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NO AGNIPATH ROLLBACK, GOVERNMENT SAYS CONCESSIONS NOT A REACTION TO PROTEST



Team Absolute | New Delhi

As the protests and agitations against the Agnipath recruitment scheme continue in several parts of the country, Lt Gen Anil Puri, Additional Secretary, Dept of Military Affairs, on Sunday clarified the scheme will be implemented and there is no question of a rollback.

Lt Gen Puri was addressing a Joint military briefing on Agnipath recruitment scheme with Air Marshal S.K. Jha, Vice Admiral Dinesh Tripathi and LG C. Banshi Ponnappa. Lt Gen Puri said that this reform was long pending. "We want to bring youthfulness and experience with this reform. Today, a large number of jawans are in their 30s and officers are getting command much later than in the past", said Lt Gen Puri while addressing media on Agnipath scheme.

Referring to the provisions of reservations in different ministries, Lt Gen Puri said that announcements were pre-planned and not in reaction to the arson and agitation which took place after the Agnipath scheme announcement. He also clarified

that all recruitment will be through Agnipath scheme only.

"Around 17,600 people are taking premature retirement from the three Services every year. No one ever tried to ask them what they will do after retirement," Puri said. He also added that Agniveers would get the same allowance in areas like Siachen and other areas which are applicable to the regular soldiers serving at present. On the ongoing protest, Lt General Puri said, "Indian Army's foundation in discipline. No space for arson, vandalism. Every individual will have to take a pledge that they were not part of protests or vandalism." Registration process for the first batch of Agniveers will start from June 24 and from July 24, phase 1 online examination process will begin", said Air Marshal Jha. He informed that the first batch would be enrolled by December and training would commence by December 30.

Talking about the recruitment process in Indian Navy, Vice Admiral Dinesh Tripathi said the first batch of naval Agniveers will start reaching the training establishment INS Chilka in Odisha from November 21. He also made clear that both male and female will be recruited through the Agnipath scheme.

"The Indian Navy has 30 women officers at present sailing on different Indian Navy ships. We have decided that under the Agnipath scheme, we will recruit women also. They will be deployed on warships," the Navy official added.

"By December, we will get the first batch of 25,000 Agniveers and the second batch would be inducted around February 2023 making it 40,000," said Lt Gen Banshi Ponnappa.

PAKISTANI AMONG TWO TERRORISTS KILLED IN TWO ENCOUNTERS IN J&K

Two terrorists, including a Pakistani national have been killed two separate encounters in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district and Lolab area of Kupwara district on Sunday, police said.



Team Absolute | Srinagar

Two terrorists have been killed in an ongoing encounter between terrorists and security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district on Sunday, police said.

"One more terrorist killed (Total 02). Operation in progress," police said.

The encounter at DH Pora area of Kulgam is the second in the day. Earlier on Sunday, a Pakistani terrorist belonging to LeT was killed in an encounter at Lolab in Kupwara district.

There have been a series of encounters between terrorists and security forces in Kashmir over the last few months in which many terrorists and their commanders have been eliminated.

Two terrorists, including a Pakistani national have been killed in an ongoing encounter between terrorists and security forces at Lolab area in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district on Sunday, police said.

Police said one of the killed terrorists has been identified as a Pakistani National.

"Killed terrorist has been identified as a Pakistani, linked with proscribed terror outfit LeT. 2-3 more terrorists alongwith arrested terrorist trapped in ongoing encounter," Jammu and Kashmir Police said in a tweet, citing Inspector General of Police, Kashmir zone, Vijay Kumar.

Police said the encounter started after police launched a joint anti-terrorist operation alongwith Army's 28 RR on the disclosure of an arrested terrorist Showket Ahmed Sheikh in Lolab area of Kupwara.

"During search of hideouts, hiding terrorists fired upon joint search parties and our team also retaliated, in which one terrorist got killed. The arrested terrorist also got trapped. Encounter in progress," police said.

This is the second encounter in Kashmir on a single day. Two terrorists were killed in an encounter between terrorists and security forces at DH Pora area in Kulgam district earlier in the day.

THREE AL-BADR TERRORIST ASSOCIATES ARRESTED IN HANDWARA

Jammu and Kashmir police along with security forces arrested three terrorist associates of proscribed terror outfit Al-Badr from north Kashmir's Handwara area and recovered incriminating materials, arms and ammunition from their possession, officials said on Sunday.

Police acted on specific information regarding movement of terrorists in Wangan area of Handwara. A special checkpoint was established by the police, army and CRPF near Wangan Crossing. "During checking, the joint party apprehended three individuals moving in suspicious circumstances. They have been identified as Nazim Ah Bhat, Siraj din Khan and Adil Gull, all the residents of Khaipora, Kralgund", police said. Upon their personal search, incriminating materials, arms and ammunition

including one pistol, one magazine, eight live rounds and two hand grenades were recovered. "Preliminary investigation revealed that the arrested trio is linked with the proscribed terror outfit Al-Badr and they were tasked by Pakistan-based handlers to carry out terrorist acts in the area," police said. Police have registered an FIR and further investigation is in progress.

IMC FIRM ON NUPUR SHARMA'S ARREST

Ittehad-e-Millat Council (IMC) chief Maulana Tauqir Raza Khan on Sunday, demanded the immediate arrest of former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma.

Bareilly: Ittehad-e-Millat Council (IMC) chief Maulana Tauqir Raza Khan on Sunday, demanded the immediate arrest of former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma.

Addressing a huge gathering in Bareilly on Sunday evening, he strongly condemned the remarks against Prophet Muhammad. Maulana Tauqir Raza Khan advised the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to read the Kalma to understand Islam. He said that the Prime Minister and Home Minister should embrace Islam.

He said that injustice is being done to Muslims in the country. And he will tell the world about it.

He will tell this to the whole world. There was a huge crowd in the field on this occasion.

The Bareilly district administration had given conditional permission to Maulana Tauqir Raza to protest on Sunday.

In the letter, permission was given to protest at Islamiya Ground with a maximum of 1500 people. However, thousands attended the meeting on Sunday.



DELHI-BOUND FLIGHT CATCHES FIRE MIDWAY, MAKES EMERGENCY LANDING IN PATNA



New Delhi/Patna | Agencies

A major tragedy was averted when a Delhi-bound aircraft, with 185 passengers on board, was forced to make an emergency landing at Jayprakash Narayan International Airport in Patna after one of the wings caught fire. According to sources, all the passengers plus the flight crew were safely rescued. A senior SpiceJet official told IANS that a SpiceJet B737-800 aircraft was operating from Patna to Delhi. On takeoff, during rotation, the cockpit crew suspected a bird hit on one of the engines.

"As a precautionary measure and as per SOP, the captain shut down the affected engine and decided to return to Patna," the official said, adding that the aircraft landed safely in Patna and passengers were safely deboarded. Post flight inspection showed a

bird hit with 3 fan blades got damaged.

The flight took off from Patna airport on Sunday at 12 noon and it returned again to the airport after 25 minutes.

The airport official said that the fire was reported by an onlooker at a time when the aircraft was flying over Phulwarisharif locality.

The local resident of Phulwarisharif informed Patna police which further communicated to airport authority. The airport officials contacted the ATC officials who further informed the pilot about the incident.

"The flight took off at Patna airport. After travelling for 25 minutes, we realized that it was returning back to Patna. There was some panic inside the aircraft," said a passenger, Rajesh Sharma.

Another passenger who was sitting on the left side of the plane on the window seat said: "I saw smoke and fire coming out from the left engine. It was scary but we thought that there were so many passengers in the plane and God certainly helped us."

The airline company has provided another aircraft for the passengers to fly to New Delhi.

Meanwhile, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) also issued a statement sharing similar details. The onlookers shot the video of the plane from the ground as one of its wings had caught fire. The fire was not visible from such a long distance, however, smoke could be seen.

'Throw out govt' Priyanka leads Agnipath protest in Delhi

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra led the Congress protest at Jantar Mantar here on Sunday against the central government's new scheme of recruitment in defence forces, 'Agnipath'. Several Congress leaders also joined the protest.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra led the Congress protest at Jantar Mantar here on Sunday against the central government's new scheme of recruitment in defence forces, 'Agnipath'. Several Congress leaders also joined the protest.

Priyanka Gandhi said, "No one is a greater patriot than the youth. I talked to many youths when I was arrested in Uttar Pradesh. I saw youths who were preparing, waiting for recruitment in the army. Found many who said there is no hope left and are now going to sell sugarcane."

Appealing to the youth, she said, "Throw out the government in a democratic,

peaceful and non-violent way. Bring a government that is true to the nation and protects the country's assets."

Several top leaders of the Congress participated in what the party called 'satyagrah' and demanded the government to withdraw the Agnipath scheme. The Congress leaders said the government should immediately withdraw this scheme as it is not good for the youth.

Priyanka Gandhi said, "You dream to get into the army, you dream to die on the border, no one is a greater patriot than you, just recognize the fake patriots. See the intention of the government, whatever protest you do, do it peacefully, but do not stop, do not get tired, every soldier of the Congress is with you."

"Understand the situation. Why did farmers have to agitate? Because they understood that their hard earned money was going to someone else," she said.

She further said, "This government is not for you, but for big corporates, it is all a thought out plan to stay in power. Several industries were closed which could have given you employment. And now your dream to get into the army has also been crushed."

Heavy deployment of security forces was seen at the protest site.

Youths across the country have been protesting against the Agnipath scheme and incidents of violence have been reported from many cities and towns.

CONGRESS TAKES A STEP BACK FOR OPPN UNITY ON PREZ POLL

The Congress has taken a step back for the sake of opposition unity in the presidential polls as the opposition parties will meet on June 21 to discuss the candidate for the Presidential election. The meeting will be chaired by NCP chief Sharad Pawar.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress has taken a step back for the sake of opposition unity in the presidential polls as the opposition parties will meet on June 21 to discuss the candidate for the Presidential election. The meeting will be chaired by NCP chief Sharad Pawar.

The Congress is not pushing anybody's candidature and will go with the opposition's choice for the sake of opposition unity. Sources say that Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge made the point in the meeting convened by Mamata Banerjee on June 15 that the party is aware that many of the parties around this table

compete with each other in assembly elections. But that has not prevented this meeting from taking place. "Each one of us has taken a larger national view and come here for a bigger cause. Let this spirit continue," Kharge said.

The reason for the Congress stepping back is opposition unity as parties like the TRS have openly said that they are not going to share the stage with the Congress and did not come for the meeting. Now with Pawar taking centre stage it is expected that many parties who skipped the meeting may join in. Sources say that 17 parties will attend the meeting on Tuesday. The parties have to arrive at a consensus on the candidate's name after

Sharad Pawar declined to contest. The opposition parties had on June 15 decided to field a joint candidate in the Presidential polls next month.

Kharge had said, "I want to right away say clearly that the Congress party will play a constructive role in ensuring that the parties assembled here this afternoon arrive at a consensus candidate in the next few days. Let us be proactive and not be reactive."

The Congress is pushing for a joint candidate from the opposition to give a tough challenge to the ruling BJP and to test the waters for opposition unity ahead of the general elections. The Congress said the candidate

should be someone committed to upholding the Constitution, its values, principles and provisions in letter and spirit, someone committed to guaranteeing that all institutions of our democracy function without fear or favour, someone committed to protecting the rights of all our citizens and preserving the secular fabric of our diverse society, someone committed to speaking out boldly against the forces of prejudice, hatred, bigotry and polarization and someone committed to being a powerful force for furthering social justice and empowerment.

The last meeting of opposition leaders called by Trinamool Congress supremo and West

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was held for building a consensus on a joint opposition candidate. In the meeting, a resolution was passed to field a common candidate.

"In the forthcoming Presidential election which is being held on the 75th anniversary of India's Independence, we have decided to field a common candidate who can truly serve as custodian of the Constitution and stop the Modi government from doing further damage to Indian democracy and India's social fabric," it said.

Banerjee said all important political parties sent their representatives and several senior leaders attended the meeting.

GROOM RIDES BULLDOZER TO BRIDE'S HOUSE

When the 'Baraat' arrived in Laxmanpur-Shankarpur village, almost the entire village ran to the venue to take a selfie -- not with the groom, but with the decorated bulldozer on which he came.



Bahraich | Agencies

When the 'Baraat' arrived in Laxmanpur-Shankarpur village, almost the entire village ran to the venue to take a selfie -- not with the groom, but with the decorated bulldozer on which he came.

On Saturday, the whole village had a festive look after

the groom arrived on a bulldozer and cries of 'Bulldozer Baba ki jai' rent the air.

The groom Badshah was happy at the attention he had managed to garner in the village. "I wanted to make my wedding a memorable event and I thought that this idea would also make it different," he said.

Videos of the bulldozer are now going viral on social



BJP HITS OUT AT OPPN FOR POLITICISING AGNIPATH SCHEME

■ The BJP on Sunday hit back at the opposition parties, especially Congress, for politicising the new Agnipath scheme for recruitment in armed forces.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The BJP on Sunday hit back at the opposition parties, especially Congress, for politicising the new Agnipath scheme for recruitment in armed forces. Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said that the opposition parties are politicising the armed forces reform. "Agnipath is a scheme that

shouldn't be politicised. It is sad to see the politicisation of issues concerning the nation and armed forces, but some people play their dirty politics by keeping aside national security. Today, after the way Lieutenant General Puri explained the scheme, all apprehensions have been cleared. Reform in armed forces goes back to 1989 and it was also recommended by Kargil Review Committee after Kargil war," Patra said.

Patra added that "it's very sad to see youth being misled by some who don't want the Prime Minister's vision of 'Reform, Perform and Transform' to become successful."

Referring to Congress' 'Satyagrah' at Jantar Mantar, Patra said that Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi should have sought reforms

earlier, "She (Priyanka) did not say anything then but is now doing Satyagrah. What type of Satyagrah is this? She did nothing when our Air Force was working with depleting strength for 10 years. We brought Rafale, they politicised it and now, again, they are politicising Agnipath."

The Central government has said that 75 per cent of the youths who will come out after completing their four-year term will be accommodated in police and Central Armed Police Forces.

"Congress leaders are making brazen statements, Priyanka Gandhi saying her objective is to topple the government. Earlier, they politicised surgical and air strikes, and now they are politicising the Agnipath scheme," he said.

Congress to protest nationwide on Monday against Agnipath, to meet Prez

AS RAHUL GANDHI IS SCHEDULED TO APPEAR BEFORE THE ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE (ED) IN NATIONAL HERALD CASE ON MONDAY, THE CONGRESS IS GEARING UP TO PROTEST ON TWO ISSUES -- AGNIPATH SCHEME AND RAHUL GANDHI'S QUESTIONING BY THE ED.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As Rahul Gandhi is scheduled to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in National Herald case on Monday, the Congress is gearing up to protest on two issues - Agnipath scheme and Rahul Gandhi's questioning by the ED.

Party General Secretary Jairam Ramesh tweeted, "Tomorrow lakhs of Congress workers across the country will continue peaceful protest

against the anti-youth Agnipath scheme & against Modi Govt's vendetta politics targeting its leader Shri Rahul Gandhi, MP." He also said that Congress delegation will meet President Ram Nath Kovind in the evening.

The Congress will start its day with party General Secretary Ajay Maken addressing a press conference at 9 a.m. on Monday. Earlier on Sunday, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra led the Congress protest at Jantar Mantar against the central government's new scheme of recruitment in defence forces, 'Agnipath'. Several Congress leaders also joined the protest.

Several top leaders of the Congress participated in what the party called 'satyagrah' and demanded the government to withdraw the Agnipath scheme. The Congress leaders said the government should immediately withdraw this scheme as it is not good for the youth.

Mamata might skip Pawar's meeting on Prez polls, depute Abhishek

KOLKATA | Agencies

The differences between West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee and other opposition parties over selection of a unanimous opposition candidate for the Presidential polls, seem to be widening, as she, in all probability, will skip the meeting called by NCP chief Sharad Pawar on June 21. Instead, she is likely to depute her nephew and Trinamool national General Secretary, Abhishek Banerjee to attend. Officially, the Trinamool leadership is stating that her most likely absence in the meeting convened by Pawar will be because of her pre-scheduled appointment on that day. However, party insiders said that the actual reasons might be the growing

grievances in the mind of the Chief Minister over certain developments since she convened a similar meeting on this count at New Delhi's Constitution Club on June 15.

The first reason is that in the invitation to opposition parties to attend the meeting convened by Pawar, there is absolutely no reference to the previous meeting on June 15.

"In the meeting at Constitution Club on June 15, 2022, it was unanimously decided that Pawar would convene the next meeting of the opposition parties on the issue of Presidential polls. However, surprisingly the invitation for the meeting on June 21 does not have any reference of the decision taken on this count in the meeting on June 15. This is somewhat belittling the efforts of the Chief

Minister who took the first initiative to call an opposition meeting on this count," a senior West Bengal cabinet minister said. Secondly, Banerjee is reportedly unhappy with the manner in which the National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah withdrew name as a probable opposition candidate in the Presidential polls by making a public statement later and without saying anything about his reluctance on this count at the June 15 meeting. However, another section in the Trinamool does not look at the issue in that way. They feel that the Chief Minister wants Abhishek Banerjee to play a major role on behalf of the party in national politics and hence, his presence at the June 21 meeting was the right opportunity to project him on this count.

INDIA LOGS 12,899 NEW COVID-19 CASES, 15 DEATHS

India on Sunda reported 12,899 fresh Covid cases in last 24 hours, a slight decline against the 13,216 infections registered the previous day, the Union Health Ministry said.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India on Sunda reported 12,899 fresh Covid cases in last 24 hours, a slight decline against the 13,216 infections registered the previous day, the Union Health Ministry said.

In the same period, there were 15 new fatalities which took the nationwide death toll to 5,24,855.

The active caseload rose to 72,474 cases, accounting for 0.17 per cent of the country's total positive cases.

The recovery of 8,518 patients in the last 24 hours took the cumulative tally to 4,26,99,363. Consequently, India's recovery rate stands at 98.62 per cent.

While the daily positivity rate slightly jumped to 2.89 per cent, the weekly positivity rate stood at 2.50 per cent.

Also in the same period, a total of 4,46,387 tests were conducted across the country, increasing the overall tally to over 85.78 crore.

As of Sunday morning, India's Covid-19 vaccination coverage exceeded 196.14 crore, achieved via 2,53,09,999 sessions.



Over 3.57 crore adolescents have been administered with a first dose of Covid-19 jab

since the beginning of vaccination drive for this age bracket.

Nearly 70% turnout in Haryana municipal polls

■ Worst-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic with 19,260-plus deaths till date, the highest in India, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) is likely to get the lion's share of the Covid-19 vaccination doses with over 7,000 slated to be administered the life-saver jab, health officials said here on Tuesday.

CHANDIGARH | Agencies

Nearly 70 per cent of over 17 lakh voters in Haryana turned out on Sunday to cast their bal-

lots in polls for 18 municipal councils and 28 municipalities amidst minor skirmishes and snags in electronic voting machines (EVMs), officials said. Counting will take place on June 22.

The main contest is between the state's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) alliance and the Congress, while the Aam Adam Party, in its maiden contest in the civic body poll, is testing the waters ahead of the 2024 Assembly polls in Haryana.

Unlike the main opposition Congress, the BJP-JJP alliance and the AAP were fighting the polls on their party symbol. Many Congress members had entered the fray as Independents.

In the 2019 polls, the AAP contested on 46 seats of the 90-member Assembly, but faced humiliating defeat with a vote share of just 0.48 per cent. State Election Commissioner Dhanpat Singh said for 456 wards of 18 municipal councils, 185 candidates were in the fray for the post of President.

Of these, 100 were men and 85 women.

A total of 15 councillors have been elected unanimously out of 456 wards, while 1,797 candidates were contesting in the remaining 441 wards. According to Singh, there were 12.6 lakh voters in 18 municipal councils, out of which 663,870 were men, 596,095 women, and 35 transgender.

▶ AHEAD OF THE GOA ASSEMBLY SESSION, SET TO COMMENCE FROM JULY 11, THE CONGRESS ON SUNDAY SAID THAT IT WILL TAKE ON THE BJP GOVERNMENT, WITH SUPPORT OF OTHER OPPOSITION MLAS, ON THEIR FAILURES TO RESOLVE ISSUES GRAPPLING THE STATE.

PANAJI | Agencies

Ahead of the Goa Assembly session, set to commence from July 11, the Congress on Sunday said that it will take on the

BJP government, with support of other opposition MLAs, on their failures to resolve issues grappling the state.

Congress Legislature Party's deputy leader Sankalp Amonkar, addressing a press conference here, said that the BJP government has failed in all aspects, including on financial condition as liabilities have reached Rs 27,000 crore.

"We have confidence that we will expose the BJP government. We have sought replies to various questions. We will raise issues of job scams and unemployment," he said.

Amonkar, the Mormugao MLA, said that his party has devised a strategy for their questions to have an impact in the public domain. "We will seek support of other MLAs to take this (fight) in the right way," he said.

He said that along with burning issues like coal hub, and double tracking, they will also question the government over failure to release financial aid under social welfare schemes and seafarers pension.

He said that corruption has taken place in the Atal Setu project and they will raise the issue in the Assembly.

"Government is trying to suppress the voice of the people by not providing information under RTI and now they have reduced the number of sub-questions to be asked in assembly to 5. Speaker should have at least allowed us to ask 8 or more questions. We will meet him in this regard," Amonkar said. He termed the "Garib Kalyan Sammelan" programme of the BJP a certificate to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Pramod Sawant for their "non-per-

formance".

"It is BJP's third term in Goa, however it failed to deliver. Before the election, it had launched 'Ghar Ghar Chalo Abhiyan' scheme and through that, hoodwinked people of Goa. Now with this newscheme they are repeating history," he said.

"Had they performed well and worked in the interest of people, then they would have organised 'Acche Din Sammelan' instead of GKS. This proves that BJP has failed in the last ten years to give 'acche din' to people of Goa. BJP has pushed the state into financial bankruptcy leading to financial emergency," he said.

Accusing the BJP of completely failing to resolve even a single issue, Amonkar said: "BJP is playing vindictive politics. BJP has brought poverty instead of prosperity."

Congress plans to take on BJP in coming Goa Assembly session

AZAMGARH CAMPAIGN FOR BYPOLL TOUCHES A CRESCENDO

With just two days left for the campaigning in Azamgarh to end, a war of words between the contesting parties is intensifying every hour.

AZAMGARH | Agencies

With just two days left for the campaigning in Azamgarh to end, a war of words between the contesting parties is intensifying every hour. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, blasted the Samajwadi Party for "betraying" the people of Azamgarh and ensuring that the area remains undeveloped.

"You have sent two former chief ministers to Lok Sabha but they left you without a word. Did they come to you during Covid pandemic? We have given Azamgarh a new identity. You have lived for long with an identity that gave you nothing to be proud of. I promise development if you promise to vote for BJP," he said.

A day ago, on Saturday, UP BJP chief and Jal Shakti minister Swatantra Dev Singh drew religious analogy. Since Azamgarh has a sizeable population of

Rajbhars, mostly considered loyal to Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) whose chief Om Prakash Rajbhar has been pitching for the SP here, Swatantra Dev began his campaign by invoking "Maharaja Suheldev" before referring to sage Durvasa.

"Azamgarh used to be the place where sage Durvasa prayed. Azamgarh may have given chief ministers, it may have sent Lok Sabha MPs, but the district's identity took a severe hit. Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and leadership of chief minister Yogi Adityanath, Azamgarh is well on way to becoming Aryamgarh," he said.

UP minister A K Sharma termed the by-election as a 'dharma yuddh'.

The Samajwadi Party that is fighting to retain the seat that was vacated by its president Akhilesh Yadav, is also leaving no stone unturned to ensure its victory.

SP leader Mohammad Azam Khan, in his campaign, has been lashing out at the BJP.

"I have been watching what has been unfolding in the country over the past three-four days. Trains and buses have been set on fire, and police vans, government property vandalised across states in protests against the Agnipath scheme. I am waiting to see what action the government will take. How many posters of offenders will be put up and if damages will be recovered from them? The government has been targeting the weak," said Khan at a rally.

Azam Khan said he suffered atrocities and injustice with patience.

"I was in jail for 27 months. If I think of taking revenge, it will only cause further harm to our community. Hence, I have decided to tolerate everything," he said and asked people to vote for SP candidate Dharmendra Yadav.

The BSP candidate Shah Alam a.k.a Guddu Jamali also lashed out at SP.

"Samajwadi Party wants the minority community to

vote for them but does not share power with us. The SP does not want any Muslim leader to emerge, they want us to be their servants," he said.

Jamali has been underlining the fact that his home is in Azamgarh while Dharmendra Yadav will fly off to Etawah-Mainpuri and Nirahua will go back to Mumbai. "My association with Azamgarh and with you people will end only when you carry me to the burial ground," said Jamali.

BJP candidate Dinesh Yadav Nirahua has been relying on star power, songs and slogans to take pots-shots at opposition leaders.

Bhojpuri film stars and BJP leaders Manoj Tiwari and Ravi Kishan have campaigned for Nirahua over the past three days while Anrapali Dubey, Sanjay Pandey, Praveesh Lal, Manoj Tiger have also been seeking votes for him.

Surprisingly, Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati have not yet campaigned for their party candidates.



CONCRETE ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTED IN ERADICATION OF SICKLE CELL DISEASE: GOVERNOR

PUBLIC COOPERATION WILL BRING SUCCESS IN ERADICATING SICKLE CELL ANAEMIA: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya took part in the workshop on holistic management of Sickle Cell disease at Indian Institute of Information Technology Designing and Manufacturing (Triple ITDM) in Jabalpur on World Sickle Cell Anemia Awareness Day. The workshop was organized by ICMR, National Tribal Health Research Institute and Department of Public Health and Family Welfare.

Governor Patel said that Sickle Cell is a serious genetic disease and a challenge to humanity. If detected on time, the disease can be treated and the affected person can lead a normal life. The symptoms of Sickle Cell are apparent not only in the tribal community, but also in other communities. He said that the central and state governments are working on a concrete action plan for the total eradication of Sickle Cell. Its prevention and relief campaign is being run in 14 tribal-dominated districts of the state. Attention is also being given to health, marriage and rehabilitation assistance of sick persons. He said that screening and testing should be done expeditiously for the diagnosis of Sickle Cell disease, which should be completed in the next 6 months. He told to initiate wide publicity and



bring public awareness, so that Sickle Cell can be treated in time. Yoga and Ayurveda can also help to lead a better life.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that the Covid pandemic was controlled through social participation. Similarly, eradication of sickle cell anaemia will also be successful with people's cooperation. For eradication of sickle cell anaemia, a public awareness campaign will be launched in all the districts of the state with people's participation. Awareness will be creat-

ed at various places through means of publicity like street plays, songs etc. Screening for identification of disease will also be expedited and necessary resources will be increased for this. Door-to-door screening was done in the Covid epidemic. Similar action plan will also be implemented for prevention and protection from sickle cell anaemia. He said that effective measures for the prevention of sickle cell disease would be taken through Yoga, Ayurveda and public cooperation. Task force will be formed at the state and district levels with public cooperation. The task force will secure the support of citizens willing to work for the eradication of sickle cell. Use new medical techniques in the treatment of the disease, so that this disease does not pass on to the next generation. Chouhan said that sickle cell patients should not consider themselves alone, the state government is with them.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that this workshop is important for the eradication of sickle cell. Sickle cell disease is passed down from generation to generation. For its prevention, work is being done on a long-term action plan. In the Amrit Mahotsav of Independence, our aim is that everyone should be happy from the point of view of health.

Governor Patel and Chief Minister Chouhan released the awareness song with a single click and launched the animated video. They also visited the exhibition on Sickle Cell Disease.

Bhopal gas survivors seek action on 5 crucial issues

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Hundred of survivors of 84' Union Carbide disaster and those exposed to ground water contamination gathered outside BMHRC hospital to meet Union Minister Health & Family Welfare and Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, of them a delegation of 5 representatives met the minister and presented him with a memorandum and urged him to take immediate action on 5 crucial demands of the survivors of the disaster. They sought action on appropriate compensation; Cleanup of toxic waste, Medical Care, Research, Mismanagement of BMHRC and Curbing corruption vis a vis mis-utilisation of funds meant to provide relief and rehabilitation to gas victims. The minister assured the delegation that BMHRC will be returned to its original glory and a medical college will be opened in the hospital. He also said that NIREH will be asked to carry out appropriate med-

ical research on Bhopal gas victims and their children.

In December 2010 Government of India filed a curative petition with the Supreme Court seeking additional compensation from Union Carbide Corporation-USA and its owner Dow Chemical Company, USA. On several occasions in the last 12 years we have repeatedly stated that the figures of deaths and injuries caused as a result of the disaster mentioned in this curative petition are neither correct nor scientific and need to be improved. In 2014 & 2015 Ministry of Chemicals also promised to correct these figures.

In 2018, the Supreme Court declared the groundwater of 42 communities situated around the Union Carbide factory to contaminated and unfit for drinking. Recent investigations have also revealed that the groundwater of additional 29 communities adjoining these 42 communities have been found to be contami-

nated with Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). POPs are known to retain their toxicity for over a hundred years.

In October 2010, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) set up its 31st institute, National Institute for Research in Environmental Health (NIREH) in Bhopal to study long term damage to the health of those exposed to Union Carbide's toxic gases and contaminated ground water disaster and their children and also provide treatment. It is a matter of regret that in the last 12 years no work has been done in this institute for the welfare of gas victims and since last 3 years this institute has completely abandoned its original purpose. In 2018 a study carried out by NIREH showed that birth defects in children being born to gas exposed parents were 7 times higher when compared to unexposed population, but unfortunately NIREH decided not to publish the results of this study.

Vyapam accused doctor murders his live-in-partner

A doctor murdered his live-in partner and hanged her from the ceiling fan. The incident took place in Kumharpura locality under Thatipur police station limits in Gwalior on June 18. The deceased was a nurse by profession. The police arrested the accused.

Kumharpura locality under Thatipur police station limits in Gwalior on June 18. The deceased was a nurse by profession. As per the reports, the nurse, Sonam Yadav, was a resident of Etawah, Uttar Pradesh.

According to police, after committing the crime, the doctor, Sanjeev Sharma fled from the flat. Later, he returned to his flat and started creating ruckus. The police during investigation found the matter suspicious and took the doctor into custody, The Free Press Journal reported.

When the investigating team strictly interrogated the doctor, he confessed the crime. He told police that the nurse, Sonam Yadav was his live-in partner and both had a dispute over a WhatsApp chat. Following which he lost

his temper and killed her.

The deceased was pursuing a nursing course and she became friends with Sanjeev. Sanjeev runs Rudraksh Hospital along with his fellow doctors. Notably, he has also been wanted in the Vyapam case. Sonam used to come often to Sanjeev's clinic.

Meanwhile, the locals claim that Sanjeev used to bring several girls to his room. He had befriended Sonam, who was taking training as a nurse at Rudraksh Hospital. Sonam had seen an obscene chat with another girl on Sanjeev's mobile. After this there was a dispute between them. After which, Sanjeev killed her in the fit of rage.

The police arrested the accused and informed the family members of the nurse about the incident.

After two years of experiments, MP BJP returns to veteran in Vindhya region

AFTER EXPERIMENTING FOR 2 YEARS TO FIND A SUITABLE LEADER WHO CAN LEAD THE BJP IN MADHYA PRADESH'S VINDHYA REGION OF, THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP FINALLY HAD TO RELY ON AN OLD WARHORSE - FORMER MINISTER AND FOUR-TIME MLA RAJENDRA SHUKLA.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After experimenting for 2 years to find a suitable leader who can lead the BJP in Madhya Pradesh's Vindhya region of, the party's leadership finally had to rely on an old warhorse - former minister and four-time MLA Rajendra Shukla. Four-time BJP MLA from Rewa constituency, Shukla was Commerce and Industry Minister in Shivraj Singh Chouhan's cabinet (2013-2018), and emerged as a prominent face not only in Rewa division but in entire Vindhya region of the state, but was not included in the cabinet after the party got back power after from the Congress in 2020.

An obvious reason was that the BJP had to give the maximum cabinet posts to loyalists of defected Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia due to which the party came back to power. Shukla was not only kept outside the cabinet but it is said some top leaders conspired to sideline him from the core group of the party.

In the 2028 Assembly polls, Shukla was in-charge of Vindhya region and the BJP managed to win 25 out of 30 Assembly seats, including Congress stronghold - Churhat in Sidhi district. Also, the BJP



won all eight assembly seats from Rewa, the only district in Madhya Pradesh where it won all Assembly seats.

According to political observers, the first and foremost reason for not including Shukla in the cabinet and keeping him sidelined was his growing stature. "In the past few years, Shukla's political graph has risen manifold and he has become a prominent Brahmin face in Vindhya region. After the death of Congress leader and former Assembly Speaker Srinivas Tiwari, Shukla is considered the topmost Brahmin leader in Vindhya region. Some other Brahmin leaders of the region consider him their rival," said a senior Journalist who has covered MP politics for three decades.

After 2018, the state BJP leadership tried to experiment with some other leaders from Vindhya region. Assembly Speaker Girish Gautam and

Cabinet Minister Ram Khelawan Patel and some others were given a push but the experiment failed.

"Despite having won maximum seats from Vindhya region, not a single leader was made cabinet minister, except Girish Gautam who was made Speaker. Though Gautam is also a senior Brahmin leader from Rewa, he remained confined within his own constituency. He was made Speaker to stop Rajendra Shukla from making it to the cabinet," said another senior political observer.

Tribal leader Bisahu Lal Singh, who also hails from Vindhya region and joined the BJP with Scindia, was given a place in the cabinet.

Political observers claimed that the race for Chief Minister's chair is another reason that Shukla was kept out of the core group of state BJP for two years. "A faction opposing Chouhan, especially those who are in the race for the Chief Minister's post backed some other Brahmin faces, because they considered Shukla their main political rival. Since then Shukla's political graph has seen a tremendous increase." The BJP had to fall back on Shukla after Congress started doing its political maths in the Vindhya region as Assembly polls are not far away. "Shukla was included in the core committee and the election committee because the party has to end the factionalism in Vidhya region and to repeat its last performance. It is also because leaders who were given a push from the back end, could not justify their performances in the last two years," a political analyst said.

Contacted by IANS for his response, Shukla said: "I am one who believes in work. I do not think about what happened in the past. Whenever I was assigned a task, I have tried to give my best. Right now, the party has given me a task in Rewa and Shahdol divisions, I am busy with that. That's all I can say."

CM PAYS TRIBUTE TO MADHAV RAO SAPRE

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid obeisance to promoter of national language Hindi, brilliant thinker, master editor, journalist, freedom fighter and dedicated to public works Late Madhav Rao Sapre on his birth anniversary. Chouhan paid floral tributes by garlanding the picture of Sapre in the auditorium at the residence office. Sapre was born on June 19, 1871 in Patharia village of Damoh district. The works of Late Madhav Rao Sapre was multi-dimensional. His contribution is extraordinary and timeless. He coined Hindi words for many English words. His 'Hindi Vigyan Kosh' was published in the year 1905. Late Shri Sapre lit the light of ideological social revolution. Sapre died on April 23, 1926. The Madhav Rao Sapre Memorial newspaper museum in Bhopal is dedicated to him.

STUDENTS' LOVE FOR ENVIRONMENT IS COMMENDABLE: CHIEF MINISTER

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Peepal, Karanj and Kadam in Smart Udyan. He was accompanied by students of National Service Scheme unit of Barkatullah University, Bhopal who also planted saplings. Students told Chief Minister that empty coconut shells are being used by them to present saplings. This allows the plant to be preserved before planting without using polythene. Chouhan praised the awareness and love of the students for the environment conservation. The students include Nupur, T Devashish, Megha, Harsh, Pradeep Kushwaha and Dileep. Students are also taking part in programmes of blood donation, child protection awareness and financial literacy. Peepal planted in Smart garden is considered to be an environment-purifying plant. It is also known as a shade-giving tree. It also has religious and ayurvedic importance. Karanja is used in religious works. Kadamba tree is found everywhere in India. It is full of medicinal properties.



CHIEF MINISTER SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN EXTENDS BEST WISHES ON FATHERS DAY

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has extended warm wishes to the people of the state on Father's Day. CM Chouhan has said in a message issued from social media that fathers do not hesitate to make the biggest sacrifice for the happiness of their children. Give due respect and love to your father who lives like an ascetic. On Father's Day, Chief Minister Chouhan, while paying obeisance at the feet of his revered Babuji and remembering him, has written that Babuji always taught that serving the people is the service to Narayan (God). Chouhan has written in his emotional message that the teachings and disciplined life of Pujya Babuji always gave him the strength to stand still in difficulties without getting distracted. He always remained calm and composed and stood like a rock in the turmoil of life. He always taught to fight for truth and goodness.

Panchayat polls trigger demand for inclusion of children's issues in manifestos

The people of Madhya Pradesh have demanded that both the BJP and the Congress include issues concerning children and women in their manifestos for the upcoming urban body elections which will be held simultaneously with panchayat elections in the state.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The people of Madhya Pradesh have demanded that both the BJP and the Congress include issues concerning children and women in their manifestos for the upcoming urban body elections which will be held simultaneously with panchayat elections in the state.

Children are not entitled to vote in elections so they are not considered a votebank for the political parties but the issues concerning them pose a grave challenge.

The panchayat elections are non-party based while urban body elections are held on a party basis.

Both the BJP and the Congress will release their manifestos for the urban body elections and preparations are going on in full swing.

The people in Madhya Pradesh have demanded that issues concerning children and women should be given equal importance by both the parties in their manifestos.

Several children and women's rights organisations are holding deliberations on issues related to children and women. The Child Rights Observatory (CRO) in Madhya Pradesh works in collaboration with Unicef, a global organisation working for the welfare of children. This organisation has prepared a document on the problems faced by children and sent it to both the BJP and the Congress.

This document includes the budget allocated for children, ending violence, improving education especially learning disorders, water and sanitation, nutrition, health and vaccination. A total of 24 points have been put forward. Nirmla Buch, the CRO President and former State Chief Secretary, has sent this 24-point document to the office bearers of both the par-



ties. This document states that all municipalities and panchayats must allocate at least 30 per cent of the state budget for children and women to ensure the necessary social infrastructure. The document advocates the complete abolition of child marriages and keeping a check on such incidents.

The document underlines the serious challenge of compensating for the loss of the learning instinct in children due to Covid-19 for which the government and women and child rights organisations must work together.

The other points discussed by CRO includes that all schools should be prepared to conduct bridge courses for at least three months. Apart from this, proper arrangements will be made to eradicate open defecation and disposal of garbage. Local self-government institutions must work for a malnutrition-free com-

munity by mobilising formal and informal committees, and self-help groups to increase community participation.

Welcoming the CRO's initiative, Ajay Singh Yadav, Vice-President, Congress Media Cell, said, "Children are the future of our society as well as the country. Finding solutions to their problems is also the responsibility of a party about which the Congress is extremely serious. That is why we have formed the Bal Congress whose committees have been constituted at the district level and suggestions are also being sought from the Bal Congress. Problems faced by children are also being listed which will be included in our party manifesto."

Lauding the initiative by CRO, BJP spokesperson Neha Bagga said, "The Madhya Pradesh government is the first state government in the country which has allocated a separate budget provision for children. Along with this Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has launched a special campaign for providing better facilities to the children at Anganwadi centres. Public participation is being widely promoted."

The Chief Minister himself volunteered to collect toys for children in a cart for which people participated in large numbers.

On the one hand, while the BJP government is paying special attention to children, on the other hand it is reaching out to the Anganwadi centres.

Founder of tribal organisation JAYS (Jai Adivasi Yuva Shakti) and Congress MLA, Hiralal Alawa also lauded this initiative, saying that children are the future of the country. "The children must be provided better facilities and rights. Therefore it is necessary for political parties to include issues concerning children and women in their manifestos. This initiative is a welcome step."



EDITOR'S SPECS

Worst Heat wave

Statistics can sometimes differ from public perceptions. Weather experts and scientists have stated that while the heatwave witnessed in large parts of India this year has been terrible, it is not the worst that India has faced in recent history. For the record, the 44-degree plus temperatures seen in many parts of north India is the worst in 10 years. So if you go by expert opinion, the heat wave was bad; but not as bad as what India has seen in the past. But public memory is known to be short and perceptions are based on current and contemporary events. For ordinary Indians, the statements of weather experts are no consolation as they are suffering through an energy sapping heatwave. Not surprisingly, a majority of Indians are of the opinion that the heatwave they are currently facing is the worst they have experienced in their lives. This was revealed by a nationwide survey conducted to gauge public sentiment on the issue. The survey was conducted via random sampling and included all education, income and ethnic categories. According to the results of the survey, overall, 78 per cent were of the opinion that this has been the worst heatwave of their life. Just 22 per cent of the respondents did not share the sentiment. Even on this non-partisan issue, political divides were visible. While 81 per cent of opposition supporters felt this has been the worst heatwave of their lives, 73 per cent of NDA supporters shared the same sentiment. Predictably, while 79 per cent of those in the age group 18 to 24 said this has been the worst heatwave of their lives, 67 per cent of those above 55 years of age felt the same.

AMBIVALENCE ON GANDHI VERSUS GODSE IN LONDON PLAY

A controversial play on the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi performed at the prestigious National Theatre in London has fared well at the box office and has even received praise in reviews in a section of the British press.

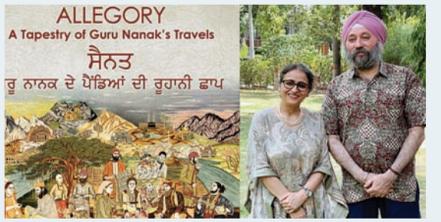
A spokeswoman for the National Theatre indicated the stage show had achieved a "a seated capacity of 80 per cent throughout the course of the run" since last month. The main character in the production is not Gandhi, but his killer Nathuram Godse. The depiction unfolds into a portrayal of Gandhi versus Godse ideologies, leaving comment on them somewhat unanswered, unless the audience is expected to reach a conclusion from the cacophony of Godse's role. "Any dramatization of history requires a degree of imaginative licence of the playwright," argued the writer of the play Chennai-born Anupama Chandrasekhar in a note in the programme for the performance. "That's fair enough. She continued: "This is not to say that the play is primarily a work of fiction. Rather, I have used history as the frame within which I could track the trajectories of both Gandhi and Godse, and therefore, of India." Admittedly, not a great deal is known that widely about Godse compared to a universal figure like Gandhi. This is but natural. How can a school dropout, who worked briefly as a tailor's assistant and was in Chandrasekhar's words "a small-time party worker" of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and then the assassin of the father of the Indian nation be of general curiosity other than his unspeakable crime? Chandrasekhar described it as "this battle between the Champion of Ahimsa and his very opposite". Can hate and violence be on the same pedestal as Gandhi's peace and non-violence? She acknowledged in reference to two million people dying at the time of the partition of India: "The fact that Bengal was fairly peaceful is testament to how much people respected Gandhi - and how big India's loss was with his death."



Yet, she leaves the question suspended on stage and indeed permits Godse the last word. The uninitiated could leave the hall a little baffled between right and wrong, the hero and the villain. They could even wonder if today's extremism is justified because of the death sentence handed down to Godse. Chandrasekhar highlights the story of Godse being brought up as a girl by his parents. Is there a suggestion that the psychological injury thus committed on him at childhood was the cause of him going astray? Grounds for what he did? It's a risky territory to venture into without scientific substantiation. "When it comes to taboo-busting, Anupama Chandrasekhar has form," wrote The Guardian. Its sister paper on Sundays The Observer was not as enthusiastic. It said, "this is a first-person narrative, delivered with bias and embellishments". Financial Times called

it an "exhilarating, epic play". But the Daily Telegraph defined it as a "dramatically slight study of Gandhi and his killer". The New European summed up, "it's hard not to feel Chandrasekhar has bitten off more than she can chew". Shubham Saraf as Godse, Paul Bazely as Gandhi and Sagar Arya as Vinayak Savarkar, not to mention Ayesha Dharker as Godse's mother and Sid Sagar as Narayan Apte, catch the eye. Director Indhu Rubasingham brings script together in parts quite arrestingly. A rumour doing the rounds was the Indian government refused permission for the play to be staged in India. This was dismissed by the National Theatre spokeswoman who said: "There has never been any plan or intention to produce the play at another venue in the UK or abroad." The play's current run finishes this weekend.

PUNJABI VERSION OF ENGLISH SERIES ON GURU NANAK DEV'S TRAVELS RELEASED



The Punjabi version of the English series on the iconic travels of Guru Nanak Dev across the distant lands of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Tibet, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka was released here on Wednesday by Singapore-based couple Amardeep Singh and Vininder Kaur. To carry forward the legacy of Guru Nanak Dev, the couple took the road less travelled and created the Punjabi docuseries, which chronicles the vast expanse of multi-faith sites visited by Guru Nanak Dev for spiritual dialogues. The series is freely available on <https://thegurunanak.com> The English version of this docuseries was released in September 2021 under the title "Allegory, A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels". This 24-episode docuseries is a joint production of Lost Heritage Productions, a Singapore-based production house and Sikh Lens Productions, a US-based non-profit organization. It has been filmed in over 150 multi-faith sites in nine countries where Guru Nanak Dev had travelled in the 15th century during a 22-year-long spiritual quest. "In a world that is so fragile and volatile, there has never been a better time to understand why Guru Nanak Dev travelled for 22 years to share his experiential wisdom and propagate the oneness of humankind," said Amardeep Singh. "Over 260 verses of Guru Nanak Dev rendered in the Raags to invoke critical thinking is the foundation of this docuseries. In addition, narratives of 14 saints from across the sub-continent, contemporaries and predecessors of Guru Nanak Dev, whose verses are enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib have been presented in the docuseries," said Vininder Kaur. Aided by the analytical study of the oldest 'Janamsakhis' (biographies of Guru Nanak Dev) and supported by the allegoric messages in Guru Nanak Dev's verses, the team spent over three years in research and filming all multi-faith sites in the geographies visited by Guru Nanak Dev. Thereafter, it has taken them over two years to edit the data to create the 24-episode docuseries. For Amardeep and Vininder, every moment in Guru Nanak Dev's footsteps has been philosophically liberating. It encouraged them to challenge their own conditioning, unlearn, re-learn and assimilate the beauty of unity in diversity. "We are seeking community support for this non-commercial endeavour to also produce the Hindi, Shahmukhi and Urdu versions of the docuseries. We would love to collaborate with like-minded people to spread the message of positivity and harmony across the globe," Amardeep added.

international

SHEHBAZ APPROVES TASK FORCE FOR PROTECTION OF MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

Islamabad | Agencies

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved the formation of a task force to oversee the implementation of the rights of minorities after the National Assembly (NA) unanimously passed a resolution over the matter, it emerged on Sunday.



hold the status of a federal minister, while the body will play an advisory role. "The task force shall monitor and oversee all the affairs of the protection of rights of minorities in the light of decisions taken by the Apex court," it said, adding that the body will also have to submit quarterly reports on the developments to the premier.

Moreover, all the provincial governments and administrations have been instructed in the notification to provide full support and assistance to the task force in discharging its functions, Dawn reported. Following the orders, Dr Vankwani took to Twitter saying that such a step had been taken "for the first time in the history of Pakistan".

"Parliamentarians unanimously passed a resolution to set up a task force for the rights of minorities and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif passed orders on its implementation... this reflects concrete steps taken by the present government for the protection of minorities," he tweeted. As chairman of the task force, Vankwani continued, "I would like to address the feelings of insecurity of the minorities." "Recommendations will be made for the solution of the problems faced by the minorities and we will take people from all the segments of the society along with us," Dr Vankwani promised, asserting that countering anti-Pakistan propaganda regarding minorities at the global level was the top priority of the task force, Dawn reported.

West moving towards war in space: Russia space agency

Western astronautics are "heading for war", Russian Space Agency (Roscosmos) said and claimed that the alleged collection of data for Ukraine by private Western companies proves this.

Moscow | Agencies

In an interview with Russia 24, Roscosmos Director Dmitry Rogozin claimed that private American companies such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, SpaceX, and others are now tasked with "one specific goal, to ensure the collection of information in real time, both visual, through infrared radar devices, and through conventional surveillance", RT reported. This data is collected for the Ukrainian forces to use "for ballistic missile guidance or multiple

launch rocket system operation", he was quoted as saying. This also applies to satellite communication companies such as Starlink, the Roscosmos director added. Asked if Russian satellites were able to monitor Ukrainian territory, Rogozin said, "of course". Earlier this month, he claimed that private American space companies are "at best, trusted contractors of the Pentagon, at worst, agents of the Pentagon or the CIA under the guise of 'private independent compa-

nies". Rogozin's remarks came soon after the head of US Cyber Command, General Paul Nakasone, admitted for the first time that Washington was supporting Ukraine by conducting offensive hacking operations, RT reported. "We've conducted a series of operations across the full spectrum; offensive, defensive, (and) information operations," he told Sky News. Nakasone did not provide any details of these operations, but claimed they are completely lawful.

Afghan airport resumes civilian flights after 2 decades

Kabul | Agencies

The Jalalabad Airport in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province has resumed civilian flights after two decades of serving as a base for the US military and other foreign troops. According to the Taliban-led government's Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation (MoTCA), there will be three to four flights each week, reports TOLO News. "The resumption of civilian flights from Nangarhar airport is a good step. It is a major resource for the eastern provinces of Laghman, Nuristan, Kunar and Nangarhar itself," said Imam Mohammad Warimach, Deputy Minister of Transportation and Civil Aviation. MoTCA said it will attempt to provide further facilities at the airport. "With the Islamic Emirate's coming to power, we reactivated this airport and provided it

with all the necessary equipment. The staff of the MoTCA have occupied their posts," said Imamuddin Warimach, a Ministry spokesman. Meanwhile, businesspeople have called for the resumption of international flights from Nangarhar province, saying that the international flights can help the country's economy. "I call on the Islamic Emirate's officials to facilitate international flights from this airport and air-corridor, thus we can export our goods from Afghanistan," TOLO News quoted Zalmay Azimi, a businessman, as saying. Earlier, the Jalalabad Airport was heavily used by the US Armed Forces and civilian contractors. They operated out of Forward Operating Base Fenty. Members of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Resolute Support Mission (RSM) also used the airport.

BANGLADESH SUFFERS WORST-EVER FLOODS IN CENTURY

Almost half of Bangladesh remained in the grip of devastating floods, as millions of people were marooned or left homeless in low-lying northeastern parts of the country.

Dhaka | Agencies

Md Kamrul Hasan, secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, told Xinhua news agency Saturday that tens of thousands of policemen, Bangladesh Army personnel and emergency service staff members have been deployed in parts of the country to assist search and rescue efforts. "Bangladesh Army soldiers have already been deployed as floods devastated the northeastern districts of Sunamganj and Sylhet," he said, adding there are no known injuries nor deaths to have occurred in the country so far as a result of the ongoing floods. Officials said thousands of homes in Sylhet and Sunamganj have been inundated and elec-



tricity has been cut. The key Surma river running through Sylhet and Sunamganj districts burst its banks, flowing at a record rate of over 100 cubic meters a second on Saturday. "The ongoing floods have been reported in 28 (out of 64) districts in Bangladesh since last week," Dalil Uddin, a spokesperson for the country's National Disaster Response Coordination Center (NDRCC) under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, told Xinhua. Ari7uzzaman Bhuiyan, head of the state-run Flood Forecasting and Warning Center, said that many major Bangladesh rivers have risen to dangerous levels. He said the overall trend con-

tinues to indicate deterioration in the flooding situation in the coming days, particularly alarming for the areas around the Brahmaputra and Ganges basins in the country. Floods reportedly caused widespread damage to habitation, crops, roads and highways across vast swathes of the country. TV reports showed wide areas of land are underwater in parts of Bangladesh, especially in the northeastern Sylhet region as major rivers have been overflowing since last week. Officials said the onrush of water from hills across the Indian borders has virtually worsened the situation in the northeastern Sylhet region.

At least 4 million people are marooned and 300,000 are reportedly facing electricity outages in the districts of Sunamganj and Sylhet, Bangladesh national news agency BSS reported. There is also the risk of mud and rock slides in the country as the flood waters run off. Also, the monsoon rain on Saturday swept the capital Dhaka, forcing millions of city residents to stay indoors most of the day. Due to incessant rainfall and flowing hill water, at least seven northern Bangladeshi districts have been inundated during the last two to three days. State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Md Enamur Rahman told journalists Saturday that both the government and private agencies of the country are working together in the Sylhet region which has been facing floods worst in 122 years. He said they had rushed teams of army, navy, coast guard and disaster response forces to carry out the rescue, distribute relief materials and supervise centres where the flood-affected families have taken shelter.

EGYPTIAN, BAHRAINI LEADERS VOW TO MAXIMISE BILATERAL COORDINATION

Cairo: Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi has met with visiting Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa in Egypt's Sharm El-Sheikh, discussing regional and international issues. During a meeting on Saturday in the Red Sea resort city, the two leaders agreed to maximise bilateral coordination and cooperation to develop the joint Arab action system in a bid to safeguard Arab national security and enhance Arab capabilities, Xinhua news agency reported, citing an Egyptian presidential statement. Sisi noted Egypt is ready to enhance bilateral cooperation with Bahrain in various fields, push forward development coordination in the Middle East, and strengthen unity and joint Arab action facing various regional and international challenges. For his part, King Hamad praised the pivotal and well-established role of Egypt as the cornerstone of regional security and stability and acknowledged Egypt's efforts in promoting joint Arab action at all levels. He said the two countries have seen significant progress in political and economic relations, among other fields.



CHIEF MINISTER THACKERAY SLAMS BJP AHEAD OF MLC POLLS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On Sunday, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray arrived at the Westin Hotel in Powai, on occasion of the Shiv Sena's 56th anniversary.

The Chief Minister addressed legislators and Legislative Council candidates, ahead of the legislative council elections due to be held on Monday.

The chief minister took the opportunity to slam the BJP-led Centre for the controversial Agnipath scheme and drew a distinction between the BJP's version of Hindutva, which he stated was merely a ploy to stay in power, drawing a contrast with the Hindutva of the Shiv Sena.

On the Agnipath scheme, the CM claimed that the only jobs available to agrivars after their 4-year service period would be that of "drivers and barbers."

Terming the scheme a "hire and fire, use and throw" policy, he urged the Centre to stop making what he said were "false promises."

In addition, he criticised the ruling BJP on a slew of issues and perceived missteps, including demonetisation,



farm laws and what he called a false promise of over 2 crore jobs annually.

Thackeray wished Shiv Sena workers on the occasion of the 56th anniversary of the founding of the party, recalling the functioning and growth of the party over the years, including having weathered the Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi during 1975-77.

The Chief Minister said, "There is peace in Maharashtra. Unfortunately Shiv Sena lost its second nominee Sanjay Pawar in the Rajya Sabha election. He asked party legislators to vote for Sachin Ahir and Aamsha Padavi in the state council polls. Addressing the rumours of impending retirements of senior party members, the chief minister

said, "Subhash Desai and Diwakar Raote won't retire, but will continue to be associated with the work of the Shiv Sena," adding that both followed directives after they were not nominated for state Council poll.

Thackeray also expressed a desire to see the number of Shiv Sena legislators increase after next assembly election, adding that he wished for the same in the Parliament after the 2024 General Election.

The chief minister also dismissed rumours that he was worried about the BJP poaching candidates ahead of the polls. "In the Rajya Sabha election not a single party legislator and associate member crossed voted. I don't expect cross voting tomorrow either," Thackeray stated. He voiced confidence that there would not be any split in the party.

"Shiv Sena had shown a different path by rejecting the BJP in the past. It will be shown in tomorrow's state Council election also," Thackeray said. He also warned legislators against defection, adding that treachery would not be tolerated by the party ahead of the legislative council polls.

Athawale claims BJP will repeat Rajya Sabh feat, win 5 MLC seats

Athawale said the plan helmed by former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis during the Rajya Sabha polls, which saw the BJP winning a third seat in an unlikely scenario, will work for the MLC polls as well as many smaller parties and Independent legislators were in support.

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Union minister Ramdas Athawale said BJP will win all the five Maharashtra Legislative Council seats it is contesting, polls to which are scheduled for Monday.

He said the plan helmed by former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis during the Rajya Sabha polls, which saw the BJP winning a third seat in an unlikely scenario, will work for the MLC polls as well as many smaller parties and Independent legislators were in support.

Queried on the Foundation Day of the ruling Shiv Sena, Athawale said Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray must align once again with the BJP and his RPI(A) as "Bhim shakti and Shiv shakti should come together again."

He said even if the Sena does not patch up, the RPI(A) will stand strongly with the BJP and ensure victory in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and Maharashtra Assembly polls.

Asked for a comment on the protests against the Centre's Agnipath, the Union minister for social justice and empowerment said the military recruitment scheme with a four-year tenure was brought in by the Centre after several rounds of deliberations. The youth



have misunderstood the scheme, especially about what the future holds for them after completion of tenure, the minister said. The Centre has increased the age limit for one year and has also announced 10 per cent reservation for 'Agniveers' in CAPFs and other forces, which would be beneficial to the youth, Athawale added.

"Considering the feeling of the youth the government is also thinking of bringing more change in the scheme," he claimed.

NCP's Eknath Khadse Meets BVA's Hitendra Thakur, Seeks Support for MVA

Recently, nominees of NCP, Congress, and BJP had called on Hitendra Thakur separately apparently to seek the support of the Bahujan Vikas Aghadi

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On the eve of the Maharashtra Legislative Council polls, NCP nominee Eknath Khadse on Sunday met BVA leader and Vasai MLA Hitendra Thakur and sought the support of his party in the tight contest between opposition BJP and Shiv Sena-led tripartite Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

Recently, nominees of NCP, Congress, and BJP had called on Thakur separately apparently to seek the support of the Bahujan Vikas Aghadi, which has three MLAs in the Legislative Assembly, in the June 20 elections for which eleven candidates are in the fray for the ten seats.

Later talking to reporters

on the premises of Thakur's office, Khadse admitted that he had asked for the BVA's votes in the polls. "I know Hitendra Thakur for more than 32 years. We share good relations. We know each other beyond politics. Today, we discussed family matters and didn't talk much about politics," he said. Khadse said it is Thakur's prerogative whom to vote. "I hope he will take the right decision," Khadse said, adding that Thakur cited different issues in his constituency during their discussion. Khadse also claimed that many MLAs in his parent party BJP, which he had quit last year, are his supporters.

He added that some MLAs (in BJP) are in touch with him but they will not cross the party line to vote for him in the MLC elections. "Not only two MLAs in Jalgaon, but many (MLAs) in BJP also support me.

I had helped many get tickets to contest elections. I also helped many MLAs to get cabinet berths. Many of them love me," he claimed. Khadse said the MVA comprising the Shiv Sena, NCP, and Congress - will win all

the six seats it is contesting.

Thakur is non-committal on the stand of the BVA in the polls. The MLAs form the electoral college for the MLC elections. The effective strength of the 288-member Maharashtra House is reduced to 285 following the death of Shiv Sena MLA Ramesh Latke, while two NCP MLAs - Nawab Malik and Anil Deshmukh - are currently in jail and are not allowed to vote by the high court. Smaller parties and Independents account for 25 MLAs. The quota for first preference votes per candidate to win the MLC polls is 26.

The BJP has 106 MLAs in the House, Shiv Sena-55, Congress-44 and NCP-52. Given its strength in the Assembly, the BJP can get four of the five candidates elected, the Sena and the NCP two each, and the Congress one.

A total of 11 candidates are in the fray for the 10 Council seats up for grabs, with the MVA allies - Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress - fielding two candidates each. The BJP has nominated five candidates.

Mumbai sees moderate showers; IMD predicts heavy rainfall for next four days

The season's first heavy rain spell is expected to lash multiple Maharashtra subdivisions, including Mumbai, over the course of this week

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On Sunday, most parts of Mumbai saw moderate showers through the wee hours and into the late morning, as the advancing southwestern monsoon arriving in Maharashtra made its presence felt.

While it has been over a week since the southwest monsoon arrived in several parts of Maharashtra, including its capital city Mumbai, the statewide rainfall activity for a majority of this period has remained low.

But this looks set to change starting this weekend, with the season's first heavy rain spell expected to lash multiple Maharashtra subdivisions.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted heavy rainfall for the next four days (June 19, June 20, June 21 and June 22) in Mumbai.

Strong southerly and southwesterly winds from the Bay of Bengal and a north-south trough from



northeast Bihar to interior Odisha are also expected to combine and dump isolated heavy rainfall over Maharashtra's Vidarbha subdivision this weekend (June 18-19).

The southwest monsoon conditions are yet to cover the northeasternmost parts of Maharashtra.

However, the state may get engulfed in monsoon completely over this weekend, the IMD's latest update has indicated.

In addition, the city on Sunday recorded an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 57, which is considered to be 'Moderate.' The Air quality is

acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.

Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.

The weather today is forecasted to be at a maximum of 30 degrees Celsius, with a minimum of 27 degrees Celsius. Moderate showers are likely to occur intermittently across various parts of the city.

Since the beginning of the monsoon period on June 1, the inactive phase of monsoon has led to Maharashtra recording just 40.3 rainfall so far this month - a 57% 'deficit' compared to its long-term average for the period between June 1 and 18, which stands at 93.4 mm.

But with the rains set to pick up the pace from this weekend onwards, the statewide precipitation figures are likely to edge closer to normal as we approach the end of the month.

IMA writes to health minister over 'impractical' amendments to nursing home registration rules

IMA members pointed out that while issues of fire safety, bio-medical waste disposal, structural audit and other procedures are relevant, they are being unfortunately linked with the registration process of a nursing home.

Team Absolute | Pune

Discontent is brewing at Indian Medical Association (IMA) as members across Maharashtra have come out strongly against the "impractical" amendments to the nursing home registration rules with a majority threatening that at least 90 per cent of hospitals would be forced to shut down. In a letter sent to Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope on June 17, the IMA said the amendments are impractical and impossible to comply with.

"There are approximately 25,000 small and large nursing homes in Maharashtra and time and again we have raised several objections after the notification was issued last year in January," Dr Mangesh Pate, honorary secretary, IMA, Maharashtra told The Indian Express.

As per the Maharashtra Nursing Homes Registration (Amendment) Rules, 2021, notification issued on January 14, 2021, the fees for the registration and renewal have been revised to Rs 5,000 for a Grade A nursing home (within municipal corporation limits), Rs 4,500 for Grade B nursing home and so on. In the council, nagar panchayat and village pan-

chayat or any other rural area, nursing homes will be charged for every additional bed. Minimum standard norms have been enlisted in the notification for the physical structure of a nursing home apart from the staffing pattern.

"The government needs to take into account the opinion of service providers and their concerns. We requested a meeting with the concerned authorities on January 18 last year and it was postponed due to the pandemic. A meeting was held on April 6 this year and we have requested another meeting with Health Minister Rajesh Tope on this issue," Dr Subas Pingle, IMA president Maharashtra, said. Dr Sanjay Patil, chairman of the Hospital Board of India - Pune Chapter, told The Indian Express that there are so many clauses designed in such a way in the amendment notification that it would not be surprising if 90 per cent of the hospitals shut down.

IMA members pointed out that while issues of fire safety, bio-medical waste disposal, structural audit and other procedures are relevant, they are being unfortunately linked with the registration process of a nursing home.

Maharashtra Legislative Council Election 2022:

Date, time, seats, contests, results-All one should know

Collectively, the Independents and smaller parties will have 29 votes. Together, they can change the course of election, as was witnessed in the recently held Rajya Sabha elections in the state.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Eleven candidates are in fray for ten seats in the biennial Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLC) elections to be held on June 20, setting up for a close fight between the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance's Congress and the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the tenth seat. While the term of nine sitting members of the legislative council is coming to an end on July 7, the election for the tenth seat was necessitated as it fell vacant after the death of BJP MLC RN Singh in January, 2022. According to the Election Commission, votes will be cast between 9 am to 4 pm, while the counting of votes will begin at 5 pm. The date before which the election has to be completed is March 22, the EC further stated.

While the tenth seat fell vacant following the death of BJP leader RN Singh, the election to the nine other seats were necessitated as terms of nine MLCs are set to

expire in July this year.

The nine outgoing members of the Upper House are its current Chairman Ramraje Naik Nimbalkar and Sanjay Daund, both from NCP, Leader of Opposition Pravin Darekar, Sujitsinh Thakur, Prasad Lad, both belonging to BJP, BJP allies Maratha leader Vinayak Mete and former minister Sadabhau Khot, and the rest from Shiv Sena, including Industries minister Subhash Desai and Diwakar Raote. 10 seats are up for grabs with 11 candidates fighting for them, thus forcing an election for the tenth seat. The strength of the electoral college has dropped to 285 from 288 as three legislators won't cast their votes on Monday. While Shiv Sena MLA Ramesh Latke died earlier this year, the Bombay High Court on Saturday rejected the pleas of two jailed NCP legislators Anil Deshmukh and Nawab Malik to grant temporary release from prison for voting.

The BJP has named Pravin Darekar, Ram Shinde, Shrikant Bhartiya, Uma Khapre and Prasad Lad as its candidates while the MVA has nominated Sachin Ahit and Amasha Padvi (both Shiv Sena), Ramraje Naik-Nimbalkar and Eknath Khadse (both Nationalist Congress Party), Chandrakant Handore and Bhai Jagtap (all Congress).

In order to get elected, each candidate will require the support of at least 26 MLAs. With 106 legisla-

tors, BJP is expected to win four out of five seats. On the other hand, Shiv Sena (55 MLAs) and NCP (51 MLAs) are slated to win two seats each. Congress, with 44 MLAs, will require at least eight first preference votes, mostly from Independents and other smaller parties, for its second member Bhai Jagtap to get elected. NCP will require only one extra vote to get its second member elected. With the Sena having three surplus votes, the rest of the MVA, mainly NCP, can breathe easy.

The Upper House in Maharashtra consists of 78 seats, with BJP having 25 members at presents, and the MVA, collectively boasting of 33 members (14 from Shiv Sena, 10 from NCP, 9 from Congress). 12 members from the state's Upper House are nominated by the Governor, while the rest 66 are elected. For the tenth seat, the 66-year-old President of Mumbai Congress Jagtap will be up against the 51-year-old Lad, former MLC and a close aide of former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. Smaller parties including Samajwadi Party, All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen and Bahujan Vikas Aghadi are still holding their cards close to their chests. Collectively, the Independents and smaller parties will have 29 votes. Together, they can change the course of election, as was witnessed in the recently held Rajya Sabha elections in the state.

Maharashtra Board SSC 10th Results 2022: 43-YR-OLD MAN CLEARS EXAM, BUT SON FAILS

- ▶ I always wanted to study more, but could not do so earlier because of family responsibilities and to earn to sustain our livelihood," said the 43-year-old man from Pune.
- ▶ A 43-year-old man from Pune and his son both appeared for the Class 10 Maharashtra board examinations
- ▶ The results of the annual Class 10 exams conducted by the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education were declared on Friday

Team Absolute | Pune

A 43-year-old man from Pune and his son both appeared for the Class 10 Maharashtra board examinations this year, but the results brought a mixed bag of feelings for the family as the father cleared the exam, while the son failed. The results of the annual Class 10 exams conducted by the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education were declared on Friday.

Bhaskar Waghmare, who had to give up studies after Class 7 and take up a job to sustain his family, was keen to resume studies. After a gap of 30 years, he appeared for the exams this year along with his son.

"I always wanted to study more, but could not do so earlier because of family responsibilities and to earn to sustain our livelihood," Waghmare, a resident of Babasaheb Ambedkar Dias Plot in Pune city who is into a private job, told reporters on Saturday

evening.

"Since sometime, I was keen on resuming studies and doing some courses which would help me in earning more. Hence, I had decided to appear for the Class 10 exams. My son was also appearing for the exams this year, and this helped me," he said.

Waghmare said he used to study every day and prepare for the exams after his work. Though he is now happy to have cleared the exams, he is sad that his son failed in two papers.

"I will support my son in taking up the supplementary exams (conducted for students who have failed in some subjects) and I am hopeful he will clear them," he said. His son Sahil also had mixed feelings.

"I am happy that my father did what he always wanted to do. But, I will also not give up. I will prepare for the supplementary exams and try to clear the papers," he added. As per the results announced on Friday, the overall pass percentage this year was 96.94 per cent.

The Konkan division registered the highest pass percentage of 99.27, while Nashik division was at the bottom with 95.90 per cent.

This year, students appearing for the exam were given 30 minutes extra to complete the papers and for their convenience, their own schools were allowed as the exam centres. Last year (2020-21), the exams had been cancelled due to the rise in COVID-19 cases and the results were prepared based on the marks obtained in the Class 9 exam and as per internal assessments of Class 10.

The pass percentage for 2020-21 was 99.95 per cent.



Lil Nas X feels awards shows have long way to go on inclusivity

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rapper Lil Nas X hopes that things will improve at the 2022 Songwriters Hall of Fame gala night in New York City, where he was honoured with the 'Hal David Starlight Award', which pays tribute to young songwriters whose work is impacting the music industry.

He said: "I think we have a long way to go in some places, but I feel like the world is definitely trying its best to change in many ways."

The comment came after the Grammy-winner hit out at the Black Entertainment Television network, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

It announced nominations for this year's edition of its long-running awards show but he received zero nominations.

He said in tweets that are now deleted: "Thank you BET awards. An outstanding zero nominations again. Black excellence!", before going on to argue the move highlighted a larger trend of exclusion and erasure of queer black artists by black spheres of power.

He also tweeted: "This not over no bet award this is about the bigger problem of homophobia in the black community, ya'all can sit and pretend all u want but imma risk it all for us."

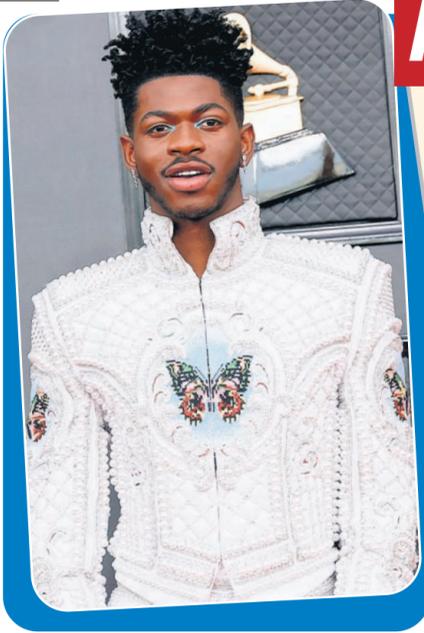
Lil Nas X then emphasised the limitations around self-expression often imposed on queer artists and argued other black queer rappers such as Frank Ocean and Tyler, the Creator, were "more respected when they do less feminine things".

In his new track dubbed 'F*** BET', Lil Nas X also appears shirtless and raps about being snubbed, while listing his accolades as a chart-topping artist. But in a statement to Entertainment Tonight, the network explained the nomination process while vowing it is committed "to using all of our platforms to provide visibility and inclusion for all of the many intersections of the Black community", reports femalefirst.co.uk.

It added: "We love Lil Nas X. He was nominated for a 'Best New Artist BET Award' in 2020, and we proudly showcased his extraordinary talent and creativity on the show twice: he performed 'Old Town Road' with Billy Ray Cyrus at BET Awards 2019, and his BET Awards 2021 performance was a highlight of our show. No one cheered louder that night than BET."

"Unfortunately, this year, he was not nominated by BET's Volodymyr Awards, which is comprised of an esteemed group of nearly 500 entertainment professionals in the fields of music, television, film, digital marketing, sports journalism, public relations, influencers, and creative arts... at BET, we are passionate advocates for the wonderful diversity that exists within our community."

Lil Nas X responded: "These are literally just buzz words placed together."



Sandra Bullock 'really' has no idea how long her acting break will be

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Sandra Bullock has talked about her hiatus from movie screens.

In a new interview, the actress portraying Loretta Sage in 'The Lost City' doesn't know how long her break from acting will last, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Bullock said she is "so burnt out and tired" that she needs to take a hiatus from filming but is unsure of when she will return.

She told The Hollywood Reporter: "I don't want to be beholden to anyone's schedule other than my own. I'm so burnt out. I'm so tired, and I'm so not capable of making healthy, smart decisions and I know it."

When asked how long the break will last, she replied: "I really don't know." She later admitted that she has relied

on work as a "crutch" and needs to take a step back. "Work has always been steady for me, and I've been so lucky. I saw it possibly becoming my crutch. It was like opening up a fridge all the time and looking for something that was never in the fridge," she said.

"I said to myself, 'Stop looking for it here because it doesn't exist here. You already have it; establish it, find it and be OK not having work to validate you'."

And Sandra says producing 'The Lost City' with Liza Chasin was a great way to "go out with a bang".

"I love working with artists, and that's why Liza and I were very well-matched. If I'm going out with a bang, I want to go out with the right person."



Priyanka Chopra wraps up Russo Brothers' 'Citadel'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Indian actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas has wrapped up the shoot of her upcoming spy-thriller series 'Citadel'.

The actress took to Instagram, where she shared a reel. In the clip, she can be seen driving around with her dog.

Alongside the video, she wrote: "And it's finally a wrap! Thank you to everyone who made this mammoth task possible and fun. Thx Atlanta. See you next time."

Her husband, singer Nick Jonas took to the comment section and dropped a heart.

On the Bollywood front, Priyanka will be seen in 'Jee Le Zaraa' with Katrina Kaif and Alia Bhatt. The film will be directed by Farhan Akhtar.

Priyanka has also signed up for an adaptation of Shilpi Somaya Gowda's novel 'The Secret Daughter', in which she will share the screen space with Sienna Miller.

Clint Eastwood's daughter on growing up with famous dad: He's a down-to-earth person

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood maestro Clint Eastwood's daughter Alison Eastwood has opened up about growing up with her famous dad.

In a new interview, the daughter of the legendary actor described her famous father as a "down-to-earth" dad who loves nature and having a beer, reports aceshowbiz.com.

The actor-and-director has two grownup children, Alison, 50, and Kyle, 54, with his first wife Maggie Johnson, as well as six more from other relationships. Alison has now opened up about what it was like growing up with her famous father.

She told "When we were kids, my dad would take my brother and I for dinner and people would come up to him for autographs. He's not someone who craves that."

Actress Alison and her musician brother were raised away from Hollywood, which she says was a wonderful place to grow up.

She added: "It's a magical spot on the ocean, and there's lots of wildlife." The 'Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil' star went on to reveal Clint is a low-key guy, who loves nature and hanging out with his friends and family.

She explained: "He's down-to-earth, enjoys nature and jazz and hanging out and having a beer."

Alison also explains that although her parents divorced in 1984, she's still very close to her dad and the whole extended family comes together once a year to spend Thanksgiving together.

After the split, the 92-year-old Hollywood star had several more relationships before marrying for a second time in 1996 when he wed TV journalist Dina Ruiz.

They have daughter Morgan together, but later split and divorced in 2014.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker Guy Ritchie, who directed Disney's 'Aladdin' in 2019, is set to direct the upcoming live-action adaptation of the 1997 film 'Hercules'.

According to Variety, who previously reported, the 'Avengers: Endgame' Directors Joe and Anthony Russo's AGBO is producing the film being developed by Disney, which hired action specialist Dave Callahan to

GUY RITCHIE TO DIRECT 'HERCULES' LIVE-ACTION FILM

a first draft. AGBO is in the process of hiring additional writers. Ritchie most recently filmed an untitled action thriller with Jake Gyllenhaal. He wrote, directed and executive produced 'Operation Fortune: Ruse de guerre', which was scheduled for a release in the first few months of 2022, but has since been pushed back without an official release date set, reports 'Variety'. The original animated 'Hercules' was directed by Ron Clements and John Musker as a musical retelling of the Hercules legend, with music by Alan Menken. Tate Donovan voiced the lead role, alongside Susan Egan as his love interest, Megara, and James Woods as Hades, who kidnaps the demigod Hercules as a baby and forces him to live alongside mortals.

Hercules is assisted by the satyr Philoctetes, who teaches him to use his superhuman strength to prove himself worthy of living among the gods on Mount Olympus. Disney's original 'Hercules' film had an \$85 million budget and raked in \$252 million at the box office worldwide. It joined Disney predecessors including 1991's 'Beauty and the Beast', 'Aladdin' and 'The Lion King', which have all been remade as lucrative live-action films, reports 'Variety'.

Al Pacino wants to see Timothee Chalamet take over his role in 'Heat' sequel

Los Angeles | Agencies

After 27 years, the follow-up to 'Heat' is almost here as writer-director Michael Mann is releasing a continuation of the crime epic on August 9 in the form of a novel titled 'Heat 2'.

The book will trace the lives of master criminal Neil McCauley and obsessive detective Lt. Vincent Hanna before and after the events of his 1995 film, reports 'Variety'.

When asked who could play Lt. Hanna in a potential film adaptation of the sequel, Pacino made one suggestion

that was met with bursting applause.

"Timothee Chalamet," Pacino said on Friday night at the United Palace theater in Manhattan's Washington Heights.

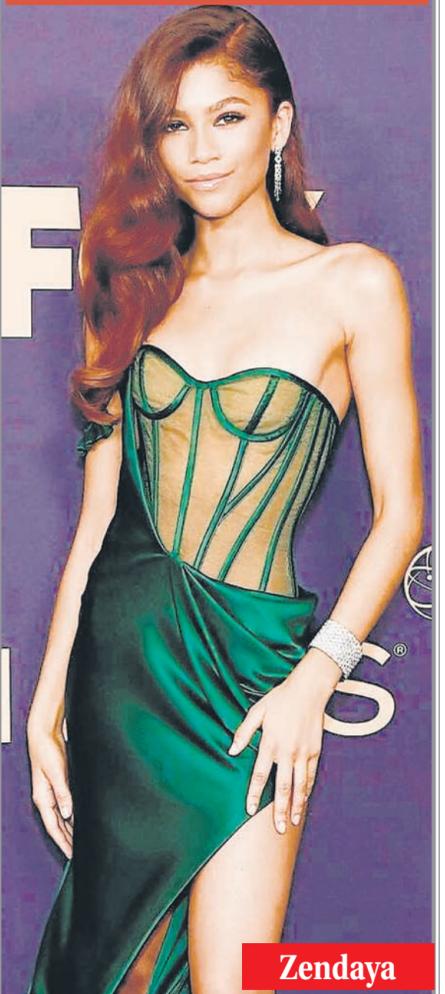
"I mean, he's a wonderful actor. Great looks." According to 'Variety', to commemorate the film's 25th anniversary, the Tribeca Festival held a Q&A panel that featured vintage superstars Pacino and De Niro as well as longtime producer Art Linson. Moderated by journalist Bilge Ebiri, the conversation was followed by a 4K screening of the 1995 film.

The celebration was delayed two years due to restrictions brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thousands of people, mostly unmasked, lined up around the block on West 176th Street to attend the event. Before the actors walked on stage, audience members were quickly reminded of the virus' presence when Mann appeared through a video message to announce that he was unable to attend the panel after testing positive for Covid.

To no surprise, Pacino and De Niro were met with a standing ovation when they first walked on stage. "The idea of these two starring in this film is something that almost anybody would say, 'That's a good idea,'" Linson recalled.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Zendaya



PM MODI LAUNCHES TORCH RELAY FOR 44TH CHESS OLYMPIAD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched the historic torch relay for the 44th Chess Olympiad at Indira Gandhi Stadium, here.

FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich handed over the torch to the Prime Minister, who in turn handed it over to Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand. This torch will be taken to 75 cities in a span of 40 days before the final culmination at Mahabalipuram near Chennai.

At every location, chess grandmasters of the state will receive the torch. Prime Minister Modi also made the Khelo Chess Ceremonial move followed by Koneru Humpy making a move. Union Ministers Anurag Singh Thakur and Nisith Pramanik, Chess players and enthusiasts, ambassadors, chess officials were among those present on the occasion.

Dvorkovich thanked the Government of India for taking the initiative in the start of the new tradition of torch relay which will popularise and galvanise the game all over the world.

"FIDE is grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his presence and honouring us," he said and recalled the Prime Minister's speech on the occasion of most players playing chess in one place in 2010 on the significance of the game of Chess in building new capabilities and role of combination of education and sports in leading to success.

The FIDE president hoped that Chess would become part of all schools across India and all over the world.



"India today is the fastest growing Chess country today and you have all grounds to be proud of that. We are grateful for your leadership for all the fantastic work that you are doing in the interest of Chess," he said.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister said, "Today the first torch relay for Chess Olympiad games is starting from India. For the first time, this year, India is also going to host Chess Olympiad games. We are proud that a sport, starting from its birthplace and leaving its mark all over the world, has become a passion for many countries."

"Centuries ago, the torch of this sport went to the whole world in the form of Chaturanga from India. Today the first Olympiad torch of chess is also coming out of India. Today,

when India is celebrating its 75th year of independence, Amrit Mahotsav, this Chess Olympiad torch will also go to 75 cities of the country," PM Modi said.

"FIDE has decided that the torch relay for each Chess Olympiad game will start from India itself. This honour is not only the honour of India, but also the honour of this glorious heritage of chess. I congratulate FIDE and all its members for this," he said.

The Prime Minister dwelled on the India's heritage in Chess. He said, "Our ancestors invented games like Chaturanga or Chess for analytical and problem solving brains. Chess, via India, reached many countries of the world and became very popular. Today, chess is being used in schools as an education tool for young people, for children."

He noted that in recent years, India is consistently improving its performance in Chess. This year, India's contingent in the Chess Olympiad is the biggest so far.

Modi expressed the hope that India will create a new record of medals this year. He talked about many lessons that Chess gives us in our lives.

Underlining the need for right support for everyone irrespective of their place in life, the PM Modi said, "Just like every piece of chess has its own unique strength and a unique ability. If you make the right move with a piece and use its power properly, then it becomes the most powerful. This speciality of Chessboard gives us the big message of life. If given the right support and the right environment, no goal is impossible even for the weakest."

5TH T20I: MATCH ABANDONED DUE TO RAIN, INDIA AND SOUTH AFRICA SHARE SERIES



The fifth and final T-20 International cricket match between India and South Africa was called off due to rain with only 3.3 overs bowled at M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru tonight.

Bengaluru | Agencies

The five-match series ends with a 2-2 draw, with both teams sharing the trophy.

The rain had earlier interrupted the start of play after Proteas had elected to bowl first and it had been reduced to 19 overs per side.

Put into bat first, India were 28 for the loss of two wickets after 3.3 overs before rain came back to play spoil sport and no more play was possible due to a wet outfield. Visitors won the first two matches before the hosts bounced back to level the series at 2-2. India's Ishan Kishan



emerged as the most prolific batter in the series, scoring 206 runs in five innings at an average of 41.20 with 2 half-centuries. Indian bowler Harshal Patel

emerged as the leading wicket-taker in the series, taking seven wickets in five matches at an average of 12.57 and an economy rate of 7.23.

MANU BHAKER, SHIVA NARWAL WIN MIXED TEAM PISTOL TITLE AT KUMAR SURENDRA SINGH MEMORIAL SHOOTING

Haryana duo of Manu Bhaker and Shiva Narwal have won the 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team title at the 20th Kumar Surendra Singh Memorial Shooting competition at the MP Shooting academy range in Bhopal on Sunday.

New Delhi: Haryana duo of Manu Bhaker and Shiva Narwal have won the 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team title at the 20th Kumar Surendra Singh Memorial Shooting competition at the MP Shooting academy range in Bhopal on Sunday.



They beat the experienced pair of Amanpreet Singh and Shweta Singh of ONGC 16-8 in the gold medal encounter.

Esha Singh of Telangana, who had won the individual women's 10m Air Pistol title on Saturday won two bronze medals on the day. She teamed up Kaushik Gopu to win bronze in both the senior and junior mixed team competitions.

Back at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range here, Meena Kumari kept the Haryana domination going with a victory in the women's 50m Rifle Prone event.

She shot a score of 620.2 to beat Mahit Sandhu of Chandigarh who notched up 619.9 after 60-shots. Mahit won the junior crown in the event.

FIH Hockey Pro League: Indian women go down 2-3 to Argentina despite superb fightback

The Indian women's hockey team came up with another brilliant performance but fell short in their efforts as World No. 2 Argentina emerged 3-2 winner in their FIH Hockey Pro League encounter here on Sunday.

Rotterdam (Netherlands) | Agencies

The Indian women's hockey team came up with another brilliant performance but fell short in their efforts as World No. 2 Argentina emerged 3-2 winner in their FIH Hockey Pro League encounter here on Sunday.

After a morale-shattering 0-5 defeat to Belgium a few days back, the Indians had come back to hold Argentina 3-3 in the first encounter before losing in the shoot-out.

On Sunday, they mounted another fightback after Argentina had scored three goals within five minutes in the third quarter to make it 3-1. India had taken the lead in the second quarter with Salima Tete had given them the lead in the 22nd minute.

Jennika Schopman's side pulled one goal back in the fourth quarter but could not draw the match like on Saturday despite putting up a sensational defensive effort in the first session even though they were reduced to nine players just before the half-time when Sonika (green card) and Deepika (yellow) were sent to the sin bin.

With this win Argentina, who had already won the title with two matches to spare, finished their campaign with 42 points from 16 matches, finishing the tournament without a single defeat in regulation time.



India now have 24 points from 12 matches with two games against the United States to go. They remain in the third position in the standings.

It was even-stevens in the first half as far as possession was concerned but the Indians came out for the breather smiling as they led 1-0 thanks to an excellent solo effort by Salima Tete.

Argentina, who had 13 circle penetrations in the first session, held sway in the first quarter, bagged two penalty corners and created several chances. But the Indian defense stood strong, especially skipper and goalkeeper

Savita brilliant her blocks, effecting three super saves -- two of them off the penalty corners. India, who made a nervous start despite coming back to hold the champion-elect 3-3 in the first match of the double-header on Saturday, were at their best in the second quarter, dominated possession and created some good chances.

Salima Tete put them ahead in the 22nd minute when she made a brilliant run into the circle off a quick-silver counterattack and planted a powerful shot inches past goalkeeper Succi from the top of the circle.

However, Argentina showed why they were the best performing team in the FIH Pro League 2021-22 as they struck thrice in the third quarter to turn the match their way.

They attacked the from the right and opened up the Indian defence and went 3-1 up. The Las Leonas equalised in the 37th minute off a good run by Sofia Toccalino, who sent a pass-back from the goal line and Thome Delfina tapped it and the ball ballooned off Savita's stick into the goal.

India bagged two penalty corners in quick succession but one was saved by Argentina goalkeeper Belen Succi while the Indians shot wide off the second.

The Argentina team obtained a penalty corner in the 41st minute and Augustina Gorzelany laid it for Eugenia Trinchinetti to deflect the ball into the goal to make it 2-1. Two minutes later, Argentina earned another PC, and Gorzelany planted a powerful flick to make it 3-1 for Argentina.

Argentina could have scored a couple of more goals in the third quarter but Savia affected two brilliant reflex saves to keep things in control for India.

India pulled one goal back when Neha made a fantastic run in the 48th minute and helped India earn a Penalty Corner. Deep Grace Ekka scored with a superb slap-sweep past goalkeeper Succi and into the net.

Argentina kept up the pressure on their opponents and earned a Penalty Corner in the 50th minute, but the Indians kept the ball away from their goal. Salima Tete made another brilliant run in the 56th minute and passed the ball to Vandana Katariya, who took a shot, but Succi effected a magnificent save to keep the Indians at bay. The Indian team tried its best to find the equaliser, but the Argentines stood tall and eventually walked off the field as winners of the match.

GRANOLLERS-ZEBALLOS WIN HALLE OPEN MEN'S DOUBLES TITLE

Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos held off a stirring late comeback from Tim Puetz and Michael Venus to clinch the 2022 Halle Open men's doubles title, here on Sunday.

Halle (Germany) | Agencies

Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos held off a stirring late comeback from Tim Puetz and Michael Venus to clinch the 2022 Halle Open men's doubles title, here on Sunday.

A crashing forehand return winner from Granollers proved the moment of magic necessary to break the deadlock late at OWL Arena, where the top seeds prevailed 6-4, 6-7(5), 14-12 in a dramatic championship match to seal their first grass-court crown as a team.

Granollers and Zeballos had appeared on course for a more comfortable climax to a tight encounter when leading 5/0 in the Match Tie-break. However, home favourite Puetz and New Zealander Venus rallied to force two match points of their own at 10/9 and 12/11, before Granollers' intervention secured a seventh tour-level title for the Spanish-Argentine pairing.

"There was a bit of luck at the end of the match because you never



know what is going to happen when you are 10/10 in the Match Tie-break," said Granollers after the match.

"I think it was a very good match, a good level from both teams. We were leading in the Match Tie-break, and sometimes it can happen that you get tight, but we're very happy to win the tournament," he added.

"This is a really special moment for me. I came here for the first time

when I was 17 with my father. I met Roger [Federer] here, I played my first junior tournament, so what can I say," said Zeballos. "I have really nice memories, I'm so happy, I enjoyed the whole week, and now that we won the tournament it is perfect," he added.

A couple of key moments defined a tight first set in their maiden ATP head-to-head meeting. Granollers and Zeballos recovered a pair of

break points to hold in the second game and were clinical when their chance came along, converting a deciding deuce point for 4-3 that proved enough to claim the opening set. Puetz and Venus responded to dropping their first set of the week by staying solid, but the German-New Zealand duo was forced to wait until a tie-break to level the match as serve dominated the second set. The third seeds converted their third set point to take it 7-5, as the excited crowd urged home favourite Puetz and his partner Venus on.

There was no panic from Granollers and Zeballos, however, whose combination of precise serving and solid net play ultimately proved enough to overcome their opponents' late charge and complete a one-hour, 52-minute win at the ATP 500 event.

It is the first tour-level title for Granollers and Zeballos since they lifted the trophy at the Western & Southern Open in Cincinnati last August. The duo is now 7-4 in ATP Tour finals.

INDONESIA OPEN:

Viktor Axelsen, Tai Tzu Ying win singles titles

Jakarta (Indonesia) | Agencies

Viktor Axelsen from Denmark and Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei won the respective men's and women's singles titles at the Indonesia Open tournament, here on Sunday.

Axelsen, who also won the Indonesia Open in the last edition, successfully defended his title after beating China's Zhao Jun Peng 21-9, 21-10 in the men's singles final.

The Olympic champion, who reached his eighth consecutive Super 1000 final, dispatched his unseeded opponent in just 38 minutes to claim his second straight tournament in Jakarta following his success at the Indonesian Masters one week ago.

Axelsen, who overcame Malaysia's star Lee Zii Jia in a thrilling semifinal on Saturday, will overtake India's Lakshya Sen to top the men's singles World Tour rankings on Monday.

On the other hand, Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei saw off Asian champion Wang Zhi Yi of China to win her third women's singles crown at the tournament (after titles in 2016 and 2018).

The Tokyo 2020 silver medalist narrowly lost the first game (21-23) but immediately reacted by taking the second period 21-6. Tai



took control of the decider and saw off Wang 21-15 to clinch her second consecutive title in the BWF World Tour after the Thailand Open.

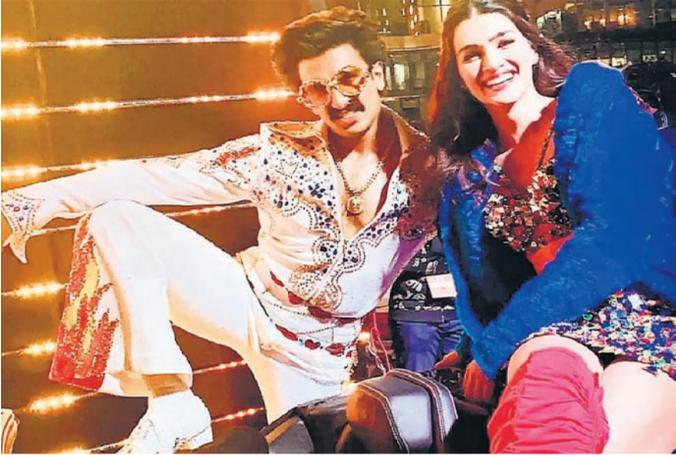
Earlier in the day, China's Zheng Si Wei and Huang Ya Qiong got the mixed doubles title after seeing off Watanabe Yuta and Higashino Arisa of Japan in two games (21-14, 21-16).

Meanwhile, Matsuyama Nami and Shida Chiharu of Japan retained their Indonesia Open women's double crown after coming back from one game down against compatriots Fukushima Yuki and Hirota Sayaka.

In the men's doubles final, Liu Yu Chen and Ou Xuan Yi capped off an impressive campaign after being promoted from the reserves list as they defeated Korea's Choi and Kim in two games.



Fans demand Kriti Sanon and Ranveer Singh to come together for a project



Team Absolute | Mumbai

It was all things spectacular during a recent award ceremony, with numerous B-town celebrities dressed to the nines. While the divas looked lovely as always, the focus of attention at the occasion was on Kriti Sanon and Ranveer Singh's bonding. Fans are demanding that Ranveer and Kriti do a film opposite each other after a video clip of the two went viral on the internet

showing them talking and joking together. That would be a fantastic combo.

The event's videos were shared on a fan page, which wrote, "Someone cast these two in a film!"

Both of the generation's biggest performers are set to star in major projects in the near future. Kriti has Adipurush, Bhediya, Ganapath and Shehzada, whereas Ranveer has Rocky Aur Rani ki Prem Kahaani and Cirkus.



Neetu Kapoor: My husband was a very possessive man

Aakruti Bagla | Mumbai

Neetu Kapoor has entertained the audiences for decades. First, as a child artist and then as a young actor who bagged several big banner films. The actress was last seen in Besharam alongside her son Ranbir Kapoor. She is now all set to make a comeback after a decade with Raj Mehta's Jugjugg Jeeyo.

During a media interaction ahead of the release of the film, the actress opened up about coming on board for this film, Ranbir and Alia's reaction. Advice from Rishi Kapoor and much more. The actress is coming back to the big screen after a hiatus of 10 years. When asked about his son Ranbir's reaction and how did she agree to come on board, the actress said, "Actually it was Ranbir's idea. So when my husband passed away I was very sad and didn't know what to do ahead. Karan was at our place that time. While we were having dinner, my kids, Ranbir and Riddhima asked me about what am I going to do further. They suggested me

to get back to acting but I was a bit apprehensive. Then Karan said I have an interesting subject for you and the next day he came with the director and they narrated me the script of Jugjugg Jeeyo. It was such a brilliant script that I immediately agreed to do it."

Further, when questioned about receiving any sort of advice from her son Ranbir and daughter-in-law Alia, the actress praised the two and gushed, "As such, they didn't advise me anything. Infact I insisted them to take my readings since they are such talented actors. They started laughing at me and said that I'll do it and I should go ahead with full confidence."

She also remembered her late husband

Rishi Kapoor, and revealed that he wanted Ranbir and Alia to get married. She quipped, "I feel that he is blessing me, his hand is over me and it will always be there. All this love that I am getting from everyone around me is all him. He wants me to be happy, that's why I am getting all this love and I got this beautiful bahu-rani, meri Alia. I couldn't have asked for anyone better, she's so lovely." She further added, "He actually wanted them to get married and even when he was hospitalised, He used to be like at least get married now".

The actress further even shared that she has not met Ranbir-Alia post their wedding as they are busy shooting. She averred, "Both of them have been travelling for their respective shoots post their wedding. While Ranbir is in Spain, Alia jetted off to London. Infact, I haven't met them after the wedding. But they do take out time and message me their reaction and people's reaction they receive on Jugjugg Jeeyo trailer."

Did you know? Before Jaya Bachchan, Neetu Kapoor was offered Kal Ho Na Ho, but the actress turned down the offer. Speaking about the same, the actress averred, "It's not that I didn't want to act, it was also that I wasn't into that frame of mind. My husband never asked me not to work, but he was a very possessive man. He wanted me to be home and even if I went out for a while, he would go crazy. He used to get very insecure. So, I could not imagine to leave my husband and go for shoot. So, I would always put it down ki nahi karna, bechara pareshan ho jayega. That's why I never worked. It's not that he told me not to. I could have worked if I asked him, he wouldn't have said no."

KJo has a special message for single parents on Father's Day

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Filmmaker Karan Johar, who is a single father to twins Roohi and Yash, has a special message for all the single parents on Father's Day.

Karan took to Instagram, where he posted a motley of pictures posing with his children, whom he welcomed via surrogacy in 2017.

He wrote: "A decision I could never have made from my heart if I didn't have my mothers hand on my head and her relentless love, time and support. She is the wind beneath our wings of love. My bachas!!!"

He revealed that he thanks the universe everyday for bringing them into his life.

"What do I say there isn't a day I don't thank the universe for bringing Roohi and Yash into my life! Happy Father's Day to me and to all single parent! It doesn't just take two to nurture! It just takes one solid heart! I know mine is."



Team Absolute | Hyderabad

The continued backlash over Sai Pallavi's comments in an interview looks to be having a significant influence on her. Sai Pallavi has had enough of the love and hate on social media and has decided to put an end to it.

The 'Fidaa' actress has clarified what she actually meant by releasing a video.

Sai Pallavi on Saturday created a video in which she clarified the situation and expressed her feelings. "This is the first time getting on live and clarifying something," she remarked in her video.

"This is also the first time I'm hesitant to voice my feelings because I'm afraid my words may be misunderstood."

"I was recently asked if I am a left or right supporter, and I responded unequivocally that I am neither. Before we identify ourselves with our views, I was aware that we should first be good human beings. I went on to expound on two of the points I made earlier, both of which had a significant impact on me and left me traumatised for days," Sai Pallavi conveyed. "I must quote an incident, when I had a chance to speak to the director of 'The Kashmir Files', and expressed my dissatisfaction with the people's suffering at the time. I said that I was traumatised for days together."

"Being who I am, I would never minimise a tragedy such as the genocide and the generations of people who have been affected by it."

Sai Pallavi later explained, "Having said that, I cannot forget the incident of a man being lynched, which obviously, had as much impact as the above incident on me".

"I believe that violence in any form is unacceptable and that it is a big sin to commit it in the name of faith."

"This is all I had to say, but it was distressing to see so many people rationalising the mob lynching incident on the Internet. I don't believe any of us has the authority to take another person's life. As a medical graduate, I think that all lives are valuable and equal."

Sai Pallavi went on to explain, "I pray the day never comes when a child is afraid of his or her own individuality. I hope we aren't moving in that direction. I recall chanting 'All Indians are my brothers and sisters' when I was 14 years old, and it

Vidyut Jamwal surprises fan by offering her a luxury car ride

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Vidyut Jamwal, who is busy with the promotions of his upcoming action film 'Khuda Hafiz 2', won Netizens' heart when he offered a ride on his Aston Martin DB9 to one of his diehard fans. During the promotions of the film, as the actor arrived in his Rs 1.9-crore car and was posing for the paps, a fan rushed towards him and expressed her feelings for him. Jamwal greeted her nicely, acknowledged her feelings, hugged her, and then as a kind gesture, he asked her to hop on to his car for a ride.

The video shared by celebrity photographer Viral Bhayani on his Instagram account, shows a long-haired Vidyut wearing loose pants, green T-shirt and sunglasses. The actor smiled for the cameras as he escorted the young woman to the car and zoomed past the paps. Netizens praised the actor's gesture and collectively said that he has a heart of gold.



Sushmita Singh crowned Miss India United Continents 2022

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Deeksha Singh (Orissa) and Rashmi Shinde (Maharashtra) were the first and second runner-ups respectively while Vidhya Srivasti (Karnataka), Shilpa Murthy (Karnataka) and Sanjana Sekharmantri (Delhi) completed the top 6.

923 entries were narrowed down to 11 finalists before Sushmita was chosen to represent India at the biggest international beauty contest of South America - Miss United Continents by Mrs. Maria Del Carmen de Aguayo.

Femina Miss India 2014 and Miss United Continents - Gail D'Silva; National Director for India, made time from her packed movie shooting schedule in London to make sure that India had the best representative at Ecuador this July. The hall of fame of Miss United Continents also includes Bigg Boss fame- Lopamudra Raut, and actresses Sushri Mishra and Gayatri Bharadwaj.

During the event, the evening gown round paid tribute to musical contributions of Late singer Krishnakumar Kunath, popularly known as KK. The finalist also celebrated the diversity of women from all over India with the beautiful skin colours and varied body types.

On route to the crown, Sushmita, daughter of Mrs. Satyabhama & Mr. Naveen Singh, also bagged the Miss Personality and Miss Photogenic titles. She will now further train under international award winning pageant mentor and fashion designer- Melvyn Noronha, as she proceeds to Ecuador to wear the sash of India across her heart.

"Tonight I come here not just as a 21 year old but a girl with 21 year of experience ready to challenge the impossible", said Ms. Singh; who is also an accomplished TV actress, Ted Talk speaker and an ambassador for Road Safety World Series. After her victory as Miss Teen world, she now vies to bring glory to India again.



SAI PALLAVI CLARIFIES AFTER ROW OVER HER COW VIGILANTISM REMARKS



stuck with me for the rest of my life." "It was also quite disappointing to find that a number of well-known people and websites had carried a fragment from a previous interview without having seen the entire interview or the sincerity of what was stated," Sai Pallavi expressed. "I'd like to take this occasion to express my gratitude to those who stood by me when I was feeling so alone and uncertain, unsure of what wrong I had done. It was uplifting to see so many individuals speaking up in favour of me. They seemed to recognise me for who I am. 'Happiness, peace, and love to you all', she said, as she ended the video. Earlier, during her promotions for 'Virata Parvam', Sai Pallavi had stated that she views every inhumane act done in the name of religion as the same. But, the examples she had quoted in the interview, sparked much controversy. It appears that Sai Pallavi has clarified the situation, and the dispute may end now.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Vaani Kapoor