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Thailand Open Sindhu reaches quarters, Srikanth pulls out...



NIKHAT STRIKES GOLD AT 12TH IBA WOMEN'S WORLD BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS

THE GOLDEN PUNCH

The boxer from Telangana becomes the only fifth Indian woman to clinch yellow metal at the prestigious event

▶ **NIKHAT THRASHED THAILAND'S JITPONG JUTAMAS WITHOUT BREAKING THE SWEAT IN THE 52KG FINAL WITH JUDGES SCORING THE BOUT 30-27, 29-28, 29-28, 30-27, 29-28 IN THE INDIAN'S FAVOUR.**

▶ **NIKHAT BECAME THE FIFTH INDIAN WOMAN TO SECURE GOLD MEDAL AT THE WORLD BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS AFTER RECORD SIX-TIME CHAMPION MARY KOM (2002, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010 AND 2018), SARITA DEVI (2006), JENNY RL (2006) AND LEKHA KC (2006).**



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian boxer Nikhat Zareen clinched the gold medal at the 12th edition of the IBA Women's World Boxing Championships after registering a dominating 5-0 victory in Istanbul on Thursday.

It was also India's first gold medal since boxing great Mary Kom won it in 2018.

Nikhath got off to a lively start and hit some sharp punches to quickly take the upper hand in the opening three minutes against confident Jutammas, who came into the match defeating the three-time World Championships medalist Kazakhstan's Zhaina Shekerbekova.

The 25-year-old Indian took full

advantage of her long reach and maintained her dominance against the Thai boxer, whom she had beaten in the 2019 Thailand Open semi-final-the only meeting between the two, enroute her silver medal finish.

However, Jutammas tried to fight back in the second round with a counter-attacking display but hardly managed to cause any trouble for the swift-moving Nikhat, who looked in complete control. Hitting straight and clear punches, strength proved to be a key factor as Nikhat threw caution to the wind in the final round and kept attacking relentlessly before securing the gold quite comfortably. With Manisha (57kg) and Parveen (63kg) signing off with bronze medals after their semi-

finals finish, Indian contingent concluded its campaign with three medals at the world's biggest boxing event, which witnessed exciting competition in presence of record 310 boxers from 73 countries and also marked the 20th anniversary of the Women's World Championships.

Out of 12 participating Indian boxers, eight made it to the quarter-finals in this year's tournament-the joint highest alongside Turkey.

With the addition of three medals in Istanbul, India's overall medal tally has gone up to 39, including 10 gold, eight silver and 21 bronze, in the 12 editions of the prestigious event-third highest after Russia (60) and China (50).

Survey report lists Hindu symbols inside Gyanvapi mosque

Mohd Suaib Khan | Varanasi

The court-appointed Commission to conduct videographic survey of the Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi Mosque complex on Thursday submitted, to the court, its report which said the members saw Hindu symbols like lotus, swastika, 'trishul' (trident), and 'bell shapes' in the building.

Ajay Mishra, the Advocate Commissioner who conducted the survey in the Gyanvapi complex on May 6-7, has submitted his report, to the local court here. Mishra was later removed from the panel for leaking the survey report.

In the report submitted to the court, Ajay Mishra said: "On May 6, 2022 after the survey started, on the northwest wall, the debris of temples with symbols of gods and goddesses were found. Some lotus symbols carved on stones were also found. On the north west corner of the mosque, a new platform can be seen to have been built using cement, iron rods. Videography of the whole area has been done."

Mishra in the report said, in the direction to the east inside the barricaded and to the west of the mosque wall, some debris of the temple were found.

The next day on May 7, Mishra said, he resumed the work of survey in presence of petitioners, and claimed he found the threshold of the Shringar Gauri temple in the mosque premises,



THE REPORT ON ONE OF ITS PAGES CONCLUDES ITS FINDINGS POINTWISE

1. Inside the second pillar of the mosque, there is a symbol of trishul, on which plaintiff number four registered objections and it was photographed and videographed.
2. On the west wall in the southwest corner of the mosque, a symbol of swastika was found engraved. There were three decorated lotus symbols, also found with overarching swastika symbol.
3. Further inside the mosque, several symbols of lotus were found engraved on the stones. Apart from this, the swastika was found on the petals of lotus.
4. On one of the pillars of the mosque, Hindi words are engraved in seven lines.
5. In the east south of the mosque, one of the walls has water seepage and the whole wall is damp. Even the floor under-

which was videographed. The report also claimed that

some broken structures had been found inside the mosque.

He said he submitted the video in the chip format to the court.

GST Council recommendations not binding on Centre, state govts: SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday said the recommendations by the GST Council are not binding on the Centre and the state governments.

A bench, headed by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and comprising Justices Surya Kant and Vikram Nath said: "The deletion of Article 279B and the inclusion of Article 279(1) by the Constitution Amendment Act 2016 indicates that the Parliament intended for the recommendations of the GST Council to only have a persuasive value, particularly when interpreted along with the objective of the GST regime to foster cooperative federalism and harmony between the constituent units."

The bench said that both the Parliament and the state legislatures can equally leg-



islate on matters of Goods and Service Tax.

"The 'recommendations' of the GST Council are the product of a collaborative dialogue involving the Union and states. They are recommendatory in nature. To regard them as binding edicts would disrupt fiscal federalism, where both the Union and the states are conferred equal power to legislate on GST", it added, in its 153-page judgment.

The top court judgment came on an appeal filed by the Centre challenging the Gujarat High Court division bench judgment passed on January 23, 2020, which quashed 2017 notifications to levy service tax on the importer.

The high court allowed a petition instituted by the respondents under Article 226 for challenging the constitutionality of two notifications of the Centre.

ONE YEAR RIGOROUS IMPRISONMENT FOR NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU

The Supreme Court on Thursday held that the hand can also be a weapon by itself where a boxer, cricketer, or a fit person inflicts a blow, as it sentenced Congress' Punjab leader Navjot Singh Sidhu to one year rigorous imprisonment in a 1988 road rage case.

"Punishments are awarded not because of the fact that it has to be an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth, rather having its due impact on the society; while undue harshness is not required but inadequate punishment may lead to suffering of the community at large."

The Supreme Court said.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Sanjay Kishan Kaul said: "The hand can also be a weapon by itself, where, say a boxer, a wrestler or a cricketer or an extremely physically fit person inflicts the same. This may be understood where a blow may be given either by a physically fit per-



son or to a more aged person."

It said there cannot be leniency in sentencing when the hurt/injury has resulted in death, nor can the delay in trial be taken into account which was not attributable to the complainants.

"Respondent No 1 (Sidhu), at the relevant time, was a young man of 25 years, who was playing international cricket and was athletically physically fit. He is expected to know the effect of any blow to be inflicted by him, more so, when on the opposite side the man is aged about 65 years (more than his father's age and elder to him by 40 years)," the bench held.

It said Sidhu cannot say that he did not know the effect of the blow or plead ignorance on this aspect. It further added that it is not as if someone has to remind him of the extent of the injury which could be caused by a blow inflicted by him. "In the given circumstances, tempers may have been lost but then the consequences of the loss of temper must be borne," said the bench.

The top court noted it was urged that simply because it was a spontaneous incident where no weapon was used, but held that this cannot be a ground to inflict minimal and innocuous punishment of fine of Rs 1,000.

DAYS AFTER QUITTING CONGRESS, SUNIL JAKHAR JOINS BJP

New Delhi: Former Punjab Congress President Sunil Jakhar on Thursday joined the BJP, days after he quit the Congress party. BJP national president J.P. Nadda inducted Sunil Jakhar into the party at the national headquarters in New Delhi. Sunil Jakhar, who was upset with Rahul Gandhi, resigned from the Congress on Saturday. After that, he called on Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday and discussed the political situation of Punjab. A day after this meeting, Sunil Jakhar on Thursday joined the BJP in the presence of party's national president Nadda and other leaders in New Delhi. Jakhar is a non-Sikh face of Punjab and commands respect across party lines.

Southwest Monsoon onset over Kerala next week

Conditions are favourable for further advance of Southwest Monsoon into some more parts of south and central Bay of Bengal and some parts of south Arabian Sea during next two days. Conditions will continue to be favourable for further progress leading to onset of Southwest Monsoon over Kerala towards end of the week.

IMD's Extended Range Forecast



Last week, the IMD had already announced the onset date of SW Monsoon over Kerala on May 27 with a model error margin of plus/minus four days.

Much before its normal date of May 22, the monsoon has reached and crossed Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Isolated heavy rainfall is very likely over coastal and south interior Karnataka on Friday, heavy

to very heavy rainfall at isolated places likely over Kerala and Mahe on Friday, and isolated heavy rainfall for rest days of the week.

Scattered to fairly widespread light/moderate rainfall with isolated thunderstorm/ lightning are very likely over Tamil Nadu and Rayalaseema and isolated rainfall/thunderstorms over rest parts of peninsular India during the week.

MIXED BAG OF WEATHER CONDITIONS FOR NORTHWEST INDIA

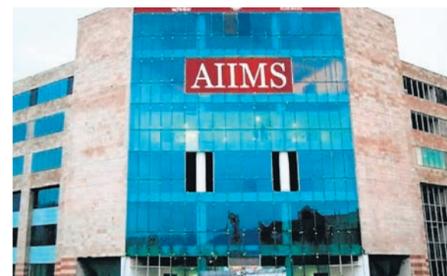
New Delhi: After continuous heat wave spells, the coming week for northwest India would be a mixed bag of abating heat waves, thunderstorms, dust storms and even rainfall for hilly areas, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Thursday.

There would be no significant change in maximum temperatures during the next two days over northwest, central India, and Gujarat and would fall by 2-4 degrees Celsius thereafter.

West Rajasthan would experience heat wave conditions in many places with severe heat wave conditions in isolated pockets on May 20 while there would be heat wave conditions in isolated pockets very likely over east Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, south Punjab, and south Haryana on Friday, the IMD said.

AIIMS HIKES PRICE FOR PRIVATE WARDS, ABOLISHES USER CHARGES FOR INVESTIGATIONS

▶ THE CHARGES FOR ITS A-CATEGORY ROOM IN PRIVATE WARDS HAVE BEEN DOUBLED FROM RS 3,000 TO RS 6,000 PER DAY, WHEREAS B-CATEGORY ROOMS RISE FROM RS 2,000 PER DAY TO RS 3,000 FROM JUNE 1. THE ROOM RENT FOR BOTH CATEGORIES IS INCLUSIVE OF ADMISSION CHARGES AND RS 300 PER DAY FOR DIET AT THE PRIVATE WARDS.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences on Thursday announced a hike in the room rent and diet charge for private wards

and the abolition of user charges for all investigations and laboratory charges.

In a separate statement, the AIIMS also announced the abolition of user charges for all investigations and laboratory charges currently costing upto Rs 300 per pro-

cedure. "AIIMS is pleased to approve abolition of user charges for all investigations and laboratory charges currently costing upto Rs 300 per procedure in AIIMS Hospital and all centres with immediate effect," the premier health institution said.



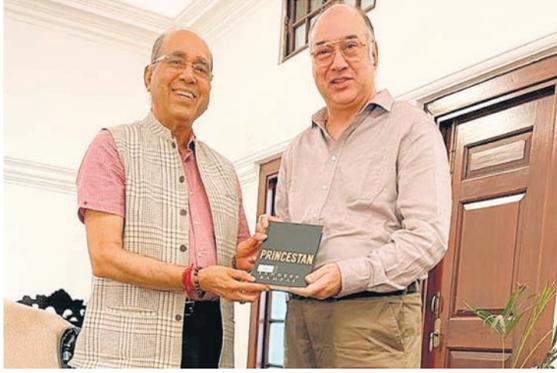
Grand Ram Mandir with Ram Lalla installation on schedule for Dec 2023, says Nripendra Misra

Sandeep Bamzai | New Delhi

The construction work of Shri Ram Temple (Ram Mandir) - a three storey temple with Garbh Griha and five Mandapapas - is proceeding as per schedule in Ayodhya.

Nripendra Misra, former Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and now Chairman of Shri Ram Temple Construction Committee in a conversation with IANS Editor-in-Chief Sandeep Bamzai, confirmed that it is all systems go with the first phase set to be completed by December 2023.

He said, "Our first phase completion target is December 2023 when we expect Garbh Griha or the placing of the Shri Ram deity as part of the Pran Prathistan to be rolled out. The construction of the plinth with granite stone started in February 2022 and should be completed by this August. About 17,000 stones of size 5ft x 2.5 ft x 3 ft will be used in the construction of the plinth. The best quality stone is being procured from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh."



He stated that the second phase which includes the completion of ground floor and two stories encompassing five Mandapas will be done by December 2024. He said, "The super structure of the temple will have carved Rajasthan Bansi Paharpur stone and this has already begun. Till now 75,000 cft stone carving has been completed. The total requirement is around 4.45 lakh cft stone for the super structure alone in

the temple. By December 2025, the temple complex of 71 acres will be complete."

On being asked about the costing of the bhavaya Ram Mandir complex, Misra said, "The costing has not been firmly fixed because specifications are being decided as we are progressing. The aim is to make it last 1000 years so that it captures the grandeur of broad national expectations. However, our sense is that the

cost should not be less than Rs 2000 crore." On the follow-up query of who is financing the grand temple, Misra added, "It is entirely donation driven, there is no grant from any govt or agency. Hindu asthaa is involved and we have already collected a significant amount as the campaign for donations has extended from village to village, town to city across the country. I would like to add that the contribution ranges from Rs 10 to as much as Rs 5 crore."

Misra also stated that after detailed technical discussions with the Project Monitoring Consultant and construction agencies, the design and drawing of the lower plinth was also finalised with the use of plain cement concrete below the ground, layers of granite stone, layers of Mirzapur stone and final topping by granite stone.

The construction work on the lower plinth will be undertaken by June 1, 2022. As per the plan, the design and drawing of the foundation of Parkota is also in the final stages of technical scrutiny. Various options are being examined taking into consideration the security and convenience of the pilgrims.

Hoax bomb threat in Bhopal, B'luru schools: TN school boy lands in trouble

Chennai | Agencies

A 17-year-old student from Salem, who aspires to open his own software company, has landed in trouble after a computer programme he developed and sold to a foreigner was recently used to send hoax bomb threat mails to schools in Bengaluru and Bhopal.

The boy had developed a Bot software programme (software programme that performs automated, repetitive and pre-defined tasks) for an overseas client. The programme was used for sending multiple emails. He sold the programme to a foreign client through telegram App and collected \$200 dollars through Bitcoin as the price for the programme.

However, the boy landed in trouble when Bengaluru and Bhopal police tracked him after finding out that hoax bomb threats through emails were sent to top schools in Bengaluru in April and in Bhopal in May. Amit Kumar, DCP (Crime



Branch), Bhopal Police, told IANS that while the bomb threats turned out to be hoax, it took long hours for the bomb squad to find out that they were hoax emails.

He also said that the police traced the mails to the IP address of the 17-year-old boy and found out that he was a resident of Salem in Tamil Nadu, who is the son of a librarian. The Bengaluru police also found out that the IP address of the Salem boy was the genesis of the

threat mails. Bhopal and Bengaluru police will be serving notice to the boy to cooperate with them in the probe to locate the foreigner who had sent the hoax bomb threat mails to schools in their respective states.

An official of the Tamil Nadu cyber security wing told IANS that the department is planning an awareness campaign among students about the perils of communicating with unknown persons over the internet.

SC VACATES STAY ON DELHI HC ORDER HOLDING STRAY, STREET DOGS HAVE RIGHT TO FOOD

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday vacated the stay on the Delhi High Court order, which issued guidelines for feeding street dogs after holding that citizens have a right to feed the animals.

The verdict, a huge relief to animal welfare organisations and volunteers involved in feeding stray dogs, was delivered by a bench comprising Justices U.U. Lalit, S. Ravindra Bhat, and Sudhanshu Dhulia.

The bench vacated the March 4 interim stay of the apex court bench comprising Justices Vineet Saran and Aniruddha Bose on the operation of the high court order passed last year.

During the course of the hearing, several impleaders pointed out how the stay order had created a hostile environment for the dogs and led to many instances of harassment of volunteers of animal welfare organisation and feeders. Senior advocates Aman Lekhi and Anand Grover appeared as intervenors. Friendicoes SECA had also moved an application for impleadment and was represented by senior advocate Ritin Rai, instructed by Karanjawala and Co. A petitioner in connected matters urged the court to look into the issue of dog bite cases and the menace of strays in the city.

Bharat Jodo Yatra: Cong to take along like-minded political forces & NGOs

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress' Bharat Jodo Yatra will try to take along like-minded political forces and NGOs working in social sectors, sources said on Thursday. The yatra which will start from Kanyakumari and end in Kashmir will pass through at least 12 states. In these states the party will reach out to like-minded groups and political parties.

Sources said that Kanyakumari has been chosen because it is said that India is one from Kanyakumari to Kashmir.

The sources said that the motive of the march will be socio-political as the earlier padyatra of YSR Reddy covering 1,475 km, meeting people across several districts in Andhra Pradesh, had catapulted the Congress to power both at the Centre and in the state.



Secondly, the Narmada Yatra of senior leader Digvijay Singh enabled the Congress to form the government in Madhya Pradesh after 15 years. The source pointed out that though Singh's yatra had religious and social overtones but it helped the party.

The Congress pointed out that it has for the first time made a resolution in Hindi to target the Hindi heartland as the party is pitched in 200 seats directly against the BJP. The leader pointed that there will be state specific alliances, but there was no discussion on a pre-poll national alliance. However, the party is in a dilemma in West Bengal and other such states.

When asked, the leader said that, "the Congress has not taken VRS and it will be politically active in each state as it's the only party which has a national footprint, and to take the message of the party the Congress is holding a meeting of state leaders for two days."

The Congress has also decided to call a meeting of those leaders who missed the Udaipur Chintan Shivir. Those who will be invited include ministers in state governments, working state presidents and party spokespersons.

DELHI REPORTS 520 FRESH COVID CASES, ONE DEATH

New Delhi: Delhi

on Thursday reported 520 fresh Covid cases, against 532 recorded on previous day, and one new death, as per the state government health bulletin.

Meanwhile, the Covid positivity rate has marginally declined to 2.09 per cent, and the number of active cases to 2,377. With 817 patients recovering in the last 24 hours, the total number of recoveries has gone to 18,73,604. The number of patients being treated in home isolation stands at 1,755. With new Covid cases, the total caseload of the city has jumped to 19,02,180, while the death toll is 26,199. The number of Covid containment zones stand at 1,094 in the city. A total of 24,918 new tests -- 16,974 RT-PCR and 7,944 Rapid Antigen - were conducted in the last 24 hours, taking the total to 3,82,97,404, while 18,923 vaccines were administered - 1,788 first doses, 7,767 second doses, and 9,368 precaution doses. The total number of cumulative beneficiaries vaccinated so far stands at 3,39,61,728 according to the health bulletin.



Rape accused roams scot free even after FIR in K'taka

Hubballi, (Karnataka) | Agencies

In a shocking incident, a married woman has alleged that the Karnataka police has let the rape accused scot free even after registration of FIR.

The incident took place in a village of Kalaghatagi taluk in Hubballi. The victim has alleged that the emboldened accused has been blackmailing her with nude photos and videos. The victim, a vegetable vendor, said on Thursday that her husband drove vehicle of the accused Moula Saab Halagura. When the victim's husband went out of village, the accused had threatened her and raped her repeatedly.

The accused had also made photos and videos of private



moments and blackmailed the victim. The victim had alleged that he had raped her for two months. The victim had also alleged that the accused had threatened her that he would finish off her husband and children if she told this to anyone.

He challenged her that he could do anything as he had money, she alleged. The victim had lodged a complaint with Dharwad Women's Police Station and Kalaghatagi Police Station. The victim had also pleaded for protection.

NIA COURT CONVICTS YASIN MALIK IN TERROR FUNDING CASE

New Delhi: The NIA court here on Thursday convicted Kashmiri separatist leader Yasin Malik in a terror funding case in which he has previously pleaded guilty. Now, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) authorities will have to assess his financial situation and arguments on the quantum of the sentence, which will be heard on May 25.

Notably, Yasin had withdrawn his lawyer. As he pleaded guilty earlier, nothing was left to be heard during the course of the hearing.

The area was cordoned off by security and the mediapersons were asked to wait outside the court during the hearing.

Yasin Malik has been charged with hatching a criminal conspiracy, waging war against the country, other unlawful activities, and disturbing peace in Kashmir. He had pleaded guilty in the matter. On the last date of the hearing, he told the court that he was not contesting the charges levelled against him, including section 16 (terrorist act), 17 (raising funds for the terrorist act), 18 (conspiracy to commit terrorist act), and 20 (being member of a terrorist gang or organisation) of the UAPA and sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 124-A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code.

KARNATAKA MAKES UNIFORM MANDATORY FOR PUC STUDENTS



Karnataka | Agencies

The Karnataka government has made uniform compulsory for Pre-University Course (PUC) students from academic year 2022-23. The directive forms a part

of the guidelines issued for the PUC students.

According to sources, the ruling BJP took the decision considering the possibility of a hijab crisis, once the PU classes restart.

The SSLC (Class 10) results were announced on

Thursday in the state and admissions for the PU colleges will begin from Friday onwards.

In the guidelines issued by the Education Department for 2020-21 academic year, uniforms were not compulsory.

Sources in the Education department said that the new rule will empower college managements to implement a ban on hijab in classrooms.

Several parents and students have questioned the government's decision. However, the Special Bench of Karnataka High Court which heard the matter upholding the government order stated that wearing of uniform is compulsory for students.

KARTI CHIDAMBARAM'S JOR BAGH PROPERTY ON CBI RADAR, CA SENT TO 4-DAY CBI CUSTODY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

S. Bhaskararaman, the chartered accountant of Karti Chidambaram, was remanded to four-day CBI custody by the Rouse Avenue Court here on Thursday, as the probe agency intends to recover few emails and information related to a Jor Bagh property belonging to Karti Chidambaram.

The CBI had arrested Bhaskararaman on Wednesday after hours of questioning in connection with the fresh bribe for visas' case.

The CBI had moved a plea before the court seeking 14-day remand of Bhaskararaman.

The CBI told the court that a sales deed recovered



during the raids was important. "This sales deed is of a property bought in Jor Bagh and the power of attorney is in the name of Bhaskararaman, whereas the property was purchased

by Karti Chidambaram and his mother," the CBI said. The CBI told the court that a long list of materials has to be recovered from Bhaskararaman and that their search operation was still on.

The CBI accused Bhaskararaman for being non-cooperative and working at the behest of Karti Chidambaram.

"We also have to recover a long trail of emails," the CBI said.

The counsel appearing for Bhaskararaman argued that there was no need to grant custody as all the emails were obtained in the INX Media case by the probe agency.

Bhaskararaman gave emails and passwords of two different IDs. The counsel also said that Bhaskararaman was never summoned during the course of preliminary inquiry. After hearing both the sides, the judge granted four-day custody of Bhaskararaman.

CBI FILES FIR AGAINST BENGAL MINISTER, DAUGHTER

Kolkata | Agencies

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed an FIR against West Bengal minister of state for education, Paresh Chandra Adhikari and his daughter, Ankit Adhikari charging the two under Indian Penal Code sections pertaining to criminal conspiracy and destruction of evidence.

Meanwhile, after playing hide and seek with the CBI for around 48 hours, Paresh Chandra Adhikari finally reached the Kolkata airport on Thursday evening, from where he was taken directly to the CBI's Nizam Palace office in central Kolkata for questioning by the CBI sleuths.

Calcutta High Court's single judge bench of Justice Avjit



Gangopadhyay, on Tuesday observed that Ankit Adhikari was illegally appointed as a teacher of political science in a state-run school even without qualifying in the merit list and appearing for a personality test.

While ordering a CBI enquiry in the recruitment of political science teachers for Classes XI and XII in state-run schools, the single-judge bench ordered Paresh Chandra Adhikari to be present at the CBI office in Kolkata on Tuesday by 8 p.m.

NITISH KUMAR REFUSES TO COMMENT ON GYANVAPI MOSQUE ISSUE

Patna: Bihar

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday refused to comment on the Gyanvapi mosque controversy. "I have no opinion on it. You (media persons) are free to make your own comment," he said while interacting with media persons here.

Meanwhile, the stand of ruling allies, Nitish Kumar's JD-U and the BJP on this controversy is different. Minority Affairs Minister Zama Khan, of the JD-U, said: "We would not do anything that could disturb the brotherhood of the society. JD-U is the party that is taking all castes and religions forward in the society. We respect the sentiments of everyone. Everyone has a contribution to build the country." Deputy Chief Minister Renu Devi, of the BJP, said: "Truth should come out. We do not believe that communal tension would increase in the society. If we have any cultural heritage, it should come out in the public domain."





Heralding a new social era - Maharashtra bans ancient 'widow-hood' practices

Ring in a new social era, Maharashtra's Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government has banned all ancient 'widow-hood' rituals on grounds that they violate human rights, dignity of women and such practices have no place in the era of modern science.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ring in a new social era, Maharashtra's Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government has banned all ancient 'widow-hood' rituals on grounds that they violate human rights, dignity of women and such practices have no place in the era of modern science.

Rural Development Minister Hasan M. Mushrif issued the official order on Tuesday triggering the social revolution with potential far-reaching implications.

The first sparks were ignited by the Gram Panchayats of two small villages Mangaon and Herwad, Kolhapur district - last fortnight when they resolved to outlaw all such nightmarish practices women who lose their husbands are made to undergo. The state government said: "The Herwad Gram Panchayat (Kolhapur) has banned rituals of widow-hood by passing a resolution in that regard. Now other gram panchayats should be encouraged."

Mushrif made it clear that such old practices should have no place in a science-oriented era and urged all other gram panchayats to undertake mass awareness campaigns and pass resolutions akin to Herwad Gram Panchayat, a village of around 7,250 souls in Kolhapur.

Signifying a silent social change, on May 1 and May 5, Mangaon Gram



Panchayat and Herwad Gram Panchayat, respectively, passed resolutions frowning at the age-old customs imposed on widows - young or old - upon losing their husbands.

These practices include: erasing the sindoor/kumkum (vermillion), removing 'mangalsutra', toe ring and other jewellery, smashing her (green) glass bangles, barring her from wearing coloured clothes and condemning her to whites for the rest of her life.

The widows are further ostracised and stigmatised by preventing them from attending any family, social, religious functions, celebrating festivals openly, interacting with other males, and in some cases, chopping off their tresses, as per traditions handed down since centuries.

Taking a cue from Herwad and Mangaon's initiatives, the MVA government order said that these practices violate human rights, hurt the dignity of women as enshrined in the Constitution and said it's the need of the hour to abolish such customs. Shiv Sena Spokesperson Manisha Kayande saluted the decision terming it 'landmark' and as important as the social reforms initiated by the legends like Raja Rammohan Roy, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule and others.

"This move will ensure that widows are now set free from the inhuman tortures and stigmas they suffer upon losing their husbands and now they can expect a life of respect and dignity," Dr Kayande said. Nationalist Congress Party MP

Supriya Sule lauded Mushrif's decision as a 'progressive' one and said: "Big Thank You, Hon. Hasan Mushrif Sahab. Government of Maharashtra for taking such a progressive decision for widowed women on the grounds of the resolution passed by Herwad Gram Panchayat."

Congress leaders - School Education Minister Prof Varsha Gaikwad and Women & Child Development Minister Yashomati Thakur - also hailed the 'historic step' of the MVA government.

"We have to forgo all these centuries-old anti-women customs and practices... I have personally undergone such situations. I am happy to note that people are accepting such positive changes," said Thakur.

Women activist and Bhumata Ranragini Brigade President Trupti Desai said she has been working in this field for several years and met with immense resistance from conservatives, but now it is showing positive results and people are voluntarily coming out to dump these degrading customs.

"When my brother-in-law Satish Desai died in March 2021, we counseled his wife Sangeeta not to follow any of these customs and she concurred. I urge Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to now enact a suitable law or modify existing laws to give this government circular legal teeth for the benefit of women," Desai said.

Discontent brews afresh in banks, strikes in May-end

Bank employees are again on the warpath with several major unions of different banks threatening to go on a one or two-day strike in May-end, activists said here on Thursday.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bank employees are again on the warpath with several major unions of different banks threatening to go on a one or two-day strike in May-end, activists said here on Thursday.

For starters, Central Bank of India staffers shall strike work on May 30-31 to protest against large-scale shutting down of branches, bypassing employees in crucial decision-making processes, large-scale transfers, etc.

Similarly, the Bank of Baroda and Punjab & Sindh Bank employees will keep off work on May 30 while staffers of the Catholic Syrian Bank, the Bank of India, the Bank of Maharashtra, the Federal Bank, and the UCO Bank are already agitating in different ways since the past few months.

Maharashtra State Bank Employees Federation (MSBEF) General Secretary Devidas Tuljapurkar said that there is tremendous distress in the entire banking industry with some or the other forms of agitation affecting almost each bank. "Since the past 5-6 years, banks have started outsourcing many works to outside private parties, all recruitments have stopped and the bipartite settlement has not been implemented in some banks," he said.

In some like the Federal Bank, the employees are agitating against the management's attempts to suppress the voice of dissent of the union representatives and even attacking them, MSBEF President Nandkumar Chavan said.

The UCO Bank unions have recently decided at their meeting in Nagpur to launch an all-out agitation on the issue of recruitment which is among the most serious problems in the banking industry, he added.

According to Tuljapurkar, presently there are around 900,000 bank employees all over India in all banks but an equal number are working with private companies to where various bank tasks have been outsourced.

"Plus, the Central government has implemented all their social sector schemes through banks which has resulted in a huge increase in the workload. There has been large-scale retirement of employees in banks but with no new recruitments, it has led to massive pressures and stress on the existing front-line employees, culminating in the unrest," he contended. Both Chavan and Tuljapurkar urged the government and the banking industry to take the initiative and address the genuine concerns of the employees and unions to enable normalise industrial relations as the banks are just emerging out of their NPA problems and the Covid-19 crisis in the past couple of years.

ASI CLOSES AURANGZEB'S TOMB IN AURANGABAD FOR 5 DAYS

Two days ago, MNS spokesperson Gajanan Kale had in a tweet questioned the need for the monument's existence in the state and said it should be destroyed

Aurangabad: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has shut Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's tomb here in Maharashtra for five days after a mosque committee in the area tried to lock the place, an official said on Thursday. Two days ago, MNS spokesperson Gajanan Kale had in a tweet questioned the need for the monument's existence in the state and said it should be destroyed.

Later, a mosque committee in Aurangabad's Khultabad area, where the tomb is located, tried to lock the monument, which is protected by the ASI. Subsequently, the ASI had deployed additional security guards at the monument.

When contacted ASI's Aurangabad circle superintendent Milan Kumar Chauley said, "Earlier, the mosque committee tried to lock the place, but we opened it. On Wednesday, we took a decision to shut the tomb for next five days."

"We will review the situation and then decide to open it or to keep it closed for another five days," the official said. Notably, AIMIM leader Akbaruddin Owaisi's visit to the tomb earlier this month was criticised by the ruling Shiv Sena in the state as well as the Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS).

Days after Owaisi's visit to the tomb, NCP chief Sharad Pawar had wondered if such an act was aimed at creating a new controversy in Maharashtra which is functioning peacefully.

US cyber security firm Trellix opens new data centre in India

California-based Cyber security company Trellix on Thursday announced the opening of a new data centre in Mumbai to help customers meet their data residency and compliance requirements.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

California-based Cyber security company Trellix on Thursday announced the opening of a new data centre in Mumbai to help customers meet their data residency and compliance requirements.

The launch of the new data centre will provide access to a scalable cloud-native architecture, the company said in a statement.

"The new data centre will help us to cater to the stringent compliance needs of our customers, especially in the banking, finance, and government sectors," said Rahul Arora, Managing Director, India, and South Asia, Trellix.



The company said that the telemetry used for threat detection and response in Trellix threat analytics solutions can now be logged and stored in the new data centre for customers who have a mandate to store their sensitive data within the country. "We already have a significant presence in India, with one of our largest research and development centers in Bengaluru powering our global solutions and we will

continue to invest in our presence," Arora added. The new data center will provide direct, high-performance access to Trellix's EDR, EPP, and local management allowing direct and faster access to the Trellix platform. Trellix said its data centre will augment the ability to detect emerging threats faster.

The company has more than 40,000 business and government customers globally.

'ANNA JAGO' AGITATION AT HAZARE'S VILLAGE ON JUNE 1

Team Absolute | Pune

Non-political group, along with several NGOs, has announced an agitation to "wake up" veteran social crusader Kisan Baburao alias Anna Hazare at his village Ralegan-Siddhi in Maharashtra's



Ahmednagar, an organiser said here on Thursday. Desh Bachao Jan Andolan (DBJA) President Somnath Kashid said that thousands of men and women from all over Maharashtra will troop down to Hazare's village on June 1.

"We shall launch a 'Dhol Bajao andolan' to draw Hazare's attention to the runaway inflation and the massive fuel prices hikes, especially cooking gas, which has made life miserable for the masses, but he seems ignorant of it and is sleeping peacefully like Kumbharakan's brother," Kashid said. "When the UPA government was in power, Anna Hazare was very busy organis-

ing all types of campaigns and would make the government bow before it. Now, in the past few years of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rule, people are reeling under all kinds of problems," he added. Worried

supporters of Hazare have claimed that the 84-year-old crusader is keeping unwell, to which Kashid countered by asking then how did Hazare had announced an agitation last week against the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government of the Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress. "People are now openly asking whether Anna Hazare conducts agitations 'selectively' or he is an 'agent of BJP' and will never take up any campaigns against the saffron party. Many political parties are in touch with us and we plan to take the 'Dhol Bajao, Anna Jago' movement till New Delhi," Kashid said.

ED LODGES PMLA CASE AGAINST RAJ KUNDRA

The Enforcement Directorate has lodged a Prevention of Money Laundering case against businessman and actor Shilpa Shetty's husband Raj Kundra in connection with pornographic apps case.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate has lodged a Prevention of Money Laundering case against businessman and actor Shilpa Shetty's husband Raj Kundra in connection with pornographic apps case. The case is based on an FIR lodged by the Mumbai Police in 2021. As of now, the ED has not summoned him. There are allegations that few overseas financial transactions are on the radar of the anti-money laundering agency.



relating to the case from Mumbai Police which includes a few financial transactions record too.

The probe agency will now scan Kundra's property in the country and abroad. It will also scrutinise the last three to five years transactions of his

and his firms. The ED will try to figure out the financial chain through which the money was being sent and received.

It was alleged that young aspiring girls were forced to act in adult movies on various pretext. In case the girls refused, they were asked to bear the whole expenditure of the shoot and their stay. The porn content was then uploaded on a mobile app Hotshots, which was later removed from google play store.

Hotshots was developed by Kundra's firm but later was sold to one UK-based firm Kenrin whose real owner was Pradeep Bakshi, the brother-in-law of Kundra. There were other mobile apps on which the contents were uploaded such as Hothit movies. The subscriber had to pay to watch the porn content.

MAN HELD FOR POSTING AGAINST NCP CHIEF ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Navi Mumbai: The Panvel city police on Wednesday arrested Kiran Inamdar who was booked for forwarding the defamatory post of actress Ketaki Chitale against NCP chief Sharad Pawar, on his Facebook wall. The police nabbed him from Palspe area in Panvel in Maharashtra's Raigad district.

After the women activists of the NCP learnt that the Panvel resident was arrested, they immediately reached the police station to drape him in a saree and put bangles on him to teach him a lesson. However, the cops prevented the agitating women from entering the police station and the 34-year old was escorted with his face covered with black cloth.

Vijay Kadbane, senior inspector said, "Acting on a complaint by NCP activist Shridhar Bagal on May 15, we had registered an FIR against Inamdar, who was booked under relevant IPC sections, for defamation promoting enmity, spreading disharmony among people and hurting the sentiments of the NCP activists, who revere Pawar as their mentor. The accused was absconding. As of now, it is not confirmed whether the accused is affiliated to any political party as he owns a food stall in Panvel. As their demand was illegal, we pacified the crowd of agitators and assured them that we were taking appropriate legal actions by following the due procedure of law. The accused was escorted to Panvel court on Thursday morning for seeking his police custody."

MONSOON IN MUMBAI MAY BE EXTREME THIS YEAR BUT WE ARE COMPLETELY PREPARED: AADITYA THACKERAY

Mumbai: Ahead of the monsoon season, Maharashtra minister Aaditya Thackeray on Thursday said that if the city witnessed over 200mm of rain in a day, any city not just Mumbai would see flash floods. "Nature's fury can't be stopped by anyone. For this we have placed dewatering pumps at various places, pumping stations are being kept ready, trash boom barriers are placed and also other mitigation measures are in place. But yet if an extreme weather event like a cloud burst takes place no one can do anything," said Thackeray who was at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) office to take stock of the preparedness of the civic works - desilting, tree trimming, road repairs, etc.



Thackeray also said that while the BMC has so far managed to control 90% of the flooding spots that arose last year during rains but a few are yet to be addressed. "Summers and winters have been extreme this year and it's likely that monsoons will also be extreme. However, we are completely prepared if anything as such happens and have worked out what should be our response. We want to ensure that the impact because of any extreme weather event is the least and there's a minimum loss to life and property," said the minister.

Over the ongoing desilting works, Thackeray said while the BMC has completed 78% of culvert cleaning works, if one goes tomorrow they will find floating debris because someone or another is putting garbage into it every day. In wake of the two landslide disasters at Vikroli & Mahul last year which killed 29 people, he said Rs 62 crore funds have been rolled out for MLA's irrespective of the party for constructing retaining walls.

"However, retaining walls may not be an answer but the road ahead is how to bring those living in informal homes into formal housing. We are working on creating 30,000 houses for PAPs in the coming years," he said.

MNS puts up 'Maharashtra will burn' poster in Lalbaug

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) has put up a poster in Lalbaug area of Mumbai which reads, "Entire Maharashtra will burn if anyone tries to hurt Raj Thackeray."

This comes in wake of protests against Raj Thackeray for his Ayodhya visit.

MNS chief Raj Thackeray is scheduled to visit Ayodhya on June 5. On April 17, Thackeray had announced in Pune that he would visit Ayodhya on June 5 to seek the blessings of Lord Ram.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Tourism Minister

Aaditya Thackeray along with Shiv Sena workers from across the country will visit Ayodhya on June 10.

Both the leaders have said that they will seek the blessings of Ram Lalla at the Ram Janambhoomi in Ayodhya.

In April this year, Raj Thackeray demanded that loudspeakers be removed from mosques in Maharashtra, a stand which the main opposition BJP supported.

Earlier in the month of May, Raj Thackeray received a threat letter, after which the Maharashtra Navnirman Sevaks (MNS) leaders



demanding Z or Y+ security for their supremacy. Though the same was denied by the Maharashtra government, sources informed Republic that Thackeray's security was increased, with the deployment of one more constable and an inspector level officer with him. This came after Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil and Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Panday discussed the threat letter that was written in Hindi with a smattering of Urdu words and referred to Thackeray's warning that the Hanuman Chalisa would be played in front of mosques if loudspeakers were continued to be used to broadcast Azaan.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Now, it's Monkeypox in Europe

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has detected four additional cases of monkeypox in gay, bisexual men, taking the total number to seven in the country. The four new cases - three in London and one linked case in the north east of England - do not have known connections with the previous confirmed cases, although two are known to each other, signalling that the virus could be spreading in the community for the first time. All the four cases who self-identify as gay, bisexual or other men who have sex with men (MSM), appear to have been infected in London and had no travel history to Africa, where monkeypox is known to be endemic, the agency said in a statement on Tuesday. "This is rare and unusual. UKHSA is rapidly investigating the source of these infections because the evidence suggests that there may be transmission of the monkeypox virus in the community, spread by close contact," said Dr Susan Hopkins, Chief Medical Adviser, UKHSA, in a statement. The individuals have the West African strain of the virus, which is mild compared to the Central African strain. The UKHSA officials advised nurses and doctors to stay 'alert' to patients who present with a new rash. Monkeypox is a viral infection usually associated with travel to West Africa. It is usually a mild self-limiting illness, spread by very close contact with someone with monkeypox and most people recover within a few weeks. Initial symptoms of monkeypox include fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, chills and exhaustion. A rash can develop, often beginning on the face, then spreading to other parts of the body including the genitals. The rash changes and goes through different stages, and can look like chickenpox or syphilis, before finally forming a scab, which later falls off.

BULLDOZER POLITICS WILL POLARIZE VOTERS IN GUJARAT, BUT AT A COST

Haresh Jhala

The bulldozer politics started in some parts of the state by the ruling BJP will polarize the voters and reap electoral benefits for the party, but it will come at a cost because it is a double edged sword, said analysts. Even the poor, middle class Hindus have suffered along with the minority community. Just because the affected Hindus are in negligible numbers, the ruling party is taking it as collateral damage, which according to it will have less impact on the election results. On Ram Navami, in many parts of the state, processions taken out by Hindus were targeted and stones were pelted by anti-socials. In a swift action the government bulldozed illegal constructions of such anti-social elements. Taking a cue from Madhya Pradesh, the Gujarat government for the first time used a JCB in Khambhat town and demolished butchers shops. Then the bulldozing of illegal constructions was extended to towns like Himmatnagar, Modasa, Kadi, Botad and cities like Ahmedabad, Surat and some other parts. Every action has a reaction, was the response of Ranchhod Bharwad from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. He added that had the anti social and anti national elements not targeted the Ram Navami processions, they would not have had to bear the brunt of the government action. These illegal constructions have become the hub of anti national activities, such as dens need to be demolished for the safety of the Hindu community and the nation's integrity, said Neeraj Vaghela, spokesperson of the International Hindu Parishad. Vaghela added that the government's action should not be viewed through the lenses of political or electoral benefits, nor should the timing of the action be questioned, what is important is that anti national elements should be taught a lesson once and for all. His contention was that the Rohingyas and Bangladeshis in large numbers are staying illegally in the state, they are into anti national activities. A large number are residing in the Chandola lake area in Ahmedabad, they should all be identified by the state police and deported to Bangladesh, demanded the International Hindu Parishad. If Vaghela is to be believed, only Muslim illegal constructions are being demolished, but the reality is that Hindus are also suffering



because of this drive. One such victim is Parag Patel, whose ice cream parlour on the outskirts of Ahmedabad was demolished. He had pleaded with the Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority officials to give time, but his plea went unheeded. He is not alone. In Kadi town of Mehsana district, 550 properties or a part of the properties were demolished for road alignment and other projects in the last four days. The traders, the majority of them Hindus, requested for more time but the authorities went ahead with their demolition plans. In Ahmedabad city, a Damocles sword is hanging over 280 properties near Bakra Mandi in Ranip area. Nearly 100 of these properties are owned by Dalits, Thakors and Devipujak Hindus along with Muslims. They will be rendered homeless once the JCB moves in, said Samshad Pathan, an advocate and human rights activist. Pathan said that human rights and social activists will always stand by the government if it is demolishing illegal constructions by land mafias, bootleggers or gangsters. However, in the name of removing encroachments the government is making the poor and the lower middle class homeless or

snatching away their livelihood. It seems the ruling party in this way wants to create an India where there are no poor or low income groups, he added. This action will benefit the ruling party, because the narrative is being peddled that only Muslims' property is being demolished, which is welcomed by the middle and upper middle classes, he explained. The state claims it is demolishing illegal constructions, but here people or social activists have to fight to get government land freed from such encroachments. One such activist Chanduji Darbar recently staged a protest outside the Viramgam Mamladar office. He has been fighting since 2019 to remove encroachments on government land near the railway station, near Rokadia Hanuman temple. Even after raising the issue at the highest level no action has been taken. In 2021, then Revenue Minister Kaushik Patel had said that 345 cases were filed for land grabbing and encroachment, some 28.61 crore square meters of land had been grabbed or illegally encroached. Its market value then was Rs 730 crore. But, beyond criminal investi-

gation there was no news of freeing these land parcels, said sources in the revenue department. The entire aim of bulldozer politics is to polarize the voters, but this time it is not going to work in the state because people by and large have started realizing that the ruling party is doing this to divert their attention from core issues like unemployment and inflation, said Manish Doshi, chief spokesperson of the Congress. Challenging the government action on technical grounds, political scientist and economist Hemant Shah called the state action illegal. His point is that if the state which has enacted the Impact Fee law, under which illegal constructions are legalized by charging fees, then how can it demolish illegal constructions. Shah said the ruling party is selective in targeting illegal properties of the minority communities. This will benefit it in the coming elections, but how far or how much is a big question.

international

RUSSIA RANKS 'UNFRIENDLY' NATIONS; US TOPS CHART

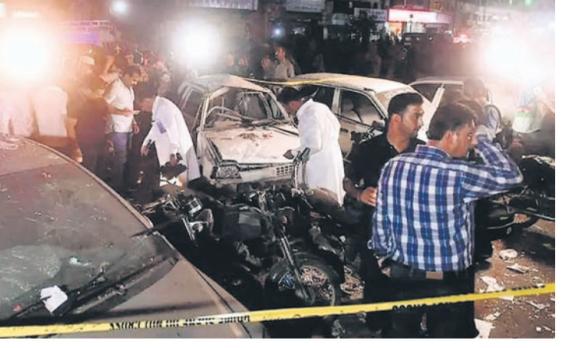
Russian State Duma chairman Vyacheslav Volodin has published on social media a list of "unfriendly nations" ranked by the number of anti-Russian sanctions they have imposed.

Moscow | Agencies
Switzerland, Britain, the EU as a single entity, Australia and Japan. "By introducing illegal sanctions against Russia, these states triggered a surge of prices for energy and food. Those are the primary culprits behind the current troubles and the future crises throughout the world," the Russian official stated. Blaming Russia for the increase in inflation that many nations now experience has become a common theme for many Western nations. The Joe Biden administration in the US coined the

term "Putin's price hike". But judging by opinion polls, Americans are not particularly willing to buy it and many believe their government should have done more to tackle inflation, RT reported. Energy prices were hitting record high levels in Europe before Russia's offensive against Ukraine. Back then, Moscow had said Europe could alleviate the surge by inking long-term supply contracts with Russia that would have mechanisms to dampen the spikes in the spot market. It also suggested bringing online the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline as soon as possible to secure the imports. Western sanctions against Russia that are now in place include the suspension of the project for the foreseeable future and a drive to decouple Europe from Russian energy.

KARACHI BLAST MASTERMIND RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM HEAD OF SRA IN IRAN

Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Deputy Inspector General Syed Khurram Ali shared on Thursday that the alleged mastermind of the improvised explosive device (IED) attack in Karachi's Saddar area earlier this month, was trained in Iran and received instructions and money from the head of the outlawed Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA) Asghar Shah, who was residing in the neighbouring country.



Karachi | Agencies
were damaged as well, among which was a vehicle of the Pakistan Coast Guards. The banned SRA subsequently claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it targeted the Coast Guards' vehicle. On Wednesday, two men, identified as Allah Dino, 28, and his accomplice Nawab Ali, 26, were killed in an encounter with counter-terror police, Dawn reported. A spokesperson for the CTD said in a statement issued on Thursday that officials, during the course of investigating the May 12 blast, found three men trying to move explosive material and tools on a motorcycle a day earlier within the jurisdiction of the Mochka police station in the city. When officials tried to stop the three suspects, they opened fire on the police. In the ensuing exchange of fire, two of the alleged terrorists were killed while the third escaped, the spokesperson said. He further said the two killed terrorists Dino and Ali were associated with the Asghar Shah branch of the proscribed SRA.

SKOREAN, RUSSIAN NUCLEAR ENVOYS HOLD PHONE TALKS ON N KOREA
Seoul: The chief nuclear envoys of South Korea and Russia held phone talks Thursday to discuss the security situation on the Korean Peninsula following North Korea's COVID-19 outbreak and missile tests, Seoul's foreign ministry said. During the introductory talks, Kim Gunn, special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs who took office last week, and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov, shared assessments of Pyongyang's recent missile tests and the coronavirus pandemic in the exclusive state, Yonhap news agency reported. Kim called for Russia to play a "constructive role" in having Pyongyang refrain from taking further escalating actions, amid speculation over the possibility of the recalcitrant regime carrying out a major weapons test despite its antiviral efforts. Seoul and Washington have warned that the North has made preparations for a long-range missile or a nuclear test around US President Joe Biden's trip to South Korea and Japan from May 20-24. High-level consultations between South Korea and Russia have been hampered by Seoul's joining of international sanctions against Moscow following its invasion of Ukraine, but their top nuclear envoys have remained in contact to discuss issues related to North Korea.

Italy supports Finland-Sweden NATO bid while Turkey says no

Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi told journalists that Italy backs the bid by Finland and Sweden to join NATO.



Beijing | Agencies
Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi told journalists that Italy backs the bid by Finland and Sweden to join NATO. Draghi met the press on Wednesday along with Finland's visiting Prime Minister Sanna Marin at Palazzo Chigi, the seat of Italy's government, Xinhua news agency reported. He said that Italy was willing to speed up the two applicant countries' accession procedures. Draghi said that the application for membership in the military alliance was sparked by security worries in the wake of the conflict

between Russia and Ukraine. Finland and Sweden, both members of the European Union (EU), formally applied for NATO membership on Wednesday. All 30 current NATO member states must approve the applications of new members. Turkey, however, has said it opposed the membership of the two Nordic countries. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Wednesday that Turkey will not approve Sweden's NATO membership if the country does not extradite "terrorists" upon Turkish request. Erdogan also told Sweden and Finland delegations not to bother coming to Ankara to convince it to approve their NATO bids.

UN chief says renewable energy "lifeline" to ending climate change

United Nations | Agencies
UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for efforts to accelerate the transition to renewable energy, saying the renewable energy is the "lifeline" to ending climate change. Greenhouse gas concentrations, sea level rises, ocean heat levels and acidification, all set new records during 2021, while some glaciers reached the point of no return, according to the latest flagship report from the World Meteorological Organization, published on Wednesday. The State of the Climate 2021 indicates that extreme weather - the day-to-day face of climate change - wreaked a

heavy toll of human lives, triggered shocks for food and water security, and led to hundreds of billions of dollars in economic losses last year, Xinhua news agency reported. The report, which describes yet more clear signs that human activity is causing harm on a planetary scale, also confirms that the past seven years have been the warmest on record, with global temperature in 2021 reaching about 1.1 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Noting the report is a "dismal litany of humanity's failure to tackle climate disruption," the UN chief said that while time is running out to prevent the worst impacts of the climate crisis, there is a "lifeline" right in front. "We must end fossil fuel

pollution and accelerate the renewable energy transition before we incinerate our only home... Transforming energy systems is low-hanging fruit," he emphasised in a video message. Highlighting that renewable energy technologies such as wind and solar are readily available and in most cases, cheaper than coal and other fossil fuels, the top UN official proposed critical actions to jump-start the energy transition, which he called the "peace project of the 21st century." Guterres called for treating renewable energy technologies as essential global public goods, securing, scaling up and diversifying the supply components and raw materials for renewable energy technologies.

He also urged efforts to build frameworks and reform fossil fuel bureaucracies. The UN chief calls on governments to fast-track and streamline approvals of solar and wind projects, modernize grids and set ambitious renewable energy targets that provide certainty to investors, developers, consumers and producers. The secretary-general called for shifting subsidies away from fossil fuels. "While people suffer from high prices at the pump, the oil and gas industry is raking in billions from a distorted market. This scandal must stop," Guterres pointed out. "It's time to jump-start the renewable energy transition before it's too late," the secretary-general said.



MAINTAINING SOCIAL HARMONY IN STATE IS TOP PRIORITY: CM



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Chouhan said that maintaining social harmony is the top priority of the state government. He said keep vigilant on those who disturb the social fabric, create distance in the communities and create disturbances. Strict action should be taken against the persons involved in such activities. Chouhan said that the people involved in the transportation of bovine and cow slaughter, the mafia linked to it should be investigated and their network should be destroyed. Chief Minister said that through development and public service, we have to maintain social harmony by creating trust in different communities.

It is our endeavour that the communal divide between different communities should not widen further at any cost. Chouhan was reviewing the law and order situation in Seoni district and implementation of development schemes at 6:30 am on Thursday from the residence office.

Chouhan also obtained information about land freed from the encroachment of 'dabangs' and mafia. The Seoni Collector informed that so far 200 acres of land is now free from such encroachment and has been earmarked for Pradhan Mantri Awas

and Mukhyamantri Bhu-Adhikar Yojana. After getting information about the drinking water situation in Seoni district, Chouhan discussed with the District Collector the updated status of on-going works under Jal Jeevan Mission. The Collector informed him that 929 tap-water schemes are operational in the district. Out of these, 61 schemes are well-based to ensure alternative arrangements for water supply. Chouhan directed L&T Company to complete the work at the earliest and review situation continuously to ensure that water supply is not disrupted. Chouhan said that women self-help groups should be entrusted with the work of maintenance and operation of tap-water schemes. The work of Jhurki Rural Women Self-Help Group was appreciated in the meeting.

Chouhan said that maximum works of Amrit Sarovar should be completed by June 15. The Amrit Sarovar should be developed ideally. Chief Minister directed the officers of Water Resources Department from Bhopal to inspect the site and solve the problem immediately regarding the arrangement of water for irrigation in Pench Diversion Irrigation Project.

The Chief Minister was apprised of progress on Prime Minister Housing Scheme and Awas Plus

schemes. He instructed officials to deal with corrupt officials strictly and take stern action against them as complaints have been received regarding corruption at field level in Panchayat and Rural Development schemes.

The Chief Minister directed the Chief Executive Officer of the District Panchayats to visit regularly in rural areas to see development work under various government schemes. He said his government is more focussed on ensuring house to maximum population and each beneficiary who has been allotted house, should be informed about the allotment through letter from the Chief Minister.

He instructed that none should demand any money neither against allotment of houses nor for inclusion of names of beneficiaries in prescribed lists for the purpose.

The officers informed him about the status of MGNREGA works. He said he would not allow any laxity in distribution of ration. He instructed officials to ensure 100% ration distribution in the district. He also issued instructions to resolve complaints through dedicated Helpline. He further instructed officers to issue cards to cent per cent population under Ayushman Bharat scheme within a certain time frame. Talking tough on certain government officers and employees are staying on a position for a very long time, Chouhan directed the top officials to prepare a list of such officers and employees. The Chief Minister said he would not spare anyone who is indulged in corrupt practices and is negligent at duty. He, however, ensured best performing officers - employees will be rewarded and encouraged. Chouhan asked to officials to work promptly in promoting local palatable variety of Sitaphal (custard apple) in Seoni district under 'One District One Product' scheme. Also, he said, the aromatic rice variety 'Jeera Shankar' is widely grown in the district and is pride of Madhya Pradesh. It should get recognition nationwide as brand, he asked.

RELEVANCE OF LIFE IS IN DEDICATION TO RESPONSIBILITIES IN MIDST OF SUCCESS: GOVERNOR



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that ups and downs come in everyone's life. It is important to keep working with constant devotion and dedication while maintaining self-confidence in adverse circumstances. The significance of life is in working with a sense of duty towards one's responsibilities even in moments of success and joy. Giving his own example, he said that in the midst of many difficulties in life, working with this spirit, he has reached this stage. Patel was addressing the Conquest-2022 of Oriental Institute. In the ceremony, he felicitated the students of the institute who got selected in various prestigious enterprises.

Governor Patel said that it is always his endeavour that he should contribute his best in the welfare of the most

backward deprived sections of the society. Work for them with maximum effort as you can. With this spirit, as the Governor of the state, he is making continuous efforts to solve the problems of the deprived sections and the inaccessible areas.

He appreciated the educational activities of the institute and the arrangements for organising the Conquest celebrations. The Governor said that it is necessary to understand the social, spirituality inherent in the concept of the dance drama, Ganesh Vandana, Namami Devi Narmade and the short film screened during the programme. The result of Ganesh Ji's service, dedication, determination towards his mother is that even today auspicious works begin by offering worship to him. Rivers and trees are the basis of life, from which we get drinking water and vitality.

Clean environment, cleanliness of rivers, conservation and plantation are necessary for a happy life. He told that on one hand there are stories of conflict among brothers for royalty and property. On the other hand Sardar Patel did an unprecedented work of convincing rulers of more than five and a half hundred princely states of the country to give up their kingdoms.

The Governor was welcomed by Oriental Institute Chairman Praveen Thakral by presenting a sapling as a symbol of clean environment and nature conservation and memento as a token of gratitude. The welcome address at the ceremony was given by Tushar Kataria, General Secretary, Student Activities Committee and Diva Khan, a Master of Ceremony student. The programme was conducted by student Om Garg and girl student Anshika Gupta.

Two injured tiger cubs shifted to rehabilitation centre in MP

▶ TWO TIGER CUBS THAT GOT INJURED AFTER STONES WERE PELTED AT THEM BY VILLAGERS IN MADHYA PRADESH SEONI DISTRICT HAVE BEEN RESCUED BY FOREST OFFICIALS AND SHIFTED TO A VETERINARY HOSPITAL IN THE KANHA TIGER RESERVE.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Two tiger cubs that got injured after stones were pelted at them by villagers in Madhya Pradesh' Seoni district have been rescued by forest officials and shifted to a veterinary hospital in the Kanha Tiger Reserve. The four to six month old cubs were found in a weak and starving condition with injuries on their bodies due to stone pelting. They were rescued by the forest officials after a video surfaced on social media showing people pelting stones at them.

"Two tiger cubs rescued from Seoni district have been brought to Kanha Tiger Rehabilitation centre. Currently, they are under veterinary doctors' supervision. They have separated from their mother. Search for their mother is going on," said an official in Kanha Tiger Reserve.

After being rescued, they were given proper food and medicines and will remain under

observation for about a fortnight. One of the cubs had suffered injuries in its right hind leg, Kanha Tiger Reserve veterinarian Dr Sandeep Agrawal said.

"The cubs will be kept in an enclosure at the wildlife hospital in Mukki range till they become normal and will then be shifted to a rewilding centre at Ghorela to learn how to survive in deep forests," he added.

A video of the incident showed one of the tiger cubs limping and some people pelting it with stones and chasing the cub.

According to the All-India Tiger Estimation Report 2018, Madhya Pradesh was home to 526 tigers, the highest in any state of the country. The state has a number of tiger reserves, including Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Satpura and Panna. Madhya Pradesh has lost over 15 tigers in the last four months in different wildlife habitats of the state.

Photographic Exhibition "Life of Sparrow" inaugurated at RMNH

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal organized various programmes on the occasion of International Museum Day on 18th May, 2022. On this occasion, a Temporary Photographic Exhibition "Life of Sparrow" jointly organised by Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal; Bhopal Birds Conservation Society and Madhya Pradesh State Biodiversity Board; was inaugurated.

Chief Guest of the occasion was Atul Shrivastava, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest & Member Secretary of Madhya Pradesh State Biodiversity and Special Guest was Viny Raj Modi, Vice President, Association of Unaided Pvt. Schools, Madhya Pradesh.

Manoj Kumar Sharma, Scientist-in-Charge of the museum delivered welcome address. During the address,



he welcomed Chief Guest, Special Guest, winners & participants of photographic temporary exhibition, participants of summer nature study programme Green Teen & Green Cub and other guests. He informed about the programmes & activities organize by museum towards nature conservation.

In the continuation of programme, Beenish Rafat,

Exhibition "Life of Sparrow".

During his speech, Special Guest Viny Raj Modi appreciated programme & activities of the RMNH, Bhopal towards nature conservation.

Chief Guest Atul Shrivastava congratulated the RMNH, Bhopal on the occasion of International Museum Day and told that RMNH, Bhopal is a unique museum which is dedicated towards nature conservation. He also told that children & teenager should become aware towards nature conservation.

Mohd. Khalique, CEO from Bhopal Birds Conservation Society announced the names of winners of Photographic Temporary Exhibition "Life of Sparrow" and the Chief Guest, & Special Guest distributed the prizes to winners & certificates to participants. The programme was concluded with vote of thanks proposed by Mohd Khalique.

CM PLANTS PEEPAL, BANYAN AND NEEM SAPPLINGS



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Peepal, Banyan and Neem saplings in the Smart City Garden, Khajuraho MP VD Sharma, renowned cricket commentator Sushil Doshi, Chief General Manager, State Bank of India Bhopal Circle Vinod Mishra, Group Editor of Patrika Media Group Bhuvnesh Jain, journalist Suresh Sharma and his family members were also participated in the plantation programme. Peepal is a shady tree which purifies the environment. It has religious and Ayurvedic significance. Banyan tree is also called 'Vat Vrکش' or Bad locally has religious significance. According to Ayurveda, it is possible to cure many diseases from the banyan tree. Neem is known as the supreme medicine rich in very useful and antibiotic elements.

'Smart fish parlors to be set up in local bodies'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that work has been done for economic upgradation, marriage, education, assistance besides providing insurance scheme benefits to the family members of the fishermen of the state. Smart fish parlors will be set up in local bodies in the state. This will provide organized employment to our fishermen as well as ensure availability of different types of clean and fresh fish to the consumers.

Assistance will be provided for fish-seed production and shrimp-cum-fish farming through Mukhya Mantri Matsya Vikas Yojana. Kisan Credit Cards will also be made available to fishermen at zero percent interest.

Chouhan distributed fishing kits to 400 beneficiaries and motorcycles for sale and transportation of fish to 50 beneficiaries during the



Budhni Kshetra Fishermen Conference held at the Chief Minister's residence on Thursday. In addition, 443 beneficiaries were also given letters of approval of Kisan Credit Card. So far, one lakh 5 thousand fishermen have been given these cards in the state.

Chouhan said that our boatman used to travel

through walking or by bus. The Kevat community also had difficulty in carrying their material. They are being given two wheelers. So far 50 beneficiaries have been benefited under the scheme. Along with this, kit of material for fisheries and fisheries work is also being given. An ice box has also been provided with the motorcycle. Fishing material includes nets, hooks, etc. Chief Minister said that a strategy has been fixed to get the benefits of various beneficiary oriented schemes besides ensuring training and upgradation of fishermen to increase fish-seed, fish and shrimp production, providing market through effective marketing and branding, providing pond hatcheries, fish feed plants, boats and nets etc., working capital, employment and along with the arrangement of livelihood. The state government will give full cooperation in fisheries and seed production.

CM talks with children in Anganwadi while sitting on the floor

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday visited Anganwadi at SunehriBagh. By adopting this Anganwadi in 'Adopt an Anganwadi,' the Chief Minister has personally made necessary arrangements including painting and decoration.

Chouhan sat on the floor in Anganwadi and interacted with the children. Taking information about the daily routine of the children, he asked, "What time do they come to Anganwadi, do they like to come to Anganwadi or not, what is available in food and what is the favourite dish." Children told that In Anganwadi, they like curry-ricce, dal-ricce, kheer-puri and halwa.

A little girl Shreya narrated a story to Chief Minister, children of Anganwadi also sang poem in choras. The words of the poem were: "Do the brush - wash your face, greet your parents - then start your



work". Chouhan presented sets of toffees and coloured pencils to the children of Anganwadi. Chief Minister also interacted with the beloved 'Laxmis' of the area present in the Anganwadi. Former Minister Umashankar Gupta, Collector Avinash Lavania and Municipal Commissioner KVS Chowdhary were also present on the occasion.

WHY POLITICAL UPROAR IN MP AFTER SC NOD TO CONDUCT LOCAL BODY POLLS WITH OBC RESERVATION?

■ The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the implementation of reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the local body elections to be held in Madhya Pradesh, with reservation limit of 50 per cent.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the implementation of reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the local body elections to be held in Madhya Pradesh, with reservation limit of 50 per cent. With the Supreme Court's decision to

allow elections with the OBC reservation, senior leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress in Madhya Pradesh welcomed the decision, saying, 'justice prevailed'. Both parties claimed that the initiative for providing reservation for OBCs was taken by them, and accused each other of being 'anti-OBC'.

Expressing happiness over the Supreme Court's decision, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said: "We had made our intentions clear on this issue. We wanted the local body elections to be held with OBC reservation and all preparations were made for this purpose. The election dates were announced, but the Congress went to the court and the process was stayed. The Congress committed a sin for political gains, but today justice prevailed and the truth won." Chouhan counted the efforts made

by his government to provide reservation to OBC. He said that his government initiated the process of forming the OBC commission and a survey was conducted across the state to collect facts regarding the same.

"The SC relied on the commission's report, subsequently the decision to allow elections with OBC quota was announced," Chouhan added.

The apex court's decision came on the basis of the Backward Classes Commission's report of triple test for reservation submitted by the state government to seek permission to implement the OBC quota for the elections.

The state government has submitted that the delimitation exercise in the state had been completed even before the May 10 order. However, these crucial facts had not been placed before the court prior to the order. After observing the commission's

reports, the bench led by Justice AM Khanwilkar modified the court's May 10 order directing the State Election Commission to notify the election programme for over 20,000 urban and panchayat local bodies in the state within two weeks, without waiting for the completion of the 'triple test' exercise and further delimitation prior to the polls.

"We permit the state of Madhya Pradesh to notify the reservation pattern local body wise to be adhered to by the state election commission within one week. The state election commission shall notify the election programme in respect of the concerned local bodies within one week," the Supreme Court order stated.

Meanwhile, the reasons behind political trade barbs over OBC reservation have emerged for the power gaining exercise of both the Congress and the

BJP during the assembly polls scheduled in the state next year.

As per the OBC Commission's report submitted to the court, the OBC population in the parts of state, such as Gwalior-Chambal, Bundelkhand, Vindya and central zone of Madhya Pradesh has nearly 51 per cent.

Political analysts said that out of total 230 assembly seats, the percentage of OBC voters are deciding factors.

L. Kumar Mishra, a senior journalist, told IANS: "Before 2003, there was rare political attention on OBC. Though the politics over OBC started coming on central stage in the state during the Digvijaya Singh government when a proposal for extending OBC quota from 14 per cent to 27 per cent was passed, but, the issue remained in the court and the Congress did pay much attention to it. The BJP managed to gain massive support from the OBC since 2003, but

in the last assembly polls had also managed to get support from OBC voters."

At present, from 230 assembly seats, 60 MLAs belong to the OBC community in Madhya Pradesh. After 2020 by-polls, the BJP has 32 MLAs from the OBC category and 28 from the Congress.

Ajad Singh Dabas, former chief coordinator of joint OBC union in Madhya Pradesh, said: "Neither the BJP nor the Congress did give attention to OBC because Madhya Pradesh's politics has always been centralised on upper castes and the ST/SC. Most of the OBC leaders in both political parties have managed to gain political space at their own strength, and they were not promoted, including the Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. But, now the scenario has started changing for the last few years and over 90 categories under the OBC have become deciding factors in the elections."



Aerial show by fighter jets unfolds 'Top Gun: Maverick' premiere

Paris | Agencies

The world premiere of the Tom Cruise star vehicle, 'Top Gun: Maverick', at the 75th Cannes Film Festival on Wednesday night was a grand affair, topped up by the appearance of eight fighter jets spewing red, white and blue smoke (national colours of both France and the United States) behind them as members of the films cast looked on from below.

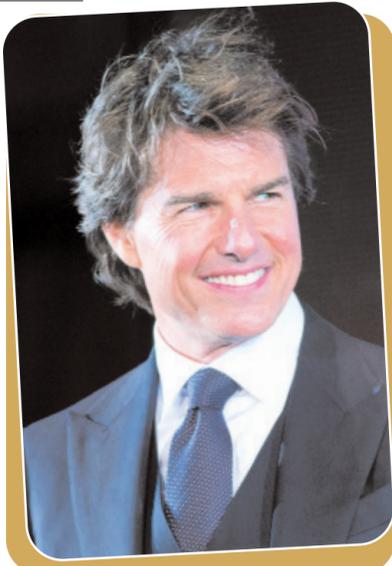
The actor received a thunderous ovation, reports 'Variety', after he was presented with a 'surprise' Palme d'Or, one that genuinely seemed to take him off guard. He had received another ovation after making some spirited introductory remarks.

"This is an incredible evening and an incredible time... just to see everyone's faces," Cruise said from the stage of the Palais du Festivals. "It's been 36 years since the first 'Top Gun' and we've had to hold it for years for the pandemic."

Cruise then called on the cast, which included Jennifer Connelly, Miles Teller, and Jon Hamm, and Paramount's executive team to stand up, as the audience cheered.

"This movie was a dream," Cruise said. "We talked about it when filming. I just want to see everyone's face. There are no masks and we're in a movie theatre. I'm going to take this all in and I feel very grateful. We're here for you. I make all these movies for all of you and I'm very blessed to do what I do. Enjoy this evening. You all have made my life."

Reporting the event, 'Variety' noted that "the festival crowd joyously interacted with the film during the screening, cheering and gasping at stunts". An overwhelming response came when Val Kilmer, who starred as Cruise nemesis Iceman in the original film, appeared in a scene with Cruise (as the commander of the U.S. Navy's Pacific fleet). The screening ended with a five-minute standing ovation from the crowd.



POTENTIAL OSCAR WINNERS TEST THE WATERS AT CANNES

Los Angeles | Agencies

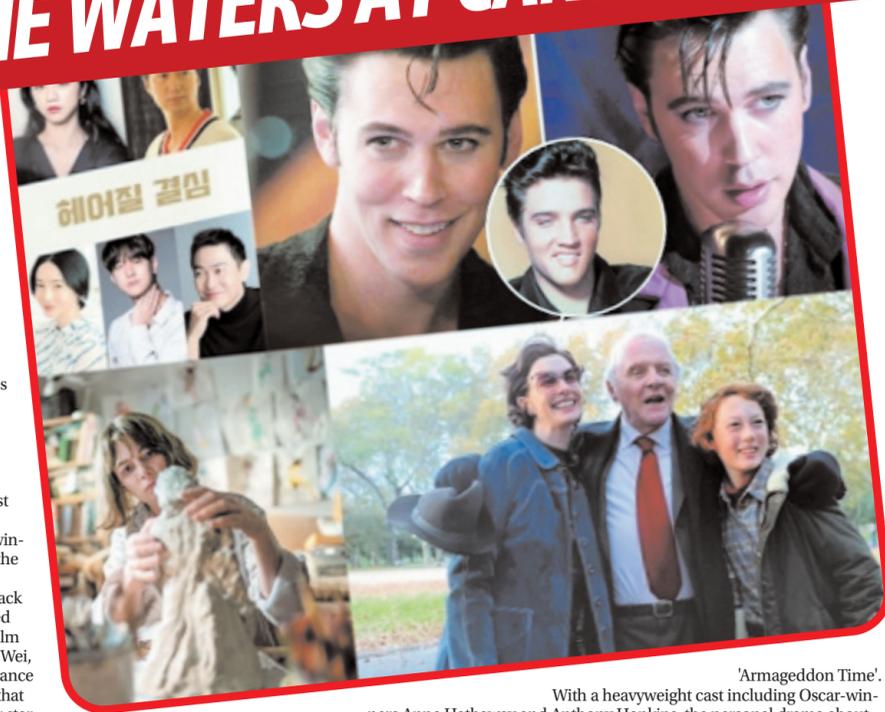
The 75th edition of the prestigious Cannes Film Festival witnesses the return of international auteurs, Palme d'Or winning filmmakers, potential summer blockbusters, and many films that will, if everything breaks their way, be campaigning for the Academy Award during the fall, reports 'Variety'.

The track record for Palme d'Or winners going onto Oscar success has varied over the years. Over the past two decades, according to 'Variety', Roman Polanski's 'The Pianist', Terrence Malick's 'The Tree of Life', Michael Haneke's 'Amour' and Bong Joon-ho's 'Parasite' have received best picture nominations. However, 'Parasite' is one of only two Cannes winners that has managed to break it at the Oscars, with the other being 'Marty'.

Asian auteur Park Chan-wook is back on the scene with his long-anticipated 'Decision to Leave' from Mubi. The film stars the criminally underrated Tang Wei, who delivered an incredible performance in Ang Lee's 'Lust, Caution' in a role that should have made her a much bigger star, and Park Hae-il, fantastic in 'The Host', 'Variety' reports.

Michelle Williams, who is set to play Steven Spielberg's mother in 'The Fabelmans' later this year, is re-teaming with director Kelly Reichardt on the Croisette with the in-competition film 'Showing Up'.

Fresh off winning Kenneth Branagh an Oscar for original screenplay with 'Belfast', Focus Features is hoping to mirror that success with James Gray's



'Armageddon Time'.

With a heavyweight cast including Oscar-winners Anne Hathaway and Anthony Hopkins, the personal drama about Gray's childhood could lead to awards season glory. Gray is revered in France, but his auteur creed has never translated into major success with the Academy Awards or with the U.S. audiences for that matter.

Warner Bros' will bring the life of Elvis Presley with the biopic 'Elvis' starring Austin Butler and two-time Oscar-winner Tom Hanks. Likely to draw comparisons to 'Bohemian Rhapsody' (2018), the Baz Luhrmann drama could be a box-office draw based on the King of Rock's mega-selling catalogue.

Nicole Kidman excised from Tom Cruise montage at Cannes

Paris | Agencies

Guess who was snipped out of Tom Cruise's 10-minute career retrospective montage at the 75th Cannes Film Festival? None other than his wife of 10 years and co-star in three of his films, Nicole Kidman. The montage, studded with shots of Cruise saving the world as Ethan Hunt from various 'Mission: Impossible' adventures, was screened before the star-studded world premiere of 'Top Gun: Maverick'.

Here's how 'Variety' has reported the excision of footage featuring Kidman: Sure, 'Days of Thunder', the film that Kidman and Cruise met cute on, was represented, but no footage of the two of them in a torrid embrace was on display. Instead, it was only shots of Cruise behind the wheel of a very fast car. Yes, there were clips from 'Far and Away', but only Cruise riding a horse. No Kidman to be found. And, of course, 'Eyes Wide Shut' made the grade, "it being the final film from auteur-iest of auteurs" Stanley Kubrick (the French love their filmmakers!). That erotic drama featured Cruise and Kidman as a married couple whose relationship is challenged by the wife's admission that she contemplated having an affair. But Cannes didn't go with anything from the pair's wrenching confessional moments. Instead,

Cruise is glimpsed removing a mask.

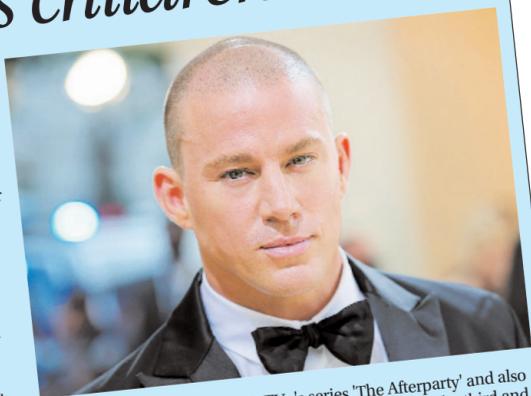
Channing Tatum to star in film adaptation of his children's book

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor-producer Channing Tatum, who was recently seen in 'Dog', is set to produce and star in a film adaptation of his children's book 'The One and Only Sparkella' for MGM, reports Deadline. Channing's first picture book, illustrated by Kim Barnes, was published by Feiwel & Friends in May last year. As per Deadline, it follows the story of a father who teaches his daughter Ella the importance of being herself, after she's made to feel like an outsider at school.

Channing will release a second children's book, 'The One and Only Sparkella Makes a Plan', on May 31, with a third also on the way. While Deadline states that Channing will play Sparkella's father figure, it's not yet clear who will play Ella. Pamela Ribon is developing the screenplay for the live-action adaptation, which is yet to finalise a director.

Channing will produce the film under his Free Association banner, which has a first-look deal with MGM. Michael Parets, Peter Kiernan, Reid Carolin and Cody Carolin will also produce, with Parets overseeing the project for Free Association. Channing recently played himself on Apple TV+'s series 'The Afterparty' and also starred in Paramount's comedy, 'The Lost City'. He'll next be seen in Zoe Kravitz's directorial debut 'Pussy Island', as well as the third and final Magic Mike film, 'Magic Mike's Last Dance'.



Jin performing Garba on Dayaben aka Disha Vakani's song

Los Angeles | Agencies

BTS members - RM, Jin, Suga, J-Hope, JIMIN, Taehyung and Jungkook - have something desi in them. Well, their vibes sure match the desi. BTS ARMY is spread across the world and India, too, has a share in it. And it seems to be growing. Well, Desi Bangtan ARMY, Navratri is still away.

But we couldn't help but share some videos we came across on YouTube wherein the BTS members are giving out the Garba Vibes. The first video is about the eldest member of BTS, Jin aka Kim Seokjin. Y'all would know how goofy Jin is in real life. The Worldwide Handsome had been shooting for a cooking-based Run BTS episode once. And he turned celery sticks into Dandiyas! And ARMYs got more creative with that. They included 'TMKOC' 'Dayaben aka Disha Vakani's Garba song in the video. Though Jin's video is for a couple of seconds, it looks hilarious.

ELTON JOHN DOCUMENTARY 'GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD' UP FOR HYBRID RELEASE

Los Angeles | Agencies

The Elton John documentary, Goodbye Yellow Brick Road: The Final Elton John Performances And the Years That Made His Legend, is set for a hybrid release as its rights have been secured by Disney+. The film, directed by the Academy Award-nominee R.J. Cutler as well as filmmaker David Furnish, has been sold for about \$30 million, reports Deadline.

At the heart of the documentary is Elton John's Farewell Yellow Brick Road Tour' as the film will capture Elton John's final months on the road, culminating in his November performance at Dodger Stadium in his final North American show. Deadline further states that the package includes the rights to livestream that final concert, which is shaping up to be one of the greatest send-offs in rock-and-roll history.

It will also look back at the unprecedented first five years of John's career when, between 1970 and 1975, he released 10 hit albums, seven of which topped the Billboard charts and became a global phenomenon. Bob Chapek, said in a statement accessed by Variety, "There are no superlatives left to describe Elton John and his impact on music and culture - he's simply unrivalled. Like a good Disney story, Elton's music has both universal appeal and the ability to connect with audiences on a deeply personal level."

"He has been part of the Disney family since 1994 when he helped make The Lion King an instant classic, and we could not be more excited to collaborate with him on this new documentary," he added in the statement. Cutler is thrilled to work with Furnish on the documentary as he said in his statement, "What a thrill and an honour it is that David Furnish and I get to create this intimate and unique look at one of the world's most celebrated artists. As it has for so many others, Elton John's music has had deep meaning for me for decades, and this opportunity is nothing short of a career highlight and privilege." Furnish added, "Elton and I could not think of a better collaborator than R.J. Cutler for a film that represents more than just Elton's career - it's his life. From the Troubadour to Dodger Stadium, we knew that R.J. would help guide Elton's story and its many layers in a way that feels authentic and evocative. We're ecstatic to be working together."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Taylor Swift



IPL 2022

KOHLI SHINES, RCB ON FOURTH PLACE WITH 8-WICKET WIN OVER GT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A vintage blitz from Virat Kohli (73 off 54 balls), with support from Faf du Plessis (44 off 38 balls) and Glenn Maxwell (40 not out off 18 balls) takes Royal Challengers Bangalore to fourth place in IPL 2022 points table with an emphatic eight-wicket win over table-toppers Gujarat Titans at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday.

After Hardik Pandya's unbeaten 62 carried Gujarat to 168/5, Kohli came out all guns blazing, bringing out his vintage self with a pumped-up attitude to notch up his highest score of the tournament while stitching a 115-run opening stand with du Plessis. After the duo fell, Maxwell applied the finishing touches as RCB emerged victorious with eight balls to spare.

With Bangalore's win, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Punjab Kings are out of the knockouts race. For Bangalore to retain their fourth place and progress to the playoffs, they would need Delhi Capitals to lose to Mumbai Indians on Saturday.

In the pursuit of 169, Bangalore were off to a flying start with Kohli and du Plessis hitting nine boundaries to reach 55/0 in power-play. It was also just the third time Gujarat failed to pick a wicket in the first six overs.

The chief reason behind it was Kohli running quick off the blocks and quashing queries over his poor



form throughout the tournament, with the crowd at Wankhede Stadium firmly cheering for the talismanic batter.

He began by lofting Mohammed Shami over his head and then superbly lofted him inside-out over extra-cover. Thursday felt like luck was favouring Kohli heavily. When Hardik Pandya cramped Kohli with a slower ball, the thick inside edge rolled past the stumps.

When Kohli whipped a full ball in the air, Rashid Khan, who was inches inside the square-leg boundary, dropped the catch. Kohli then produced the shot of the match, dancing down the pitch and lofting straight over Rashid's head with impeccable timing.

With du Plessis giving solid support, Kohli brought up his fifty in 33 balls with a nice clipped six over deep mid-wicket off Rashid. Du

Brief scores:

Gujarat Titans 168/5 in 20 overs (Hardik Pandya 62 not out, David Miller 34; Josh Hazlewood 2/39, Wanindu Hasaranga 1/25) lost to Royal Challengers Bangalore 170/2 in 18.4 overs (Virat Kohli 73, Faf du Plessis 44; Rashid Khan 2/32)

Plessis brought up the century of the opening partnership by swatting Lockie Ferguson through mid-wicket. But he fell six short of his fifty, as top-edge on slog sweep went to cover off Rashid, bringing the 115-run stand to a close.

Rashid then hit the top of Maxwell's leg stump as the batter tried to swipe across the line. But the balls didn't come off and the ball rolled away for four byes. The slice of luck at the start proved advantageous for Maxwell as he smacked Pandya for sixes - loft over long-on and reverse scoop over third man - apart from a boundary through long leg.

Kohli's dazzling show continued as he elegantly brought out a lofted drive over long-off against Rashid. But a ball later, Kohli tried to hit another six but the ball went through the gap between bat and pad to be stumped by a quickish googly from Rashid. Maxwell smacked four boundaries in his next nine balls, including three off Ferguson, to seal the match in Bangalore's favour.

GUINNESS WORLD RECORD

RCB FANS SCORE MOST CRICKET RUNS BETWEEN THE WICKETS IN AN HOUR

Bengaluru | Agencies

Royal Challengers Bangalore fans on Thursday scripted a new Guinness World Record feat for completing most runs between the wickets in an hour at 12th Man Takeover, a fan-connect programme.

A huge group of 187 RCB fans came together in the event powered by sportswear giant Puma at Jaymahal Palace in Bengaluru to establish a new official record as they completed 823 runs between the wickets on a 22-yard cricket pitch set up at the venue, the organisers informed in a release on Thursday. Royal Challengers Bangalore were the first T20 team to be placed in the Top-10 list of the most popular teams in the world on social media. The world record was set in the presence of two top Indian sports personalities - sprinter Dutee Chand hockey player and hockey star Rupinder Pal Singh.

India's star sprinter Dutee Chand kick-started the official attempt for the world record with the first run and was joined by fans, who contributed runs for the feat.

Popularly known as the 12th Man Army, the RCB fans wore the team's jersey along



with cricketing gear while securing the record.

Royal Challengers Bangalore have had an impressive run in the ongoing IPL 2022 and are in the hunt for a place in the playoffs.

Marwadi University bets big on sports, nurturing athletes to represent India

Rajkot: Marwadi University (MU) students, shone brightly at the recently concluded Khel Mahakumbh 2022, as Rabiya Basathiya, a first-year BCA student won silver in 100m athletics and long jump, while Ruchita Sagathiya and Srushti Mehta won gold medals in karate across different weight categories respectively. The MU volleyball team also brought home gold. Among other recent sports achievements, Jigar Thakkar, a fourth-semester MBA student at MU, combating cerebral palsy, recently won gold at the 21st National Para-Swimming Championship in Udaipur. The University also aims to promote an active lifestyle via tournament participation and physical training. "To date more than INR 8 crore has been invested with a plan to build a strong sporting ecosystem to complement academics. Significant investments are underway to expand the indoor sports facility and an additional football ground with night lighting and stadium-style seating, in addition to a 4-acre sports complex with a lakeside athletics track.

ARCHERY WORLD CUP

INDIAN WOMEN'S RECURVE TEAM WINS BRONZE

Gwangju (S Korea) | Agencies

The Indian women's recurve team of Ridhi, Komalika Bari and Ankita Bhakat outscored the Chinese Taipei team to win a bronze medal at the ongoing Archery World Cup 2022 stage 2, here on Thursday. The young Indian trio of Ridhi, Komalika and Ankita dominated their opponent from Chinese Taipei 6-2 (56-52, 54-51, 54-55, 55-54) in the lopsided playoff after going down against home favourites South Korea in the semifinals with a similar 6-2 scoreline.

While India women were inconsistent against South Korea, they corrected their ways against Chinese Taipei by scoring three perfect 10s and eight 9s in the first two sets to take a 4-0 lead. The Indian team lost the third set but mounted a comeback and won the match in the fourth set with one 10 and five 9s.

This was the second bronze medal for India at the Archery World Cup in Gwangju. Earlier on Wednesday, the women's compound team comprising

Avneet Kaur, Muskan Kirar and Priya Gurjar had won the bronze, an olympics.com report said.

However, the Indian men's recurve team of Olympians Tarundeep Rai and Jayanta Talukdar along with debutant Neeraj Chauhan were eliminated in the quarterfinals after losing to lower-ranked France 2-6.

Meanwhile, the Indian men's com-

-pound team of Asian Games gold medalist Abhishek Verma along with Aman Saini and Rajat Chauhan has already assured India of at least one silver medal after beating home favourites South Korea to reach Saturday's final.

Notably, the Indian men's compound team had also won gold at the Archery World Cup Stage 1 event held in Turkey last month.



Frankfurt lift Europa League title after shootout win against Rangers

Madrid | Agencies

Eintracht Frankfurt beat Rangers 5-4 in a penalty shootout to lift the UEFA Europa League title after 120 minutes ended 1-1 between the two sides in the Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium on Wednesday.

Rangers' Aaron Ramsey, who had been brought on specially for the shootout, missed the seventh penalty, and Frankfurt's Rafael Santos Borré drilled the last penalty into the corner to decide the title.

The first half was a relatively even affair as neither side wanted to commit any errors, although Eintracht had the best chance when Ansgar Knauff's effort was pushed wide by Rangers



keeper Allan McGregor, while at the other end, John Lundstram saw an effort comfortably tipped over the bar, reports Xinhua.

Extra-time saw the game become increasingly stretched as the heat and the tension began to take its toll

on the players, although it was 15 minutes of 'oooh' and 'ahhs' rather than clear chances. The second period of extra-time began with Borna Barisic firing straight at Kevin Trapp, while Adjin Hrustic dragged a shot wide of McGregor's far post, before Rangers brought Ramsey on for the impending penalties. The shootout nearly wasn't needed as Kent saw Trapp make a great save when he looked certain to net the winner for Rangers, and Davis' follow-up was deflected wide at the last moment.

THAILAND OPEN

Sindhu reaches quarters, Srikanth pulls out

Bangkok | Agencies

Former world champion PV Sindhu advanced to the women's singles quarter-finals of the Thailand Open 2022 while world championships silver medalist Kidambi Srikanth pulled out from his Round of 16 match, here on Thursday. Sindhu, seeded sixth, took 37 minutes to defeat world No 46 Sim Yu Jin of South Korea 21-16, 21-13 in the Round of 16 at the Impact Arena. Both Sindhu and her Korean opponent matched the intensity in the early exchanges of the first game and were tied at 5-all. However, the Indian ace took command of the proceedings by scoring nine of the next 10 points and went on to win the game with ease. The 26-year-old only tightened her grip on the match in the second game and sealed her place in the quarter-finals of the Thailand Open. This was Sindhu's second win over Sim Yu Jin in as many



matches. She had come from behind to defeat the South Korean shuttler in three games at last year's Indonesia Open. Sindhu, India's only remaining challenge at the BWF Super 500 tournament, will next face world No 1 Akane Yamaguchi of Japan in the quarter-finals on Friday. While Sindhu enjoys a 13-9 head-to-head record against Yamaguchi, the Indian shuttler had lost to the Japanese player in the semi-finals of the Badminton Asia championships last month. Earlier in the day, Kidambi Srikanth pulled out from his round of 16 match against Ireland's Nhat Nguyen. The reason for his withdrawal is not yet known.

KARUNARATNE, DICKWELLA HELP SRI LANKA DRAW FIRST TEST AGAINST BANGLADESH

Team Absolute | Chattogram

Defiant half-centuries from skipper Dimuth Karunaratne and Niroshan Dickwella helped Sri Lanka draw the first Test of the two-match series against Bangladesh, here on Thursday.

Some brilliant bowling from Bangladesh on the final day made things interesting. Tajjul Islam led Bangladesh's attack with guile and spin and at 161/6, the home side would have fancied their chances to bowl the opposition out.

However, resistance from Chandimal and Dickwella, who put on an unbeaten 99-run stand for the seventh wicket, meant both teams had to settle for a draw and share four points each



Brief scores:

Sri Lanka 397 & 260/6 (Niroshan Dickwella 61 not out, Dimuth Karunaratne 52; Tajjul Islam 4/82) drew with Bangladesh 465 (Tamim Iqbal 133, Mushfiqur Rahim 105; Kasun Rajitha 4/60, Asitha Fernando 3/72).

in the ICC World Test Championship. The result means Sri Lanka and Bangladesh remain rooted to the fifth and eighth spot, respectively on the World Test Championship table.

Resuming Day 5 on 39/2, still 29 runs behind as Bangladesh had raised 465 runs in response to Sri Lanka's first innings score of 397, Kusal Mendis decided attack was the best form of defence and

played a counter-attacking innings that quickly wiped out the deficit. Sri Lanka were 161/6. At that time, Sri Lanka's lead was only 75 and a couple more wickets would have given Bangladesh a sniff at victory. But, Dinesh Chandimal and Niroshan Dickwella held the fort together, taking Sri Lanka to tea at 205/6. The second and final Test is set to be played from May 23 in Dhaka.

SUHL JUNIOR WORLD CUP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian women's Skeet team comprising Parinaaz Dhaliwal, Darshna Rathore, and Areeba Khan blanked Germany 6-0 to win bronze late on Wednesday, at the ISSF Junior World Cup in Suhl, Germany.

This was only India's third medal in the Shotgun discipline.

On the final day of competitions on Thursday, India did pick up a medal through Sift

Skeet women win team bronze as India finish on top



Kaur Samra and Surya Pratap Singh when they came second to Poland in the 50m Rifle Prone Mixed Team competition. The Polish pair

won a tight contest 17-15 in the end.

Indian shooters in the Skeet Mixed Team competition, the final event on the

schedule, bowed out in qualification with Abhay Singh Sekhon and Areeba Khan finishing seventh with a combined effort of 134/150. The second Indian pair in the competition, Bhavtegh Singh Gill and Darshna Rathore finished further back in 10th with a score of 132.

In the end, table-topper India's medal tally stood at 13 gold, 15 silver, and five bronze for a total of 33 medals from the premiere World Shooting competition for Juniors.

As captain, Ganguly built a team; not sure if Kohli did: Sehwal

Mumbai: Former India batsman Virender Sehwal rates Saurav Ganguly's leadership higher than anyone else in Indian cricket. The former India opener said statistically, Virat Kohli as captain may remain among the best, still, he could not build a team as much as Ganguly did. "Sourav Ganguly built a new team, brought in new players, and backed them through their highs and lows," Sehwal said on Home of Heroes, Sports18's latest offerin. "I doubt if Kohli did that in his tenure." The two-time World Cup winner said during Kohli's captaincy, for 2-3 years, there was a trend to change the team after almost every Test, whether they won or lost. "In my opinion, the #1 captain is the one who builds a team and gives confidence to his players. He (Kohli) backed some players, some he d'd not," says Sehwal. Quizzed if Rishabh Pant's career trajectory was similar to his, with limited success in ODI and T20s but enviable numbers in Tests, Sehwal agrees and says Pant will be more successful if he opens in limited-overs cricket. Cricket fans were stunned earlier this year when Pant walked out to open against West Indies in an ODI.



Siddharth Kumar Tewary:

Social networking is both beneficial and terrible for me

Shachi Chaturvedi | Mumbai

Siddharth Kumar Tewary is a television producer and director from India. Tewary has created and directed several series, including Mahabharat, Suryaputra Karn, Karmaphal Daata Shani, Porus, Ram Siya Ke Luv Kush, and most recently RadhaKrishn.

Tewary recently spoke with absolute India news about his next series 'Escape live' and much more. The producer-director explained how he came up with the idea for the series. "I was talking with one of my friends when we came across this one live streaming app, and it hit me how life is changing around us." This platform appears to be a completely separate universe. The idea of creating a series begins there. I investigated, spoke with some well-known influencers, and attempted to comprehend what is in another universe."

He also talked about whether or not virtual reality is real. "I think people assume that by using social media, we are

avoiding reality, but the truth is that social media is a part of our actual existence, and we can't ignore it."

He stated that everyone wants to be happy, and if social media can provide that enjoyment, there is nothing wrong with it.

Social networking is both beneficial and terrible for him. It is dependent on the individual's use.

Now social media is providing people with a platform they can become stars by using social media rightly.

"This series has given me memories that will last for life. Escape live will always remain a part of my life." Said Siddhart.



Alia Bhatt commences shoot for her Hollywood debut

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After carving a niche for herself through her acting prowess in Bollywood, Alia Bhatt is all set to make her Hollywood debut. The actress is currently on a roll, with some interesting films in her kitty. Earlier this month, reports about the actress kick-starting shoot for her Hollywood debut surfaced on the internet.

Today, May 19, the diva took to her social media handle and informed her fans and followers that she has kick-started shooting for the same.

Sharing an alluring selfie and expressing her excitement, Alia wrote, "And off I go to shoot my first ever Hollywood film!!!! Feel like a new comer all over again - S00000 nervous!!!! Wish me luckkkkkkk"

Congratulations were for the actress, as she shared the news. The diva will feature alongside Gal Gadot and Jamie Dornan in the spy thriller Heart Of Stone. The film will be streaming on a leading OTT platform.



Amitabh Bachchan and Rajesh Khanna's Iconic Film 'Anand' to be remade



Team Absolute | Mumbai

One of the most iconic films of Amitabh Bachchan and Rajesh Khanna - Anand is all set to be remade. And it is all set to be remade by the original producer, N.C. Sippy's grandson Sameer Raj Sippy along with Producer Vikram Khakhar. The making of the film is currently at the nascent stage. The film is at the scripting stage. The director and cast of the film are yet to be finalised.

The details about the same are under wraps.

Shedding some light on what the remake will focus on, elated producer Vikram Khakhar averred, "Digging into our own classics, we will find invaluable gems rather than scouting for stories, Internationally or Regionally. Placing Anand in the post Covid era, where we emphasise on the value of life, will enhance the story of Anand."

Excited about the remake, Producer Sameer Raj Sippy said, "Keeping in mind the sensibilities of the original film and the emotions attached, I felt the current generation needs to be retold the many stories that are so relevant today and specially when there is a great appetite for good content."

The remake of this cult classic movie will definitely turn into a blockbuster impressing millions of viewers.

A.R. Rahman: We must not limit ourselves to only Indian stories'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

During the inauguration of the India pavilion at Cannes 2022 on Wednesday, Academy Award winner A.R. Rahman explained why we should tell stories about West and try to break the boundaries. "I can't say much because I've been in the industry for almost 40 years - ten years of playing outside as a musician and 30 years as a composer. I was a director for the sensory cinematic experience," he said.

Rahman further shared that despite the fact we have our stories to tell, we must not restrict ourselves. "Even though we have so many stories, we should tell stories about the West because we have a narrative about the West. We should be doing that."

"The West does Gandhi, he (Shekhar Kapur) is the man who has done 'Elizabeth: The Virgin Queen'.

I am super inspired by him," he added while hinting towards filmmaker Shekhar Kapur. On the reason for choosing English language for his film, he elaborated: "The reason why I did this in the English language and for an international audience was to see if it is possible to break those boundaries and set a new path. Even if we fail it's fine. I am talking about Le Musk, the sensory cinematic experience in Cannes XR. I want to thank my whole team, and please do check it out and see how we can improve and celebrate it. God bless you all. Thank you so much."



Nawazuddin to celebrate b'day for the 7th time at Cannes

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The 'Serious Men' and 'The Lunchbox' star Nawazuddin Siddiqui will be celebrating his birthday at the Cannes Film Festival for the seventh time, on Thursday.

From his 2012 releases of 'Miss Lovely' and 'Gangs of Wasseypur', then 2013 releases 'Monsoon Shootout', 'The Lunchbox', 'Bombay Talkies' followed by the 2016 release 'Raman Raghav 2.0' and 2018 release 'Manto' - all have been screened at Cannes Film Festival and coincidentally the actor has been present there celebrating his birthday. Talking about his birthday



celebrations, Nawaz, who is a part of the Indian contingent this year at Cannes, said, "Representing India is always special. I have celebrated 6 birthdays here in Cannes as my films were selected but this time as an Indian delegate it makes it more special and memorable." On the work front, the actor has an interesting lineup of films in his kitty which include 'Tiku Weds Sheru', 'Noorani Chehra', 'Adbhut' and 'Laxman Lopez'.

Pooja Hegde makes a stunning debut at Cannes

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Pooja Hegde, who made her Cannes Film Festival debut at the 'Top Gun: Maverick' premiere on Wednesday, was a sight to behold in an elaborate strapless ivory-hued feather gown that had an embellished bodice and a voluminous skirt. She paired this dazzling outfit with diamond danglers and a no-fuss ponytail.

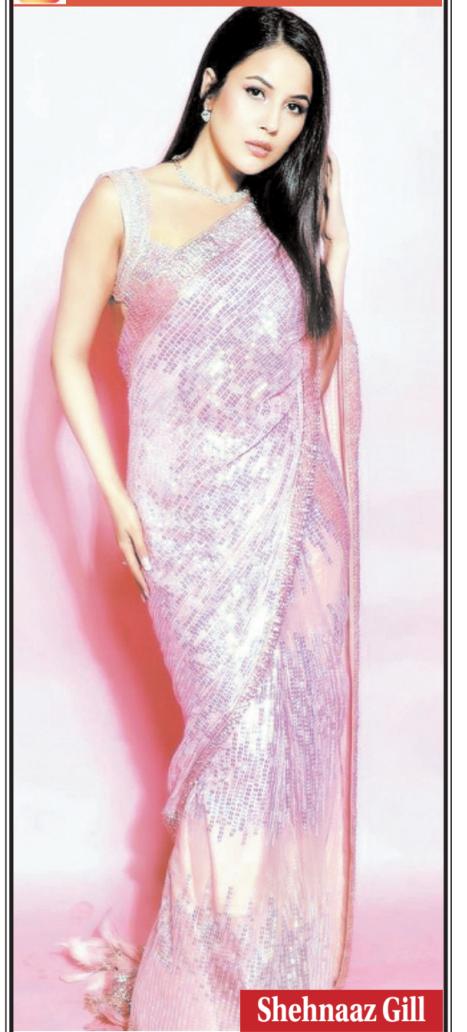
The 'Ala Vaikunthapuram Loo' actress used the hashtag 'Crafted in India' when she posted pictures of her new look on Instagram, indicating that the look was created by an Indian designer.

She then expressed gratitude to Anurag Thakur for making it possible. She said, "I didn't come with a brand; instead, I came with brand India. As an Indian actor, I've come to celebrate Indian cinema."

Pooja Hegde talked about how walking the red carpet at Cannes is a dream in a video snippet. At the 75th Cannes Film Festival, India is the 'Country of Honour', led by Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur.

Pooja is among the 11 film personalities along with A.R. Rahman, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, R. Madhavan, Shekhar Kapoor, and Praseon Joshi, who are members of India's official delegation to Cannes.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Shehmaaz Gill

TITLE TRACK OF KANGANA'S UPCOMING RELEASED IN VARANASI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

'Tu Hai Dhaakad' from the Kangana Ranaut-starrer film was released here amid much fanfare. The song was played on a floating LED screen on the banks of the river Ganga. The film's title song has been set to the tune by veteran advertising and film composer Dhruv Ghanekar. It is penned by actor and writer Ishitta Arun and performed by the jazz artiste Vasundhara Vee.

Talking about the song, Kangana Ranaut said, "We have released song during the last leg of our promotional campaign as this song sets the tone of the film. It showcases Agent Agni as an unstoppable force who embodies the never-say-die attitude. The song has an anthem-like quality to it and encompasses my character's grit and gumption in herself and her abilities."

Talking about the song, director Razneesh Ghai added, "I wanted a song which had a rousing aspect to it. I reached out to my friend from the advertising world, musician Dhruv Ghanekar, who has composed many songs in the past. I knew



that he would be able to understand what I had in mind and translate it into a tune."

He added, "The song is inspiring and instils a sense of how one can achieve things against all odds and should never accept defeat. Ishitta Arun has written lyrics which do full justice to the spirit of the film's story and Agent Agni's fortitude. Vasundhara Vee's vocals elevate the song to a whole new level and her singing style makes the song soar and how."

Producer Deepak Mukut said, "The song 'Tu Hai Dhaakad' is inspirational and really apt for the film's theme and story. It feels wonderful to see that the film which we have made with our blood and sweat, is also scoring high musically. This song highlights the film's theme and Agent Agni's spirit, and it will deeply connect the audience to Kangana's character."

"All the songs in the film have been composed beautifully and flow organically into the film's narrative. Its music will resonate with every audience member and will stay with them long after leaving the theatres," he concluded.