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Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

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VOL. 7, ISSUE 156, BHOPAL | SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2022 I ₹5 I PAGE 08

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KARAULI VIOLENCE: THE WOMAN WHO SAVED 15 MEN FROM ANGRY MOB

This is the story of Madhulika Singh, a single mother of two children who saved at least 15 men -- most from another community, from an enraged mob that had come to attack them during the violence earlier this month in Rajasthan's Karauli.

JAIPUR | Agencies

This is the story of Madhulika Singh, a single mother of two children who saved at least 15 men -- most from another community, from an enraged mob that had come to attack them during the violence earlier this month in Rajasthan's Karauli.

Madhulika, 48, stood alone in front of the mob that rushed towards her shop during the violence on April 2.

A widow, she has been running a garments business for the last five years since her husband died. When the procession was being taken out to mark the Hindu New Year, it entered an area where many people of a particular community reside. Suddenly, she heard people shouting and screaming.

According to police, during the procession, "sensitive" slogans were played on a loudspeaker and soon, there was violence and stone-pelting.

Madhulika said: "People were running... downed the shutters... they said riots have broken out. I had locked the gate of the shopping complex and asked them (who came to take shelter there) not to worry. I saved them as humanity stands sacrosanct." Around 15 men told her they were scared, and were unable to decide whether to leave or stay put. Madhulika Singh said the mob tried to break in but she stopped them.

Mohammad Talib and Danish were among those who were present in that shopping complex. "Madhulika didi saved us. She told us not to worry," said Talib.Mithilesh Soni, who runs a salon in the same shopping complex, said she and three other women attempted to douse the flames with buckets of water.

INDIA WILL BECOME 'AKHAND BHARAT' IN 10-15 YEARS: RSS CHIEF MOHAN BHAGWAT

> "India will talk about non-violence but will also carry a stick in our hand as the world only understands power... We will have no ill will, no enmity. But the world only understands power."

HARIDWAR | Agencies

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat has claimed that India will become 'Akhand Bharat' in 10-15 years.

As per the predictions of saints and astrologers, India will become 'Akhand Bharat' in 20-25 years but if we all collectively work towards it, the target will be achieved in 10-15 years, he claimed.

He was in Haridwar for inaugurating the statue of 1008 Swami Divyanand Giri at Shri Krishna Niwas and Poornanand Giri Ashram in Kankhal.

India is on the path of progress and those who will come in between will be wiped out, Bhagwat said on Wednesday.

Lord Krishna lifted the Goverdhan mountain on his little finger, but fellow cowherds thought it was due to the support of their sticks. Similarly, we all will make efforts but if the saints will join in, then Swami Vivekanand, Maharishi Arvind's dream of Akhand Bharat will be realised soon. Dharma and Bharat are synonymous.

"Our nationality is flowing like the flow of the Ganga. If dharma will be promoted, the country will rise," he added. "For 1,000 years, efforts were made to end sanatan dharma, they failed, but we and the dharma are still intact," he added.

After coming to India, the evil tendencies of every type of person end, he added."Many people protest against sanatan dharma. If they would not have opposed, Hindus would not have awoken," the RSS chief claimed.

Mahamandaleshwar Swami Girdhar, Swami Vivekanand Bharti, Swami Vivekanand, Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad secretary Ravindrapuri and Mahamandaleshwar Harichetanand among others were present on the occasion.

Akhand Bharat when each person from all castes lives with unity: Gehlot

Jaipur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday accused the RSS of cashing in on the names of veteran leaders like Sardar Patel, BR Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi. He said that the RSS never believed in them, however they are taking their names just for the sake of winning elections."Neither the Jan Sangh, now BJP, nor the RSS ever believed in them; however, now they are taking their names for electoral benefit," he added."They talk of Akhand Bharat but Sardar Patel had banned them. The RSS in fact should visit each house to spread the message of love, harmony and non-violence to people from all castes and religions. Akhand Bharat will be made when each person from all castes starts living with brotherhood and love," he said.

Alliance Air becomes Centre's independent business unit

New Delhi: Regional airline Alliance Air has become an independent business unit under the Central government's control.

Alliance Air was an esrtwhile part of Air India prior to the latter's divestment. At present, it is operated as a division under the Air India Asset Holdings Pvt Ltd (AIAHL).

It was founded in 1996 as a wholly-owned subsidiary of then Indian Airlines, which later merged with Air India.

The airline mainly operates on domestic regional routes as part of the government's Regional Connectivity Scheme.Currently, it has 19 aircraft -- 18 ATR-72s and 1 Dornier-228 -- which it operates on over 100 regional routes connecting Tier-II and Tier-III cities.In terms of financials, the airline had earned an operating profit of Rs 65 crore in 2019-20 on a revenue of Rs 1,182 crore.

On Thursday, Air India had said that Alliance Air is no longer its subsidiary. In a tweet, the airline had said on Thursday: "Passengers holding tickets of Air India with a four-digit flight number starting wiith '9' or 3-digit flight number starting with '9I' may please be informed that these bookings belong to Alliance Air. Bookings or queries related to Alliance Air will not be handled by Air India from April 15, 2022."

Notably, the Centre now has Alliance Air as the only airline under its control.

"Alliance Air, from 15th April 2022, will no longer be part of Air India after its disinvestment, and will be run as an independent business unit under government of India," the airline said in a statement.The airline will now sell its tickets under the Alliance Air banner with flight code '9I-XXX'. The airline is headed by Chief Executive Officer Vineet Sood.Last year, Tata Group bought the debt-ridden Air India from the Central government by placing a bid of over Rs 18,000 crore at an auction. On January 27, 2022, it took over the full control of Air India.

RUSSIA STARTS DELIVERY OF SECOND S-400 MISSILE SYSTEM TO INDIA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid the Ukraine war and sanctions, Russia has begun delivering the second squadron of S-400 advanced surface-to-air missile defence system to India, ahead of schedule, officials said.

By end of this month, the delivery of the critical system will be completed and thereafter it will be deployed.

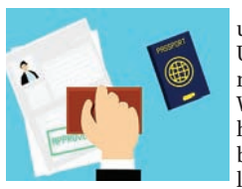
The first squadron of the S-400 system arrived in India in December 2021 and has been deployed on the Punjab border to thwart any air strikes from both Pakistan and China.

India has procured five S-400 systems from Russia through a $5-billion deal signed in October 2018.

All the five units of the S-400 system, which can take down a hostile aircraft or missile at a range between 40km and 400km, are expected to be operational by 2022.The S-400 system is capable of tracking, engaging and addressing the threat of Chinese or Pakistani fighters the moment they take off from air bases. The system can track multiple targets at multiple ranges and neutralise them simultaneously.India decided to upgrade its military infrastructure when the country was locked in a major face-off with China along the Line of Actual Control in July 2020. The threat of two-front war - from China and Pakistan - made India go for large scale arms deals and Russia is still one of India's largest arms suppliers.There were apprehension on delay in delivery of critical weapon system after Russia's war with Ukraine. However, with delivery of the second squadron of S-400 system, India is hopeful of getting other military capabilities.Earlier this month, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited India and had met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar and apprised them about the ongoing crisis in Ukraine while discussing bilateral ties.Lavrov and Jaishankar held discussions over Russia's crude oil offer, rupee-ruble payment, ongoing arms deals, Ukraine crisis, and the situation in Afghanistan and Iran.

INDIANS CONTINUE THEIR HOLD ON H-1B VISAS

WASHINGTON | Agencies



Indians cornered nearly three-fourths of H-1B visas issued by the US to speciality foreign workers in 2021, continuing their stranglehold on this highly sought after professional ticket to work, live and, finally, settle down in America.

The US approved 407,071 H-1B petitions in 2021 and 301,616 of them 74.1 per cent were for Indian workers, according to the latest report on this topic released recently by the Department of Homeland Security, the government agency that oversees immigration.

Indians accounted for 74.9 per cent of the approved petitions in 2020.The US allows American employers to hire speciality foreign workers on H-1B for positions they are unable to fill with local Americans. Top American companies such as Microsoft, Amazon, Google, and Facebook are among leading users of this visa programme as are US subsidiaries of Indian IT companies such as Infosys, TCS and Wipro.These foreign workers are hired either from their countries of birth or residence or from US colleges and universities Sundar Pichai, the Google CEO, was hired on H-1B when he was studying in the US. They can live and work here for three years and, if approved, another three years. A large number of them go on to Green Cards permanent residency sponsored by their employers.Indians have had a tight grip on the H-B visa programme for years, at that three-fourths mark. People from China have been a distant second with 12.1 per cent. The next three were Canada with 0.9 per cent, South Korea also with 0.9 per cent and Philippines with 0.7 per cent. The line-up was the same in 2020, with almost the same numbers.

7 children die of 'mysterious illness' in Rajasthan district

Jaipur: Seven children aged between 2 and 14 years have died in Rajasthan's Sirohi district of some 'mysterious illness' with symptoms varying from fever to seizures.

Al residents from Fulabai Kheda and Fulaber villages in Sirohi, these children breathed their last between April 9 and 13.

Joint Director (Health), Jageshwar Prasad, said the cause of the deaths is yet to be ascertained.

"While they seem to be cases of some acute viral disease, nothing can be said with certainty till all their reports are received," he added.Prasad also said that the deaths were reported within a day of showing symptoms. A mother who lost her five-year-old child said that her son woke up at 5 am and asked for water before having seizures. The boy vomited and then died at around 8 am. "Three of the seven deceased children had consumed local flavoured ice," Prasad said, though he ruled out a case of acute food poisoning.

Teams of doctors from Jaipur and Jodhpur are set to visit the area. "The situation is being monitored. Around 300 houses have already been surveyed and 58 samples have been sent to a lab in Jaipur for testing," Prasad said. Meanwhile, three more children have been admitted to a hospital as a precautionary measure.

Manjhi calls Lord Ram 'imaginary' character, triggers row

PATNA | Agencies

The President of Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) and former Chief Minister of Bihar, Jitan Ram Manjhi, has again made a controversial statement on Lord Ram.

Speaking at an event organised by HAM MLA Praful Kumar Manjhi at Sikandra in Jamui district to mark Ambedkar Jayanti on Thursday, Manjhi said: "I don't believe Ram was a God. Ram was a character created by Tulsidas and Valmiki to spread their message."

On September 22 last year, Manjhi had sparked a row after calling Lord Ram a historic figure who is just a character in a mythological story.

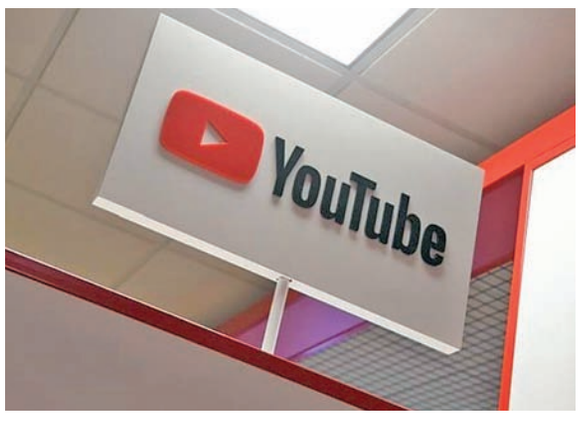
At the event in Sikandra, Manjhi also said: "People who perform Puja at other's houses do not become big people. People belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should stop puja in their houses. Brahmins used to eat meat, consume liquor and speak lies. You cannot achieve religious merit ny inviting Brahmins at your houses for puja. In fact, you gain sin that way."

Reacting to Manjhi's remarks, RJD state unit chief Jagadanand Singh said: "I can't understand why Manjhi repeatedly makes statements on Lord Ram. We worship Lord Ram. He is the creator of the universe. Why do some people use his name to create controversy and flare up communal tension in the society? "I firmly believe that someone is asking him (Manjhi) to say such things to target the saffron brigade,"

YouTube Shorts allows creators to use clips from YouTube videos

- *The new feature is an extension of existing "remix" tool that allowed creators to sample audio from other videos into their own YouTube Shorts posts.*
- *The YouTube Shorts feature is similar to popular TikTok tool Stitch'.*
- *The company said that music videos with copyrighted content from YouTube's music partners are not eligible to be remixed.*

SAN FRANCISCO | Agencies



TikTok competitor YouTube Shorts has allowed creators to use video clips from billions of videos from YouTube platform, albeit with some rules.

"Create your own short videos using our Shorts creation tools to mix in music from our Audio Library or use original audio from videos across YouTube," the company said in an update.

"Shorts you make with sampled audio are attributed back to the source creator's original video," it added.

"If you upload a short video you've created elsewhere, make sure that any copyright-protected material you've used is approved for your use on YouTube.

Using copyright-protected material could lead to you getting a Content ID claim," the company suggested.

The new update will allow creators to clip 1- to 5-second segments from long-form videos and Shorts to use in new short-form content. "Shorts are automatically opted in to sampling on YouTube, and you can't opt them out. For the existing long-form videos on your channel, you can limit audio sampling in YouTube Studio," the company added.

The streaming platform also said that YouTube Shorts is now accessible via web and tablet.

BETTER HEALTH FACILITIES NOT LIMITED TO TREATMENT OF DISEASES, THEY ALSO ENCOURAGE SOCIAL JUSTICE: PM

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that better health facilities are not limited only to the treatment of diseases, they also encourage social justice.

Modi was speaking after virtually dedicating the K. K. Patel Super Specialty Hospital in Bhuj, Gujarat, to the nation.

"When cheap and best treatment is available to the poor, his faith in the system is strengthened. If they get freedom from the worry of the cost of treatment, they work hard to get out of poverty with more determination," he said.

The Prime Minister explained that in the past years, all the schemes of the health sector have been implemented with this thought behind them.

The hospital has been built by Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Samaj, Bhuj. Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel was among those present on the occasion.

The Prime Minister appreciated that leaving the devastation caused by the earthquake behind, the people of Bhuj and Kutch are now writing a new destiny for this region with their hard work.

"Today many modern medical services exist in this area. In this series, Bhuj is getting a modern, super specialty hospital today," he said.

He informed that this hospital is the first charitable super specialty hospital of the region which will act as a guarantee of quality medical treatment for people of Kutch along with lakhs of soldiers, para military personnel and traders.

The Ayushman Bharat scheme has been instrumental in saving crores of rupees every year in the treatment of poor and middle class families along with Janaushadhi Yojana. Health and Wellness centres and campaigns such as the Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Scheme are helping to make treatment accessible to all.

Modi mentioned that the Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission is expanding the facilities for the patients. Modern and critical healthcare infrastructure has been developed through the Ayushman Health Infrastructure Mission in the district and is being taken up to the block level.

The Prime Minister talked about the recent expansion of medical infrastructure and education in Gujarat.

He said today there are nine AIIMS, more than three dozen medical colleges, up from nine colleges earlier.

"Medical seats have increased from 1100 to 6000. Rajkot AIIMS has gone functional, and Civil Hospital Ahmedabad is getting a 1500-bed infrastructure for mother and child care," he informed. "Facilities for cardiology and dialysis have grown manifold," he said.

He asked the residents of Kutch to celebrate Yoga Day on a grand scale. He asked the Patel community to promote the Kutch festival abroad and increase the number of foreign tourists for it.

44 children in Noida tested positive for Covid in last 7 days: CMO

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As many as 44 children have tested positive for Covid-19 in Noida in the last seven days, Chief Medical Officer Dr Sunil Kumar Sharma said on Friday.

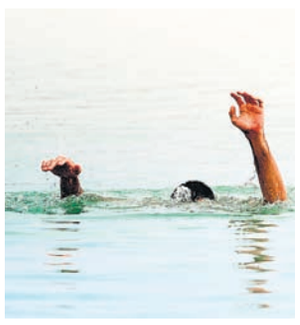
Taking to reporter, Dr Sharma said that out of total, 16 are below 18 years of age.

After a decline, the Covid infection rate is again showing an upward trend in Noida and the number of active cases has crossed the 150 mark.

All schools in Noida and adjoining areas have been directed to inform the Health Department immediately about any child with cough, cold, fever, diarrhoea, or showing any other symptoms of Covid-19 for timely treatment. After the children being tested positive for Covid 19, some schools have started online classes.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government has also directed city schools that the wing concerned or even the whole school must be closed down for time being if any case is reported. Meanwhile, India on Friday reported marginal decline in fresh Covid cases, at 949 as against 1,007 infection reported on previous day. In the last 24 hours, six Covid related deaths occurred across the nation, taking the death toll to 5,21,743, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday morning.

THREE TEENAGERS DROWN DURING RITUAL BATH IN GANGA IN PATNA



Patna: Taking a selfie during a ritual bath in the Ganga river turned fatal as three teenagers died in two different incidents in Patna while undertaking the activity, officials said on Friday.

The teenagers went to Ganga to take holy dip on the occasion of Satuan festival on Thursday.

The first incident was reported at Goraiya Sthan at Maner town in Patna district. A SDRF official said that 6 teenagers came to the river and four of them, identified as Ankul, Aditya, Guddu and Manna, went inside the water.

"While taking selfies, they probably did not realize the strong flow of water. When they started drowning in the river, a crossing boat managed to rescue two, Guddu and Manna while Ankul and Aditya were swept away in the strong flow of water," the official said.

A similar incident occurred at the bank of Ganga river near Dostnagar locality in Patna where Tinku Kumar, a resident of Lodipur, went there to take a holi bath on the occasion of Satual. He was also taking selfies in the deep water without realising the strong flow of water and was also swept away. The SDRF team worked till late in the evening but they failed to fish out the dead bodies.

Fake call centre busted; 23 held for duping job aspirants

Hyderabad | Agencies

A fake call centre has been busted while 22 people including the owner have been arrested here for allegedly duping people on the pretext of providing them jobs in MNCs, the police said on Friday.

The owner who was running the fake call centre has been identified as Sonu. The arrested individuals include 13 men and 9 women.

Sonu is a resident of Hans Enclave of Gurugram. His brother Sanjay and co-partners Anil, Deepak, Raj and Ajit are yet to be arrested.

The brothers started the call centre in Udyog Vihar Phase-5 of Gurugram in September which was registered in the name of a 'Premium Erutidion'. They had also purchased a domain '@placementmnc.com' for sending e-mails to job aspirants, the police said.

The police raided the spot on Thursday afternoon after a tip-off and recovered Rs 38,000 cash, 27 mobile phones, 1 laptop and fake appointment letters from there.

Subhash Boken, spokesperson of the Gurugram police said Sonu and Sanjay had established this fake call centre in September 2021, and earned Rs 1.25 crore while duping people on the pretext of providing them jobs.

"The accused used to collect data of job aspirants from the prominent job websites and used to develop communication with them through different e-mail IDs and charged Rs 6,500, Rs 28,000, and Rs 89,000 on a different pretext. They had even charged Rs 10 lakh as commission per person," Boken said. "They also targeted people already by luring them lucrative packages and used to charge money from them through fake website payment gateway or different payment links in their bank accounts. The accused used to provide fake appointment letters," he added. Police said the accused had also provided a fake Press identity card to mislead police.

SARPANCH SHOT DEAD IN J&K'S BARAMULLA

Srinagar: A village Sarpanch, associated with the BJP, was killed by militants in J&K's Baramulla district on Friday, police said. "Mansoor Ahmad Bangroo was shot and killed by militants in an apple orchard in Goushbugh village of Pattan tehsil on Friday evening. "He was associated with the BJP. The area has been cordoned off for searches," a source said.Kashmir politicians have condemned the killing of a Sarpanch by terrorists at Pattan in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district on Friday. Terrorists fired upon and critically injured Manzoor Ahmad, an independent Sarpanch, at Goshbugh area of Pattan in Baramulla. He was moved to hospital where he was declared brought dead. Condemning the killing of Sarpanch, Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC) said the vicious cycle of violence seems to be unending. "JKNC condemns the gruesome killing of BJP Sarpanch Manzoor Ahmad in North Kashmir's Goshbugh, Pattan in the strongest possible terms. The vicious cycle of violence seems to be unending. May Allah grant him a place in Jannat-ul-Firdous. Condolences to his family and loved ones," JKNC said. "Another targeted killing, another family in mourning this evening. This unending cycle of violence is heartbreaking. My condolences to the family of Manzoor Bangroo. May he find place in Jannat," former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah tweeted. Meanwhile, the BJP while condemning the killing of the Sarpanch said he was not associated with the BJP.

Bihu, Poila Boishakh celebrated in northeastern states

Guwahati/Agartala | Agencies

The northeastern states on Friday celebrated Rongali Bihu and Poila Boishakh with traditional fervour and enthusiasm. These festivities were affected in Assam and other northeastern states since 2019 due to agitations against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and Covid-19 situation.

Lakhs of cheerful men, women and children in traditional and new attires took part in Bihu and Poila Boishakh celebrations, mostly in five of the eight northeastern states -- Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya.

A festive atmosphere prevailed in the residential areas, villages and in mela (fair) grounds in the region.

People in Assam and other northeastern states were gripped in the spirit of Rongali or Bohag Bihu, the beginning of the Assamese New Year, giving a glimpse of the pre-pandemic festive fervour.

Bihu is the main festival in Assam. 'Rongali' or 'Bohag Bihu' observed in mid-April, 'Kongali' or 'Kati Bihu' observed in mid-October and 'Bhogali' or 'Magh Bihu' in mid-January. 'Rongali Bihu' is the most important and colourful of the three.

All the three Bihu festivals could not be properly celebrated last year (2021), and also in 2020 due to the Covid situation, and the demonstrations against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Hindu Sena puts up saffron flags outside JNU, cops remove it

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The members of Hindu Sena -- a right wing organisation -- on Friday morning put up saffron flags outside the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus in the national capital forcing the police to initiate legal action and remove the said flags from there.

"Today morning it has come to notice that few flags and banners have been put on the road and adjoining areas near JNU. In view of recent incidents, these were promptly removed and suitable legal action is being taken," Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Manoj C said.

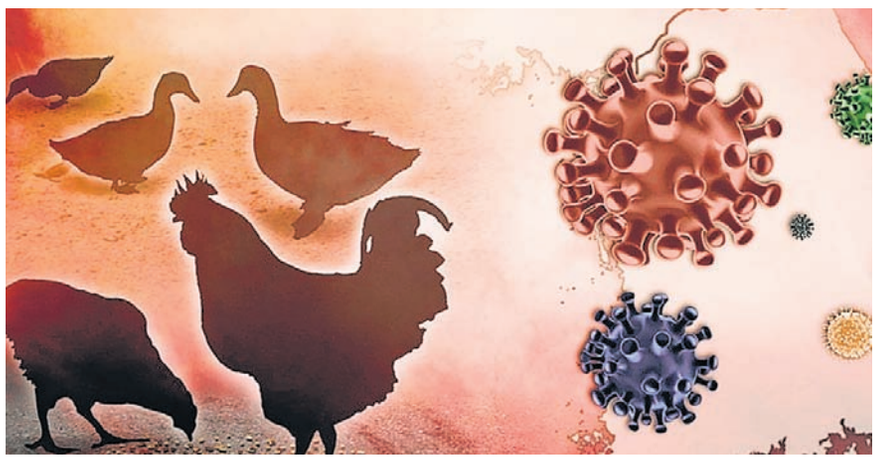
Hindu Sena national vice-president, Surjit Yadav said the saffron has been insulted all along by the anti-saffron people at Jawaharlal Nehru University. "The Hindu Sena warns them. We respect you, respect each and every religion and every thought process. But the way the saffron is being insulted at JNU, the Hindu Sena will not tolerate it and can take stringent steps against it," Yadav said.

Apart from the saffron flags, tied all across the main road outside JNU, some banners were also installed that read - 'Bhagwa JNU'.

Expressing similar sentiments, Hindu Sena president Vishnu Gupta, confirmed to reporter about putting up the saffron flags and banners by his organisation's vice president."It is very wrong that saffron is being constantly insulted at JNU. Saffron is in India's culture. None should oppose it," Gupta said.

BIRD FLU SCARE IN BIHAR'S SUPAUL AFTER SAMPLES TEST POSITIVE

Patna | Agencies



Avian influenza (H5N1) scare has gripped Bihar's Supaul district with the administration on Thursday directing culling of chickens in poultry farms located in affected areas after samples of birds found dead there came out positive.

District officials appealed to the people to avoid consumption of chicken in the region.

Divisional Forest Officer, Supaul, Sunil Kumar Sharan said that more than four dozen birds, including crows, ducks, chickens, and other birds were found dead in mysterious circumstances in Chapkahi village under Sadar police station on March 31.

The villagers of Chapkahi spotted the birds are found restless and dying in large numbers. They approached local veterinary doctors at that time and gave medicines and injections to some of the birds but they did not recover from the illness.

During preliminary investigation, the animal husbandry officers hinted towards the symptoms of neurotic disease in the birds. They, however, collected the samples and sent them to the lab in Bhopal to find out the exact reason of deaths.

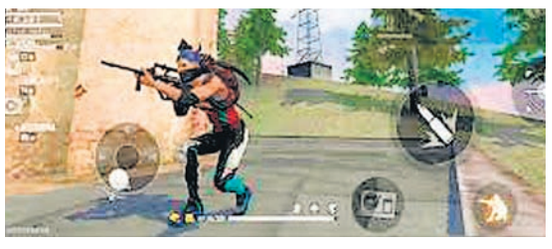
"The officials of the Animal Husbandry department had collected the samples of birds and sent them to the lab in Bhopal for testing. Its report has come positive. Accordingly, an action plan for prevention, control and containment of avian influenza is activated in the region to prevent its further spread," Sharan said.

"On the direction of District Magistrate Kaushal Kumar, 4 rapid response teams comprising specialist animal husbandry officers and veterinary doctors have been constituted for the culling of chickens in the poultry farms located in the one km radius of Chapkahi village followed by their burial in the soil. Area in a one km radius from Chapkahi village is declared as an infected area. Each team is working under the supervision of an SDO rank officer. Besides, the teams are also taking samples of chickens in the poultry farms located in the radius of 9 km from the Chapkahi village. The 9 km areas from the epicenter are declared as surveillance area," Sharan said.

As per the directive of district administration, the places have been identified for the burial of chickens and ducks. The places are away from low lying areas and away from the water bodies to avoid groundwater contamination.

The rapid response team will do the culling followed by putting them into the jute bags and sprinkle calcium carbonate powder before the burial. The district administration has provided PPE kits to every labourer who will do the culling. They will also be assigned to count the numbers and report to the team and the district civil surgeon will report to the District Magistrate office.

MINOR BOY KILLED BY TWO FRIENDS FOR MOBILE GAME



Bhubaneswar: A minor tribal boy of Odisha's Koraput district was allegedly killed by his two friends as he had not provided his mobile phone to play a game, the police said on Friday. The deceased has been identified as Lulu Bhoi (12), son of Pitabasa Bhoi of Mastiput village of Koraput district. He was studying in class 7.

According to police, Lulu and his two friends were playing a game on a mobile phone in the locality. Later, his two friends told him to give them the device so that they could play the game.

Following which, a heated exchange of words erupted between the three boys over the matter and it turned violent. The two accused stoned the boy to death and threw him in the nearby Kolab river, said Utkal Keshari Das, additional SP, Koraput.

After tracing the dead body, Lulu's father lodged a complaint with the police on Friday morning and a case has been registered on this incident, he said.

RAM NAVAMI CLASH ACCUSED HAD BEEN IN JAIL SINCE MARCH

THE CASE WAS REGISTERED AGAINST THEM IN THE SAME POLICE STATION WHERE THE ATTEMPT TO MURDER CASE WAS REGISTERED.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Three men, accused for attempted murder and in jail since March, have been named in a police case in the communal clashes in Barwani district earlier this month, raising questions about the police investigations in the rioting case. One of the men had recently witnessed the wrath of the district administration, who allegedly demolished his house citing illegal construction.

The three men, who have been in jail since their arrest last month, are accused of setting a motorbike on fire on April 10 in Sendhwa of Barwani district, one of the two districts that witnessed communal clashes on Ram Navami.

The case was registered against them in the same police station where the attempt to murder case was registered. When asked about the lapse, police officials said that the case was filed based on the statement of the complainant. "We will investigate the matter and take his information from the jail superintendent, the case has been registered on the basis of the allegations of the complainant," senior police officer Manohar Singh said.

The three have been identified as Shabaz, Fakru and Rauf. All three are in jail in connection with an attempt to murder case registered against them on March 5.

Shahbaz's mother Sakina has alleged that her house was vandalized after communal clashes and no notice was served to her. "The police came here, my son is in jail for almost one and a half months. He was arrested after a fight but the police came threw us out, my child is in jail so I want to ask why the FIR was registered against him. We told the policemen that he is jail but no one was ready to listen to us. We folded our hands, apologized. They have taken my younger son also," she said.

On the instructions of the Chief Minister, the district administration and police demolished illegal buildings of those involved in the attack on Ram Navami procession on Sunday.

The authorities ran the bulldozer over about 45 houses and shops. Around 16 houses and 29 shops were demolished on Monday.

Violence broke out in Khargone and Barwani after stones were thrown at a Ram Navami procession passing through the areas.

At least 24 people, including six policemen, were injured in the violence, according to officials.

Help for higher education will be available under Mukhya Mantri Medhavi Vidyarthi Yojana: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the state government will arrange tuition fee for higher education under Mukhya Mantri Medhavi Vidyarthi Yojana. Students should get a livelihood according to their talent, and lack of funds will not be a hindrance. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that an amount ranging between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 50 lakh would be provided to the youth for starting industrial units under Mukhya Mantri Udyam Kranti Yojna in Madhya Pradesh. A new startup policy is coming soon in the state. The youth of Indore have taken interest in the field of startup. About 600 companies are working in Indore. The state government will provide all possible support to the youth for startup.

Chouhan was giving placement letters to students in Bansal Group of Institutes this evening. He congratulated the students selected on an annual package of Rs 5 lakhs to Rs 42 lakhs in various institutions. About two thousand students of the institute have got employment in various fields.

Chouhan also answered the questions raised by some students. He gave details about his education through Hindi medium in a government school, how he went to jail during emergency while studying in Class 11th, how he took part in social work for various organizations, and the works done by him as MLA, MP and then Chief Minister. He said that a person achieves success with firm determination.

He is working with determination and passion to make Madhya Pradesh a wonderful state not only of the country but of the world. Swami Vivekananda is his idol. Chief Minister said that the state has moved towards rapid development. The growth rate of the state is 19.7 percent, which is more than other states. Similarly, the contribution of Madhya Pradesh in the country's GDP has increased from 3.6 percent to 4.6 percent. At one time, the average annual per capita income of the state was Rs 13 thousand, which has become 1 lakh 23 thousand annually after continuous growth. Now Madhya Pradesh is included among the leading states.

Maintain enthusiasm in your work, help yourself, nothing is impossible, keep trying, work continuously, set a goal, create a road map to achieve your goal, work hard, focus on fitness, do not be obsessed with success, do not have ego, keep a sense of compassion, affection, cooperation and try that the mind is always full of enthusiasm.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan's bulldozer act gets party's backing

Under attack from several quarters for using bulldozers to demolish properties of persons accused of rioting and other serious crimes, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has got support from the Central leadership for his actions.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under attack from several quarters for using bulldozers to demolish properties of persons accused of rioting and other serious crimes, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has got support from the Central leadership for his actions.

Endorsing the move to demolish properties of those accused of violence and heinous crimes, the party's incharge for Madhya Pradesh, P. Murlidhar Rao, said on Thursday that Chouhan took action depending on the ground situation.

"Depending on the situation on the ground, Chief Minister Chouhan took the action. Wherever a bulldozer is required, he (Chouhan) is using it," Rao said.

After the recent violence in Khargone district of Madhya Pradesh over a procession taken out of Ram Navami, the local administration demolished more than 50 houses and shops using bulldozers besides arresting around 100 persons.Chouhan followed the successful bulldozer' style of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and tried to send a strong message on the issue of law and order and his government's tough stance against people involved in rioting and heinous crimes."People have started calling Chouhan bulldozer mama', just like Adityanath is popularly called bulldozer baba'. The bulldozer is not demolishing properties of innocent people, it is only demolishing properties of rioters and criminals. Many in the BJP, including me, think that there is nothing wrong in the state government's decision to use bulldozers against properties of anti-social elements," a BJP functionary said.Earlier, the Chouhan government had demolished properties of the accused persons in two separate criminal acts at Sheopur and Raisen districts.A party insider said that bulldozers will be more visible in the coming days against those who are involved in heinous crimes, as the BJP is all set to make law and order a major issue in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections scheduled next year.

Shivraj, Digvijaya continue to train guns at each other over Khargone violence

MADHYA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN AND CONGRESS RAJYA SABHA MP DIGVIJAYA SINGH CONTINUED TO TRAIN GUNS AT EACH OTHER ON THURSDAY OVER THE RECENT COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN KHARGONE THAT OCCURRED ON THE OCCASION OF RAM NAVAMI ON APRIL 10.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Congress Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh continued to train guns at each other on Thursday over the recent communal violence in Khargone that occurred on the occasion of Ram Navami on April 10.

Addressing an event in Bhopal to mark Ambedkar Jayanti on Thursday, Chouhan said the houses of poor people and Scheduled Caste were burnt in Khargone and when the state government took action against the rioters, it did not go down well with some Congress leaders.

Chouhan's remarks followed Singh's statement, in which he directly held the Chief Minister and the district administration responsible for the Khargone violence."Some people are hatching a conspiracy to create communal divide and disrupt peace and harmony in Madhya Pradesh. Many houses were burnt and when the state government ordered action against those involved in the violence, Digvijaya Singh has a problem with the government's act," Chouhan said. Chouhan also accused former MP Chief Minister Singh of sharing fake photographs showing men waving saffron flags outside a mosque on social media, and said that Singh wants 'to set Madhya Pradesh on fire'.

"No one from any religion or community has to worry. The government will take care of your safety and honour. But yes, action will be taken against those who create disturbance. And Digvijaya Singh will not be able to save such people," Chouhan added.On the other hand, Singh said that no matter how many FIRs are lodged against him, he will always stick to the truth.

He also accused Chouhan of being biased over the Khargone violence.

"During my tenure as the Chief Minister, not even a single case of communal violence was reported in the state because whoever tried to disrupt peace and harmony, we took action against such people without being biased," Singh said.On Wednesday, Singh had said, "The BJP has always used religion as a weapon for political gains. And when I am demanding investigation into the Khargone communal violence, BJP leaders are filing a case against me."

He added that the violence in Khargone was a failure of the district administration and the police.

People in riot-hit Khargone step out to buy essentials amid tight security

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Claiming that the situation in the riot-hit area in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone district is back to normal, the district administration has relaxed curfew partially - in two intervals.

While the morning hours will see relaxation from 10 a.m to 12 p.m, people can also run errands between 3 p.m and 5 p.m.

However, the administration has allowed opening of shops selling essential items like groceries, medicines, vegetables, fruits etc. Clear instructions have been issued against people assembling in large groups.

A tight vigil is being maintained on activities of the people stepping out to buy daily needed items. Earlier, only women were allowed to buy essential items, however, relaxation was extended to men also after observing the situation.

Curfew was relaxed for two intervals of two hours with police saying that the alleged role of the Popular Front of India (PFI) in Sunday's riot would be investigated.

During the relaxation in curfew, the police personnel are giving instructions to the residents and shop owners through loudspeakers in the markets. Khargone district collector P. Anugraha told IANS that with the awareness of the general public, the situation in the city has started returning to normal.

"After the relaxation of curfew, citizens came out of their homes to buy essential items. Shops opened in the markets under the supervision of the administration and the police," Anugraha said. The district collector further informed that earlier some individual shops selling essential items were allowed, but observing the public cooperation, markets are also gradually restarting amid the tight-knit arrangement of the administration and the deployment of the police.Meanwhile, police claimed to have arrested as many as 144 people so far involved in communal violence in the city that occurred on the occasion of Ram Navami festival on April 10. While normalcy slowly returns to communal violence-hit Khargone city, the state police has begun probing the possibility of an external hand, including the role of the Popular Front of India (PFI) behind the riots.IANS, through its trusted sources on Thursday has reported that the police suspect possible role of PFI for funding to create violence. "Alleged involvement of the PFI and funding of the communal violence will be investigated,a confirmed newly appointed Superintendent of Police (SP) Khargone district, Rohit Kashwani on Friday.

Kashwani took charge as SP on Thursday as his predecessor Siddharth Choudhary is on leave after sustaining an injury during the violence.

State government will conduct pilgrimage to various places associated with Babasaheb: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the state government will conduct pilgrimage to various places related to the works of Babasaheb Ambedkar under Mukhya Mantri Teerth-Darshan Yojana. Chouhan was addressing the Bodhisattva Babasaheb Ambedkar Samyukta Jayanti Mahotsav programme at Ambedkar Jayanti Maidan in Tulsi Nagar. Chouhan paid floral tributes at the statue of Ambedkar and the picture of Lord Gautama Buddha.

Chouhan said that a grand memorial has been built in Mhow, the holy birthplace of Babasaheb. Similarly other memorials of Ambedkar will be constructed. He said that no stone would be left unturned in the development of the state. He said that Ambedkar has given a gift to all of us by making the Constitution of India, through which the country is running. We all respect him from the bottom of our hearts.The patron of Bodhisattva Babasaheb Ambedkar Sanyukta Jayanti Mahotsav Samiti and former MLA Umashankar Gupta said that the state is progressing rapidly under the able leadership of Chouhan. He is leaving no stone unturned for the welfare of the poor. Chouhan assured to fulfil the various demands put forth by the committee. Committee officials and a large number of citizens were present in the programme.

THE POOR ARE NOT BORN ONLY TO LIVE IN DEPRIVATION, THEY TOO HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE A GOOD LIFE: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the campaign is on to make every poor of the state the owner of a house. It is the resolve of the state government that there should be peace on the face of every poor and smile on the faces of his children. In reality, this is social justice. The poor are not just born to be poor. They too have the right to live a good life. Our goal is to change the lives of the poor. Baba Saheb Ambedkar was dedicated to providing freedom, equality and opportunities for progress to all. If anyone has realized the dream of social, economic equality and justice for the backmost person, it is only Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar who did it. The state government will leave no stone unturned in realizing Baba Saheb's dream of social harmony and social justice.

Chouhan was addressing the state level function organized at Motilal Nehru Stadium Bhopal on the 131st birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar.

Chouhan said that Baba Saheb Ambedkar used to say that a man's life should be great instead of being long. He had amazing talent. He was the most powerful force of economic and social empowerment of the Dalits, oppressed, exploited and neglected in India. It was Baba Saheb Ambedkar who gave the right of unity and equality to the crores of citizens of India by voting and electing the government despite diversity. It was a result of his thoughts that the citizens of the country got the right to freedom of expression, belief, religion and worship. Chouhan said that on the initiative of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Panchteerth dedicated Baba Saheb Ambedkar was established in the country. Panchteerth will be included in the Mukhya Mantri Teerth-Darshan Yojana, so that the followers of Baba Saheb can conveniently visit places related to him. Chief Minister said that Baba Saheb inspired people to become educated. According to the path shown by him, the state government is providing all possible assistance to the students of Scheduled Caste category for higher education and competitive examinations. Adequate budget provision has been made for the hostels of SC category in the state. Chouhan said that along with recruitment in government services, various schemes have been launched to provide other employment opportunities. One day every month is being celebrated as Employment Day in the state, in which lakhs of youth are getting employment. This practice of celebrating Employment Day every month will continue. Chouhan said that five kilograms of free ration per person has been arranged by Prime Minister Modi till Diwali. This is an attempt to embody the spirit message of Sant Ravidas "Aisa Chahoon Raj, Jahan Mile Saban ko Anna-Chhote Badon Sab Sam Yase, Ravidas Sada Rahe Prasanna" (I want a rule where everyone gets food and the big and small are all equal, this will make Ravidas happy). Chief Minister said that the State Government has made a provision of Rs. 10 thousand crore for the houses of the poor. 10 lakh houses will be provided to the poor every year in the next three years. The state government will provide a total of 30 lakh houses to the poor. 21 thousand acres of land freed from the mafia will also be distributed to the poor. Chouhan also informed about the Mukhyamantri Bhu-Awasiya Adhikar Yojana launched to provide residential lease to every family. Chief Minister Shri that efforts are being made through self-help groups to ensure that every poor sister has a minimum income of Rs 10 thousand per month. He Chouhan also discussed about the arrangements made during the Covid period, free vaccination and Ayushman scheme for treatment.

EDITOR'S SPECS

Age over 60; get 4th vax shot

A new Israeli-led study has found that the fourth dose of Covid vaccine is effective for protecting people aged 60 and above, Israel's largest healthcare organisation Clalit said on Thursday. The study found that a fourth dose can reduce the possibilities of symptomatic infection, hospitalisation, serious illness and mortality among the elders, Clalit said, Xinhua news agnecy reported. In the study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, Clalit researchers and their colleagues from Harvard University in Boston analysed data from 182,122 Clalit members, all aged 60 and above, who received Pfizer's fourth dose. The control group included the same number of people in the same age group, who received the third dose at least four months earlier and were not vaccinated with the fourth dose. The study evaluated the efficacy of the fourth dose between January 3 and February 18, when the Omicron variant was dominant in Israel. It found that within a period of 14 to 30 days after receiving the fourth dose, 52 per cent efficacy was observed against infection, 61 per cent against symptomatic coronavirus, 72 per cent against hospitalisation, 64 per cent against severe Covid, and 76 per cent in preventing death, all compared with the control group. The study also indicated that the efficacy of the fourth dose can last longer than 30 days, without dropping significantly. "The study unequivocally demonstrates that the fourth dose provides effective protection in preventing morbidity," said Ran Balicer, Director of the Clalit Research Institute. "It will help every person to make a decision on the fourth vaccine based on their level of personal risk," he added.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL? UNDERSTANDING PRINCIPLES OF PHYSICS VIA CAPTIVATING BOOKS

Vikas Datta

Microwave ovens to computers, refrigerators to mobile phones, air travel to advanced surgery -- can we imagine a world without these? But do most of us know what all these owe to Maxwell's laws of electromagnetism, Bernoulli's principle, thermodynamics, quantum mechanics, or in short, the majestic realms of classical and modern physics?

The epitome of human curiosity about and arriving at an understanding of our physical world, physics helps us understand what is matter (in all its states), motion, the impact of forces on objects, and energy -- heat, light, sound, electricity, magnetism -- and what these can do for us. It thus underpins all the technology that makes our lives easier.

But, as noted in a previous installment, like other sciences, it remains an arcane area for most people, including those who studied it. Treated as just another subject to mug up and pass exams, its students are required to memorise the laws and processes of nature and regurgitate them to answer a set of trite and uninspiring questions/problems.

All these stem equally from teachers racing to complete the syllabus, boring textbooks, the overriding objective to clear academic/competitive exams, and a lack of inclination to imbibe knowledge for its own sake.

All these factors, however, are not peculiar to India. Take textbooks.

American physicist Jearl Walker, in the preface to his revised 10th edition of David Halliday and Robert Resnick's seminal "Fundamentals of Physics", wrote: "I had spent six years slugging my way through many dozens of physics textbooks that were carefully written with the best of pedagogical plans, but there was something missing. Physics is the most interesting subject in the world because it is about how the world works, and yet the textbooks had been thoroughly wrung of any connection with the real world. The fun was missing."

If you trawl across social media platforms about what Indian students think of this textbook -- used by generations from 1960 till now, and also boasting of a customised Indian version, just a handful speak about its utility in understanding the basic concepts, while the more common refrain will be how it stacks up against other books in preparing to crack various competitive examinations.

Perhaps, if there were textbooks like Walker's own "The Flying Circus of Physics" (2011), which promises to show how physical phenomena, such as high-flying acrobatics and other stunts, and mind-bending illusions, are all a part of everyday life, or Paul Parsons' engagingly-titled "How to Destroy the Universe: And 34 Other Really Interesting Uses of Physics" (2012), they would better ignite minds.

Both the quality of textbooks and the staple rote learning, which lead to a lack of genuine understanding, are well described in "Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!: Adventures of a Curious Character" (1985), the anecdotal autobiography of Nobel laureate Richard Feynman, deemed to be one of the top three physicists of the 20th century -- along with Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking.

There are a wide range of books that can be illuminating introductions to the intricacies of physics for both beginners and those who would like to brush up their knowledge. But before seeing some of them, let's see why the subject is important beyond education.

And who is better than someone who used his physics knowledge to make himself a household name -- Elon Musk, who holds that the "study of physics is a good preparation for innovation because it teaches how to reason from first principles" -- as cited in Sidney Perkowitz's "Physics: A Very Short Introduction" (2019). Part of the OUP's 'Very Short Introduction" series, this can be a good start.

For the complexities of modern physics, especially its quantum element, Italian physicist Carlo Rovelli's "Seven Brief Lessons on Physics" (2014 in Italian; 2015) is unlikely to be surpassed. Less than 100 pages, and containing just a single equation -- that too, mentioned just in passing, it is meant "for those who know little or nothing about modern science".

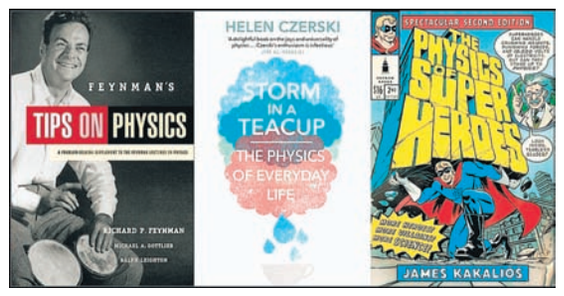
Beginning with Einstein's general theory of relativity, which he terms "the most beautiful of theories", both for what it explains so simply and what a leap of thinking it represented, Rovelli goes on to deal with quantum mechanics, "where the most baffling aspects of modern physics lurk". The next two deal with our cosmos -- its architecture and then the particles that comprise it. Then comes quantum gravity and the attempts to synthesise all the major discoveries of the 20th century. Black holes follow before he signs off with us in the strange world physics describes.

Feynman, whose fame was due as much to his innovative and scintillating methods of teaching, offers an absorbing and virtually jargon-free introduction to some key areas of physics in "Six Easy Pieces" (1963), drawn from his famous California Institute of Technology (Caltech) lectures.

This begins with atoms, describing all three common states of matter from the atomic framework, how atoms enable processes -- like salt dissolving in water, and then, how they act in chemical reactions. What follows is an invaluable insight into basic physics, divided into the pre-1920 period, and subsequently, quantum physics.

Feynman goes on to describe the relation of physics with other sciences, before returning to his subject with conservation of energy, and then, gravity, before ending with the subtleties of quantum behaviour.

If you like Feynman's style, then you can also check his "Six Not-so-easy Pieces" (1987), which deals with more challenging and counter-intuitive issues stemming from Einstein's theory of relativity on space and time.



There is also "The Character of Physical Law" (1965), based on his guest lectures at Cornell University, where he covers, among others, the law of gravitation, the relation of mathematics and physics, the great conservation principles, symmetry, distinction of past and future, probability and uncertainty in the quantum mechanical view of nature, and more.

And then, "Feynman's Tips on Physics: Reflections, Advice, Insights, Practice" (2013), where he takes up topics physics students often struggle with and offers his suggestions on dealing with them.

Physicists Helen Czerski and James Kakalios bring physics right into our daily life with their "Storm in a Teacup: The Physics of Everyday Life" (2017) and "The Physics of Everyday Things: The Extraordinary Science Behind an Ordinary Day" (2017).

Czerski, who attributes her love for physics by telling us how the means to keep the Hubble Space Telescope fixed on its mission can be demonstrated by a simple trick to distinguish between a raw and boiled egg without removing its shell, also underscores its importance: "Everything you learn will come in useful somewhere else, and it's all one big adventure because you don't know where it will take you next."

With chapters like "Popcorn and rockets: The gas laws", and 'Making waves: From water to WiFi", which shows the role of waves in various different manifestations and applications in our lives, Czerski, while maintaining a breezy, conversational style, packs in tons of information of easily assimilable.

Kakalios, on the other hand, uses the day of an average person to illustrate the role of physics in our daily life at home, in office, in commuting, work trips, business conferences, and even in a visit to a doctor for a minor ailment.

However, Kakalios does this spectacularly in "The Physics of Super Heroes" (2009, 2nd edition), an outcome of his university course where he uses various caped/web-slinging crusaders to explain a wide swathe of physics, including motion, conservation of energy, thermodynamics, quantum mechanics, materials science (via Iron Man), as well as why some of their extraordinary powers are not enough -- e.g. why Spider-Man couldn't save his girlfriend.

As he observes, tongue-in-cheek, scenarios involving projectile motion, weight on pulleys, oscillating masses on springs, seem so artificial that students lament when they will use all this in real life, but no one participating in his course using examples culled from superhero comic books ever raised the same question. "Apparently, they all have plans, post-graduation, that involve protecting the City from all threats while wearing spandex."

There are many more -- say, Paul Sen's "Einstein's Fridge: The Science of Fire, Ice and the Universe" (2021) for thermodynamics. But while all these books may not help you pass exams or qualify in competitions, they will give you respect for physics, not to mention a pervasive insight -- and that will last.

international

PALESTINIAN FACTIONS CONDEMN ISRAEL FOR ESCALATING TENSION IN WEST BANK

Palestinian factions, including the Fatah Party led by President Mahmoud Abbas, and Hamas, on Thursday condemned Israel for killing Palestinians and escalating tensions in the West Bank.

Ramallah | Agencies

Palestinian factions, including the Fatah Party led by President Mahmoud Abbas, and Hamas, on Thursday condemned Israel for killing Palestinians and escalating tensions in the West Bank.

Over the past three weeks, tensions have flared up between the two sides, particularly since the start of the Muslim fasting month of Ramzan at the beginning of April, Xinhua news agency reported.

According to Palestine's Ministry of Health, two Palestinians were killed on Thursday in clashes with Israeli forces in the northern West Bank city of Jenin. Another civilian succumbed to wounds after being shot in Nablus.Israeli authorities said that the soldiers "responded with live ammunition" after dozens of Palestinians violently attacked and shot at them, endangering their safety.In a statement, the Central Committee of the Fatah Party denounced "the Israeli government's disregard for the lives of Palestinians by

unleashing the Israeli army and settler groups to carry out field assassinations and military incursions."

Israel "is waging war against the Palestinian people and drags the entire region to catastrophic results", the committee said.

Palestine Liberation Organisation Executive Committee member Hussein al-Sheikh tweeted on Thursday that "Palestinian blood is being shed daily by the occupation forces".On the same day, Abbas held a telephone conversation with Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, saying "what is happening in the Palestinian territories due to the aggressive Israeli practices is serious and dangerous," the official Palestinian news agency WAFA reported.

Furthermore, three Palestinians were killed by Israeli soldiers in three separate incidents near Nablus, Bethlehem and Ramallah in the West Bank, the health ministry reported on Wednesday.

By the ministry's count, 41 Palestinians, including women and children, have been killed by Israeli soldiers in the West Bank since January.In Gaza, Hamas said it mourns the six Palestinians who lost their lives on Wednesday and Thursday."Hamas affirms that escalating Israeli measures against the defenseless Palestinian civilians will not stop the heroic resistance operations throughout occupied Palestine," it said.

S Korea, US in talks to hold Yoon-Biden summit around May 21

- South Korea and the US have been in talks to hold a summit between President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol and US President Joe Biden around May 21 in Seoul, a source said Friday.

Seoul | Agencies

South Korea and the US have been in talks to hold a summit between President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol and US President Joe Biden around May 21 in Seoul, a source said Friday.

South Korea has been pushing to have Biden visit before he travels to Japan to attend a Quadrilateral Security Dialogue meeting set to take place around May 24, the source added, Yonhap news agency reported. If realised, the summit would come just days after Yoon takes office on May 10, making it the earliest-ever South Korea-US summit after a South Korean president's inauguration. "Nothing has been confirmed, but I understand the two sides are coordinating schedules," an official on Yoon's transition team told Yonhap News Agency.

"During the recent US visit by Yoon's policy consultation delegation, they expressed

their wish for a South Korea-US summit at the earliest possible date as part of President Biden's visit to Asia," the official said.

Japanese private broadcaster JNN reported the same day that talks were in their final stages to schedule a Biden visit to South Korea on May 21 ahead of his trip to Japan.

Won Il-hee, senior deputy spokesperson of the transition team, said he had nothing to confirm regarding a Yoon-Biden summit.

"The date May 21 is also not being discussed or under consideration for now," he said during a press briefing.

Meanwhile, US Special Representative for North Korea Sung Kim is scheduled to visit Seoul next week for meetings with South Korean government officials.

Won said he is not aware of any planned meetings between Kim and transition team members, though the foreign relations subcommittee is looking into the matter.

Afghan govt inaugurates major agro project in eastern Laghman province

The Taliban-run administration has inaugurated a major agricultural project to cover 20,000 hectares of land in Afghanistan's eastern Laghman province, provincial Governor Zainul Abidin Madani said on Friday.

Kabul | Agencies

The Taliban-run administration has inaugurated a major agricultural project to cover 20,000 hectares of land in Afghanistan's eastern Laghman province, provincial Governor Zainul Abidin Madani said on Friday.

At a cost of 20 billion afghanis and as a joint venture of the government and private sector, the project was launched in Qargahyi district on Thursday, the official said, adding that the project would irrigate 20,000 hectares of lands to cultivate more crops and develop gardening, vegetable cultivation with the objective to export agricultural products, Xinhua news agency reported.

Welcoming the step as an initiative toward achieving self-sufficiency, locals called upon the administration to launch more such projects elsewhere in the country to create job opportunities for the people.

Earlier the authorities launched a 280-km long water canal in the northern Balkh province and extraction of crude oil in the neighboring Sari Pul province over the past couple of weeks.

Shehbaz faces test after proposed fuel price hike of Rs 120 per litre

Days after the exit of the PTI government, the Pakistan Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) suggested an unprecedented increase of up to Rs 120 per litre (over 83 per cent) in prices of petroleum products with effect from April 16 to recover full imported cost, exchange rate loss and maximum tax rates, reports said on Friday.

Islamabad | Agencies

Days after the exit of the PTI government, the Pakistan Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) suggested an unprecedented increase of up to Rs 120 per litre (over 83 per cent) in prices of petroleum products with effect from April 16 to recover full imported cost, exchange rate loss and maximum tax rates, reports said on Friday.

Highly-placed sources in Ogra and the Petroleum Division confirmed that the regulator had presented two options to the government for price increase, the highest-ever in both cases, on the next fortnightly review due on Friday, the Dawn reported.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif must now decide whether or not to lift a four-month price freeze (until June 30) announced by his predecessor, Imran Khan, on February 28.Informed sources, however, told Dawn that the price freeze would continue for the time being.Ogra said both options had been worked out under the PTI government's August 24, 2020, policy guideline. This required calculations on the basis of existing sales tax and petroleum levy rates at the time of fortnightly review as well as full tax rates permissible under the

law.

The Ogra's working paper, seen by Dawn, suggests that based on the existing tax rates which are zero the prices of all products should go up in a Rs 22-52 per litre band to charge breakeven prices without any element of subsidy.

Under this option, the ex-depot price of high speed diesel (HSD) has been worked out at Rs 195.67 per litre against the existing rate of Rs 144.15, showing an increase of Rs 51.52, or 35.7 per cent. The ex-depot price for petrol will rise by Rs 21.60 (14.2 per cent) to Rs 171.46 per litre from Rs 149.86.

The second price scenario is based on full tax rates, including 17 per cent GST on all products, and Rs 30 per litre petroleum levy each on HSD and petrol, followed by Rs 12 on kerosene and Rs 10 on LDO the maximum rates permissible under the Finance Bill.In this case, Ogra has worked out the ex-depot price of HSD at Rs 264.03 per litre against Rs 144.15 at present, showing an increase of Rs 119.88 or 83.2 per cent. Likewise, the price of petrol has been calculated at Rs 235.16 per litre for the next fortnight against Rs 149.86 at present, up by Rs 85.30 or 57.4 per cent, Dawn reported.said.

UKRAINE, RUSSIA CONDUCT FOURTH PRISONER EXCHANGE

Moscow/Kiev: Ukraine and Russia conducted their fourth prisoner swap since the start of the conflict, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said on Thursday.

Thirty Ukrainian prisoners-of-war, including 8 civilians, held by the Russian military were released, Vereshchuk said on Telegram, without specifying the number of captives freed by the Ukrainian side, Xinhua news agency reported.

Out of the 22 Ukrainian troops released under the swap, there were five officers, she said.

Ukraine and Russia conducted their first prisoner exchange on March 24.

Petrol Sold For Re 1 Per Litre To Protest Rising Fuel Prices

A local organization in Solapur city on Thursday sold petrol at just Rs 1 per litre to 500 persons to lodge a protest against rising prices of petroleum products and also to mark Dr B R Ambedkar's birth anniversary.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A local organization in Maharashtra's Solapur city on Thursday sold petrol at just Rs 1 per litre to 500 persons to lodge a protest against rising prices of petroleum products and also to mark Dr B R Ambedkar's birth anniversary. However, it was a symbolic gesture, and every buyer was given only a litre of the fuel for Rs 1.To avail the offer, people thronged the petrol pump, leading to serpentine queues. Police were also deployed to control the crowd.

The program had been organized by Dr Ambedkar Students and Youth Panthers.

"Inflation has risen sharply. The price of petrol has reached Rs 120 per litre under the Narendra Modi government. So to give relief to people and celebrate Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary, we decided to give petrol at the rate of one rupee," said Mahesh Sarvagoda, the outfit's state unit leader.

"If a small organization like ours can provide relief to 500 people, the government should also provide relief," he added.Prices of petrol and diesel remained steady for the eighth day in a row on Thursday. However, since March 22, rates of petrol and diesel have increased Rs 10 per litre each via 14 revisions.

"I was happy to buy petrol at this price. I saved a bit of money amid inflation which is scaling new heights every day," said one buyer in Solapur.

According to a price notification from fuel retailers, petrol in Delhi costs Rs 105.41 per litre and diesel Rs 96.67 per litre. In Mumbai, petrol and diesel prices per litre are at Rs 120.51 and Rs 104.77 respectively. In Chennai, petrol costs Rs 110.85 per litre and diesel Rs 100.94 per litre, and in Kolkata, petrol is Rs 115.12 per litre and diesel Rs 99.83 per litre.

Maharashtra records 69 new COVID-19 cases, 1 death, 132 recoveries on April 15

Out of 7,98,25,249 laboratory samples 78,75,620 have been tested positive (09.87%) for COVID-19 until today

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra on Friday, April 15, recorded 69 fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the number of active cases to 681. Besides, 1 COVID-19 death was reported in the day, taking the tally to 1,47,827.

132 patients were discharged in the day, taking the tally to 77,27,112. The recovery rate in the state is 98.11%. The case fatality rate in the state is 1.87%.

Out of 7,98,25,249 laboratory samples 78,75,620 have been tested positive (09.87%) for COVID-19 until today.

The Mumbai circle--which consists of MCGM, Thane, TMC, Navi Mumbai, KDMC, Ulhasnagar MC, BhivandiNijampur MC, Mira Bhayandar MC, Palghar, Vasai Virar MC, Raigad, Panvel MC--recorded 53 new cases.

The Nashik circle--which consists of Nashik, Nashik MC, Malegaon MC, Ahmednagar, Ahmednagar MC, Dhule, Dhule MC, Jalgaon, Jalgaon MC, Nandurbar--reported 2 fresh COVID-19 cases.The Pune circle--which includes Pune, PMC, PCMC, Solapur, Solapur MC, Satara--recorded 11 new cases.

The Kolhapur circle--which includes Kolhapur, Kolhapur MC, Sangli, Sangli MC, Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri-- reported 1 new case.

The Aurangabad circle--which consists of Aurangabad, Aurangabad MC, Jalna, Hingoli, Parbhani, Parbhani MC--reported 0 fresh cases.

The Latur circle--which consists of Latur, Latur MC, Osmanabad, Beed, Nanded, Nanded MC--recorded 1 fresh case.

The Akola circle--which includes Akola, Akola MC, Amaravati, Amaravati MC, Yawatmal, Buldhana, Washim-- recorded 0 fresh cases.

Nagpur circle--which includes Nagpur, Nagpur MC, Wardha, Bhandara, Gondia, Chandrapur, Chandrapur MC, Gadchiroli --reported 1 fresh case.

KIRIT SOMAIYA SAYS FIRM OWNED BY MAHARASHTRA CM'S BROTHER-IN-LAW ENGAGED IN MONEY LAUNDERING

Somaiya alleged that Shreeji Homes has an office in Bandra and it constructed a building in the Shivaji Park area. "The firm has two entries of Rs 5.86 crore and Rs 23.75 crore. The company is used to hide black money," he said.

Mumbai: BJP leader Kirit Somaiya Friday alleged that Shreeji Homes, a company linked to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's brother-in-law Shridhar Patankar, has engaged in money laundering of Rs 29.62 crore.Somaiya alleged that Shreeji Homes has an office in Bandra and it constructed a building in the Shivaji Park area. "The firm has two entries of Rs 5.86 crore and Rs 23.75 crore. The company is used to hide black money," he said. "Shreeji Homes is a partnership firm between Shridhar Patanakar and two private companies. Uddhav Thackeray should answer his connection with the firm," said Somaiya Friday while speaking at a press conference.He also said that he has filed a complaint with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Income Tax offices in Delhi and Mumbai against Nandkishor Chaturvedi, who is allegedly involved in laundering money along with Patankar. Chaturvedi, who has been accused in another similar case, is currently absconding.

We're prepared...: Maharashtra govt on Raj Thackeray's ultimatum on loudspeakers

On Tuesday, Raj Thackeray had said during an event in Thane that loudspeakers in mosques should be shut till May 3. "Otherwise, we will play Hanuman Chalisa with speakers. This is a social issue, not a religious one. I want to tell the state government, we will not go back on this subject, do whatever you want to do," he had said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra home minister DilipWalse Patil slammed Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray's May 3 ultimatum to shut down loudspeakers in mosques, as the Azaan row in the state escalates.

Speaking to reporters, Patil said that the state government has taken a serious view of Thackeray's ultimatum, adding it is prepared for the upcoming festive season.

"Police are keeping an eye on all areas to ensure that no communal tension breaks out anywhere," Patil said.

He said that a court decision is being referred to (by the MNS and the BJP) while making the demand for removing loudspeakers from mosques.

"The court decision being referred to says nobody should use loudspeakers from 10 pm to 6 am at higher volume. The decibel levels have been decided. Hence, the court has not given any decision on removing loudspeakers on temples or mosques or other places which were installed with permission," the state home minister further told reporters. On Tuesday, Raj Thackeray had said during an event in Thane that loudspeakers in mosques should be shut till May 3. "Otherwise, we will play Hanuman Chalisa with speakers. This is a social issue, not a religious one. I want to tell the state government, we will not go back on this subject, do whatever you want to do," he had said.

The MNS chief had previously too warned of playing the Hanuman Chalisa on loudspeakers.

On Thursday, Thackeray faced a major setback after his party's state secretary Irfan Shaikh said that he would quit the MNS.

"Time has come to say 'Jai Maharashtra' (goodbye) if the party, which one worked for and considered as everything, takes a hateful stand against the community one comes from. Rajsaheb Thackeray was a ray of hope. But we got to see and hear something different during the GudiPadwa rally," Shaikh said in a letter addressed to Thackeray.

MAN SHOOTS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW DEAD FOR 'DELAYING BREAKFAST'

Thane: In a shocking incident, a senior citizen from Thane allegedly shot dead his daughter-in-law for not serving him breakfast, police said on Friday.

The incident happened on Thursday morning when Kashinath P. Patil, 76, killed his 42-year-old daughter-in-law with a revolver at their home in Rabodi and fled.

Hearing the sounds of the gunshots, neighbours rushed there and rushed the profusely bleeding woman to a hospital where she succumbed after a few hours.

Another daughter-in-law of Patil has filed a police complaint against their father-in-law, who is engaged in a sand supply business.The probable trigger was the woman served Patil tea only and was reportedly delaying or denying him breakfast, police said.

Police are investigating if there were any other motives or provocations behind the sudden killing that shocked Thane residents and all family members are being questioned.

SLUR ON CHHATRAPATI CLAN: MUMBAI LAWYER SENT TO 4 DAYS' POLICE CUSTODY

Team Absolute | Satara

A court in Maharashtra's Sarara district on Friday sent lawyer GunratanSadavarte to four days police custody in connection with certain inflammatory utterances on the clan of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Sadavarte - the lawyer for Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) employees - was arrested by Satara police on Thursday in Mumbai and brought here for the probe into the two-year old case.

At that time, Sadavarte had made certain objectionable remarks against Chhatrapati Udayanraje Bhosale and Chhatrapati Sambhajiraje, both direct descendents of the great Maratha warrior king.

Social worker Rajendra Nikam had lodged a complaint against the lawyer at that time but Sadavarte had skipped police summons for the investigations.

Last week, following the attack on the home of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) President Sharad Pawar on April 8, Sadavarte was arrested along with another 115 MSRTC employees, a journalist and others.

Following his police remands and later judicial custody, a Mumbai court granted Satara police permission to take Sadavarte into its custody. He was placed under arrest and taken to Satara on Thursday.

After heated arguments by the prosecution, the lawyers of Nikam, and the defendant, the Satara court sent Sadavarte to 4 days police custody.

TWO MINORS DETAINED FOR STABBING, INJURING MEN IN BHIWANDI

The city police on Thursday detained the two minors and are on the lookout for a man who was with the duo at the time

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Two minors were detained for allegedly attacking two men with knives over a dispute in Bhiwandi town of Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Friday.The city police on Thursday detained the two minors and are on the lookout for a man who was with the duo at the time, the station house officer of Shanti Nagar police station said.

The incident took place on Thursday at a residential building in Nagaon, where the accused tried to enter the premises without any purpose and the victim stopped them,

he said.The accused got angry and attacked the victim and his friend with a knife and injured them, the official said.

When people in the locality tried to rescue the victims, the accused also ran towards them with knives, he said.

Based on a complaint lodged by one of the victims, offences under section 307 (attempt to murder) and other relevant provisions of the IPC have been registered against the accused, the official said.

Maharashtra loudspeaker controversy: Desperate attempt by Raj Thackeray to revive his political career?

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena's state secretary Irfan Shaikh on Thursday said he has quit the party in light of party president Raj Thackeray remaining firm on his pitch for removal of high-decibel loudspeakers from mosques. In fact, he is not the only Muslim face to quit party in the recent days. In the last about 10 days, almost 50 office-bearers of MNS have left the party.

In a letter to Thackeray, which he shared on Facebook, Shaikh said he was resigning with "a heavy heart". "Time has come to say 'Jai Maharashtra' (good bye) if the party, which one worked for and considered as everything, takes a hateful stand against the community one comes from," Shaikh said in the post.

Thackeray had on April 2 made a strong pitch for removing high-decibel loudspeakers from mosques. Addressing a rally at Shivaji Park, the MNS chief had also said that if such a step was not taken, loudspeakers would be installed outside mosques to play 'Hanuman Chalisa' at higher volume. Speaking at a public rally in Thane on April 12, Thackeray reiterated the demand that loudspeakers on mosques be removed, giving an ultimatum to the Maharashtra government to act before May 3.

The MNS has been losing appeal among people over the past decade. Many have questioned Raj Thackeray's renewed pitch for Hindutva amid Azaan vs Hanuman Chalisa debate in Maharashtra. The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena was founded on 9 March 2006 in Mumbai by Raj Thackeray after he left the Shiv Sena party due to differences with his cousin Uddhav Thackeray, who is the current Chief Minister Of Maharashtra and to his sidelining by the Shiv Sena in major decisions like distribution of election tickets.

Between 2009 and now, the party's strength in the assembly has gone down from 13 to one. MNS won 13 assembly seats (out of 288) in the 2009 assembly elections, which was the first Maharashtra Legislative Assembly election that the party contested. In the most recent elections of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly 2019, MNS won only 1 seat. In January 2020, MNS unveiled a new flag, however the symbol on the flag was not used for elections.

The MNS chief's stand is being seen as an attempt to get closer to the BJP. Recently, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari met Raj Thackeray at the latter's residence in Mumbai. Calling it a family meeting, Nitin Gadkari denied anything political behind this meeting. Everyone speculated a political agenda behind the meeting. Days later, a huge political row was ignited in the state Thackeray's stinging direct attack on his estranged cousin and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, and attempt to stake a claim on Hindutva, at his large GudiPadwa day rally. In a Macaque-shaming somersault, Raj slammed Uddhav for not respecting the peoples' mandate in favour of Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2019 Assembly elections and choosing to ally with Nationalist Congress Party-Congress to head the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

AFTER RAJ THACKERAY'S BARBS, BJP DROPS 'TWITTER BOMB' ON SHARAD PAWAR

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A week after Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut accused the BJP of having declared a 'war' on the Maha Vikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra, and three days after Raj Thackeray's barbs, Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis dropped a series of 14 Twitter bombs at Nationalist Congress (NCP) Party supremo Sharad Pawar, here on Thursday.

Fadnavis launched a blistering, no-holds-barred attack at Pawar, ranging from the Constitution to the mafia to 'The Kashmir Files' and the man who coined the word 'Hindu terror' -- though the immediate political provocation for the loaded verbal assault was not clear.

Among other things, Fadnavis endorsed Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray's charges against Pawar of appeasing minorities and polarising the society on communal lines -- a day after the 81-year-old NCP chief rebuked Thackeray for his 'childish' outbursts on Tuesday against the Pawars and others.

"On one hand, we are celebrating (today, 131st) birth anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkarji, who was against inclusion of Article 370 granting special status to Jammu & Kashmir. But look what is being said going against the wishes and values of Dr.Ambedkarji," posted Fadnavis.

Talking of Pawar's statements on the film 'The Kashmir Files', Fadnavis said they were not surprising as they were in tune with the NCP's decades old track record of appeasement politics and polarising the society on communal lines.Fadnavis also pointed out that NCP minister Nawab Malik was arrested by the Enforcement Director for activities linked to alleged money-laundering of absconding mafia don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, while in 2013, the NCP was on record declaring Ishrat Jahan as innocent, with its senior leaders extending help to her and even trying to demean the Intelligence Bureau though they were themselves in power at that time.

In a brief reaction, NCP's Home Minister DilipWalse-Patil said that even in the past, Sharad Pawar was linked to the mafia and said it has become a favourite hobby of people to target the NCP chief.Fadnavis said in 2012, when the Congress-NCP ruled the state, the 'shameful' Azad Maidan violence took place in Mumbai, and the Amar Jawan Jyoti was desecrated, but the NCP,

which held the home portfolio, went soft on the Raza Academy and instead removed the Mumbai Police Commissioner.Going back by three decades, Fadnavis asked what happened when Mumbai cried during the 12 serial blasts of March 12, 1993 that shook the city, but Pawar 'invented' a 13th blast in a Muslim area, and instead of law and order, appeasement was his first priority.The BJP leader said the NCP has 'grand' plans to introduce Muslim quota in Maharashtra though the Constitution has no such provision, adding that it is "shameful how vote-bank politics prevails over Constitutional values".

Defending 'The Kashmir Files', Fadnavis said the movie is not against any religion but against those who chose to look the other way when people were suffering, because they felt that it suited their 'political agenda of appeasement, thereby achieving a communal divide', but such acts and approach of disturbing 'the harmony of society cannot be accepted by Ambedkar's India.'

Referring to Pawar, Fadnavis asked 'any guess on who was the first person' to coin the term 'Hindu Terror', and a gem - 'Minorities decide whom to defeat' - and wondered whether such utterances have any place in our polity.

HOW CHLOE CHERRY STARTED HER FILM CAREER?

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Euphoria' actress Chloe Cherry, who started her career in the adult film industry at the age of 18, detailed in a new interview how she ended up being a porn star.

The 24-year-old shared her story when appearing on 'Viall Files' podcast, reports 'showbiz'.

"I think a lot of it had to do with where I'm from, an Amish place. People were very religious and it was very normalised where I was from to not have sex until marriage and people just hated sex and thought nobody casually had sex," she said.

"Nobody did anything at all and it really f**ed with my brain because I got this sense that sex is amazing and we all really like to have it," she continued.

Cherry added: "I started watching a lot of porn when I was younger because of the fact I wanted to see a world where people actually like to have sex and actually just admit that sex feels good and we want to do it."

"As long as it's done safely it's fine, no human being wants to save themselves for marriage and only have sex with one person their whole life," the Pennsylvania native said.

"But people acted like that was a thing and it always messed with my head."

She went on to say, "I feel like maybe I wouldn't have been as into sex if people weren't so anti-sex."

She further elaborated, "That's what we were taught in school, that abstinence is key and all this weird stuff, and I had these weird ideas about sex."

Cherry, who also claimed she "used to have a bunch of" sugar daddies, also revealed how her parents reacted to her decision to become a porn star.

Kevin Hart, Woody Harrelson's 'Man From Toronto' goes to Netflix

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actors Kevin Hart and Woody Harrelson's action comedy 'The Man From Toronto' is going to Netflix.

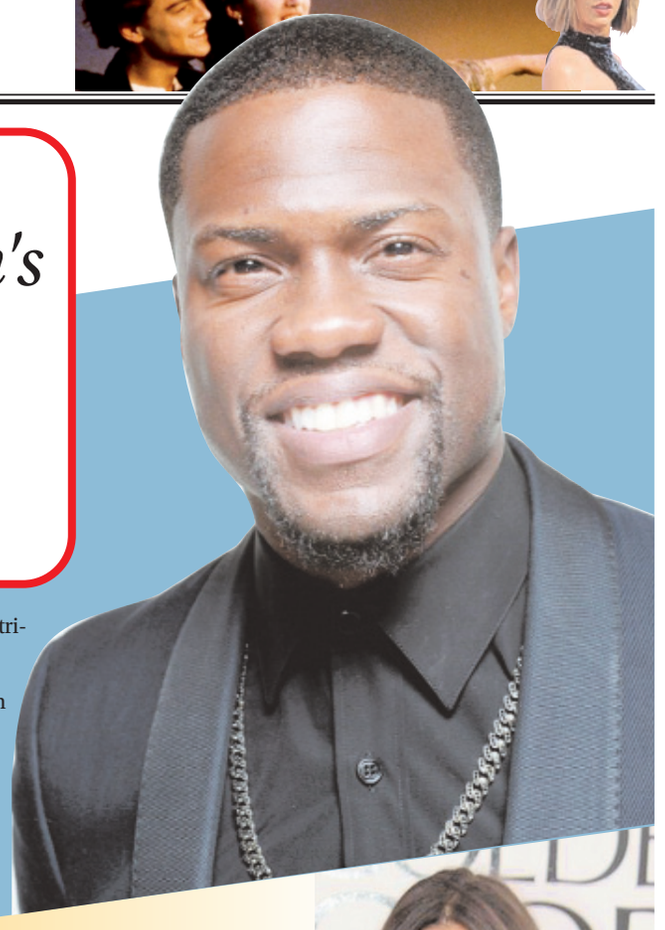
According to 'Variety', the Sony Pictures production, originally dated for an August theatrical release, has sold in a worldwide rights deal to the streamer in all territories, barring China.

The transfer falls under the exclusive first-look deal Sony signed with Netflix last year, on the heels of its notable windowing agreement with the tech giant in 2021.

The film revolves around a case of a mistaken identity after the world's deadliest assassin, known as the "man from Toronto" (Harrelson), and a stranger (played by Hart) run into each other at an Airbnb. Chaos soon follows as the assassin's world comes crashing down on Hart. Netflix will release the film later this year.

Sony's Netflix pact is additive to the studio's full theatrical slate.

Upcoming theatrical films include Brad Pitt's 'Bullet Train', 'Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse', 'Where the Crawdads Sing', 'The Woman King' and 'Madame Web'.



Hari Nef joins Margot Robbie's 'Barbie'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Hari Nef has joined the cast of the feature film adaptation of 'Barbie' starring Margot Robbie. Directed by Greta Gerwig and starring Margot Robbie as the iconic doll, Nef joins a steep bench of supporting actors, including Ryan Gosling, Kate McKinnon, America Ferrera, Simu Liu and Will Ferrell, reports Variety.

Nef is a trailblasing, out trans performer who began as a fashion darling, going on to breakout roles in 'Assassination Nation', 'Transparent' and the streaming adaption of Caroline Kepnes' novels 'You'.

Her role is under wraps in the Warner Bros. feature, written by Gerwig and her partner Noah Baumbach.

Mattel and Robbie's LuckyChap Entertainment are producers.

In a 2021 interview with British Vogue, Robbie said that taking on Barbie "comes with a lot of baggage and a lot of nostalgic connections. But with that comes a lot of exciting ways to attack it. People generally hear 'Barbie' and think, 'I know what that movie is going to be,' and then they hear that Greta Gerwig is writing and directing it, and they're like, Oh, well, maybe I don't."

Production began earlier this year in London, with a planned 2023 release. 'Barbie' is one of many Mattel properties on the burner for feature adaptation.

THANDIWE NEWTON HEADING TO REHAB?

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Thandiwe Newton is reportedly "heading to rehab" after her abrupt exit from 'Magic Mike's Last Dance'.

According to Page Six, her agent flew in from Los Angeles to try to smooth things over but on Tuesday the 49-year-old actress was flown back to the States to "hopefully check into a facility".

Multiple sources informed the outlet that she has been battling emotional and family problems after separating from her husband of 24 years, Ol Parker, with whom she has three children, reports aceshowbiz.com.

"She fired her UK agent of three decades, and then her US agent Gaby Morgerman flew in from Los Angeles to try to calm things down," explained the source.

"Thandiwe's team wants her to go to rehab for mental health support. She was supposed to leave immediately for a facility, they tried for a Malibu rehab, but they couldn't take her. Arrangements are now being made to go to a facility in Arizona if she agrees to go."

A source on set said, "Thandiwe had been acting strange on set, she has been very highly strung. Her apparent breakdown caused so much disruption, it became clear she couldn't play the role."

The insider further claimed, "There is a lot going on in her personal life, she and her husband have separated. She seemed so stressed she even brought her two pet rabbits to her hotel for emotional support." It was earlier reported the 'Mission: Impossible 2' actress was fired from the 'Magic Mike' set because of a fight with co-star Channing Tatum over Will Smith's Oscar slap.

Kaley Cuoco vows never to get married again

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Kaley Cuoco has said that she will never get married again after separating from second husband Karl Cook last year. The 'Big Bang Theory' actress split from her husband Karl Cook after three years of marriage last September and claims she is no longer interested in getting hitched after getting divorced for a second time, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She told Glamour magazine: "I will never get married again."

Although she does not want to tie the knot again, the star is open to the idea of another long-term relationship.

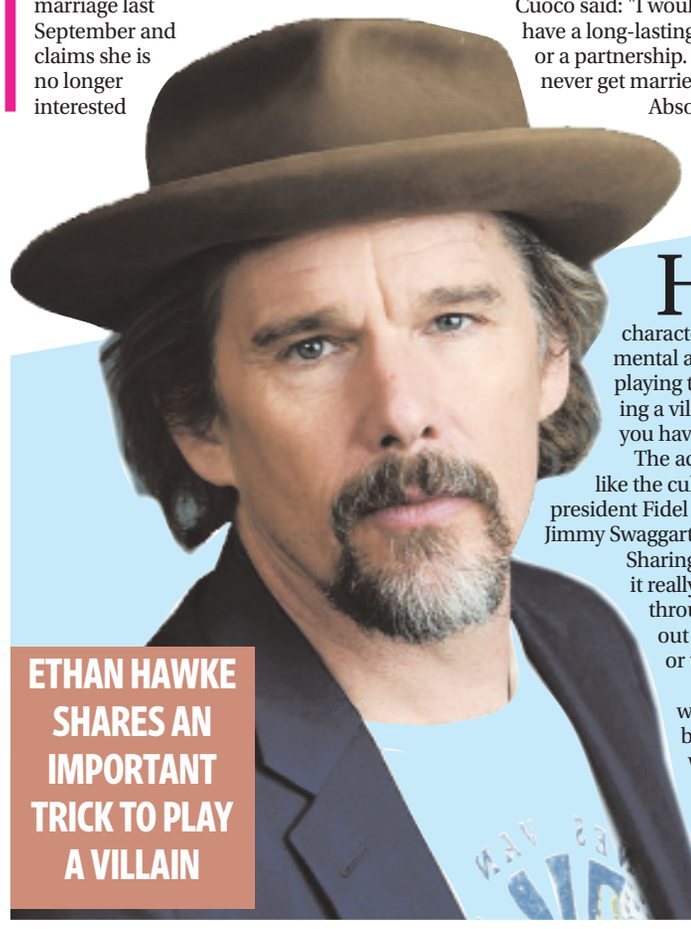
Cuoco said: "I would love to have a long-lasting relationship or a partnership. But I will never get married again.

Absolutely not.

You can literally put that on the cover."

The 36-year-old actress also confessed that she needs to rethink her priorities when it comes to a relationship and concedes that she may have put too much focus into her career.

The actress said: "I want to change, I want to be better. It's always been my first love. I think that's a tough one to overcome. And I admit to that holding me back in a way. I'm talking about that a lot in therapy."



ETHAN HAWKE SHARES AN IMPORTANT TRICK TO PLAY A VILLAIN

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actor Ethan Hawke, who made his MCU debut with the recently released Marvel Studios' miniseries, 'Moon Knight', shared that to play the character of villain, it's important for actors to not be judgemental about their character. Expressing his excitement of playing the villain Arthur Harrow, Ethan said, "If you're playing a villain you have to erase that word from your brain, and you have to see the universe from their point of view."

The actor has based his character on several personalities like the cult leader David Koresh, psychiatrist Carl Jung, Cuban president Fidel Castro, Dalai Lama, writer Leo Tolstoy, televangelist Jimmy Swaggart and Nazi officer and doctor Josef Mengele.

Sharing what intrigues him about cult leaders, he said, "I find it really interesting when you think about cult leaders throughout history, those megalomaniacs very often start out extremely idealistic and then the idealism takes a hit or they compromise themselves in some way."

"Most people who commit terrible crimes in this world don't wake up in the morning and say, 'I'm the bad guy.' They have their reasons, and hell is paved with their reasons. So as an actor I had to come up with Harrow's reasons and make them as rational and sane and compelling as possible", he concluded.

'Moon Knight' is available to stream on Disney+ Hotstar in English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Megan McKenna

FIH HOCKEY PRO LEAGUE

INDIA DEFEAT GERMANY 3-1, STAY TOP OF THE TABLE

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

India ended their home stint in perfect fashion taking all 6 points available from the two games against Germany in the FIH Hockey Pro League at the Kalinga Stadium here on Friday.

In the second game, India defeated Germany 3-1 with young Sukhjeet and Abhishek scoring a goal apiece from the field, to go with a Varun Kumar drag flick goal from a penalty corner, that gave India enough of a lead to see out the game without too much discomfort.

Both teams played out the game with India trying to impose their will early, while the Germans played more aggressively, harrying the Indian midfield, that was largely untroubled in the first game. India still managed to create early chances, primarily through some great work by Manpreet, where twice he worked his way into the German circle and his pass only needed a touch to open the scoring for India. But Akashdeep and Sukhjeet both couldn't get their sticks to the crosses and the teams went into the quarter break tied at 0-0.

India came out stronger in the 2nd quarter, much as they did last evening after a goalless first fifteen. They threatened to open the scoring through Moirangthem who found acres of space on the right side of the circle after some good switch play by India caught Germany out, but his cross deflected out off a German stick before it could threaten the German keeper. India finally made the pressure pay though, as a long corner saw some great work by a combination of Hardik, Manpreet and Nilakanta.

Nilakanta then sent a fast pass towards the goal and Sukhjit smartly got ahead of Danneberg to deflect the ball in. Germany started to get on the front foot towards the end of the first half, but they could only muster one shot on target, that did not trouble Krishan Pathak too much, and he saved to maintain India's lead heading into the second half. The win gives India a 10-point lead at the top of the table, but as coach Reid pointed out before the game, India have played more matches than any other team, so the points buffer at the top is something they wanted to increase with this game and have successfully managed it with 6 points out of 6 taken against Germany. FIH Hockey Pro League action from the 2021/22 season concludes in India, and will now move to Argentina for the next set of matches in both women's and men's season of the Pro League.

IPL 2022: Tripathi, Markram fifties help Sunrisers Hyderabad beat Knight Riders by seven wickets

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Superb half-centuries by Rahul Tripathi and Aiden Markram helped Sunrisers Hyderabad overcome Kolkata Knight Riders by seven wickets in Match 25 of the IPL 2022 at the Brabourne Stadium here on Friday.

Tripathi and Markram got together after Sunrisers had lost their first two wickets for 39 runs. They raised 94 runs for the third wicket partnership after their bowlers had done a good job to restrict Kolkata Knight Riders to 175/8 in their allotted 20 overs. Sunrisers eventually reached 176/3 in 17.5 overs to register a comfortable victory.Tripathi topscored with 74 runs (37 balls, 4x4, 6x6) while Markram remained undefeated with 68 off 36 deliveries, hitting six boundaries and four sixes as SRH cruised to victory with 13 balls to spare. They launched calculated attacks, hit big sixes and kept the Kolkata Knight Riders bowlers on the tenterhooks with their superb hitting. The dew of course did not help the Knight Riders but that was expected.

Earlier, fighting knocks by Nitish Rana (54 off 36) and Andre Russell (49 not out off 25) helped Kolkata Knight Riders post a par score of 175/8 in 20 overs.

Rana came to the rescue with KKR reduced to 31/3 in fifth over, played a well-controlled knock of 54 off 36 deliveries, hitting six fours and two sixes. He had lost skipper Shreyas Iyer and Sheldon Jackson early but helped KKR cross the three-figure mark in the 13th over.

After Rana was out, caught by Pooran off Natarajan going to raise the tempo, Russell took over from there and kept the scoreboard ticking before blasting sixes and a four off successive deliveries off spinner J. Suchith in the 20th over to propel KKR to a respectable score.

Natarajan was the best SRH bowler in the field on Friday, claiming 3/37 while Umran Malik claimed 2/27 off his four overs.

Brief scores :
Kolkata Knight Riders 175/8 in 20 overs (Nitish Rana 54, Andre Russell 49 not out, Shreyas Iyer 28; T Natarajan 3/37, Umran Malik 2/27) lost to Sunrisers Hyderabad 176/3 in 20 overs (Rahul Tripathi 74, Aiden Markram 68 not out; Andre Russell 2/20).

Emma Raducanu wins on Billie Jean King Cup debut, levels tie for Britain

Prague | Agencies

US Open champion Emma Raducanu won on her Billie Jean King Cup debut here on Friday to help Britain level with the Czech Republic and leave the qualifying tie delicately poised.

The 19-year old Raducanu was playing her first senior match on clay and she won 7-5, 7-5 against world number 50 Tereza Martincova.

The teenager saved a set point at 5-4 in the opener before winning the next three games, and also fought back from a 4-1 deficit in the second against the 27-year-old Martincova Raducanu won six of the final seven games to clinch a vital victory for herself and her team.

With her victory, she levelled the best-of-five tie after Harriet Dart lost 6-1, 6-0 to Marketa Vondrousova. "This one means so much to me. Playing on clay definitely took some adjusting, even now. The conditions were very windy and some bad bounces, so to adjust and adapt in the situation was very challenging but I'm very proud of how I dug in," said world number 12 Raducanu, who is set to play Vondrousova in the reverse singles on Saturday.

"In the beginning of the second set, I went a bit flat and everyone in my team was telling me the intensity had dropped. It is difficult to regain that but I'm very happy I did in the end," she added. The countries will play two singles matches on Saturday, plus a doubles if needed. The winners will qualify for November's finals, while the runners-up face a play-off tie the same week. Britain are among the countries bidding to host the finals and could also still qualify as the host nation.

BENGALURU, FC GOA SCRIPT WINS ON OPENING DAY OF RFDL

Goa | Agencies

Goa FC and Bengaluru FC registered clinical victories over Reliance Foundation Young Champs (RFYC) and Chennaiyin FC respectively, as the first-ever Reliance Foundation Development League (RFDL) got underway here on Friday.

Bengaluru FC beat RF Young Champs 2-0 with goals from midfielder Bekey Oram (24th) and substitute striker Rahul Raju (90+3) on either side of half-time at the Benaulim ground following FC Goa's 1-0 win over Chennaiyin in the first game of the inaugural meet.

Goa rode on Jovial Dias' second-half strike to log three points, and the two winners on the night face each other on April 19. The RF Young Champs, the youngest team in the tournament, put out a strong performance in the second period but a late goal from second-half substitute Raju put paid to their efforts after Oram had given the Blues' an early lead. Bengaluru started the game on the front foot creating a lot of chances through Sivasakthi Narayanan, part of their senior team as well, and Huidrom Thoi Singh. At right-back, Namgyal Bhutia also put in a terrific shift to eventually help his side take the lead when a move led to Oram trying his luck from just outside the box, the ball taking a deflection off a RF Young Champs shirt to balloon over the goalkeeper and into the back of the net. RF Young Champs got their best chance of the half when Sanan Mohammed K's header was tipped over the bar after Salman Faris found him with a delectable cross. The second half saw both teams fighting it out in the middle of the park with few injuries to either side affecting the tempo of the game. Just on the cusp of full time, Bengaluru doubled their margin with substitutes Raju and Omega combining for a goal, the former crossing for the latter inside the area and Raju deftly nodding home from close range.

Earlier in the day, FC Goa's Dias scored from a Vasim Inamdar pass to cap off an impressive outing both for him and the 'home' team who bossed possession, especially in the first half, and weathered a flurry of Chennaiyin attacks at the start of the second period to log three points in the first game of the competition. Goa thought they had taken an early lead when skipper Lesly Rebello smashed home from close only for referee Shantan Agrawal to raise his flag for an offside. Soon after, striker Mevan Dias shot wide from the edge of the box as the Gaurs had Chennaiyin defenders on tenterhooks in a fluid 4-2-3-1 formation. Chennaiyin sat deep and relied on counter attacks to find a breakthrough, Syed Suhail Pasha firing wide of the target from a Johnson Joseph Mathews pass.

Jovial was in his elements from the off and proved to be a constant menace for Chennaiyin, dropping a shoulder and making an incisive run in the 21st minute to underline his intentions. Both teams went into the break as they were at the start, Chennaiyin trying to find answers to Goa's slick possession play.

Soon after the breather, Pasha skewed his effort wide while Joseph Lalvenhima saw his shot from close come off his own teammate. Goa coach Deggie Cardozo replaced Velroy Fernandes with Vasim in the 55th minute and the latter did not take much time to swing into action, finding Jovial with a perfectly-timed pass from the left inside channel which the latter toe-poked past an onrushing Samik Mitra under the Chennaiyin bar.

JOE ROOT STEPS DOWN AS ENGLAND TEST CAPTAIN

Following debacles in the Ashes and the three-match series against the West Indies, Joe Root stepped down as captain of the England Test side on Friday after leading the team for five years.

London | Agencies

One of England's most successful Test captains, Root's side had recently endured a 0-4 thrashing in the five-match Ashes series and lost the away three-Test series against the West Indies 0-1.

"After returning from the Caribbean tour and having time to reflect, I have decided to step down as England Men's Test Captain. It has been the most challenging decision I have had to make in my career but having discussed this with my family and those closest to me; I know the timing is right," said Root, who had been blamed by former England players for the string of losses, despite the 31-year-old player's personal form remaining intact.

"I am immensely proud to have captained my country and will look back on the past five years with enormous pride. It has been an honour to have done the job and to have been a custodian of what is the pinnacle of English cricket," said Root."I have loved leading my country, but recently it's hit home how much of a toll it has taken on me and the impact it has had on me away from the game," added Root.

Was very nervous, but didn't let it get the better of me: GT's Yash Dayal

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Gujarat Titans' 24-year-old left-arm pace bowler Yash Dayal has said that nervousness of playing his first Indian Premier League (IPL) game could have got the better of him on Thursday, but he was happy that he could complete the task assigned to him to the satisfaction of his skipper Hardik Pandya.

Dayal emerged the new bowling sensation in the IPL, taking 3/40 in his four overs as Rajasthan Royals were restricted to 155/9, falling short in the chase by 37 runs. The Titans had earlier made 192/4, thanks mainly to skipper Pandya's unbeaten 52-ball 87 and Abhinav Manohar's 28-ball 43.

It was Gujarat's fourth win of the IPL 2022 season and they climbed to the top of the points table with eight points. "It's a big thing for me for the kind of background I come from. It was a proud moment for me and my family. I was a bit nervous but I controlled it. I liked the whole experience," Dayal said in a video posted on the IPL website. Dayal said that he was extremely nervous when he came in to bowl to Devdutt Padikkal, adding that he did not allow it to "compromise my bowling" at any stage of his debut IPL match.

Border-Gavaskar series has risen in prestige to the Ashes: Nathan Lyon

Sydney | Agencies

Australian spin stalwart Nathan Lyon feels the Border-Gavaskar series has risen in prestige to the Ashes, adding that beating the sub-continental cricketing giants is becoming a "massive challenge."

India have had the better of Australia, winning each of the past three Border-Gavaskar Trophy, since 2017, the latest being the 2-1 Test victory Down Under in the four-match series in 2020/21.

"It's massive. It's getting very similar to Ashes series as the pinnacle series for an Australian cricketer," Lyon was quoted as saying by Code Sports.

"This series with the (World) Test Championship on the line as well it's going to be even more important and probably a bigger challenge... It's about doing the basics, not getting too far ahead of ourselves and enjoying the challenge -- I think that's going to be the biggest one."

Ahead of two away series Australia are scheduled to play in Asia as a part of the ICC World Test Championship 2023, Lyon has recognised the challenges it poses, however still exciting

Eintracht Frankfurt stun Barcelona in Europa League

Madrid | Agencies

FC Barcelona crashed out of the Europa League after a 3-2 home defeat to Eintracht Frankfurt.

Barcelona had drawn 1-1 in Germany a week ago and were favourites to qualify for the semifinals, but cheered on by an estimated 20,000 of their fans in the stands of the Camp Nou Stadium on Thursday night, Eintracht stunned Xavi Hernandez and his side.

Gavi and Pedri were back in the Barca starting 11, but it was never Barca's night with Eintracht opening the scoring thanks to Filip Kostic's fourth-minute penalty after a careless foul from Eric Garcia.

The Frenchman needed treatment for a thigh injury soon after and in the 67th minute Kostic's first-time effort made it 3-0 for the visitors after a quick move following a throw-in.

The big striker then won a penalty in the 10th minute of injury time, but it was too late for a Barca miracle and Eintracht progress to the last four.

'KGF: CHAPTER 2' EMERGES AS INDIA'S HIGHEST EVER DAY 1 EARNER

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

The much-awaited Yash starrer 'K.G.F: Chapter 2' has become the biggest day-1 opener in Indian history. Grossing close to Rs 135 crore on its opening day, the magnum opus demolished all previous box office records and cemented its position as one of the biggest Indian films of all time. With this 'KGF: Chapter 2' becomes the highest opener for a single star and also has several other titles to its credit.

The film made box office history in various markets becoming the highest ever Day 1 collection for a Hindi film, grossing Rs 63.66 crore, the highest ever opening in Karnataka for a Kannada film and highest ever Day 1 collection in Kerala for any Indian film, industry sources said.

While the massive advance booking played a major role in the grand opening, the film was expected to have, the actual opening numbers stand testimony to the ever growing 'KGF' fever and all this despite the ongoing season of Ramzan and the current pandemic situation.

Hombale Films, an emerging pan-India production houses produced the film, 'KGF: Chapter 2' was presented in North Indian markets by Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment and AA Films. After super hits like 'Dil Chahta Hai', 'Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara', 'Dil Dhadakne Do', and 'Gully Boy' to name a few, Excel chose to back the film way back in 2018 and stuck to their vision of having a theatrical release for the magnum opus.

The film headlined by Yash and starring a talented ensemble cast including Sanjay Dutt, Raveena Tandon and Srinidhi amoung others released nationwide on April 14, in Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam. 'K.G.F: Chapter 2' is written and directed by Prashanth Neel.

Karan Johar congratulates new couple, calls Ranbir his son-in-law!

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor are now officially husband and wife. The two tied the knot on Thursday at their Vastu residence in Pali Hill area of Mumbai.

Karan Johar, who is Alia's mentor and a very close friend of Ranbir, shared his feelings about the two getting married, on his social media. Pouring his heart out in his post, he called Ranbir his son-in -law, in jest. The Dharma Productions head honcho took to his Instagram and shared an array of wedding pictures of the star couple.

Congratulating the newly-weds, he wrote in the caption, "It's days like this that we live for where there is the most beautiful blend of family, love and absolute emotion overwhelmed and so full of love in my heart."

"My darling @aliaabhatt this is such a beautiful life step and my love and blessings go with you everywhere ? Ranbir ! I love you? now and forever! You are now my son in law, badhai ho and here's to decades of ????????" Ranbir and Alia fell in love on the sets of their upcoming film, 'Brahmastra' and tied the knot in a traditional Punjabi wedding ceremony.

Poonam Pandey recalls how her family was thrown out of housing society

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Kangana Ranaut hosted 'Lock Upp' is grabbing all the attention and one of the interesting elements of this show is revelation of intriguing and emotional stories by the contestants.

In a recent episode, Poonam Pandey broke down in tears when she remembered a story related to her family from the past.

Poonam shared an emotional story with Karanvir Bohra and Shivam Sharma. She even began to cry.

She recalled an incident that took place with her family three to four years back. During that time, she was with her whole family, where they all used to live together.

Poonam's family was thrown out of the housing society because it was her family. Even none of the family members told her the reason why they were thrown out of society, because she was the only earning member.

Poonam even said that she never spoke anything evil or wrong to anyone, she was always busy with her own work.

She said: "I haven't said anything bad to anyone till today, show me an article where I have said something wrong to anyone."

Karanvir tried to console her. Poonam can't control her tears because she had hear a lot of wrong things about her. She said that: "First try to know me first before saying anything wrong about me."

RANBIR'S EX-FLAME KATRINA EXTENDS BEST WISHES TO NEW COUPLE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Star couple Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt tied the nuptial knot on Thursday and the entire B-Town erupted in celebrations.

Among the celebrations, the early wishes came from Ranbir's ex-flame Katrina Kaif, who extended her best wishes to the newly-wed couple through her social media.

Katrina took to her Instagram and posted the picture of the couple in the story section. She wrote under the picture, "Congratulations to u both - all the love and happiness @aliaabhatt #ranbirkapoor (sic)."

Katrina and Ranbir dated for nearly six years before they parted ways in 2016. Their last film together was the Anurag Basu directorial 'Jagga Jasoos'.

While Katrina got married to 'Masaan' actor Vicky Kaushal in December last year in Jaipur in a private ceremony, Ranbir and Alia exchanged wedding vows in Mumbai at the 'Sanju' actor's Vastu residence.

Katrina's husband Vicky Kaushal, who has worked with Ranbir in 'Sanju' and with Alia in 'Raazi', too congratulated the couple on their special day.

TIGER SHROFF GIFTS HIS STUDIO TO WARRIOR SQUAD OF 'IGT'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Tiger Shroff offered 'India's Got Talent' contestants Warrior Squad his own studio 'Fly Zone' for them to practice their stunts. He is coming as a celebrity guest along with co-actors Tara Sutaria and Nawazuddin Siddiqui to promote their upcoming film 'Heropanti 2'. He got so impressed by their act that he gifted them not only his studio but also his trainers.

Talking about their amazing gift, Warrior Squad's leader Rahul said: "Thank you is a very small word and what you have done for us sir, it's very big!" He spoke about how they did not have any trainers with them for their stunts and performed sheerly depending upon YouTube videos and the like. Rahul expressed his gratitude towards Tiger as now because of him his squad have trained trainers who helped them with their stunts in Tiger Shroff's studio and how everything would be helping them in achieving success in international shows like 'America's Got Talent'.

Tiger also responded to his gratitude saying: "I am very thankful because you are going to represent India and asli Heropanti aapne hi dikhayi hai (you've shown what real Heropanti is)! I think going ahead, you are already winners and you will surely win and come back home."

The Grand Finale of 'India's Got Talent' will be airing on April 17 on Sony Entertainment Television.

YESHA RUGHANI: DELNAAZ IRANI IS THE SUNSHINE ON THE SETS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Delnaaz Irani is a clear favourite when it comes to the sets of 'Kabhi Kabhie Ittefaq Sey'. Actress Yesha Rughani, who shares the screen with her, says that the two share a great equation.

"Delnaaz is a darling. She is the sunshine of our set. Even when I have a dull day, when I see her face, it brings a bright smile to my face as well. She is an extremely giving, warm and fabulous person. I cannot stop learning from her in terms of acting and professionalism. That level of learning is amazing. I'm so grateful that I'm learning so much from her."

"Every time I see her perform, I'm in awe. I have seen her on the big screen and have always told her that when I saw you, I used to think of you as this adorable cute darling! And I used to relate a lot with her. I love her energetic vibe and I never thought that one day I would have the honour of working with her and sharing the screen with her," she says. Meanwhile, Yesha, who plays the role of Gungun in the show, says that people have loved her in the show.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

Reem Sameer

Owned, Published and Printed by Yogendra Chaturvedi at P.G. Infrastructure and service Pvt.Ltd, Karond Bhanpur Bypass Road, Bhopal-462037 (MP) and published from 8/1, Malviya Nagar, Bhopal- 462011 ■ **Editor -** Yogendra Chaturvedi, **Advisory Editor-** Sarika Chaturvedi, **Resident Editor-** Nagendra Sharma| (*responsible for selection of news under PRB act). RNI. No. MPENG/2015/69891 Phone No. 0755-3577179, www.absoluteindianews.com, E-mail- absoluteindiadesk@gmail.com,(Bhopal will be the jurisdiction of any dispute.)