

absolute india

VOL. 7, ISSUE 149, BHOPAL | SATURDAY, APRIL 09, 2022 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM BHOPAL, MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI

NATION > 02

Congress to call party's Maharashtra Ministers...



HOLLYWOOD > 06

Maya Erskine to star in 'Mr. and Mrs. Smith' Series...



SPORTS > 07

Tewatia blasts two sixes in two balls to win it for Gujarat...



India's FY23 retail inflation rate projection raised to 5.7%, vegetable, milk prices will rise

In his policy statement post the Monetary Policy Committee's (MPC) bi-monthly meeting, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said: "Taking into account these factors and on the assumption of a normal monsoon in 2022 and average crude oil price (Indian basket) of \$100 per barrel, inflation is now projected at 5.7 per cent in 2022-23, with Q1 at 6.3 per cent; Q2 at 5.8 per cent; Q3 at 5.4 per cent; and Q4 at 5.1 per cent."

Sharp increase in domestic pump prices could trigger broad-based second round price pressures. A combination of high international commodity prices and elevated logistic disruptions could aggravate input costs across agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors."

Shaktikanta Das, Governor, RBI

FY23 GDP GROWTH FORECAST TO 7.2%

Mumbai: Reserve Bank of India on Friday lowered India's FY23 GDP growth projection to 7.2 per cent from an earlier estimation of 7.8 per cent. In a statement after the Monetary Policy Committee's bi-monthly meet, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the real GDP growth is projected at 16.2 per cent in Q1FY23, at 6.2 per cent in Q2; at 4.1 per cent in Q3 and Q4 at 4 per cent, assuming that crude oil (Indian basket) price is at \$100 per barrel during 2022-23. "As the horizon was brightening up, escalating geopolitical tensions have cast a shadow on our economic outlook. Although India's direct trade exposure to countries at the epicentre of the conflict is limited, the war could potentially impede the economic recovery through elevated commodity prices and global spillover channels," he said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday raised India's retail inflation rate projection for FY23. Accordingly, inflation projection for 2022-23 has been raised to 5.7 per cent from an earlier estimation of 4.5 per cent. The RBI Governor said that the heightened geopolitical tensions since February end have upended the earlier narrative and considerably clouded the inflation outlook for the year. "On the food price front, a likely record Rabi harvest would help to keep domestic prices of cereals and pulses in check. Global factors such as the loss of wheat supply from the Black Sea region and the

unprecedented high international prices of wheat could, however, put a floor under domestic wheat prices. Edible oil price pressures are likely to remain elevated in the near-term



INDICES RISE AS RBI KEEPS RATES, STANCE UNCHANGED

New Delhi: After sliding for three consecutive sessions, Indian equity indices settled high on Friday as Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) kept policy rates unchanged, besides retaining "accommodative" stance. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) retained its key lending rate during the first monetary policy review of FY23. Accordingly, the MPC of the central bank maintained the repo rate, or short-term lending rate, for commercial banks, at 4 per cent. Sensex settled at 59,447.18 points, up 412.23 points or 0.70 per cent, whereas Nifty at 17,784.35 points, up 144.80 points or 0.82 per cent.

CARDLESS CASH WITHDRAWAL AT ALL BANK ATMS

Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday, announced that the RBI has proposed to make cardless cash withdrawal facility available at all ATMs across all banks in India. Das said that the facility is proposed to be made available through the Unified Payments Interface or UPI. At present the facility of cardless cash withdrawal through ATMs is limited only to a few banks. It is now proposed to make cardless cash withdrawal facility available across all banks and ATM networks using the UPI. In addition to enhancing ease of transactions, the absence of the need for physical cards for such transactions would help prevent frauds such as card skimming, card cloning, etc.



due to export restrictions by key producers. Besides, the RBI Governor said that feed cost pressures could continue due to global supply shortages, which could also have a spillover impact on poultry, milk and

dairy product prices. On non-food items, he cited that the spike in international crude oil prices since February-end poses substantial upside risk to inflation through both direct and indirect effects.

Heat wave intensifies, covers even northwestern Himalayan areas



highest maximum temperature was 47 degrees Celsius on April 17, 2010, followed by 46.8 on April 17, 2017, and 46.3 degrees Celsius on April 30, 2016, IMD data showed. Maximum temperatures in the range of 42-44 degrees Celsius was recorded in most parts over west Rajasthan, parts of south-east Uttar Pradesh, west Madhya Pradesh, Saurashtra-Kutch and Vidarbha, 41-43 degrees Celsius in most parts over east Rajasthan, east Madhya

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Three stations in Rajasthan and one in Gujarat recorded maximum temperatures of more than 45 degrees Celsius as the severe to very severe heat wave intensified not just in plains of central, west, and northwest India but also at many parts over Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand on Friday.

While there have been instances of similar 45 degrees Celsius plus maximum temperatures in April, the India Meteorological Department's data showed that those were in the second half of the month. "The maximum temperatures were above normal by 6-10 degrees Celsius at many parts over Jammu division, Himachal Pradesh, by 4-6 degrees Celsius in many parts over Uttarakhand, Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana-Delhi and in isolated pockets over

MAX TEMP IN NARMADAPURAM, RAJGARH TOUCHES 44.5 DEGREES CELSIUS

Bhopal: The maximum temperature in Narmadapuram and Rajgarh in Madhya Pradesh climbed to 44.5 degrees Celsius on Friday, leading to both places making it to the list of the 10 hottest places in the country, an India Meteorological Department official said. Eleven areas, including Ratlam, were in the midst of a severe heatwave, he added. Heat wave conditions are very likely to occur in a few pockets over the next four days.

Madhya Pradesh, east Uttar Pradesh and Saurashtra-Kutch," the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. Alwar, Phalodi, and Ganganagar in Rajasthan recorded highs of 45.8, 45.2, and 45.3 degrees Celsius, respectively, while Kandla recorded 45.2 degrees Celsius maximum temperature. The all-time record of

Pradesh, in remaining parts of east Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, south Haryana, Delhi, central Maharashtra, and Marathawada. The heat wave conditions in some parts are very likely over Himachal Pradesh during next four days, over Madhya Pradesh over next two days and in isolated pockets over subsequent three days.

6 B'luru schools get bomb threats

Bengaluru | Agencies

Six schools situated on the outskirts of Bengaluru got bomb threats on Friday, said the police. Following this, the premises were emptied and the police rushed to the schools along with bomb disposal and dog squads and carried out search operations. The bomb threats were found on the official email ids of the schools. Initially, Ebenezer International School located in Hebbagodi police station limits and Vincent Pallotti International School located in Hennur police station limits received the threats. Later, it came to light that the threat has also been given to Gopalan Public School in Mahadevapura, Delhi Public School of Varthur, New Academy School of Marathahalli and The Indian Public School of Govindapura, police sources stated. One of the threat messages read: "A powerful bomb has been planted in your school, attention it is not a joke, this is not a joke, a very powerful bomb has been planted in your school, immediately call the police and sappers, hundreds of lives may suffer, including yours, do not delay, now everything is only in your hands!" The email was forwarded from 'barons.masarfm@gmail.com'. Tension prevailed in the area as parents rushed to the schools. Bengaluru Police Commissioner Kamal Pant said that following the bomb threats, the police department initiated the necessary action and the situation is under control.



'UNFORTUNATE' NEW TREND OF GOVERNMENT MALIGNING JUDGES HAS STARTED: CJI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Chief Justice N.V. Ramana on Friday orally observed that a new trend of the government maligning the judges has started and termed it "unfortunate". A bench headed by the Chief Justice was hearing two special petitions, which included a plea by the Chhattisgarh government against high court order, which quashed the FIR registered under the Prevention of Corruption Act against the state's former Principal Secretary Aman Kumar Singh saying that the allegations were prima facie based upon probabilities. The other petition was filed by activist Uchit Sharma against the high court decision. Senior advocate Siddharth Dave, representing a petitioner, submitted before the



bench, also comprising Justices Krishna Murari and Hima Kohli, the reason for quashing the FIR is that the allegation was based on probability. The Chief Justice remarked: "Don't try to malign the courts. I'm watching in this court also...". Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, representing the

Chhattisgarh government, contended that they are not pressing that point at all. To this, Chief Justice Ramana said: "No, we are watching every day. You are a senior counsel; you've seen this more than us. It's a new trend, government started maligning the judges, it's unfortunate."

COVID PRECAUTION DOSE FOR ALL ADULTS AT PRIVATE VACCINATION CENTRES

New Delhi: The Union Health Ministry on Friday announced that the Covid precaution dose will be available for adults above the age of 18 at private vaccination centres from Sunday (April 10). All those who are more than 18 years of age & have completed 9 months after the administration of second dose, are eligible for the precaution dose. About 96 per cent of all 15 plus population in the country has received at least one COVID-19 vaccine job while about 83 per cent of 15 plus population has received both the doses.

Centre warns 5 states over rising Covid cases



Team Absolute | New Delhi

week, accounting to 31.8 per cent of India's new cases. According to the letters, Delhi has reported an increase in weekly new cases from 724 new cases in the week ending (April 1) to 826 new cases in the last week (ending April 8), accounting to 11.33 per cent of India's new cases. Haryana has reported an increase in weekly new cases from 367 new cases in the week ending (April 1) to 416 new cases in the last week (ending April 8), accounting to 5.70 per cent of India's new cases.

JIBS shortlisted for the prestigious Times Higher Education Asia Award 2022

Sonipat | Agencies

In a significant academic leap, Jindal Institute of Behavioural Sciences (JIBS)-- a value-based research Institute of O.P. Jindal Global University has been shortlisted for the Times Higher Education Asia Awards 2022, for its 'innovation and inclusion to empower classrooms and community' across the world. The institute has been rewarded for its 'innovation and inclusion to empower classrooms and community' across the globe. JIBS is one among the eight top-ranked institutes in Asia shortlisted for the 'Teaching and Learning Strategy' category, this year. The institute has been rewarded for its inclu-



sive teaching and learning strategies, research innovation, and community outreach initiatives that impact a diverse group of stakeholders consisting of students, educators, career counsellors, and corporate and non-corporate officials.

'Beginning of many beginnings': Private mission Ax-1 lifts off to space station

Washington | Agencies

American company Axiom Space has launched the world's first private mission to the International Space Station (ISS) on Friday. "This is a very special moment for us. The launch of Ax-1 is a beginning of many beginnings. Ax-1's launch to ISS is part of our journey to build a first private commercial space station," Kamal Ghaffarian, Executive Chairman, Axiom Space during the launch. "We will usher in a new era in private human spaceflight when they cross the threshold to enter the ISS," added Michael Suffredini, President and CEO of Axiom Space. He thanked SpaceX, the astronauts and Axiom team for "long hours of training, planning, and dedication". Suffredini also thanked NASA for its "vision to develop a sustainable presence in low-Earth orbit". "This takes commerce to a whole new level. Axiom Space's #Ax1 mission is on its way to the Space Station in SpaceX's Dragon Endeavour" a key step in our ongoing work to open opportunities for space travellers in low-Earth orbit," NASA said in a tweet. NASA and ESA (European Space Agency) astronauts and Roscosmos cosmonauts already aboard the space station will welcome the Ax-1 crew after docking. Founded in 2016, Axiom has the ultimate goal of building private space stations Axiom Station, in low-Earth orbit that can serve as a global academic and commercial hub.

THE 4-MEMBER CREW LIFTED OFF ON SPACEX'S CREW DRAGON SPACECRAFT ATOP A FALCON 9 ROCKET AT 11:17 A.M. EDT (8:47 PM IST) FROM LAUNCH COMPLEX 39A AT NASA'S KENNEDY SPACE CENTER IN FLORIDA. THE AX-1 CREW MEMBERS INCLUDES COMMANDER MICHAEL LOPEZ-ALEGRIA OF SPAIN AND THE US, PILOT LARRY CONNOR OF THE US, AND MISSION SPECIALISTS EYTAN STIBBE OF ISRAEL, AND MARK PATHY OF CANADA. DURING THEIR 10-DAY MISSION, THE CREW WILL SPEND EIGHT DAYS ON THE ISS CONDUCTING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, OUTREACH, AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES. THE CREW HAS SHARED THAT THEY ARE BRINGING OVER 25 DIFFERENT SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENTS TO WORK ON DURING THEIR EIGHT-DAY STATION STAY.



CONGRESS TO CALL PARTY'S MAHARASHTRA MINISTERS AFTER MLAS COMPLAINT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After two dozen Congress MLAs complained about the party's Maharashtra Ministers for not listening to them or even meeting them, the party's high command is likely to summon all its ministers in the state, sources said on Friday. Sources say that Congress President Sonia Gandhi has sought a report from state in charge H.K. Patil before the meeting and has directed him to come up with an amicable solution. The main complaint is against Balasahab Thorat, who is also the legislative party leader in the Assembly.

The party MLAs met Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday to discuss issues of the party in the state, and share their grievances. They had complained that Congress ministers in the MVA government ignore



them and party workers and apprised her that there is a strong resentment against the ministers

due to this. Gandhi had given them a patient hearing and assured them of an amicable solution within a

week. Before the meeting, a letter was written by the MLAs over the "cold response" of the ministers in the state. The Congress is facing a tough battle in the state as it has become the number 4 party, as per seat numbers, and is the junior-most partner in the MVA coalition government, but does not want to take any risk of upsetting the MLAs as BJP may reap the discontent. Congress has to set its house in order before Kolhapur North bypolls for which its state President Nana Patole has already accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of allegedly threatening voters with "Enforcement Directorate action". The MVA government, which also comprises the Shiv Sena and the NCP, is also facing tough time with Central agencies like the ED acting against several MLAs and ministers as well as close associates of big leaders.

Over Rs 21K cr defence domestic capital procurement allocated for pvt cos

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ministry of Defence has decided that 25 per cent of domestic capital procurement or acquisition budget, amounting to Rs 21,149.47 crore, will be earmarked for the domestic private industry in this financial year.

It is in continuation with the government's efforts to promote private industry, MSMEs and start-ups in the defence production eco-system.

Further, to foster innovation and encourage technology development in defence, it has also been decided that an amount of Rs 1,500 crore will be earmarked for procurement from start-ups, including iDEX start-up, from within the allocations for Domestic Capital



Procurement.

These steps will foster the growth of private industry, MSMEs and start-ups in the defence ecosystem.

Earlier, the Ministry of Defence had decided to earmark 68 per cent of capital

procurement budget for the entire domestic industry during Financial Year 2022-23. Accordingly, an amount of Rs 84,597.89 crore was allocated specifically for domestic defence industry in the current Financial Year.

Centre to scrutinise Covid compensation claims

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The central government has sent teams to Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh to scrutinise five per cent claims filed for Covid-19 ex-gratia compensation.

"This is in pursuance of Hon'ble Supreme Court's Order dated 24th March 2022 passed in the Miscellaneous Application No. 1805 of 2021 in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 539 of 2021," the Union Health Ministry said in a statement.

The three member team to Maharashtra will be led by Sunil Gupta, Principal Consultant of the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC). In Kerala it will be led by P Ravindran, advisor, Ministry



of Health and Family Welfare. The team to Calicut in Gujarat will be led by Dr S Venkatesh, Principal Advisor at NCDC while in Andhra Pradesh the team will be headed by S.K. Singh, Director of NCDC.

The teams will examine the on-field implementation of the ex-gratia being paid as per the directions of the Supreme Court and the

guidelines issued by the NDMA. The teams will also undertake random scrutiny of 5 per cent claims applications filed for payment of ex-gratia assistance and will also ascertain the process followed for its payment. It will examine the details of cases approved or rejected, including its documentation or verification undertaken by the district authorities.

Receiving foreign donation a reflection on constitutional morality of nation: SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court said that receiving foreign donations is "a reflection on the constitutional morality of the nation, as a whole, being incapable of looking after its own needs and problems" and said charitable associations may instead focus on donors within the country to obviate influence of foreign countries owing to foreign contribution.

A bench of Justice A.M. Khanwilkar and comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and C.T. Ravikumar said the theory of possibility of national polity being influenced by foreign contribution is globally recognised. "For, foreign contribution can have material impact in the matter of socioeconomic structure and polity of the country. The foreign aid can create presence of a foreign contributor and influence the policies of the



country," it said.

It added: "It may tend to influence or impose political ideology. Such being the expanse of the effect of foreign contribution coupled with the tenet of constitutional morality of the nation, the presence/inflow of foreign contribution in the country ought to

be at the minimum level, if not completely eschewed." The bench said, by its very expression, foreign donation is a reflection on the constitutional morality of the nation, as a whole, being incapable of looking after its own needs and problems. "The question to be asked is: 'in normal times',

why developing or developed countries would need foreign contribution to cater to their own needs and aspirations? Indisputably, the aspirations of any country cannot be fulfilled on the hope (basis) of foreign donation, but by firm and resolute approach of its own citizens to achieve the goal by sheer dint of their hard work and industry," it said. It said it is open to a sovereign democratic nation to completely prohibit acceptance of foreign donations on the ground that it undermines the constitutional morality of the nation. The bench said the influence may manifest in different ways, including in destabilising the social order within the country. "The charitable associations may instead focus on donors within the country, to obviate influence of foreign country owing to foreign contribution. There is no dearth of donors within our country," it added.

23 arrested in connection with violence in R'than's Karauli

Jaipur | Agencies

At least 23 people have been arrested in connection with a violence on April 2 in Rajasthan's Karauli town during which shops and motorcycles were set afire, DGP M.L. Lather said on Friday.

The violence had broken out between two groups during a bike rally that was taken out on the occasion of Nav Samvatar.

Interacting with the mediapersons, the senior police officer said a total of 10 FIRs including one by the Kotwali Police Officer of Karauli, and 9 by other persons have been registered.

According to the investigation, 44 miscreants have been identified by the police, Lather said while addressing the media in presence of Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Abhay Kumar.

He said that a conditional permission to take out the rally was given, which said that there should be no use of DJ and loudspeakers, and no provocative slogans should be raised.

However, on April 2, at 4 p.m., about 400 people on over 200 motorcycles left the Collectorate Circle in a rally led by police officials, and a police



team, but the DJs continued playing songs. The rally descended from the slopes and reached near the bamboo shops and Maniyar Masjid on Hatwara Road. In the minority-inhabited area, people part of the rally raised provocative slogans.

Following this, heavy stone pelting began on the people involved in the bike rally, and about 100-150 people attacked the rally with sticks. Eight police personnel along with 11 local residents were injured in the attack.

AMIT SHAH'S HINDI PUSH DRAWS IRE IN K'TAKA

Bengaluru | Agencies

Union Home Minister Amit Shah's recent Hindi language push has drawn ire in Karnataka with Opposition leader Siddaramaiah on Friday criticising it.

"The statement is not only against the federal principles of the country but also an insult to other languages. Amit Shah should immediately withdraw the statement," he said.

Also, the social media in the state is abuzz with comments under the hashtag #IndiaAgainstHindiImposition.

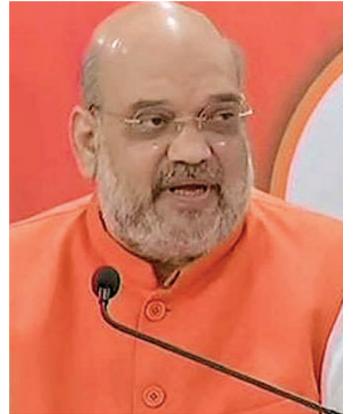
Siddaramaiah, a former Karnataka Chief Minister, dubbed it as an attempt to impose Hindi language in the country, saying he won't be quiet if any attempt is made to impose Hindi.

"Time has come for the non-Hindi states to stage a protest," he noted.

Some Kannada organisations have also reacted, submitting they won't be quiet if Hindi is imposed in the state.

Amit Shah has stated that people from different states should speak in Hindi, not English and he also stated that Hindi should be accepted as an alternative to English.

"Amit Shah's diktat of asking states to use Hindi as a language of communication instead of English is objectionable,"



Siddaramaiah, a Congress veteran, said.

"As a Kannadiga with self-respect, I condemn Shah's statement," he said.

"We are not against Hindi, English, Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati languages. However, the priority in Karnataka should be given to the Kannada language. If any attempt is made to impose Hindi, it is not possible to remain quiet," he said.

INT'L NARCO CARTEL BUSTED IN DELHI, NIGERIAN NATIONAL HELD WITH RS 3 CR HEROIN

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Police on Friday busted an international narco cartel and arrested one Nigerian national and recovered heroin worth Rs 3 crore in the international market from his possession, the police said.

The accused, identified as Prince Emeka Lath (34), a permanent resident of Anambara in Nigeria, was presently residing in Tilak Nagar.

He came to India on a tourist visa in January 2017, but even after his visa expired, he neither extended it nor returned to his country.

Furnishing the details, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Ghanshyam Bansal said a tip-off was received that an African national involved in drug peddling would deliver a consignment of heroin in Tilak Nagar. The police then laid a trap near Santgarh in Tilak Nagar.

"After a wait for two hours,



the accused was apprehended from the spot and 602 gm fine quality heroin, sourced from Afghanistan, was recovered from his possession," the DCP said. During interrogation, the accused disclosed that he received the consignment from another African national named Charles.

"Efforts are on to unearth the entire racket," the officer said. Notably, this is the second big catch in the past 10 days in which an African national

was involved, and the third major haul of such contraband in the last 10 days.

On April 6, the Cell Against Illegal Foreigner and Narcotics (CAIFAN) of Dwarka district police arrested a 50-year-old Nigerian national along with 1,081 gm heroin worth Rs 10 crore.

The Special Cell of Delhi Police had earlier busted an international narcotics cartel and arrested two of its key members along with heroin worth Rs 40 crore.

Chamoli saw seismic activity before ice-rock mass avalanche disaster: Study

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Little more than a year after the deadly ice-rock mass avalanche in Chamoli district in Uttarakhand that led to the death of more than 200 people and a substantial economic loss, scientists have been able to decode the reason behind the disaster.

Scientists of the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology have found that the region was seismically active before the disaster hit. They also found a noteworthy sequence of precursory signals of rock-ice detachment preceded by a formation of a new structure via self-assembly or self-organisation called the dynamic nucleation phase.

"Retreating Himalayan glaciers and associated melt along with unstable slopes are subject to trigger landslides by rainfall during monsoon or by induced seismicity in the region.



Also, the snow, ice, and rock avalanches may threaten people and infrastructure downstream in mountainous areas worldwide. This is why the area requires constant monitoring of seismicity as well as glacier status," the study said. Since its inception, the WIHG has been actively involved in understanding the processes responsible behind such disasters and focusing on detecting significant and unfelt activities with a dense

network of seismic stations in the vicinity of Himalayan glaciers. As a part of this process, it also tried to trace the reasons behind the disaster that took place on February 7, 2021.

A group of nine scientists analysed the satellite images of the avalanche zone and found that it shows gradual growth of cracks and the joint near the crown of the weak wedge that has controlled the head scarp for the last five years.

"These cracks further started to open up and led to successive advancement of a weak zone near the crown of the wedge failure. The initiation of ice-rock mass avalanche has been recorded as seismic precursors, which were continuously active for 2.30 hours, before the main detachment took place," the study published in the journal Scientific Reports said.

Scientists analysed and verified the seismic signals with field evidence to evaluate the velocity of dynamic flows and associated impacts. Such high-quality seismic data allowed them to reconstruct the complete chronological sequence and evaluate effects since the initiation to the advancement of debris flow.

Apart from the human loss, the impact of the flash flood was too high to sustain modern structures i.e., two hydropower projects, bridges and roads. The

high-flow intensity of the flood disturbed the stability of the Raini village, and thus the area is prone to landslides, especially during the monsoon.

Seismic monitoring systems are well suited to detect mass movements such as debris flow, landslides, avalanches, etc. The ability to see such activities by a seismic network before the main failure could provide a scope for developing an early warning system for the region.

An integrated early warning system can alert the people towards the mitigation of any such impending disaster. The EWS should be based on seismic data from the seismometers, hydrological data from automatic water level recorders and meteorological data from automatic weather stations installed as a network in the vicinity of glacierised basins of the Himalayas, the study said.



INDUSTRIAL UNITS SHOULD GIVE PRIORITY TO LOCAL YOUTH IN EMPLOYMENT: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that industrial units investing in the state should give priority to local youth in employment. Industrial units should work with sensitivity and promptness in providing necessary training and skill upgradation to the youth residing around the places where industries are being set up.



Exports worth Rs 10 thousand crore has been made in the pharma sector from the state. Employment opportunities are also being created in the state by investing in industries. In the last three months, the state government has connected 13 lakh 50 thousand youth with self-employment.

prosperous, glorious and empowered. Chouhan said that Endurafab is going to set up a plastic waste recycling plant at a cost of Rs 800 crore for the production of technical items and for protecting the environment. About 2 thousand youth will get employment from this industry and about 4 thousand families will be benefited directly and indirectly.

CM CHOUHAN PLANTED CASSIA AND KACHNAR SAPLINGS

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Cassia and Kachnar along with Anura Patankar and Ravi Patankar in Smart City Park on Friday. Chouhan plants saplings every day as part of his resolve. Kumari Anuva inspires children and teenagers to take up painting, sketching and tree-planting and taking care of them.



Voluntary organizations should be a catalyst in the efforts to remove poverty: Governor



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patil has said that voluntary organizations should come forward as catalysts in their efforts to remove poverty by connecting the poor in various roles of development. He said that their role can be decisive in the efforts to make people self-reliant by mobilizing financial resources.

donor agencies, organizations participating in development works and scholars from 52 districts of the state were present. Patil said that voluntary organizations should try to change the society by setting their own example. Expecting their cooperation in the control of sickle cell, he said that a large part of about 1.75 crore tribal population of the state is suffering from the genetic disease sickle cell.

and Jhabua districts. Giving information about the nature, form and control of the disease, he told that in the year 2006, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat, at that time extensive work was done on sickle cell control. Referring to his experiences, the Governor said that sickle cell disease has been found mostly in the tribal society in the world.

MP Cong constitutes 20-member panel for 2023 Assembly polls

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Congress has constituted a 20-member committee of party leaders to prepare strategies to take on the ruling BJP in the state. The committee, comprising senior leaders and former cabinet ministers, will be assisting the state president Kamal Nath.



Sources told IANS that members of the committee have been selected as per the directions of the party's national president Sonia Gandhi. Apart from 20 members, two more members would be added as special invitee of

the head of the committee - Kamal Nath. The committee will hold meetings twice in a month to strategize the party's preparation for 2023 Assembly polls in the state. The development came three days after the state Congress unanimously

decided that the party will contest the Assembly elections under the leadership of former Chief Minister Kamal Nath. Prominent Congress leaders who have been included in the committee are - former Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh, former party president Kantilal Bhuria, former leader of Opposition Ajay Singh (Rahul). Other members of the committee are - former Union Minister Arun Ydov, Govind Singh, Arif Akil, Sajjan Verma, Vijay Laxmi Saho, Sajjan Singh Verma, NP Prajapati, Bala Bachan, Ramiwas Rawat, Omkar

Markam, Jitu Patwari, Lakhna Ghanghria, Chandra Prabhsh Shekhar, Prakash Jain, Ashok Singh, Rajeev Singh. Two special invitee members in the committee are - Rajya Sabha MP Vivek Tankha and Rajmani Patel. Senior Congress spokesperson KK Mishra talking to IANS said, "The committee will be chaired by the party state president Kamal Nath and it would sit for discussion twice in a month. The party has formed the committee considering all aspects - region wise and also considering the social dynamics in the state."

CM Pays Tribute to Creator Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Mangal Pandey

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid homage to the author of the national song Vande Mataram Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay on his death anniversary and garlanded his portrait at his residence today. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay did an important work of awakening national consciousness in the Indian public. The national song Vande Mataram became a source of inspiration for the revolutionaries in the Indian freedom struggle.



the 34th Bengal Infantry of the East India Company. He is respected as a hero of the freedom struggle. In 1984, a postage stamp was issued in his honour by the Government of India for his important role in India's freedom struggle. The British feared the spark of rebellion, lit by revolutionary Mangal Pandey, could become a flame in the country. Therefore, on 8 April 1857, Mangal Pandey was hanged 10 days before the due date.

martyrdom day. Chouhan garlanded the portrait of Shaheed Mangal Pandey in the auditorium at the residence office. Amar Shaheed Mangal Pandey, who first blew the bugle of the freedom struggle in the country, was born on July 19, 1827 in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh. He was a soldier of

STREET VENDORS OF MP MADE SWANIDHI YOJANA SUCCESSFUL

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Efforts made to improve the economic condition of small businessmen in Madhya Pradesh have been successful. While the beneficiaries are being benefited from loan schemes through employment fairs every month, the schemes to upgrade the business are becoming the basis of economic prosperity of small businesses. More than 5 lakh vegetable vendors, fruit sellers, tea and snack carts, pani puri stalls, toy sellers have been successful in growing their business in the state.

Chouhan said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi not only pulled out the urban street vendors from economic crisis during Corona period by launching the PM Swanidhi Yojana, but also facilitated their self-employment by providing them loans without interest. In fact, during the Corona period, when the economic crisis had increased, the Central and Madhya Pradesh governments realized the problem of street vendors in the direction of self-reliance. It may be noted that 1 lakh 37 thousand 42 urban street vendors in Madhya Pradesh have repaid a loan of Rs 10 thousand on time to the bank under PM Swanidhi Yojana. Out of these, 45 thousand 413 street vendors have been re-approved loan of Rs 20 thousand. Madhya Pradesh is leading in the implementation of this scheme. Not only this, Mukhya Mantri Gramin Path Vendor Scheme has also been implemented in Madhya Pradesh. In view of the economic problems of small businessmen during the Corona period, working capital of Rs 10 thousand was provided to rural street vendors without interest, which became the economic basis for them.

Cooperation between Civil Society Organisations and Government Should Be for Good Causes

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Presiding over the conference-session of voluntary organisations for participation in sustainable development and sharing of experiences "Facilitating Partnerships: Exploring Collaborations and Convergences," Anurag Behar, CEO, Azim Premji Foundation, said that collaboration between civil society organisations and the government should be for good causes. Such cooperation should also take place between organisations. Behar said that the objectives of the organisations should be clear and they should have better expertise. As far as possible, financial support should not be expected from the government. Respect, continuity and flexibility are must. Civil society organisations should be respected at all levels, consistency in work and flexibility is essential at all levels.



Additional Chief Executive Officer of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis Lokesh Sharma, while conducting the session said that there should be a thorough discussion on where and who should start participation. He said that this conference has been organised to brainstorm on these subjects. Sharma said that it is important to define cooperation, so that a clear vision can be prepared about the role of government, citizen, society, community etc. C Pramathesh Ambasta, CEO, Bharat Rural Livelihood Fund said that it is necessary to bridge the capacity gap. Unless this is addressed, there will be no proper social and economic development at the grassroots level.

roots level. Government institutions and academia should highlight the work of small NGOs. The success stories of their social workers should be displayed at every level. He informed that his organisation is working with 2500 farmers in Madhya Pradesh, out of which about 1500 farmers are Divyang. Organic farming is done by them on 1200 hectares. He appreciated the Panchayat app of Madhya Pradesh government. He said that there is not as much transparency in any other app. In this, information about every expenditure of Panchayat is available. Baurai informed that agriculture related work is being done on about 3 thousand hectare land with 5 lakh farmers all over the country. Co-Founder Transform Rural India Foundation Anish Kumar said that give autonomy to the localism, it will definitely lead to success. He said that Barwani is working with the Panchayat and Rural Development Department among the tribal people in the district. Kumar said that convergence is like India, which is sometimes visible and sometimes not. Founder India Foundation and Development Alternative Lt. Gen. Arun Sahni said that a bridge should always be built between people and policy makers. First find the problem and then its solution and then the platform to solve the problem. Identify the gap and remove it and become a voice for the progress of the poor. Appreciate each other's thinking and share innovations. The doubts of the representatives of the voluntary organisations participating in the conference were also resolved. A participant from Jhabua said that instead of explaining, there should be an effort to understand.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Climate crisis is health crisis

Human health is directly interlinked with the health of the physical environment and biodiversity. The link is much evident in the increase in the number of illnesses because of pollution and our environmental health, public health experts said. World Health Day is a global health awareness day celebrated every year on April 7. The theme this year as set by the World Health Organisation is 'Our Planet, Our Health'. In the midst of a pandemic, a polluted planet, increasing diseases like cancer, asthma, heart disease, the WHO aims to focus global attention on urgent actions needed to keep humans and the planet healthy and foster a movement to create societies focused on well-being. According to the global health agency estimates, more than 13 million deaths around the world each year are due to avoidable environmental causes. These include heart disease and stroke, accidents, respiratory illnesses, diarrhoeal diseases, and malaria among others. In addition it includes the climate crisis which is the single biggest health threat facing humanity. The WHO estimates that between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year, from a combination of malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress. Increased hunger is also driven by the worsening climate crisis. Oxfam International calculates that 821 million people across the world face chronic food deprivation which is a return to levels from almost a decade ago. This tests health systems to their capacity and places those who are vulnerable at particular risk. Pollution also directly contributes to poor health outcomes. The experts noted that an increase seen in the number of illnesses because of pollution and our environmental health, in general, is no secret. Thus, it is essential to respect planetary boundaries and address the underlying factors contributing to global warming, pollution and overall climate change.

IN UTTAR PRADESH, GIRLS ARE FIGHTING HARD TO KEEP THEIR EDUCATION BOAT AFLOAT

Saurabh Sharma

Despite a volley of pandemic-induced challenges, girls are making all out efforts to stay up to date with their classes -- all while lacking access to the digital mode of education.

"I just want to be a doctor," said 15-year-old Roshni* Gupta. She was willful but had to put education on the back burner, for it was food that was her primary concern at that moment.

In a two-room house she shared with her parents and two brothers, Gupta lives in the labyrinth of Daliganj, a congested, impoverished locality in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Under the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and a series of lockdowns, Gupta had to drop out from her private school in the neighbourhood as her father could not afford the fee. The only breadwinner of the family, he was a street-side chaat seller in Daliganj.

"He was without a job for months, and we didn't have money to even afford three square meals a day," said the Class 5 student who could not continue her education.

To run the household, her father Ashok turned to selling vegetables, earning far less than he did as a chaat seller. The debts were mounting, given his downward spiralling income, making it unaffordable to send his three children to school.

Lean, with bulging eyes, he recalled how it was "a struggle to keep his three kids and wife alive during the lockdown". So to balance this out, Gupta had to drop out, while her brothers continued their education. She couldn't get any updates on classes from her friends either, as the family couldn't afford to constantly recharge their prepaid mobile phone connection. Gupta had tried her best to convince her parents to let her continue with school, but her repeated pleas fell on deaf ears.

"If the government had ordered private schools to waive our fees, there could have been some hope for students like me from economically weaker sections," she rued.

Huma Firdaus, a volunteer with Sadbhavana Trust -- a Lucknow-based NGO working to develop leadership among marginalised groups of young girls and women -- highlighted that Gupta wasn't alone in her plight in the Uttar Pradesh capital. With her team, Firdaus had worked out a list of 140 girls who had to either abandon their education midway or get married -- or both -- due to income losses and debts. The data sample,

she said, "was only of a few areas of the city".

"I believe there are more girls who had to quit studies or were forced into early marriage," she added.

According to Census 2011, Uttar Pradesh ranks 31 among all the states and union territories of India, with female literacy rate at 57.18 per cent -- 7.54 per cent lower than the national average of 64.63 per cent. The pandemic further worsened these numbers: the Right to Education Forum found that almost 10 million girls were at the risk of dropping out of schools due to the pandemic.

Ashok had wanted his 15-year-old daughter to study, but said he wanted to wait till he earned as much as he did earlier.

"I had thought that once the lockdown would be lifted, things would be back to normal. But after the second wave hit, we feared for our lives much more," explained the father of three, who feared for his family when "innumerable deaths were being reported in Lucknow". Amid this chaos, his daughter's education was not at the forefront of his mind.

He had resumed selling chaat but said that "it'd take a lot of time to repay debts and equalise his incurred losses". When asked why he let his daughter drop out while his sons continued their classes, he added after a momentary pause: "Once things are back to normal and I get back in business, I'll seriously think about my daughter's education."

However, contrary to her father's assurances, Gupta felt that her parents had been planning to get her married early.

"A few of my family acquaintances had got their daughters married. My parents might, too," said the 15-year-old, much younger than the 18 years she was required to be legally wed, though she couldn't shake the possibility.

Around 80 km from Lucknow, in Raebareilly, Priya* Sonkar, a Class 8 student of UPS Raipur School, also dreamt of being a doctor. Her father Rajesh Sonkar, a tonga rider, earned Rs 200 as daily wages and had to double as a labourer at a local furniture shop during the pandemic. He was the sole breadwinner of the family of four -- Priya has a younger brother studying in the same school -- and also had to feed their livestock (it cost Rs 100 every day). Rajesh and his wife Ruby, both illiterate, were hoping to get out of poverty by educating their daughter.

"We want her to become a teacher, or anything that could fetch her a respectable salary, to run our family," 32-year-old Ruby said.

In the absence of face-to-face academic guidance from teachers, Priya was dependent on her aunt to cope with studies. The teenager had also been struggling to manage her time between studies and gender-dictated household chores, unable to dedicate more than an hour to academics.

The lack of smartphones, unstable internet connection and the difficulty in adapting to digital education were adding to her struggles. But Ruby said that occasionally, "her teachers would come home to give her homework". At times, they "went to school and collected study material", somehow keeping the academically sound Priya's education afloat.

In another Raebareilly village, Fatima* Bano was a Class 9 student at a government school for girls. When the lockdown was imposed and the digital education model was adopted, Fatima, despite being a top performer, was forced to miss her classes. She neither had a smartphone nor a television to access the government-run education programmes on Doordarshan.

"My teacher had said if we lacked a smartphone, we didn't have to study," she shared.

But to continue, she depended on her classmates who owned smartphones and copied her homework from their device -- in the two hours she was able to dedicate to academic activities.

Her mother Hameeda Bano rolled bidis to earn Rs 60 for every 1000 she made. Fatima assisted with the job, and the mother-daughter duo rolled around 4000 bidis a week to earn Rs 240. Bano's husband Mohammed Mukeem had passed away three years ago, leaving behind four daughters: Fatima, Rukh*, Sana* and Zira*. Bano was the only earner in the family.

Sana and Rukh had been studying in Class 8 and Class 6, respectively, in a government-run school in Beliganj. They, too, visited friends who "owned a digital device to be up to date" with their classes.

Dr Vivekanand Tripathi, an assistant teacher at the Beliganj school, had been concerned about the education of his female students. He recognised Sana and Rukh, as well as their "plight in lacking access to education due to unavailable resources".

"We are putting in the effort to make online education feasible for marginalised children, especially girls, but we're still unable to give quality education," he added.

Zira, the youngest of Bano's four daughters, couldn't read nor write despite being



enrolled in Class 1 in a government school, Poore Kallu. Moreover, unable to meet their mounting expenses and continue the education of her four daughters, Bano wanted to get Fatima and Rukh married when they turned 18.

"After their marriage, I'll be able to feed my other daughters better," she said, helpless.

Suman Devi, the principal of Zira's school, acknowledged how online classes had failed to facilitate the education of students of her school.

"Of the 153 students enrolled at the school, only 12 students had been attending classes through smartphones," she pointed out.

To mitigate this problem, mohalla classes were introduced where a Prerna Sathi ½ teaching volunteer chosen by the headmaster of the local school ½ would run offline classes for rural students. For Shivendra Pratap Singh, BSA (Basic Siksha Adhikari or Primary Education Officer) of Raebareilly, these mohalla classes were the valid alternative for "those who lacked resources, for uninterrupted education", though he didn't have any data on the ratio of students without access to online education.

But Kavita, one such volunteer, said she was "on her own in this whole process".

"I had broken the screen of my phone and had to manage Rs 700 to get it repaired. I also bore the monthly internet recharge expense. I didn't get any support for these out-of-pocket expenses from the school administration," she shared her distress.

*The names of all minors quoted have been changed to protect their identity

(The author is a Lucknow-based freelance journalist and a member of 101Reporters, a pan-India network of grassroots reporters.)

international

Russians hit train station in Ukraine's Kramatorsk with Iskander ballistic missiles

Kiev | Agencies

Russian forces on Friday attacked a railway station in Ukraine's Kramatorsk with Iskander ballistic missiles, killing dozens of people, with more than hundred others injured.

Pavlo Kyrylenko, head of the Donetsk Regional Military Administration said: "The Russian fascists have hit the railway station in Kramatorsk with Iskander cluster munitions. Police and rescuers working at the scene are reporting dozens of dead and injured", Ukrayinska Pravda reported.

Thousands of people were at the train station at the time of the missile strike, Kyrylenko said, as Donbas residents were being evacuated to safer areas of Ukraine.



He stressed that the Russian forces "knew very well where they were aiming and what they wanted: they wanted to sow panic and fear, they wanted to take as many

civilians as possible hostage".

Earlier, Kyrylenko reported that evacuations by bus from Vuhledar on Thursday were carried out under Russian fire and that a cruise missile

strike near Sloviansk temporarily blocked the departure of three evacuation trains. Movement was restored around midnight, the report said.

SAUDI ARABIA ANNOUNCES RETURN OF AMBASSADOR TO LEBANON

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry announced the return of its Ambassador to Lebanon, in a positive sign of a thaw in the countries' tense ties. The move came after Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati pledged to take the necessary and required measures to enhance cooperation with the kingdom and other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Ministry was quoted by the official Saudi Press Agency as saying.

Saudi Arabia highlighted the significance of Lebanon's "return to its Arab origins to enjoy peace, security and stability", Xinhua news agency reported citing the Ministry as saying. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, all GCC members, recalled their ambassadors to Lebanon in October 2021 to protest against the comments made by former Lebanese Information Minister George Kordahi, who criticized the Saudi-led coalition's involvement in the civil war of Yemen.

PTI mulling en masse resignations from national, provincial assemblies

Islamabad | Agencies

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party is all set to launch an agitation against the dismissal of its government and the potential forming of a new regime in the wake of the Supreme Court's ruling setting the stage for the no-trust move against Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday, sources said.

This movement may be launched in the next few days and protests will take place against the new government at every platform, The Express Tribune quoted the sources as saying.

The PTI is also mulling resignations en masse of its lawmakers in the national and provincial assemblies.

Though key leaders of the party opine that electoral reforms are crucial for fresh polls and so urgent resignations will be a politically dangerous decision as this would open the door for opposition to bring amendments or legislate as per its choice, the sources said.

The ruling party, they added, is also considering approaching the courts to have a commission constituted to probe the "foreign conspiracy" against its government, but a step regarding this will be



taken only after due legal consultation. PTI sources also told The Express Tribune that the ruling party had decided to reach out to the masses.

The new government would be pressured, through public opinion, to undertake electoral reforms and hold fresh general elections. The party, the sources further said, will not leave the political turn unoccupied and the rallies organised against them will be led by Khan.

Moreover, if the potential government forges cases against them or makes an arrest, then it will be responded with stern protests.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR COMPLICATES ECB'S RATE HIKE CONSIDERATIONS

The Russia-Ukraine war has added to the uncertainties amid which the European Central Bank (ECB) chose to adopt a prudent stance in formulating its agenda for rate hikes, according to minutes released by the central bank.

Frankfurt | Agencies

The Russia-Ukraine war has added to the uncertainties amid which the European Central Bank (ECB) chose to adopt a prudent stance in formulating its agenda for rate hikes, according to minutes released by the central bank.

Commodity prices have surged and energy prices in the euro area have hit record highs since the eruption of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. "The resulting energy price rise had contributed to a substantial reappraisal by markets of the euro area inflation outlook," Xinhua news

agency quoted the ECB as saying on Thursday.

The central bank announced in March that it would terminate its asset purchase programme, setting the stage for a rate hike under its forward guidance.

However, the minutes released on Thursday indicate that the central bank is prudent and in no hurry to raise interest rates.

The ECB disclosed that the governing council members agreed at their meeting in March to separate the timing of a rate hike from the end date for net asset purchases.

Previously, it had alleged that the net asset purchases

would end "shortly before" it started raising key interest rates.

By removing the two key words from its forward guidance, the ECB intended to create "extra space" so that it would assess the situation based on incoming data. It said that there would be "some time" between the end of the net asset purchase programme and a rate hike.

The ECB announced in March that it would conclude the asset purchase programme in the third quarter this year if its medium-term inflation outlook will not weaken absent the bond-buying programme.

US STRESSES COMMITMENT TO INDO-PACIFIC IN 2+2 AGENDA

New York | Agencies

Announcing next week's 2+2 ministerial meeting of Indian and American defence and diplomacy leaders, the US has stressed the two countries' "commitment to a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region" on the agenda.

During the meeting on April 11, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, they will "reaffirm the importance of the US-India Comprehensive and Global Strategic Partnership in ensuring international peace and security", the State Department said on Thursday.

The Pentagon said that the US and India will "continue to chart an ambitious course in the bilateral defence partnership" that will aim "to meet the challenges of the 21st century".

The two parallel announcements did not make any mention of the Ukraine situation, which is the pre-occupation of the US and a point of difference with India, which has stayed neutral frustrating Washington.

Nor did the Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA) statement in New Delhi.

The MEA said: "The 2+2 Dialogue will also provide an opportunity to exchange views about important regional and global developments and how we can work together to address issues of common interest and concern."

"The Dialogue would enable both sides to undertake a comprehensive review of cross-cutting issues in the India-US bilateral agenda related to foreign policy, defence and security with the objective of providing strategic guidance and vision for further consolidating the relationship."

The 2+2 meetings held since 2018 alternate between the two capitals and its fourth edition was to have

been held last December but was postponed because of the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to New Delhi that month.

This year's event will celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations between India and the US, the State Department said.

Ahead of the 2+2 meeting with the Russian invasion of Ukraine taking precedence in US foreign policy, Blinken spoke to Jaishankar twice in the last eight days, and Deputy National Security Adviser Daleep Singh and Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland visited New Delhi in March. India showed a slight twitch away from its neutrality by demanding on Monday at the UN Security Council an independent international inquiry into the allegations of atrocities by Russian troops in Ukraine, but on Thursday it remained neutral on a General Assembly resolution to suspend Moscow from the Human Rights Council. Laying out the broad scope of the meeting, the State

Department said: "The 2+2 Ministerial is an important opportunity to advance our shared objectives across the breadth of the US-India Strategic Partnership, including enhancing our people-to-people ties and education cooperation, building diverse, resilient supply chains for critical and emerging technology, scaling up our climate action and public health cooperation, and developing a trade and investment partnership to increase prosperity for working families in both countries."

"The relationship between the world's largest democracies is built on a foundation of common values and resilient democratic institutions, and the shared Indo-Pacific interests of a rules-based international order that safeguards sovereignty and territorial integrity, upholds human rights, and expands regional and global peace and prosperity."

The MEA said that Jaishankar will also hold a bilateral meeting with Blinken and meet other US officials.



BJP PLOTTING TO MAKE MUMBAI A UNION TERRITORY: SHIV SENA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Shiv Sena again claimed on Friday that there is a strong move among a section of Bharatiya Janata Party to make Mumbai - the country's financial capital - into a Union Territory.

Sena MP and chief spokesperson Sanjay Raut claimed that a group of BJP leaders including ex-Mumbai MP Kirit Somaiya are chalking out a plan to the effect with the help of some businessmen, realtors, and others. "This has been going on for the past couple of months or so. A detailed presentation has also been made to the Union Home Ministry in this regard," he said, adding he has evidence in the matter.

Raut said there is a possibility that this group is likely to move the courts citing that the percentage of Marathi-speaking people in Mumbai has gone down and hence it should be made a UT under the direct control of the Centre. On several occasions in the past, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) has accused the BJP and Centre of making attempts to carve out Mumbai from Maharashtra to bring the megalopolis



under its jurisdiction as a UT.

In January 2021, BJP-ruled Karnataka's then Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi had sparked a major political row by demanding that Mumbai should be handed over to Karnataka and until then its status should be changed to a UT.

However, the MVA allies Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress had slammed the proposal and said Mumbai has always been an integral part of Maharashtra, will remain so, and any plans to dilute it would be resisted stiffly.

BJP HAS DECLARED WAR, BUT MVA FULLY UNITED, SAYS SANJAY RAUT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Two days after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) attached properties belonging to his wife and associates, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Thursday said that the Bharatiya Janata Party has declared a war, but the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra is fully united.

Returning to Mumbai, Raut was given a hero's welcome by thousands of ShivSainiks with flags, banners, posters, and 'dhol-tasha' outside the airport.

"They (BJP) has declared war. The manner in which they are targeting us with the help of central agencies, taking steps against us, we shall also retaliate... If they put us in jail, we are ready... they may kill us, we are prepared. But, we will continue our fight," he thundered.

The Sena's chief spokesperson said that the so-called 'sankat' (danger) of the government has now actually proved to be a 'sandhi' (opportunity) for the MVA regime which has emerged stronger.

"We are completely together in fighting the attacks of the BJP through the central probe agencies. This is not



a show of support or strength. It's the angst and resentment of the people against the INS Vikrant scam," he said.

Reiterating the MVA allies Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress will overcome the threats of the ED, CBI, IT, etc., Raut warned that "the BJP has dug its own grave" and "a time will come when they will bow down on their knees".

He expressed gratitude to Chief

Minister Uddhav Thackeray and NCP President Sharad Pawar for their support to him after the ED action against his family.

"The very fact that Pawar Saheb raised the issue with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi proves that the MVA allies are united," Raut pointed out.

He termed as immaturity the vindictive attacks by the BJP in the past two-and-half years since the MVA

came to power, but vowed to fight it out.

On the instructions of Thackeray, the party has launched a series of agitations against the BJP at the village level and said the same will spread to the national level and spell doom for the BJP, he said.

Raut created a mega-sensation on Wednesday when he accused a BJP activist and ex-MP Kirit Somaiya of allegedly siphoning off an amount of Rs 57 crore collected as 'crowd-funds' by launching the save Vikrant campaign in 2013-2014.

As per a RTI reply from Maharashtra Raj Bhavan last month, the amount which was claimed to be deposited with the Governor's office, had never reached there.

Raut said that not only did Somaiya misappropriate the public monies for a nationalistic cause but also indulged in money-laundering and he would "definitely go to jail."

However, Somaiya has consistently denied all the allegations hurled against him and said he was prepared to face any probe even as police complaints were lodged against him in Mumbai and other cities for the alleged Vikrant scam.

Transport employees attack Sharad Pawar's home with stones

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a shocking development, a large number of agitating employees of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) stormed at the home of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar, and pelted stones and shoes.

Taking the Mumbai Police by surprise, the angry state transport staff including many women first staged a noisy demonstration demanding the merger of the MSRTC with the state government, and raised slogans against the Maha Vikas Aghadi and the Pawars.

Then small groups of the employees were seen rushing towards the high-security Pawar residence in Silver Oaks Building, broke the security barricades, shouted slogans, and pelted stones, shoes at their home.

Taken aback by the unexpected 'attack', NCP MP Supriya Sule, Pawar's daughter, rushed out of the home



right into the midst of the agitating state transport workers crowding there and appealed to them to remain calm and sit for negotiations. "With folded hands, I am pleading

to you... please keep calm, my parents and my children are there at home. Don't indulge in such behaviour," said Sule fervently with chaos all around her.

Pawar is accorded Z-Plus category security and the unprecedented attack has raised questions on possible intelligence failure, particularly since the home department is handled by NCP's Minister Dilip Walse-Patil.

Sule repeatedly urged the ST workers that she was "prepared to sit for negotiations at this minute", but they were in no mood to listen.

Soon afterwards, a posse of senior police officers rushed there and brought the situation under control, pushing back the ST employees who have been on the warpath since the past five months.

The transport staffers' action -- the transport department is held by Shiv Sena Minister Ani Parab -- evoked strong condemnation from political circles and the social media.

MVA leaders blamed one of their leaders Adv. Gunratna Sadavarte for the assault on the Pawar home despite negotiations underway with the government at the highest level.

Pandemic WFH: 75% Mumbaikars agonised by bone & joints problems

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Aggravating 75 per cent of all Mumbaikars, who were compelled to work from home (WFH), suffered from various types of bones/joints health issues, during the past two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, claimed a medical survey released here on Friday.

The survey, conducted by the Fortis Hospitals at Mulund & Kalyan, Hiranandani Hospital, Vashi, and S.L. Raheja Hospital, Mahim -- guided by Dr. Kaushal Malhan, Dr. Manish Sontakke and Dr. Siddharth M. Shah -- covered 5,005 citizens, comprising 65 per cent women and the rest men, all aged between 31-40 years. Of these 75 per cent -- or three-fourths of the WFH crowds -- 8 per cent complained of numbness in arms/legs, 14 per cent had pains in the



lower body with difficulties in getting up, 19 per cent experienced stiffening of the legs and lower back while 26 per cent revealed pain or tingling in the neck and shoulders due to constant use of devices, household/outdoor chores, 14 per cent sacrificed their weekend for these duties, and 18 per cent confessed to being glued to their mobiles when not on the computer. household chores were hampered due to the physical, bone/joint problems, for which 26 per cent blamed their disrupted sleep cycles,

24 per cent to single-handedly managing their official-domestic functions, 17 per cent attributed it to longer work hours or some ill family members, 14 per cent blamed lack of exercise or improper eating and 9 per cent claimed they had no time to consult their doctors. For their health issues, 42 per cent of Mumbaikars underwent time-sensitive scheduled procedures or emergency surgeries, 26 per cent avoided their operations as they were scared of visiting hospitals, 58 per cent delayed, 18 per cent self-medicated, 15 per cent ignored their pains and only 14 per cent consulted their family physicians. The orthopaedic surgeons Dr. Shah, Dr.Sontakke and Dr.Malhan appealed to people to maintain a healthy lifestyle with proper eating, workouts, etc., to avoid any deterioration in the future.

Maharashtra launches free study module for Ukraine-returned medical students

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra government has launched a three-month online course, designed by the state's health sciences university, for medical students who had to stop their studies midway and return home from war-torn Ukraine.

The Nashik-headquartered Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS), in association with a private entity, Elsevier, has prepared the digital content.

State medical education minister Amit Deshmukh and MUHS vice-chancellor Lt Gen Madhuri Kanitkar (ret'd) launched the study module,

which is free of cost. "The digital content has been developed by the MUHS with help from Elsevier. It is a voluntary course for the students who have returned from Ukraine. This is a temporary arrangement for the students who at present have no access to education," said Kanitkar.

MUHS has also developed a mobile application for the online learning module, which students can download on their phones and use the course material, she said.

"Students interested in taking up the online course will have to register themselves on the MUHS portal. No fee will be charged from the stu-

dents for this course," the vice-chancellor said. Deshmukh said the module will prove useful for Ukraine-returned students and they should take advantage of it. "Students pursuing medical education in Ukraine had to return to India. To avoid educational loss of these students, the MUHS and Elsevier have made available useful content for them in a very short period," the minister said.

"As this course has been developed as a stopgap arrangement, there will be no special benefits of this course for the students," said Amit Modi, a senior officer at Elsevier.

COVID-19: MAHARASHTRA CUMULATIVE VACCINATION TALLY CROSSES 16.22 CRORE

▶ IN THE ONGOING VACCINATION DRIVE, MAHARASHTRA ON APRIL 7 HAS INOCULATED 16,22,73,915 PEOPLE.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As per the state government data, 4,90,43,967 individuals aged between 18 and 44 years received their first vaccine dose and 3,83,14,867 received their second dose since the inoculation drive for this age group began on May 1.

Similarly, 133,48,053 individuals above 60 years have received the

first vaccine dose while 1,10,76,509 received their second dose. 12,01,365 of them received their precaution dose.

Meanwhile, 38,13,596 individuals aged between 15-18 years have received the first vaccine dose, while 24,83,623 have received their second.

As many as 16,25,200 children in the age group of 12 to 14 years have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

So far, 12,95,281 health care workers have been administered the first dose of the vaccine, while 11,88,333 of them have got their second dose. 3,35,538 health care workers have received their precaution dose so far.

Similarly, 21,49,477 front line workers in the state have till now received their first vaccine dose

and of them, 19,96,561 got their second dose. 3,58,609 front line workers have received their precaution dose so far.

Maharashtra on Thursday recorded 128 fresh coronavirus cases and six deaths linked to the infection, while 159 more patients recovered from the disease, the health department said.

With fresh additions, the state's COVID-19 tally reached 78,74,818, while the death toll rose to 1,47,806, the department said in a bulletin. On Wednesday, the state recorded 108 cases and seven fatalities. Jalgaon, Nandurbar, Hingoli, Nanded, Bhandara, Gondia and Chandrapur districts have zero active cases.

The bulletin said 159 patients recovered in the last 24 hours, taking their cumulative number to

77,26,184 and leaving the state with 828 active cases.

The coronavirus recovery rate in the state stood at 98.11 per cent, while the fatality rate was 1.87 per cent. Mumbai recorded 41 coronavirus cases and one fatality, the department said.

Rural parts of Pune district recorded four fatalities, while one patient succumbed to the infection in municipal limits, the bulletin said.

It said 38,137 coronavirus tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, pushing their overall count to 7,96,09,229.

Maharashtra's coronavirus figures are as follows: Total cases 78,74,818; fresh cases: 128; death toll 1,47,806; recoveries 77,26,184; active cases 828; total tests 7,96,09,229.

Maharashtra government initiates chapter proceeding against BJP MLA Nitesh Rane

▶ MAHARASHTRA BJP MLA NITESH RANE, ON THURSDAY, WHILE REPLYING TO A SHOW CAUSE NOTICE BY THE SPECIAL EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE, STATED THAT THE NOTICE WAS ILLEGAL AND "BAD IN LAW" AND HAD BEEN ISSUED "WITHOUT APPLICATION OF MIND WITH MALAFIDE INTENT."

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The show cause notice asked the BJP MLA to execute a good behaviour bond for one year. The good behaviour bond is part of the chapter proceedings that are initiated against a person facing many cases.

The Special Executive Magistrate in

Mumbai had issued a show cause notice to Rane on April 1 asking him to appear on April 7, 2022. However, Rane did not appear but filed a reply through his advocate Namita Maneshinde, who also appeared on his behalf.

The notice had stated that Rane faced 12 cases across Maharashtra and Goa, such as in Kankavli, Kudal, Sindhudurg, Sawantwadi, Vengurla, Malvan, Devgad, Worli, Mahim, Malwani, Pedne, Goa. Most of the cases concerned were about sloganeering, illegal assembly, disrupting public officials' work and others.

The notice stated that these FIRs point out that Rane is dangerous and does not have concern for law and order in society. If ignored, he will continue with his criminal activities.

"For this, police carried out secret investigations in these areas and the witnesses gave statements on his conduct which led to this conclusion," the show cause notice stated, before adding that being a politician, his acts will influence people around him and if this continued, then the same would disrupt peace and order in that region.

The notice stated that in future, to avoid such offences and to reform the accused, they were of the belief that proceedings ought to be initiated under 107 (security for keeping peace) of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). The Rs 5 lakh bond, according to notice, would be valid for one year as an assurance to maintain peace and tranquility in society with one surety.

Maneshinde in the reply stated, "Rane has never been convicted of any offence whatsoever" and that section 107 of CrPC deals with security for keeping the peace and mandates that a notice under this section be issued only when information is received that any person is likely to commit a breach of peace or to disturb public tranquillity or to do any wrongful act that may have the aforesaid effect. That the present notice is devoid of any such credible information and instead consists merely of vague allegations and per se defamatory content regarding the nature of Rane which is completely unwarranted."

Rane also pointed to the anticipatory bail application order passed by a se-

sions court recently in the Malwani FIR case. The reply stated, "Sessions Judge has made scathing observations against the prosecution and the manner in which the investigation was being conducted," stated the reply.

One of the allegations against Rane was of illegal assembly outside the Malwani police station on March 5, 2022. Rane's reply stated that the "crowd largely consisted of media personnel. That, given that this entire case is politically driven, it naturally attracted media attention which is not within the control of Rane. Rane cannot be held liable for the actions of the media. In addition, given the mala fide conduct of the prosecution in the crime, it is only natural that Rane was accompanied by his well-wishers who behaved in a peaceful and orderly manner."

The reply stated that there is absolutely no reason or lawful justification for calling upon Rane to execute any bond for good behaviour. "The notice is clearly without application of mind and is causing undue harassment to Rane."

The notice and the reply have been kept for further arguments on April 20.

Maharashtra to buy additional power from CGPL to avoid load shedding: Nitin Raut

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Energy minister Nitin Raut has said that the state government has decided to buy additional power from Coastal Gujarat Power Limited (CGPL) in order to avoid load shedding and ensure a smooth supply of electricity.

The power demand is expected to reach 30,000 MW very soon. Currently, the power exchange rate is Rs 12 per unit.

Considering the higher rate, CGPL will provide electricity at Rs 5.50 and Rs 5.7 per unit, which will mitigate the economic burden on the state-run Mahavitaran.

The state cabinet approved to explore various options of power purchases by the state-run Mahavitaran to meet growing power demand and in turn avoid load shedding.

Due to the hot summer, the highest demand of the

state has reached 28,489 MW. This is an increase of 8.2 per cent over the previous year.

The decision was taken at a special meeting of Council of Ministers held today which was chaired by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

The Cabinet also decided that the Board of Directors of the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company (MSEDCL) could take the necessary decision regarding the power purchase agreement as decided by the Union Ministry of Power.

The Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company (MSEDCL) was allowed to procure electricity for a short period of time till June 15, 2022, until the power generation and availability situation in the state was restored.

Due to shortage of coal and rising demand for power the water has been utilized to meet the power demand.



VANESSA HUDGENS

HAD 'A LOT' OF PARANORMAL EXPERIENCES

Los Angeles | Agencies

Vanessa Hudgens spoke about her paranormal experiences during her appearances on Tuesday's episode of The Kelly Clarkson Show.

During the sit-down, the 33-year-old performer confessed that she's 'had a lot of them over the years' and has even engaged in direct communication with spirits.

Hudgens began by telling Clarkson, 39, that she's been in tune with the paranormal since childhood.

'It's not really a new passion...I've accepted the fact that I see things and I hear things,' she said.

The High School Musical actress then noted that she had learned to see her ability to communicate with spirits as a positive trait.

She stated: 'The unknown is scary. But I recently was like, "No, this is a gift and something that I have the ability to do, so I'm going to lean into it."

Hudgens went on to speak about one of her earliest experiences, which occurred during her younger years.

'I remember getting ready for school when I was 8 years old, and there was, like, you know those ducks that you pull [the string]? It's a toy? "There was one of those on the dining room table, and I started walking, and it just started going alongside me.'

She also revealed that she had recently performed what she described as her 'first real paranormal investigation.'



MAYA ERSKINE TO STAR IN 'MR. AND MRS. SMITH' SERIES

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Wine Country' star Maya Erskine has joined actor Donald Glover in the upcoming 'Mr. and Mrs. Smith' series at Amazon.

Erskine takes over the co-starring role from Phoebe Waller-Bridge, who had originally been set to star alongside Glover but departed the project last year due to creative differences, reports 'Variety'.

Glover revealed the new casting in an interview with himself in Interview Magazine.

The series is based on Doug Liman's feature of the same name starring Brad Pitt and Angelina

Jolie.

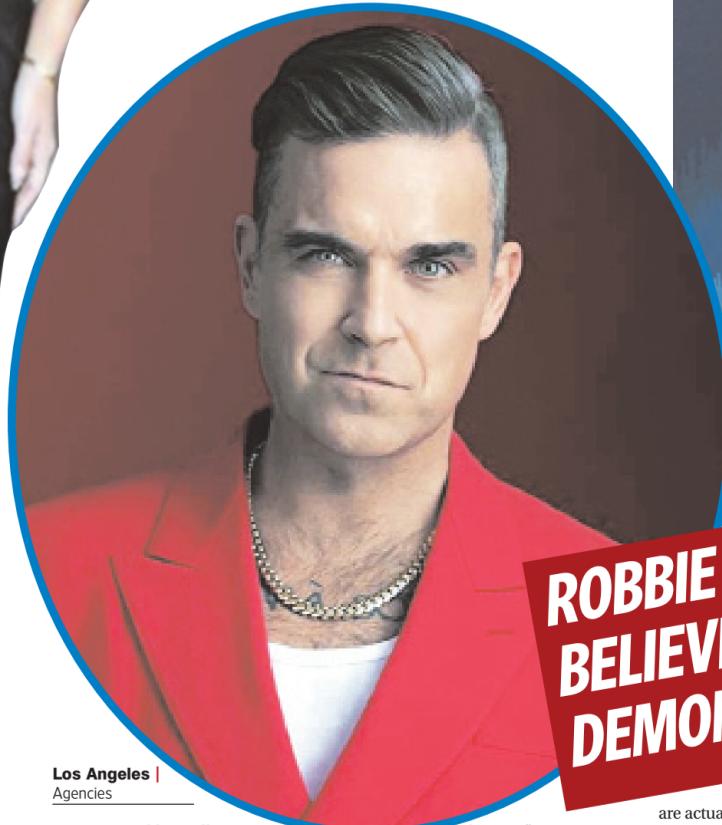
The pair played rival spies that discover they have been contracted to assassinate each other.

According to Glover, he is currently writing the finale for the series.

Erskine is best known for co-creating, starring in, executive producing and co-showrunning the Hulu comedy series 'PEN15'.

The show was nominated for multiple Emmys throughout its two-season run, including one for best comedy series and two for best writing for a comedy series for Erskine as well as Anna Konkle and Stacy Osei-Kuffour.

Her other TV roles include 'Man Seeking Woman' and 'Casual', with Erskine recently working on films such as 'Scoob!' and 'Wine Country'.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Robbie Williams believes that drug abuse allows real demons to enter your life and has stated that his addiction to prescription pills was his most damaging vice.

Speaking on the 'Bought the T-Shirt' podcast, Williams said: "I think drugs are like the equivalent to a Ouija board and you don't know what you're opening up. I think when people talk about demons and sorting out their demons, I think

demons."

The former 'Take That' star says of all his vices, his addiction to painkillers was the worst and caused him the most harm, reports 'Variety'.

He shared: "Let me tell you, the worst time I've ever had with drugs are painkillers.

"Nothing is a day trip or a walk in the park but pain medication is f***** evil. Meanwhile, the people that own the parent for those pain medications

ROBBIE WILLIAMS BELIEVES DRUGS LET REAL DEMONS INTO YOUR LIFE

are actually they

are currently loving in 50,000 sq ft houses." Williams only started taking drugs to try and cope with the enormous fame he experienced as a member of 'Take That'.

The 'Better Man' hitmaker, who was in the boy band with Gary Barlow, Jason Orange, Howard Donald and Mark Owen, was thrust into the limelight when he was just 18 following release of their hit single 'It Only Takes A Minute' in 1992, and as a natural 'introvert', he started drinking alcohol and using substances to try and live up to the reputation other people bestowed upon him.

'THE CONTRACTOR': REFRESHINGLY SENSITIVE AND BALANCED, ACTION-THRILLER



TROY RIBEIRO

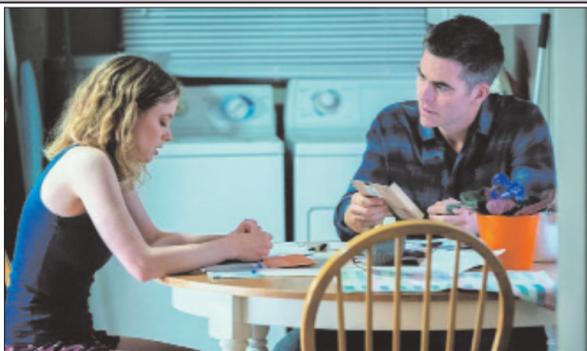
(Running in Theatres)

Duration: 103 minutes

Director: Tarik Saleh

Cast: Chris Pine, Ben Foster, Gillian Jacobs, Eddie Marsan, JD Pardo, Kiefer Sutherland, Florian Munteanu, Nina Hoss, Amira Casar, Fares Fares, Sander Thomas, Nicolas Noblitt

Rating: **1/2



tooted Rusty Jennings (Kiefer Sutherland), who sends him on a covert mission to Berlin, where he is assigned to take out the virologist (Fares Fares) who may be working with Al-Qaeda.

Soon, the plot switches gears when James and Mike realise that their mission has been compromised. We are then plunged into the intrigue and double-crosses that occur in Berlin. After which, James must fend for himself - not sure whom to trust as shadow forces descend upon him while he tries to navigate a safe passage back to America.

Pine delivers a convincing performance as he carries the burden of his character's past on the screen. Despite the overall narrative falling short on many levels, his journey as James Harper remains a largely compelling one. Ben Foster as Mike is another standout in the film. He shares brilliant on-screen chemistry with Pine, and their low-key rapport, selling a brotherly trust and banter, is especially affecting in the early sequences as their char-

acters struggle with transitioning to civilian life. Director Tarik Saleh's handling of the film is refreshingly sensitive. Instead of jumping straight into the action and explosions as some military thrillers tend to do, he spends a considerable amount of time setting the backdrop of the drama before a single bullet is fired. The opening scenes introduce us to James' family; his wife Brianna (Gillian Jacobs), and their son Jack (Sander Thomas), showing a loving family whose happy lifestyle is being threatened by the discharge of James' military service. The time it takes at the beginning, before the action sequences begin, lays the foundation of the story, and the stakes, which offer depth to the characters, in whom you are emotionally invested. Overall, genre fans in particular, those who prefer action sequences consisting of close-quarters combat and tense shootouts, need not worry as 'The Contractor' eventually has plenty of them.

Ricky Gervais defends Chris Rock's Oscars joke by mocking Alopecia

Los Angeles | Agencies

Comedian Ricky Gervais has defended fellow comedian Chris Rock's Oscars joke in a controversial manner.

The comedian, who is no stranger to provoking celebrities at awards shows thanks to his five-year stint hosting the Golden Globes, said Rock's joke at the 94th Academy Awards that resulted in Will Smith slapping him wasn't even that offensive.

Gervais then proceeded to joke about disabilities, reports 'Variety'.

Rock's Oscars joke revolved around the comedian telling Jada Pinkett Smith he was excited to see her star in a 'G.I. Jane' sequel because of her shaved bald head.

Ridley Scott's 'G.I. Jane' memorably featured Demi Moore sporting a shaved head. Pinkett Smith has alopecia, which causes hair loss, and she shaved her head last December.

"You don't hit people over a joke, however bad it is. And it wasn't bad! That was like the tameset joke I would ever have told," Gervais said during a live Twitter Q&A (via Uproxx).

"Someone said it was joking about her disability. Well,



I'm going a bit thin, so I'm disabled. That means I can park right up next to (British supermarket) Tesco now. And I'm fat. That's a disease, isn't it? I'm fat and balding. I should get fucking benefits."

Gervais' mocking of alopecia and questioning if it's a disability or not ignited outrage on social media.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Camila Cabello



IPL 2022

TEWATIA BLASTS TWO SIXES IN TWO BALLS TO WIN IT FOR GUJARAT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Rahul Tewatia struck two sixes on the last two balls of the match off Odean Smith as Gujarat Titans defeated Punjab Kings by six wickets in a thrilling encounter in the IPL 2022 at the Brabourne Stadium here on Friday.

From 21 of nine deliveries to 18 off the last five deliveries to be bowled by Smith, Tewatia and David Miller brought it to 13 off three balls when Miller scrambled for a single, leaving Tewatia the unenviable task of hitting two sixes off the last two deliveries of the match and win it for Gujarat Titans, who successfully chased a target of 190.

The 28-year-old seasoned campaigner who has played for Kings XI Punjab, the previous avatar of Punjab Kings, and Delhi Capitals in the IPL obliged brilliantly, carting Smith just over the deep



Brief scores:

Punjab Kings 189/9 in 20 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 35, Liam Livingstone 64, Rahul Chahar 22 not out; Rashid Khan 3/22, Darshan Nalkande 2/37) lost to Gujarat Titans 190/4 in 20 overs (Shubman Gill 96, Sai Sudarshan 35, Rahul Tewatia 13 not out; Kagiso Rabada 2/35).

midwicket, with the fielder nearly catching him before falling over the rope, and then slog sweeps the final delivery over the long-on boundary to seal a memorable victory for Gujarat Titans. Chasing a target of 190, Gujarat looked cruising to victory with opener

Shubman Gill and skipper Hardik Pandya leading the charge. But both got off at the most inappropriate time -- Gill just four short of his century and Pandya run out off the first ball of the final over. It looked like the match had slipped out of their hands before Tewatia inter-

vened so brilliantly. Gujarat will have to thank opener Shubman Gill (96 - 59b, 11x4, 1x6) for putting them in a position where they could chase Punjab Kings' 189/9 reached thanks to a 27-ball 64 by Liam Livingstone, who struck his second successive half-century.

JR WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

India subdues South Korea 3-0; storm into semis

Potchefstroom | Agencies

India came up with a clinical performance to subdue South Korea 3-0 and storm into the semifinals of the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup 2021 at the North West University grounds here on Friday.

Playing as a cohesive unit and maintaining their structure throughout the quarterfinal clash, the Indian girls dominated two-time champions Korea, who played well in defence but lacked the creative spark upfront to overcome the Indian defence.

Mumtaz Khan (10th minute), Lalrindiki (14th min) and Sangita Kumari scored the goals for India who now will meet the winner of the quarterfinal clash between three-time champions, the Netherlands, and hosts South Africa later in the day.

This is the second time that India have reached the semifinals in the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup. In the 2013 edition, India had reached the last-4 before eventually settling for a bronze medal.



India started well and scored twice in the first quarter via Mumtaz Khan, who deflected in a penalty corner attempt in the 10th minute, and through forward Lalrindiki, who tapped in a rebound off a shot by Lalremsiami from near the goalmouth in the 14th minute.

They continued to dominate the second quarter too but could not add any more goals to the score. Mumtaz, Lalremsiami Beauty Dung Dung and Sangita missed some great opportunities to score. While Mumtaz and

Lalremsiami shot just wide, Sangita and Beauty were thwarted by the defenders as they went into the half-time break leading 2-0.

India, coached by Erik Wonink, continued in the same manner in the third quarter and Lalremsiami, and Beauty Dung Dung were thwarted in their attempts.

However, Sangita made it 3-0 when she shot home a disguised short pass by Beauty to get past the Korean goalkeeper and a defender.

THAILAND OPEN 2022

Amit, Ananta and Sumit advance to finals; three women boxers win bronze medals

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's Amit Panghal, Ananta Chopde and Sumit made their way into the finals of their respective weight categories while three women boxers signed off with bronze medals at the 2022 Thailand Open International Boxing Tournament in Phuket on Friday.

Manisha (57kg), Pooja (69kg) and Bhagyabati Kachari (75kg) are the three women pugilists who signed off with defeats in their respective semifinal bouts.

The 2018 Asian Games champion Panghal started the day's proceedings aggressively when he outclassed Vietnam's Tran van Thao in a one-sided semifinal in the 52kg weight category.

Panghal came up with a brilliant display of counter-attack and swift movement to register a commanding win by unanimous decision, the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) informed in a release on Friday.

Chopde came up with a strong show against another boxer from Vietnam, Bui Trong Thai and notched up an easy 5-0 win in the 54kg category. In



the 75kg semifinals, Sumit faced a tough challenge from Kazakhstan's Ayatulla Takizhanov and managed to secure a thrilling 4-1 victory. Later in the day, Pooja and Manisha fought hard but suffered losses by similar margins -- 1-4 against Thailand's Baison Manikon and the 2020 Olympic bronze medalist Irina Testa, respectively while

Kachari lost to Hergie Bacayadan of the Philippines by 0-5 margin. With Ashish Kumar (81kg), Monika (48kg), Govind Sahani (48kg) and Varinder Singh (60kg) already entering the finals on Wednesday, seven Indians will now fight for gold medals on Saturday to improve upon their performance in the last edition when they won one gold medal.

Korea Open 2022: Srikanth, Sindhu enter semifinals

Former world champion PV Sindhu and silver medallist Kidambi Srikanth advanced to the semifinals after winning their respective men's and women's singles events at the Korea Open Badminton Championships 2022 at the Palma Stadium, here on Friday.

Suncheon | Agencies

Former world champion PV Sindhu and silver medallist Kidambi Srikanth advanced to the semifinals after winning their respective men's and women's singles events at the Korea Open Badminton Championships 2022 at the Palma Stadium, here on Friday.

Sindhu, seventh in the badminton rankings, defeated world No 11 Busanan Ongbamrunphan of Thailand 21-10, 21-16 while Srikanth eked out a 21-12, 18-21, 21-12 win against South Korea's Son Wan Ho in the quarterfinals of the BWF Super 500 event. Sindhu, who had also won last month's



Swiss Open final against Busanan Ongbamrunphan, dominated the match from the start and won the first game convincingly. In the men's singles, Srikanth, world No 12, came into the match having a 4-7 head-to-head record against 78th-ranked Son Wan Ho of South Korea. Former world No 1 Son Wan Ho, who was out of action for the most part of the last two years, lost the match in an hour and two minutes to the sixth seed Indian. Kidambi Srikanth, also a former world No 1, is slated to face the winner of the match between third seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia and eighth seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand in the semi-finals.

WORLD DOUBLES SQUASH: DIPIKA-JOSHNA ENTER SEMIFINALS

Glasgow (Scotland): Top Indian women's squash pair of Dipika Pallikal and Joshna Chinappa finished second in Group B to sail into the semifinals of the World Doubles Squash Championships 2022, here.



Up against the 11th seeds Abbie Palmer and Kaitlyn Watts of New Zealand, the easier of the two challenges on the day, the third-seeded Indian pair won the match 11-5, 11-3 in 16 minutes at the Scotstoun Leisure Centre.

But, Dipika and Joshna had their task cut out against second seeds Sarah-Jane Perry and Alison Waters of England. The Indian duo, who are two-time Commonwealth Games medallists, lost their match 9-11, 8-11 in 18 minutes on late Thursday night. However, Dipika and Joshna qualified for the semis after Rachael Grinham and Donna Lobban of Australia pulled out of the tournament on Thursday. In Group B of the mixed team event, Saurav Ghosal and Dipika Pallikal, second seeds, are placed second with a group match to play. In the men's doubles, Asian Games bronze medallist Ramit Tandon and Vikram Malhotra will play their classification matches after finishing third in Group E.

10-man Frankfurt secure draw with Barcelona in UEFA Europa League

Berlin | Agencies

Ferran Torres' equaliser clinched Barcelona a 1-1 draw with 10-man Eintracht Frankfurt in the first leg of Europa League's quarterfinal. The visitors from Spain started powerfully into the encounter as Frankfurt goalkeeper Kevin Trapp had to tip Torres' hammer over the crossbar in the third minute on Thursday night.

The "Eagles" responded in style and missed the golden chance to break the deadlock three minutes later as Djibril Sow had the entire goal to aim for but pulled wide from inside the box.

Barcelona remained dangerous and came to a promising chance in the 17th minute when Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang fired the ball from a tight angle into the side netting. Xinhua reports. The hosts got a penalty awarded at the other end of the pitch but Sergio



Busquet's challenge inside Barcelona's box was overruled after a review in the 38th minute. Frankfurt caught a fairy-tale start into the second half and opened the scoring through Dortmund loanee Ansgar Knauff, who controlled a Filip Kostic corner at the edge of the box before drilling the ball past Marc Andre ter Stegen into the top right corner. Barcelona pressed forward but Frankfurt's defence stood firm to take a 1-1 draw into the second leg at Camp Nou.

LEIPZIG HOLD ATALANTA

Davide Zappacosta's own goal helped Leipzig to take a 1-1 draw into next week's second leg with Atalanta following Europa League's quarterfinals. Leipzig started brightly on the road as Christopher Nkunku tested Atalanta goalkeeper with a long-range attempt in the opening stages. The opener was scored at the other end of the pitch though as Atalanta broke the deadlock with their first chance after Luis Muriel unleashed a hammer from inside the box into the top corner. Silva stepped up but couldn't beat goalkeeper Juan Musso, who blocked the penalty and Willi Orban's rebound from very close range in quick succession with 56 minutes gone.

AYUSHI PODDER WINS WOMEN'S 50M RIFLE 3 POSITIONS EVENT

New Delhi: West Bengal's Ayushi Podder won the women's 50m rifle 3 positions competition as the national selection trials for rifle events got underway at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range here on Friday. She got the better of Punjab's Sift Kaur Samra 16-10 in the gold medal match. Ayushi, presently ranked fourth in the country in the women's 3P Olympic event, made it to the top eight semi-final stage with a qualification round score of 585 out of 600, giving her fifth place in the 86-strong field. Among those who qualified were India number one Anjum Moudgil of Punjab and veteran Lajja Gauswami of Gujarat. Haryana's Meena Kumari topped the stage with a fluent 589.



INDIA TO PLAY DERBYSHIRE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE IN T20 TOUR MATCHES ON ENGLAND TRIP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India men's cricket team is scheduled to play two T20 matches on their trip to England in July this year. The two T20 matches will be played against Derbyshire and Northamptonshire on July 1 and 3 respectively.

The first T20 tour match between India and Derbyshire at The Incora County Ground for July 1 is scheduled for a 7pm local time start (11:30pm IST).

"The number-one ranked T20 side in the world will continue their ICC Twenty20 World Cup preparations against a Derbyshire side, which includes the likes of Pakistan international, Shan Masood, and former Sri



Lanka fast bowler, Suranga Lakmal," said a statement by Derbyshire on Friday.

For the second T20 tour match against Northamptonshire, it will be hosted at the County Cricket Ground on July 3. Northamptonshire will welcome India to Wantage Road this summer

for a one-off T20 tour match. The world number 1 ranked T20 side take on the Steelbacks as they prepare for the series against England in July. Tickets for the fixture on Sunday the 3rd of July will be available in the coming weeks," said the county side on their official website.

IPL 2022: BISHNOI, GOWTHAM CHANGED THE GAME FOR LUCKNOW, SAYS HOLDER

Mumbai: Lucknow Super Giants' all-rounder Jason Holder praised the efforts of leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi and off-spinner K Gowtham, saying the duo's overs turned the match in their favour.

Bishnoi and Gowtham tightened the screws on Delhi Capitals in the middle overs once Prithvi Shaw got out, fetching figures of 2/22 and 1/23 in their respective four overs as Delhi managed to post only 149/3 in their 20 overs. Though Delhi took the match to the final over of the run-chase, Lucknow reached the target with two balls to spare. "We've got some clever spinners. Bishnoi was excellent for us. Gowtham coming in for his first game was excellent as well. Their overs really changed the game for us. Andrew Tye came in at the back of the powerplay and into the middle overs and did an outstanding job for us as well. It was just a real team effort, the way we fought back. Credit to each and every individual," said Holder in the post-match virtual press conference.



Australian GP: Leclerc leads Verstappen in second practice session

Melbourne | Agencies

Scuderia Ferrari driver Charles Leclerc topped the second practice with a time of 1m 18.978s - 0.25s ahead of Red Bull rival Max Verstappen at the Albert Park circuit here on Friday.

Verstappen jumped to second with his opening soft-tired runs compromised by traffic, then a lock-up in Sector 3 before the Dutchman finally managed a more representative lap on worn tyres to finish 0.245s off Leclerc -- and drop Ferrari's Carlos Sainz to third. Sainz started the Australian Grand Prix weekend on the front foot as the Spaniard topped the first free practice session.

Lewis Hamilton was left grasping for answers as



Mercedes' struggles continued at free practice at the Australian Grand Prix on Friday. After posting the seventh fastest lap in the first free practice, Hamilton could only manage the 13th quickest in the second session

despite some tweaks to his car. His teammate George Russell was sitting at P11. Alpine's Fernando Alonso put in a blistering lap to take P4 at Sergio Perez's expense, while Alonso's teammate Esteban Ocon was sixth.



Alka Yagnik, Javed Ali, Himesh Reshamiyaa back as judges

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Playback singer Alka Yagnik, Javed Ali and Himesh Reshammiya will be reprising their roles as judges for the second season of reality show 'Superstar Singer'.

Yagnik said that she cannot wait to see the incredible talent that the second season of 'Superstar Singer' will bring to the fore.

"Season 1 was a joyous roller coaster ride that brought in a sense of pride in me as I was amazed to see such little dynamites acing the singing game with such ease and extraordinary voices. It's amazing to see the kind of talent these youngsters have in them, and I am honoured to be a part of their journey where together we can guide and groom them to become the country's next singing stars.

"It's incredible how the creative teams go through all highs and lows to bring forth the best of musical talents from all corners of the country. It's an exciting journey. I'm confident that season 2 will exceed my expectations. Can't wait for this journey to begin."

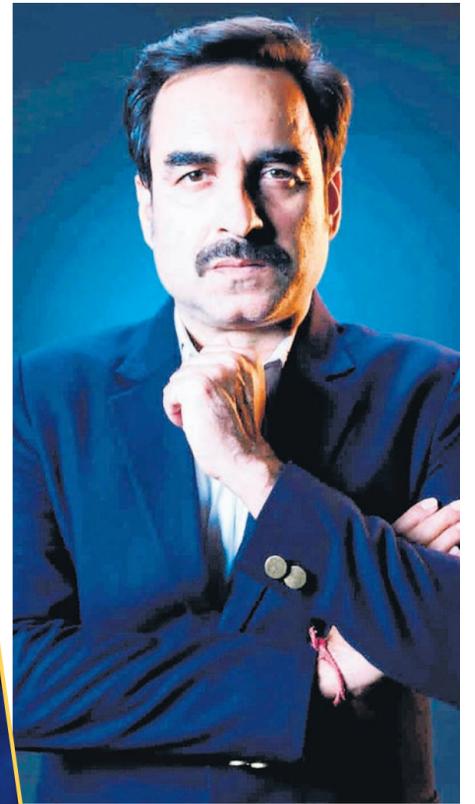
Reshammiya has been a force to reckon

with within the music industry with many hits under his belt as a music director, singer, and composer.

As someone who has seen a fair share of talents through his time in the industry, he spoke about his return as the judge, "This is surely going to be the greatest spectacle of the year, and the musical sparks will linger for a long time. Kids these days have God's gift in their voices, and with the right mentoring at an early stage in their journey, they will go a long way in successfully etching out a career in the Indian music industry."

Known for winning the hearts of the audience with his melodious voice across languages, playback singer and music aficiona-

do Ali echoed his thoughts of reprising his role as the judge.



PANKAJ TRIPATHI DELIVERS MOTIVATIONAL SPEECH TO IIT KHARAGPUR STUDENTS

Mumbai | Agencies

Pankaj Tripathi, who has been shooting for the next instalment of cult buddy comedy franchise 'Fukrey' in Delhi, took time off the sets and made a special visit to one of India's reputed educational institutes - IIT Kharagpur - to deliver a special speech for the students.

Pankaj spoke about the importance of education in today's times. He stressed on the fact that there should be clarity of thought when it comes to life and career goals for all students alike.

Pankaj said, "I've always advocated young minds and their ways of understanding today's education system and dealing with it. It was my privilege to be the part of a session in conversation with the students of IIT Kharagpur, which is one of the most reputed and oldest educational institutions in the country. I took out sometime from my ongoing shooting schedule to speak to these students who are the future of our country."

He added, "During the conversation I tried to share my experience, knowledge that I gained over the years benefiting them in some way or the other. It was a two communication session an exchange of knowledge and wisdom between the newer and experienced generation. I thoroughly enjoyed the entire conversation with them and look forward to being part for such healthy conversation."

Yami Gautam: I get my adrenaline rush from doing something different

Mumbai | Agencies

Actress Yami Gautam, who has been creating waves with her performances in films such as 'Dasvi' and 'A Thursday', says she has attempted something very different and as an actor she gets her adrenaline rush from doing that.

Talking about the same Yami shares, "I had a lot of fun playing a Haryana cop in the film ('Dasvi') and I'm ecstatic about the initial response to my performance. My family, my team, and some friends, who are always honest about their opinions with me watched it a few days ago and I'm glad they strongly connected to my character throughout the film."

"Now, I'm excited to hear what the audiences have to say about it. I've attempted something very different and as an actor, I get my adrenaline rush from doing that."

Yami has an exciting slate ahead with 'OMG 2', 'Dhoom Dham', and few more unannounced projects.



ALIA BHATT'S BESTIES ANUSHKA AND AKANSHA TO THROW A BACHELORETTE FOR HER

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt are one of Bollywood's power couples and just can't wait to get married.

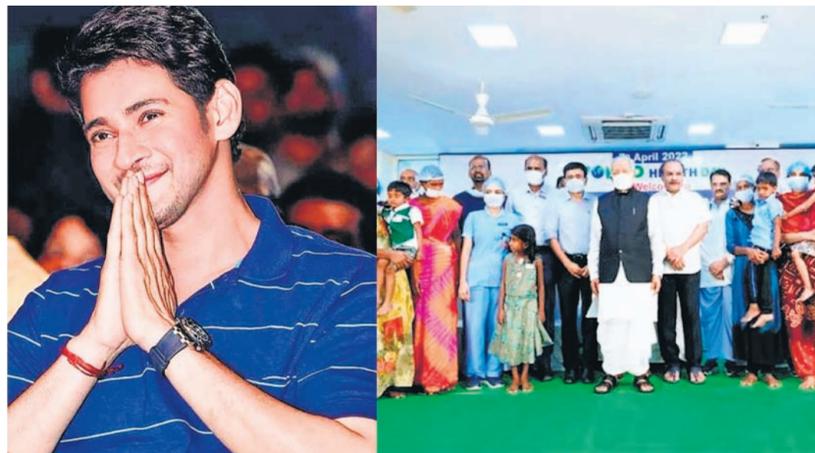
As per reports, the couple will tie the knot on April 15th in Mumbai at Kapoor's ancestral home - RK House. The wedding festivities will begin on April 13th at Ranbir and Alia's home at Bandra.

Reportedly, Ranbir will be hosting a grand bachelor party ahead of his wedding which will be attended by celebs like Ayan Mukerji, Aditya Roy Kapoor, Arjun

Kapoor, the groom-to-be's childhood friends and his close friends from the industry. On the other hand, it is also reported that Alia's BFFs Anushka Ranjan and Akansha Ranjan are also planning for a bachelorette party for the bride-to-be.

For the uninitiated, it is also reported that Ranbir and Alia will also be offering langar at a Gurudwara in Mumbai as a wedding ritual.

On the work front, the two will be seen sharing screen space in Ayan Mukerji's directorial Brahmastra.



MAHESH BABU DOES IT AGAIN, COMES TO AID OF 30 SUFFERING CHILDREN

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

On the occasion of World Health Day, Telugu superstar Mahesh Babu organised financial help to save the lives of more than 30 children. Mahesh Babu, besides delivering super hit movies, is also known for his generosity and philanthropy. Everyone is aware of the star's help, as he sponsors heart surgeries for suffering children.

Recently, the 'Murari' actor sponsored 30 children, who underwent heart surgeries and interventions, with the help of doctors at Andhra Hospitals, Vijayawada, and Mahesh Babu Foundation.

Mahesh Babu's wife Namrata Shirodkar Ghattamaneni took to her Instagram and thanked Biswa Bhusan Harichandan, the governor of Andhra Pradesh, for facilitating the event and lending his support as well.

Namrata's Instagram post reads, "On the occasion of World Health Day today, 30 children underwent heart surgeries and interventions. The event was felicitated by hon'ble @governorap Sri Biswa Bhusan Harichandan garu." "Thank you team @andrahospitals for your commitment to medical excellence and quality healthcare", Namrata mentioned.

Namrata also shared a few pics, of the children who underwent the surgeries with the help of Mahesh's financial support. On the work front, Mahesh will be next seen in Parasuram Petta's 'Sarkaru Vaari Paata'.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Bhumi Pendnekar

Ram Charan and Jr NTR's response to Rakhi Sawant while Karan ignores her

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Actress Rakhi Sawant, who was present at the star-studded success party of 'RRR' in Mumbai, had taken the opportunity to interact with Ram Charan and Jr NTR.

Though it was a short conversation, the video of Ram Charan and NTR interacting with Rakhi has now become viral on social media.

The super excited Rakhi, was spotted interacting with Ram Charan, as she congratulated him on the huge success of 'RRR'. "Will you please do 'Naatu Naatu' step with me?", Rakhi had requested Ram Charan. As Ram Charan was among a huge crowd, he politely said that he could not dance. Jr NTR, who was surrounded by hundreds of people, had also posed for a selfie video with Rakhi Sawant, as she is seen congratulating him for 'RRR'. This humble gesture by the biggest south Indian stars has caught much attention, as social media comments pour in. Bollywood filmmaker Karan Johar, on the other hand, had ignored Rakhi while she was literally seen trying to talk to him. Social media users were left wondering why he acted so coldly towards the actress.

