

absolute india

VOL. 9, ISSUE 288, MUMBAI | THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2022 ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM MUMBAI, BHOPAL AND NEW DELHI

NATION > 02

Cash over Rs 20cr, 3kg gold bars recovered from Arpita's home...



HOLLYWOOD > 06

Brad Pitt's 'Bullet Train' to release in India a day before its US rollout...



SPORTS > 07

Confident teen squash star Anahat ready for the...



SC UPHOLDS ED'S POWER TO PROSECUTE ON PROCEEDS OF CRIME, ATTACHMENT OF PROPERTY

ED'S POWERS ROSE

On the aspect of Section 3 (definition of money laundering), a bench, headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar and comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and C.T. Ravikumar said: "The Authority under the 2002 Act, is to prosecute a person for offence of money laundering only if it has reason to believe, which is required to be recorded in writing that the person is in possession of proceeds of crime. Only if that belief is further supported by tangible and credible evidence indicative of involvement of the person concerned in any process or activity connected with the proceeds of crime".

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday said that the ED, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, can prosecute a person for offence of money laundering only if it has reason to believe, which is required to be recorded in writing that the person is in possession of "proceeds of crime", and also upheld the validity of the Section 5 of the Act, relating to attachment of property.



UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS IN JUDGEMENT: JAIRAM RAMESH

"The judgment pronounced by the Hon'ble Supreme Court on the powers of the Enforcement Directorate today will have far reaching implications for our democracy, especially when Governments are anchored in political vendetta. However, the Hon'ble Court has agreed that they are conscious of the fact that if that ground of challenge is to be accepted, it may go to the root of the matter and amendments effected vide Finance Act would become unconstitutional or ineffective. The Hon'ble Court has left these matters to be decided by a larger bench. This is a matter of some gratification."



sonable and has direct nexus with the purposes and objects sought to be achieved by the 2002 Act and does not suffer from the vice of arbitrariness or unreasonableness," said the top court. Section 45 says when the public prosecutor opposes the bail plea of an accused, the court can grant relief only after it is satisfied that the accused is not guilty and it is unlikely to commit any offence if granted bail.

"The authorised officer cannot resort to action of provisional attachment of property (proceeds of crime) mechanically. Thus, there are inbuilt safeguards provided in the main provision as well as the second provision to be fulfilled up to the highest-ranking ED official, before invoking such urgent or 'immediate' action. We fail to understand as to how such a provision can be said to be irrelevant, much less manifestly arbitrary."

such process initiated would be a standalone process. It noted the argument that removing the necessity of projection from the definition will render the predicate offence and money laundering indistinguishable. "This, in our view, is ill founded and fallacious. It is only when money is generated as a result of such acts that the 2002 Act steps in as soon as proceeds of crime are involved in any process or activity. Dealing with such proceeds of crime can be in any form - being process or activity. Thus, even assisting in the process or activity is a part of the crime of money laundering," it said.

The top court also said section 5 of the Act, relating to attachment of property involved in money laundering, is constitutionally valid. It said the provision in the form of Section 5 provides for a balancing arrangement to secure the interest of the person as well as to ensure that the proceeds of crime remain available for being dealt

with in the manner provided by the 2002 Act. "This provision, in our opinion, has reasonable nexus with the objects sought to be achieved by the 2002 Act in preventing and regulating money laundering effectively," added the bench. It said from the plain language of this provision, it is evident that several inbuilt safeguards have been provided by the Parliament while enacting the 2002 Act. The petitioners had argued that the twin conditions of bail contained in Section 45 of the 2002 Act would act grossly disproportionate and illogical qua a person who is not directly connected with the scheduled offence but merely an accessory after the fact.

However, the top court rejected this argument. It said Section 45, which deals with offences to be cognisable and non-bailable and have twin conditions for bail, is reasonable and not arbitrary. "The provision in the form of Section 45 of the 2002 Act, as applicable post amendment of 2018, is rea-

38 Trinamool Congress MLAs have started contacting BJP: Mithun

Kolkata | Agencies

As many as 38 legislators of West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress have started contacting state BJP leadership again, megastar-turned-politician and BJP leader Mithun Chakrabarty claimed here on Wednesday.

Arriving here on Wednesday morning, he had a meeting with top state BJP leaders and then made the revelation at an interaction with media persons at the state BJP headquarters. "As many as 38 MLAs of Trinamool Congress have started contacting the BJP leadership in the state again. Out of that 38 MLAs, 21 are directly in touch with me," Chakrabarty claimed.

However, despite repeated requests, he refused to divulge the names of these ruling party legislators. However, at the same time, Chakrabarty admitted that there are possibilities that some of the BJP's own elected representatives might also shift camp to the Trinamool. "We had only three representatives in the West Bengal Assembly after the 2016 elections. In the 2021 Assembly elections, we increased the tally to 77 and now we are 70. My appeal to those who want to join Trinamool Congress to do that right now. They are welcome to do that. Once they do



that, we will have a clear idea on where we stand and accordingly, we can set up our new team," Chakrabarty said.

MENTAL ILLUSION: TMC

Reacting to Chakrabarty's comments, Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member, Santanu Sen said that probably he "was suffering from some sort of mental illusion which prompted him to make such absurd claims. Rather if Trinamool Congress opens its doors, then BJP will be totally non-existent in West Bengal."

Intense protest outside Congress HQ, several leaders detained

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid multi-layered security arrangements outside the Congress party headquarters in the national capital, the party workers on Wednesday staged an intense protest and were subsequently detained by the police.

The party workers were protesting against the questioning of their president Sonia Gandhi by the Enforcement Directorate. Several barricades have been placed to prevent the Congress workers from taking out any kind of march towards the ED office.

The party workers, raising slogans, attempted to cross the barricades and were subsequently detained by police. Till now several party leaders, including Sachin Pilot,



have been detained. Meanwhile, Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi on Wednesday shared a video and alleged that clothes of women MPs, agitating against Central government, were torn and they were manhandled by the police during the protest. "Prime Minister, these MPs have been elected by the people and sent. Questions

on the issues of inflation, unemployment are the questions of the public. Tearing the clothes of women MPs for asking questions, dragging them is cruelty to the extreme. In a democracy, you have to listen to questions on issues. Why are you so scared of questions?" she asked, tweeting a video excerpt from the agitation.

Explosion near gurudwara in Kabul triggers panic, no casualty

Kabul | Agencies

Days after a terror attack on Karte Parwan Gurudwara in Kabul, an explosion near the gurudwara triggered panic in the area -- predominantly inhabited by people of Sikh and Hindu communities.

Initial reports have suggested that there is no casualty in the explosion that took place at a Sikh hakim's shop located near the gurudwara. President of the Indian World Forum Puneet Singh Chandok condemned the attack and sought Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi intervention to ensure security and safety of Sikhs living in Afghanistan.

Earlier on June 18, three explosions ripped through the gurudwara, killing at least two civilians.

Despite claims by the



Taliban-led government that it is working to ensure safety of the minorities, non-Muslim residents in the country have remained on the target of militants groups.

INDIA REPORTS 18,313 NEW COVID CASES, 57 DEATHS

New Delhi: India reported 18,313 new Covid cases in the last 24 hours, a rise from the previous day's count of 14,830, said the Union Health Ministry on Wednesday. In the same period, the country has reported 57 more Covid deaths, taking the nationwide death toll to 5,26,167.

Meanwhile, the active caseload of the country has marginally dropped to 1,45,026 cases, accounting for 0.33 per cent of the country's total positive cases. The recovery of 20,742 patients in the last 24 hours took the cumulative tally to 4,32,67,561. Consequently, India's recovery rate stands at 98.47 per cent. Meanwhile, India's daily positivity rate has risen to 4.31 per cent, while the weekly positivity rate in the country currently also stands at 4.57 per cent.

DGCA orders Spicejet to operate only 50% of its flights for eight weeks



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Aviation regulator DGCA on Wednesday ordered SpiceJet airline to operate only 50 per cent of its flights for eight weeks.

During these eight weeks, the airline would be subjected to "enhanced surveillance" by the DGCA.

The DGCA also said: "Any increase in the number of departures beyond 50 per cent would be subject to the airline demonstrating to the satisfaction of DGCA that it has sufficient

technical support and financial resource to safely and efficiently undertake such enhanced capacity." The regulator also said that "it was deduced that SpiceJet failed to establish a safe, efficient and reliable air transport service" and a show-cause notice was issued on July 5.

It said that it has been observed that SpiceJet is taking measures to arrest the trend of incidents, however, it needs to sustain these efforts for a safe and reliable air transport service.

"In view of findings of various spot checks, inspections and the reply to the show cause notice submitted by SpiceJet, for continued sustenance of safe and reliable air transport service, the number of departures of SpiceJet are restricted to 50 per cent of the number of departures approved under Summer schedule 2022 for a period of eight weeks."

Director General of Civil Aviation

"We are in receipt of the DGCA order and will act as per directions of the regulator. Due to the current lean travel season, SpiceJet, like other airlines, had already rescheduled its flight operations. Hence, there will be absolutely no impact on our flight operations. We want to reassure our passengers and travel partners that our flights will operate as per schedule in the coming days and weeks. There will be no flight cancellation as a consequence of this order."

Spicejet

Google Maps bring back Street View experience for Indian users

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With an aim to enhance user experience, Google Maps on Wednesday brought back 'Street View' experience to the country that will help people navigate and explore places more visually and accurately. The Indian government had suspended the 'Street View' service more than a decade ago for allegedly failing to secure required security clearances.

Google said Street View APIs will also be available to local developers enabling them to deliver richer mapping experiences in their services. It also mentioned

that the company has launched this new feature in partnership with Genesys International, an advanced mapping solutions company, and Tech Mahindra. "We believe the launch of Street View in India will be instrumental in delivering a more helpful user experience, from virtually visiting locations to getting a better sense of local businesses and establishments," Miriam Karthika Daniel, VP - Google Maps Experiences, said in a statement.

"This launch has been made possible only through collaborations with our local partners Tech Mahindra and Genesys International," Daniel added.

GUJARAT HOCH TRAGEDY: 13 PATIENTS FLEE FROM GOVT HOSPITAL

Team Absolute | Bhavnagar

The Bhavnagar district government hospital has sought help from the Botad police to trace and bring back 13 to 14 patients who had consumed illicit liquor, and have fled the hospital in the last 24 hours without completing medical treatment.

Dr Jayesh Brahmabhatt, Superintendent of the Bhavnagar District Government Hospital told the local media, "Since Tuesday afternoon till Wednesday

morning, 13 to 14 patients have fled from the hospital. The hospital administration has shared a list of the patients with the police and requested them to bring them back so that their treatment can be completed."

Brahmbhatt said, "The patients must have felt that they have recovered and do not need further treatment, so instead of waiting for the official discharge, they have left the hospital."

"This is not possible without hospital staff or security personnel's involvement,"

alleged Congress spokesperson Manhar Patel. According to his information, "the government hospital has 24 X 7 private security personnel at all important entry and exit gates. This agency is hired by the hospital's Rogi Kalyan Samiti." According to Patel, 88 patients were taking treatment for the side-effects of illicit liquor, of which till morning 14 had passed away and seven were in critical condition. All these patients were brought from Botad district's Barwala Taluka for treatment.



WBSSC SCAM

CASH OVER RS 20CR, 3KG GOLD BARS RECOVERED FROM ARPITA'S HOME

Team Absolute | Kolkata

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials on Wednesday recovered Indian currencies worth over Rs 20 crore and three kg of gold bars from one of the residences of Arpita Mukherjee at Belgharia in the northern outskirts of Kolkata.

ED sources said that the counting process is still on and so far, cash worth Rs 20 crore have been recovered from a cupboard at the bedroom of the residence.

"The currencies recovered were in Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 denominations. The counting is still on and we expect that the amount finally will be somewhere near the amount of Rs 21.20 crore from Arpita Mukherjee's residence at Diamond Park Housing Complex at Tollygunge in South Kolkata. At the same time, we have recovered three kg of gold mostly in the form of ornaments," said an ED official. On Wednesday evening, ED



sleuths, escorted by central armed forces personnel, broke the entry lock of Mukherjee's residence and on opening the cupboard at a bedroom of the residence, the agency sleuths came across bundles of Indian currencies separately in Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 denominations.

The ED sleuths immediately contacted the Reserve Bank of India's regional office in Kolkata for help in counting the notes.

Within half-an-hour, four officials of State Bank of India arrived with four jumbo currency counting machines capable of counting 1,000

notes at a go.

"The counting will take some more time and we hope to complete the process by this night. There are two flats owned by Arpita Mukherjee in this housing complex. In the first flat, which has been purchased recently and was more or less empty, we did not get anything. But in the second flat, we came across such huge cash and gold," the ED official said. On July 22, ED sleuths recovered Indian currencies worth Rs 21.20 crore, in addition to foreign currencies worth Rs 70 lakhs and gold ornaments worth Rs 90 lakhs from Arpita Mukherjee's Diamond Park Housing Complex residence in South Kolkata.

In addition to multiple high-end Apple iPhones, sale deeds of multiple flats and documents of multiple high-end passenger vehicles were recovered. Soon after that recovery, first Partha Chatterjee, currently the state Commerce & Industries Minister, was arrested first on July 23 morning and then Arpita Mukherjee in the afternoon on the same day.

Lalu Prasad family facing uneasy situation after Bhola Yadav's arrest

Team Absolute | Patna

The Lalu Prasad Yadav family is facing an uneasy situation after CBI arrested the RJD chief's close aide Bhola Yadav in Delhi on Wednesday.

Considered "Hanuman" of Lalu Prasad, he has been associated with Lalu Prasad for more than three decades, and believed to be privy to his secrets, while the investigating agency will be keen to unearth.

Produced before a special CBI court which has granted 7 days remand till August 2, Bhola Yadav is accused in the land for a job in the Group D recruitments of IRCTC during the tenure of Lalu Prasad as Railway Minister between 2004 to 2009. Bhola Yadav was OSD of Lalu Prasad then and was said to be instrumental in dealing with this issue.

During that tenure, a large number of plots were registered in the names of family members of Lalu Prasad Yadav and Bhola Yadav reportedly had signatures as witness in various registry papers.

Following his arrest, a team of CBI also arrested Hridayanand Chaudhary from Patna as well. He is facing the charge of registering a piece of plot in the name of Lalu



Prasad Yadav's daughter Hema Yadav, gifting it to her as his "sister".

Now, the CBI may question Hema Yadav as well in future. During CBI raids at 15 places of Lalu Prasad Yadav, they were searching proofs against Tejashwi Yadav, Tej Pratap Yadav, Misa Bharti, Hema Yadav and others.

Streets flooded as heavy rains continue to batter Jodhpur

Jaipur | Agencies

Heavy rains continue to batter Rajasthan's Jodhpur on Wednesday, leaving the city flooded.

According to the Meteorological Centre, the city recorded 119 mm of rain during the last 24 hours, which is the highest rainfall in the month of July since 1943. In July 2019, the city received 117 mm of rainfall.

The videos of LPG cylinders, cars and other vehicles floating on streets amid gushing water are going viral on social media.

Officials said that rain started to pour the city on Monday evening which continued till Wednesday leaving residents stranded as streets were water clogged bringing traffic to a standstill.

Four trains have been cancelled while others' routes have been diverted.

Schools, both private and government, have remained closed on the second day on Wednesday in wake of water jammed roads.

Meanwhile, District Collector Himanshu Gupta is touring different locations and giving



necessary instructions to the officials.

Looking at the water clogged roads, bus stands and railway stations, the administration has also issued emergency numbers of the flood control room.

Met department officials confirmed that rains this year has smashed many records and has wreaked havoc in many cities of the state.

The district administration says that more than 30 colonies of the city are submerged in water and as the rains continue, exact loss cannot be estimated.

Another Class 12 student commits suicide in TN; fourth in 2 weeks

Chennai | Agencies

A 17-year-old boy has died by suicide in Tamil Nadu, the fourth such instance in the state over the last two weeks, the police said on Wednesday.

The deceased, a Class 12 student of a private higher secondary school, allegedly committed suicide on Tuesday night in his home, near Karaikudi in Sivaganga district.

According to police, the boy's parents had gone out of town on Tuesday morning while he went to school. However, after returning from school in the evening, the boy had locked himself up in his home.

When there was no response, neighbours



informed the police.

When they broke open the house, the boy was found hanging dead. A case has been registered by the Sakkottai police and investigation is on. Of late, Tamil Nadu has been rocked by a series of suicides by school students, with as many as four Class 12 students committing suicide since July 13 this year.

Earlier, on Tuesday, a class twelve student had committed

suicide at her home in Cuddalore.

The District Superintendent of Police had told reporter that the student had a rift with her mother and in a fit of fury she entered her room and committed suicide.

On July 13, a class twelve student of a private school at Kallakurichi jumped to death from the third floor of the hostel of the private school. The suicide of the girl sparked violence in Kallakurichi with the hundreds of protesters vandalizing the school, torching school buses, burning a police vehicle, and destroying and setting afire several two-wheelers on July 17. On July 25, a class 12 student of Tiruvallur district hanged herself to death in her hostel room on Monday, July 25.

12 MILITANTS SURRENDER BEFORE MANIPUR CM

Imphal: At least 12 hardcore militants of Liberation Tigers of Tribals (LTT) on Wednesday surrendered before Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh and deposited sophisticated arms and ammunition, officials said. Defence spokesperson Lt. Col. A.S. Wallia said that the militants deposited one M-16 Rifle, two AK-56 Rifles, one double barrel gun, one point 22 Rifle, two 9 mm Pistols (one country made), one Lathode (country made), one CMG (country made), one Chinese hand grenade, 14 live rounds of AK rifle, and a Kenwood radio set. He said that the Spear Corps of the Army along with Manipur Police successfully persuaded 12 members of the LTT to lay down their arms and join the mainstream. "The homecoming ceremony was organised at Imphal where 12 cadres of LTT group laid down their arms before the Chief Minister. Security Forces compliment the cadres for their surrender to the government and impress upon all those who have chosen the wrong path to join back into the mainstream and live a happy and peaceful life. Families of the surrendered insurgents also expressed their gratitude to the Security Forces for safely bringing their loved ones back to the family," Lt. Col. Wallia said.

HC dismisses plea seeking suspension of Satyender Jain as Delhi minister



New Delhi | Agencies

Delhi High Court on Wednesday dismissed a plea seeking suspension of Satyender Jain, who is under the custody of the Enforcement

Directorate (ED) since May 31 in an alleged money laundering case, as a Cabinet Minister. The plea was turned down by the bench presided over by Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad after

the submissions were made on behalf of petitioner former BJP MLA Nand Kishore Garg. The plea contended that Jain was arrested over his alleged involvement in hawala transactions in 2015-2016 with a Kolkata-based firm. The arrest is repugnant and inconsistent to the rule of law as he is a public servant having a constitutional oath to uphold the rule of law in the interest of the public, it stated. "Such a scenario was contrary to the provision of law applicable to the public servant who is deemed suspended immediately after the custody of more than 48 hours as per Rule 10 of The Central Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1965," it read. Jain, whose bail was denied in various hearings since May 31, is currently admitted to a city government-run Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) hospital, as he complained of medical issues.

VIGIL ALONG INDO-NEPAL BORDER INTENSIFIED AFTER 13 HELD WITH TWO KG URANIUM

Patna | Agencies

Security along the Indo-Nepal border has been tightened after 11 Afghanistan and two Nepalese nationals were arrested last week while attempting to smuggle in two kg uranium.

The Nepalese authorities arrested the accused from Viratnagar on July 23. Six of the arrested Afghan nationals were found in possession of fake Aadhaar cards. During interrogation, the accused confessed that they trying to smuggle in the uranium consignment in India through Bihar.

Soon after, the Nepal home ministry released a statement saying that the citizens of third countries are taking advantage of the open border



of Bihar and Nepal to smuggle highly sensitive Uranium. It is a threat to both nations.

According to sources, the accused were trying to enter through Joghani border in Araria district of Bihar. The arrest of Afghan nationals is a

sensitive matter as it comes days after the security agencies busted a suspected Phulwari Sharif terror module in Patna. The security agencies of India are suspecting that a large number of sleeper cells are active in Seemanchal districts like Araria, Purnea, Kishanganj and Katihar districts.

Sources have said that the first target of accused was to enter into the territory of Bihar through Joghani town and take shelter in Muslim dominated area. The officials are claiming that it was a big conspiracy against India.

Uranium is highly sensitive radioactive element used in atomic reactors and preparation of atom bomb after its enrichment.

BJP youth leader hacked to death in Karnataka

Dakshina Kannada | Agencies

BJP Yuva morchha worker in Karnataka's coastal district of Dakshina Kannada has been murdered by unknown miscreants.

As a protest, the Hindu organisations have given a bandh call in Puttur, Sullia and Kadaba taluks of the district on Wednesday. Security has been beefed up across the communally sensitive district and coastal region.

With the activists alleging that the murder is a revenge killing by miscreants belonging to minority community, the incident has taken a communal turn.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has strongly condemned the murder of party worker Praveen Kumar Nettaru in Sullia of Dakshina Kannada district. "The miscreants who carried out this brutal act will be arrested and punished according to law. Let Praveen's soul rest in peace. Let the God give strength to his family to bear his loss," he stated.

Thirty-one-year-old Praveen Kumar Nettaru, a member of BJP Yuva Morchha and a resident of Sulia was hacked to death on



Tuesday night. Two unknown bike-borne miscreants had attacked him with swords and fled the scene. Praveen owned a chicken shop at Peruvaje Cross, Bellare village near Puttur.

Though Praveen was immediately rushed to a hospital, he succumbed to his deep injury in the neck. Hindu activists are claiming that Praveen was targeted as a revenge to the incident of murder of a youth belonging to minority community four days ago.

Social media posts were abuzz with calls for revenge and police are suspecting it to be a revenge killing. Further details are awaited.

Honey-trapped Army jawan sends confidential documents to Pak agent, arrested

Jaipur | Agencies

An Indian Army jawan, Shantimoy Rana (24), resident of West Bengal, was arrested for sharing confidential videos and documents after being honey-trapped by a female agent, confirmed officials here on Wednesday.

The CID Intelligence team arrested the accused and confirmed that documents of Army's strategic importance have been shared with a Pakistan female agent through social media by him.

Director General Intelligence Umesh Mishra said the espionage activities being carried out in Rajasthan by the Pakistani intelligence agencies are continuously monitored by CID Intelligence under



Operation Sarhad. During this surveillance, it came to the notice that Army jawan Shantimoy Rana was in constant touch with the Pakistani intelligence handlers through social media. When the activities of the jawan were monitored by the team of Intelligence Jaipur, he was found sharing information of military's strategic significance with

the Pak female agent via social media after being honey-trapped and in greed of money. On July 25, Shanti Moy Rana was taken into custody. Mishra said that the accused jawan was interrogated by various intelligence agencies at the Joint Inquiry Center, Jaipur. During interrogation, he said that he is in the Indian Army since 2018 and was in

touch with female Pak agents via WhatsApp chat and WhatsApp audio and video calling for a long time. Mishra further said that one Gurnur Kaur alias Ankita identified herself as a resident of Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh and said that she was working in the Military Engineering Service there. Another girl introduced herself as Nisha

to him and said that she was working with the Military Nursing Service. Luring the man after honey-trapping him, they asked for photographs of confidential documents related to the army and videos of war exercises and promised a big amount in return. Hence, the accused jawan sent confidential documents of his regiment and videos to Pakistani women agents through social media for which money was sent to his bank account by a Pakistani female agent. DG Mishra said that after interrogation of the accused and confirmation of facts in the technical analysis of mobile phone, a case has been registered against the accused under the Government Secrets Act, 1923 and arrested.



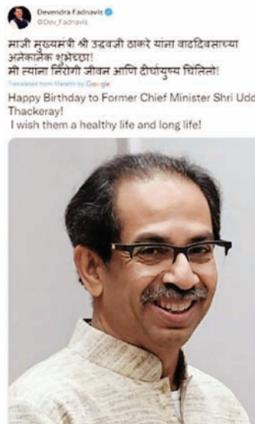
MAHA CM, DYCM GREET 'EX-CM UDDHAV THACKERAY' ON B'DAY

AS UDDHAV THACKERAY TURNED 62 YEARS OLD, MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER EKNATH SHINDE AND DEPUTY CM DEVENDRA FADNAVIS GREETED HIM AS "EX-CM" AVOIDING MENTION AS 'SHIV SENA PRESIDENT', HERE ON WEDNESDAY.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As Uddhav Thackeray turned 62 years old, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis greet-

ed him as "ex-CM" avoiding mention as 'Shiv Sena President', here on Wednesday. "Wishing former Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on his birthday...praying before Mother Jagdamba to give him a long and healthy life," said Shinde in his greeting. "Wishing former chief minister Uddhav Thackeray a very happy birthday... wishing him a healthy and long life," Fadnavis said in his felicitation. Later, a Shinde group leader claimed that the official greeting was appropriate as per protocols applicable from a CM to a former CM.



Breakaway Shiv Sena faction leader

Thackeray camp has rejected these contentions outright. At midnight, the Thackeray family cut the ceremonial

Shinde and Bharatiya Janata Party's Fadnavis topped the Maha Vikas Aghadi regime headed by Thackeray on June 29, and the duo took oath on June 30.

Since then, there is a dog-fight, a war of nerves and a legal battle as the Shinde side attempts to assert its supremacy and claim of being the 'real Shiv Sena', but the Thackeray camp has rejected these contentions outright. At midnight, the Thackeray family cut the ceremonial

birthday cake and full-throated sang the all-time favourite Bollywood songs like "Tum Jiyo Hazaron Saal..." "Baar Baar Din Ye Aaye..." As he blew off the candles and sliced through the multi-tiered cake, the gathering comprising wife Rashmi, son Aditya and others, lustily cheered 'Happy Birthday To You...' as a grinning but a tad embarrassed Thackeray accepted the affection with folded hands.

Meanwhile, thousands of Sena leaders and ordinary party activists from Mumbai and other parts of the state thronged 'Matoshri' the Thackeray's residence in Bandra east -- to meet and greet the 'birthday boy' who was surrounded with his family and other close relatives.

Among the visitors were several seniors who came to 'bless' Uddhav, one came to present a sketch made in his blood, others carried flowers, bouquets and good-wishes for the Sena chief

MAHA BEATS 5 STATES TO GET VEDANTA-FOXCONN'S RS 2.06L CR INVESTMENT IN ELECTRONICS

Maharashtra has beaten at least 5 states to win a stupendous Rs 2.06 lakh-crore investment by Vedanta Group-Foxconn partnership in the sunrise semiconductor chips and display fabrications sector in Pune, officials said here on Tuesday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra has beaten at least 5 states to win a stupendous Rs 2.06 lakh-crore investment by Vedanta Group-Foxconn partnership in the sunrise semiconductor chips and display fabrications sector in Pune, officials said here on Tuesday. The deal, the single biggest investment of its kind

in Maharashtra -- coveted by Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh -- was signed in the presence of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

Earlier this year, Vedanta Group -- a mining giant based in Mumbai -- had partnered with the Hon Hai Precision Industry (Foxconn) with plans to invest \$15 billion in phases over the next five-ten years to manufacture semiconductor chips and displays in India.

Accordingly, Vedanta-Foxconn will invest Rs 166,800 crore and Rs 40,000 crore from other sources for its 1,000-acre proposed manufacturing facility at Talegaon near Pune.

The understanding caps a series of meetings held by the state government in the past few months to bag the prestigious deal, including the last one held in June by the erstwhile Maha Vikas

Aghadi (MVA) government's former Industry Minister Subhash Desai, preceded by a Vedanta team survey of Pune to set up its plant in February 2022.

This mega-project will create around 200,000 direct and indirect jobs, total revenues of GST worth Rs 125,230 crore comprising Rs 37,500 crore State GST and the rest Rs 88,079 as Inter-State GST.

The state will provide a slew of incentives including 25 per cent capital subsidy, subsidised water and power supply, and land at concessional rates, and Shinde-Fadnavis assured all other help for the project to come up without hiccups in three years. The Indian semiconductor industry is estimated to grow more than four times to over \$60 billion in the next four years, and Fadnavis said the state was keen that this industry - available in only four nations - should come here.

Rs 70,000 crore lying unclaimed with banks, insurers, MFs

A whopping Rs 70,000 crore is lying with various banks, insurance companies, and mutual funds as unclaimed amounts by the depositors/legal heirs/nominees.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A whopping Rs 70,000 crore is lying with various banks, insurance companies, and mutual funds as unclaimed amounts by the depositors/legal heirs/nominees.

In the case of banks, the unclaimed amount is over Rs 48,200 crore at the end of FY22, according to a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) report.



The unclaimed deposits in the banks - deposits-SB/CA/ fixed, not claimed for 10 years, was over Rs 48,200 crore last year, up from about Rs 39,200 crore in 2021 and about Rs 24,000 crore in 2020, as per the report. If one takes into account the amount lying unclaimed with the insurance companies, the mutual funds and other unclaimed securities, the cumulative amount, will be far larger. For instance, in the case of Life Insurance

Corporation of India (LIC), the unclaimed amount is about over Rs 21,000 crore. The banks happily use this almost free float for their business purposes for 10 years, after which, it is transferred to the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund (DEAF) maintained by the RBI. According to the RBI, the legal heirs/nominees can locate the unclaimed amounts on the bank's website, feed in some simple data, and claim the remaining amount.

Short-term debt instruments yield rises as surplus liquidity narrows

THE YIELD ON SHORT-TERM DEBT INSTRUMENTS SUCH AS COMMERCIAL PAPERS, CERTIFICATES OF DEPOSIT AND TREASURY BILLS ROSE SHARPLY IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS DUE TO AN UPTICK IN CREDIT OFF-TAKE AND SHARP NARROWING OF SURPLUS LIQUIDITY FROM THE BANKING SYSTEM.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The yield on short-term debt instruments such as commercial papers, certificates of deposit and treasury bills rose sharply in the last few weeks due to an uptick in credit off-take and sharp narrowing of surplus liquidity from the banking system.

According to data compiled from the market sources, yield on treasury bills maturing in 91 days rose 40 basis points in two weeks, whereas on a 182-day and 364-day period it inched up 25-30 basis points.

Similarly, the yield on commercial papers and certificates of deposit also rose more than 50 basis points. One basis point equals one hundredth of a percentage point.

"Credit off-take, systematic withdrawal of surplus liquidity from the

system by RBI, large borrowing from GOI, continuous repo hikes are the key factors for the short-term rates to increase sharply in the last few weeks," said Venkatakrishnan Srinivasan, founder and managing partner at Rockfort Fincorp, a Mumbai-based debt advisory firm.

Liquidity in the banking system has narrowed sharply to Rs 49,876.91 crore, from Rs 1.24 lakh crore in the last week. This was because of outflows on account of goods and service tax payments and limited net government spending. But, liquidity is expected to improve in the latter part of the week.

"We expect the system liquidity surplus to improve towards the latter part of the week amidst CIC payback and month-end government spending," said Upasna Bhardwaj, Chief Economist, Kotak Mahindra Bank.

Market participants said a future rate hike of 35-50 basis points by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is already priced in the current short-term debt instruments rate.

With the expectation of systematic liquidity withdrawal to continue, short-term rates will increase slowly and steadily based on RBI MPC policy statement on further rate hikes, inflationary risks, depreciating rupee, additional borrowing by government, among others.

The market analysts expect that the RBI will continue to increase policy rates continuously at least up to 5.75 per cent or 6.00 per cent till this fiscal year end. "Besides managing growth, the primary concern is to control inflation, Srinivasan added. The RBI has so far hiked rates by a total of 90 basis points in May and June to combat rising pressure on the economy.

MAHARASHTRA ON ALERT AS MONKEYPOX CASES RISE

ALL NECESSARY STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN TO STOP THE SPREAD OF THE MONKEYPOX VIRUS, CM SHINDE SAID

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said that the state is on alert for monkeypox and necessary steps are being taken in this regard. India has so far recorded four confirmed cases of monkeypox, three in Kerala and one in Delhi. No cases have been reported from Maharashtra yet. Several states including Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand have already

issued alerts regarding the virus spread.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to create awareness about monkeypox among people of the state and keep a minimum of 10 beds reserved in Covid hospitals for cases of the disease. And, Jharkhand government has asked health officials to remain on alert and arrange isolation beds in all the district hospitals

Currently, the India government has started discussions with vaccine makers for developing a monkeypox vaccine, should the need arise, a senior government official said, as cases rise globally. "We are already engaging with the potential players," said Vinod Kumar Paul, member of government think tank NITI Aayog and head of the

national task force on Covid-19. "As you know, we have a strong presence of our vaccine capacity, so that's also under the government's active consideration."

Meanwhile, scientists have claimed that monkeypox cases currently doubling every two weeks, raising concerns that it will take several months for the outbreak to peak. World Health Organisation (WHO) Europe has forecast just over 27,000 monkeypox cases in 88 countries by August 2, up from 17,800 cases in nearly 70 countries at the latest count. Making predictions beyond that are complex, scientists around the world told Reuters, but there is likely to be sustained transmission for several months and possibly longer, they said. "We have to get in front of

this," said Anne Rimoin, an epidemiology professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, as reported by Reuters. "It's clear the window of opportunity for doing so is closing," added Rimoin, a member of the WHO expert committee on monkeypox that met last week to determine whether the outbreak constituted a global health emergency. Monkeypox has been a globally neglected public health problem in parts of Africa for decades, but cases began to be reported outside countries where it is endemic in May. It generally causes mild to moderate symptoms, including fever, fatigue and the hallmark painful skin lesions, that resolve within a few weeks. Five people have died in the current outbreak, all of them in Africa.

Still waiting to form cabinet, Eknath Shinde govt fast-tracks projects linked to Sena rebels

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Eknath Shinde government may be dragging its feet on forming the cabinet but it's moving speedily to facilitate projects linked to Sena rebels who are backing it.

Last week, the state approved a Rs 19-crore increase in the project cost of a spinning mill in Kolhapur controlled by Sena rebel Prakash Abitkar, in keeping with policy. It has also approved the transfer of 20 acres of land from the tourism department for the construction of a Bhim Park and Shivaji statue in the constituency of Sena rebel Abdul Sattar.

The Sharad Cooperative spinning mill in Kolhapur's Kagal taluka was registered in 1994 and granted government support. Last year, its approved project cost was Rs 61.7 crore. The Eknath Shinde government

is moving fast on the construction of a Bhim Park and Shivaji statue in Sena rebel Abdul Sattar's constituency besides other projects linked to Sena rebel MLAs. In December 2021, MVA government had agreed to the construction of Bhim Park dedicated to Babasaheb Ambedkar near the Ajanta Caves in Fardapur. This falls within the constituency of Sena rebel Abdul Sattar.

For Bhim Park, the MVA government had given in-principle approval to provide 10 acres of land from the tourism department and a fund of Rs 1 crore for initial project planning. Separately, the construction of a Shivaji statue was also being planned in Fardapur. After the Shinde government took over, it approved the transfer of 20 acres of land from the tourism department for the two projects, sources said.

Ten acres will be allotted to the rural development department for the Shivaji statue and the remaining

10 acres to the social welfare department for the Bhim Park. Sattar was not available for comment. It also approved an increase in the project cost of Sharad Cooperative spinning mill in Kolhapur controlled by Sena rebel Prakash Abitkar. The policy approved by the MVA government in June 2021, allowed the project cost of cooperative spinning mills receiving government support to be raised to Rs 80.9 crore, if they were still incomplete. The mill, which is controlled by Abitkar, had applied for hiked cost and received in-principle approval. The final approval was granted by the Shinde government in an issue on July 22.

"The enhanced project cost is part of government policy. The application had been made during the previous regime and the approval has come now. Other spinning mills will be granted the same," Abitkar said.

DEMOCRACY IN PERIL DUE TO BJP'S 'MONSTROUS' POLITICAL AMBITIONS: THACKERAY

Shiv Sena President and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday warned that democracy in India is at peril owing to the "monstrous ambitions" of the Bharatiya Janata Party to control everything.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena President and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday warned that democracy in India is at peril owing to the "monstrous ambitions" of the Bharatiya Janata Party to control everything.

"A conspiracy to eliminate all the opposition and regional parties in the country is going on in full swing... The ruling party (BJP) is scared of the opposition. It indicates their inefficiency," said Thackeray, in the concluding part of a marathon "birthday interview" to Sanjay Raut, Executive Editor of the Sena mouthpieces "Saamana" and "Dopahar Ka Saamana" newspapers.

He pointed out that democracy does not mean winning (elections) everytime, be it any party - Shiv Sena, Congress, NCP, BJP, etc - nobody gets consecutive victories, all have to win or lose, new parties keep emerging, shine for some time - "that is a real democracy."

However, the gargantuan aspirations (of the BJP) of keeping everything under their heels coupled with whatever they say is right, makes them apprehensive of the opposition, he said.

Recalling the late Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's refrain - "Power comes and goes, but the country should remain", Thackeray said: "I was the CM yesterday, I am not today and am sitting in front of you... What's the difference? Power comes and goes... and returns, but it doesn't matter to me."

He emphasised the need for all political parties to unite and work for the country, or they shall be labelled as "enemies" of our nation, as there are stupendous problems like inflation, unemploy-



ment, etc, that confront the people.

Thackeray took a swipe at the BJP-government on how various central investigation agencies are harassing the Opposition, arresting their leaders first and framing the charges later, "defaming them in a dirty and perverted manner intended to ruin their careers". Referring to BJP leader and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari's statement that his party was like a "washing machine" which makes people facing allegations "virtuous," Thackeray said this is not really the sign of a strong ruler, but one in fear.

To Raut's query on how to overcome such oppression, Thackeray said that first all should have a desire to get out of it, as people did during the Emergency and united to form the Janata Party. At that time, he said the Janata Party (1975-1977) did not even have election agents at polling booths, yet people of all classes voted for them overwhelmingly, and the party came to power.

"Later, due to fighting, the Janata Party government toppled itself. So, there must be a strong will to fight unitedly. Presently, the symptoms are not good and it seems the country is heading towards dictatorship, this is the opinion of many," cautioned Thackeray. He said the Shiv Sena is willing, but it cannot go alone and all the states of the country must join together for the struggle which will "awaken" the people, and without making too many enemies, must ensure healthy politics.

In this context, Thackeray mentioned the Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress's Maha Vikas Aghadi, and termed it as "a successful experiment, and supported by the masses".

"The MVA was not wrong. The people have welcomed it. Many in the state cried when I left 'Varsha' (the CM's official residence, on June 22). I will not allow those tears go in vain," he said.

The Sena leader rued how the very same people (Eknath Shinde) who were opposed to joining hands with the BJP in 2014 have now allied with that party, and called him "a power-hungry" person. Thackeray said he had offered Shinde the post of CM, after discussing with the NCP-Congress provided he could get some replies from the BJP, "but he had no guts."

He again challenged the Shinde-Fadnavis government for elections and predicted that the "state will again get a Shiv Sena CM."

GOVT TO WITHDRAW ALL CASES FOR VIOLATION OF COVID-19 GUIDELINES

Mumbai: In the cabinet meeting today, it has been decided to withdraw all the cases up to March 2022 in political and social agitations in the entire state in connection with Ganesh Utsav and Dahi Handi (Krishna Janmashtami), Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde informed.

Shinde on Wednesday said that it has been decided to withdraw all the cases up to March 2022 in political and social agitations in the entire state in connection with Ganesh Utsav and Dahi Handi (Krishna Janmashtami). He also said that the govt will also withdraw cases for violation of Covid-19 guidelines.

Cases for violation of COVID guidelines will also be taken back. Our Health department is on alert for monkeypox and necessary steps are being taken in this regard.

In the cabinet meeting today, it has been decided to withdraw all the cases up to March 2022 in political and social agitations in the entire state in connection with Ganesh Utsav and Dahi Handi (Krishna Janmashtami): Shinde said.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Rajbhar now looks back at BJP

After being shown the door by the Samajwadi Party and rebuffed by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) is planning a return to the BJP fold for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The SBSP had contested the 2017 polls in alliance with BJP, but the relations between the two parties soured in 2019 and SBSP chief Om Prakash Rajbhar was dismissed from the ministry by Yogi Adityanath. The recent Presidential elections seem to have brought the two former allies closer and Rajbhar voted for the NDA candidate in the polls. According to sources, the BJP is keen to further strengthen its reach among OBCs for the Lok Sabha elections. Accounting for over 40 per cent of the electorate in Uttar Pradesh, the OBC community has been a key constituent of the social coalition for all political parties. While Rajbhar is now seeking a return to the BJP fold, he is also eyeing a seat in the Vidhan Parishad for his son Arvind Rajbhar who had lost the recent assembly elections from Shivpur assembly seat in Varanasi. Rajbhar's supporters claim that another BJP ally, Sanjay Nishad, has been given a seat in the Vidhan Parishad, a ministerial position while his elder son is an MP and younger one is an MLA. Going by the same formula, the SBSP also deserves a better deal. Two seats are coming up for elections in the Vidhan Parishad and Rajbhar is waiting to get his share before he announces his loyalty to BJP again. Significantly, the BJP is also keeping an eye on two other OBC outfits - Mahan Dal and Janwadi Party -- that have snapped ties with the SP.

Online Gaming - A conundrum for GST

S.K. Reddy

One of the biggest challenges facing the Governments today is the rapid evolving nature of the digital economy, with which the regulators are struggling to keep pace. In fact, the challenge posed by technology enabled services means that even if one or few countries devise regulations, businesses can simply shift to another jurisdiction where the regulations are more convenient to them. Yet, lack of any regulation can play havoc. The crypto meltdown and the consequent freezing of transactions by some platforms is one such telling case. The rapidly evolving but unregulated product offerings left millions exposed to a 70 per cent to 100 per cent erosion of value and wiped out of life-time savings for some.

Online gaming industry is posing quite a similar challenge to regulators. Globally, the industry caters to over two billion entertainment seeking consumers, with services being provided by a rapidly growing multi-billion dollar industry. For example, data released by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) and The NPD Group, in the US, shows the overall consumer spending on video games was US Dollars 60.4 billion in 2021, an 8 per cent increase over 2020.

This figure includes revenues from all content categories, including hardware, subscription spending across console, cloud, mobile, portable, PC and VR platforms. Microsoft announced a buy-out of the US based Activision Blizzard, for a whopping sum of US dollars 70 billion. While Activision Blizzard is highly profitable clocking annual revenue of 8.8 billion and profits of US dollars 2.7 billion, even Roblox, a cash-burning gaming company, boasts of market cap of close to US dollars 24 billion. Roblox offers 20 million games with an average of 32.6 million people a day logging in, as per a report published on Bloomberg. The company has also plunged into metaverse with Supermodel Karlie Kloss, the latest celebrity to onboard.

The All-India Gaming Federation, which claims to be the apex industry body for self-regulation for online gaming in India comprises 70 online gaming companies and claims a combined user base of 4.5 crore. As per their projections, India's industry is poised to hit 30,000 crore of revenue by 2025. Reportedly, investments in the industry are growing rapidly with Rs 17,500 crore having been invested. There are host of other small



and micro IT enterprises involved in gaming. Financial Express (29.6.22) has reported that there are over 950 online gaming companies in India. Several companies are single entrepreneurs, offering games developed by them on Google's play store and Apple's App store. Most of these games are free to download, though the consumer could be at risk of being bombarded with unsolicited advertisements, at times lewd, or even worse, near-hacked.

Paid games are available at a one-time or monthly subscription fee. There are more complex pricing models too involving purchase of in-game credits. And then there is competitive online gaming, such as, chess.com which is reported to have a subscriber base of 57 million with over 400,000 online players at any point of time. Online games include card games (bridge, rummy, poker) to roulette to boxing to war games. Readers will recall the rage created by the game PUBG developed by the Chinese mega-company - Tencents.

According to Tencent games, there were almost 175 million pubg mobile users in India and they claimed having 1.5 crore daily users. The most eye-popping story is that of Dota 2 which is played with teams from around the world. There are professional leagues and tournaments - an event format known as the Dota Pro Circuit. The International tournament is crowdfunded with prize money reaching upwards of US\$40 million, making Dota 2 the most lucrative e-sport in the world.

The Government of India has set up a Committee of Secretaries for considering regulations for the online gaming industry. This move is well timed. India will do well to position a National Gaming Commission under the Ministry of Home Affairs, as an apex and appellate body on the lines of GST Council, while the states could similarly structure State Gaming Commissions.

Most developed countries have Gaming Commissions and elaborate gaming laws. These bodies are currently seized with vexing problems such as underage gambling & addiction. In a report published on Bloomberg on June 29, 2022, it was said that the UK was considering capping stakes between British Pound 2 to 5 for online casinos and a ban on free bets, while updating its 17-year-old gambling legislation. There is also a proposal to obligate online casinos to implement "affordability checks" to show how much, a user can safely spend. China has even gone a step ahead. Online games require regulatory approval before they can be launched. After a hiatus of nine months, Chinese Regulators approved new online games in April 2022. Approvals had been paused over concerns of children being addicted or conformity with Communist party values.

A Group of Ministers (GoM), chaired by Hon'ble Chief Minister Sangma, a Wharton Alumni, is looking at a taxation regime for casinos, online games and horse racing. Media

is rife with reports of 28 per cent tax being imposed on online gaming. The industry is up in arms against the reported recommendation of GoM on the ground that it would kill a nascent technology industry. It is said that business will move underground or to other jurisdictions posing implementation challenges to regulators, whether under OIDAR (GST law for overseas service providers to pay tax for services rendered to individuals in India) or for purposes of equalization levy under Income Tax.

The task before GoM is by no measure easy. Rapidly evolving technology, immense subscriber bases and huge revenues have made online gaming, a heady high stakes mix of entertainment and gambling. From intellectually stimulating games like crosswords to "parimatch" (Tagline: "Play online win real cash") from a Cyprus registered and Ukraine origin gaming company dot the landscape. The rapidly morphing gaming scenario poses a nightmare for any tax administration. How to monitor when a game creates a pot of money to collect for a winner ("actionable claim") or when a player is simply spending time and money entertaining himself in a competitive e-sport is an issue. Then there are parity considerations, such as the Casino owners citing the case of online casinos and card games for a reduction in taxes.

While the online gaming industry makes much of the concept of "skill vs chance", which emerged out of the SC Judgements in the case of Sunrise Associates (2006) and Skill Lotto (2020), the argument is quite specious in the present technological landscape. Dividing lines have become blurred due to features contained within games which make such classification a very difficult task. Basically, the guidance post could be prize money (actionable claim) and a differentiation made between user-pays but gets nothing except entertainment versus a pot of winnings, should determine tax rates. No doubt this poses a challenging task for the tax administration but it is time for building capacity and self-regulation to manage present day complexities of the digital economy. Whichever way the Council decides, it would be tragic if administrative convenience of GST officers alone makes the case to decide the rate of taxation.

(S.K. Reddy, IRS. The author is a retired Commissioner.)

international

NEW RAIL STRIKE DISRUPTS UK TRAIN SERVICES

London | Agencies

More than 40,000 railway workers across Britain are taking a 24-hour strike on Wednesday, bringing another day of widespread delays and cancellations. The action by workers from Network Rail, 14 train companies, and members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT), has left only one out of five trains running on average and stopped train service altogether in some parts of the country. The labour action is part of the ongoing dispute between unions and rail companies over pay, job security and working conditions, Xinhua news agency reported.

People across the United Kingdom (UK) are struggling against rising living costs and seeing their salaries eaten up by soaring inflation. The latest data showed Britain's Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rose by 9.4 per cent in the 12 months to June, hitting a fresh 40-year high. "Our



members are more determined than ever to secure a decent pay rise, job security and good working conditions," said RMT general secretary Mick Lynch. "Network Rail has not made any improvement on their previous pay offer and the train companies have not offered us anything new." Meanwhile, UK's rail companies are set to cut jobs, pay and pensions as rail passenger numbers have not returned to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels.

Andrew Haines, Network Rail chief executive, described the strike as "polit-

ical campaigning" and "pointless" and said he can "only apologize for the impact this pointless strike will have on passengers."

Wednesday's strike came after the biggest rail strike in 30 years which took place on June 21, 23 and 25 and caused traffic chaos across England, Scotland and Wales.

Further rail strikes are already planned for the coming weeks. About 6,000 train drivers from the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) union across eight train companies will go on strike on July 30.

Nawaz Sharif wants early elections

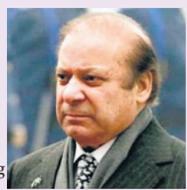
London | Agencies

London: Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif wants early general elections and has discussed with the senior party leadership the option of quitting the government in the Centre, media reports said.

Nawaz Sharif has discussed this several times with top leaders of the party including Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and also with the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), The News reported.

He suggested that staying in the government any longer looked set to create more problems than resolving the issues in the absence of genuine support the government should have received from all state organs, said sources. They said PDM leaders, including Asif Ali Zardari and Maulana Fazlur Rehman, have so far resisted the idea of quitting the government but the Supreme Court's decision to make Pervaiz Elahi Punjab's Chief Minister is highly likely to reinforce the idea, The News reported.

The sources shared that Nawaz Sharif has told his party leaders that obstacles had been created for Shehbaz Sharif's government from the very start, after Imran Khan's ouster in a vote of no-confidence, and staying in the government in the absence of powers could damage the party further, The News reported.



4 KILLED, 60 INJURED IN 7-MAGNITUDE EARTHQUAKE IN PHILIPPINES

Manila | Agencies

A 7-magnitude earthquake that rattled the main Luzon Island in the Philippines on Wednesday morning killed at least four people and injured some 60 others, Interior and Local Government Secretary Benhur Abalos said.

In a report to Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos, Abalos said that two of the deaths were from Benguet, one from Abra and one from the Mountain Province. He added that many of the injured were from Abra province. Abalos said the earthquake triggered nearly 60 landslides and made highways and roads impossible in the northern Philippine region. At least three bridges in Abra province, the quake's epicenter, were damaged.

The quake affected three northern Philippine regions, including 15 provinces, 15 cities, 218 municipalities, and 6,756 villages, Xinhua news agency reported quoting Abalos. "There are road closures in some parts of Abra, power interruptions in Abra and Benguet, intermittent communication lines in Region 1, landslides in the Cordillera



Administrative Region, and minor damages in other regions," Abalos said. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) confirmed the death of one person in Benguet province in the northern Philippines. Governor of Abra province Jocelyn Bernos said a 25-year-old male was also killed after he was pinned by a concrete slab in Bangued town. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) said a 7-magnitude earthquake rattled Abra province in the northern Philippines at 8:43 a.m. local time (0043 GMT). The

institute said the epicenter is located at Tayum town, with a depth of 17 km. The tremor was felt in many areas on the main Luzon Island, including Metro Manila, where high-rise buildings swayed and train transport suspended operation. It was also felt in many provinces, including Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, Nueva Vizcaya, Bulacan, Laguna and Cavite. As of 1:00 p.m. local time (0500 GMT), the institute has recorded at least 120 aftershocks in the northern region. In the capital region, panicked employees in offices, including the presidential palace, ran out of the buildings.

US will react appropriately to any NKorean nuclear test: Kirby

Washington | Agencies

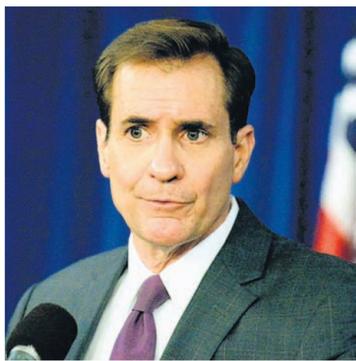
The United States and its allies will take appropriate steps to hold North Korea accountable should the recalcitrant country conduct a nuclear test.

John Kirby, NSC coordinator for strategic communications, also noted the North may continue to be ready to conduct a test, a National Security Council (NSC) spokesperson said on Tuesday.

"We have been very clear that North Korea could be ready to conduct a nuclear test. That is something we said very, very openly," Kirby said in a press briefing, held virtually.

"These tests have in the past and if they test in the future will in the future just add to the insecurity and instability on the Korean Peninsula," he added. "Again, we would react appropriately along with allies and partners."

Seoul and Washington have both said the North appears to have completed all preparations for what will be its seventh nuclear test, with US officials earlier anticipating Pyongyang to conduct a



test as early as in May, Yonhap news agency reported.

Earlier reports have suggested Pyongyang may have been forced to postpone its test due to its

ongoing Covid pandemic and economic difficulties.

North Korea began reporting its COVID-19 cases in May. It claims its daily new infection cases have since dwindled to below 50 as of this week.

South Korea's Unification Minister Kwon Young-se on Monday hinted at the possibility of North Korea conducting a nuclear test this week to mark the end of the 1950-53 Korean War 69 years ago, which it calls "Victory Day."

State department spokesperson Ned Price said US concerns over a potential North Korea nuclear test "have not abated" when asked if Washington shared Seoul's assessment.

"You have heard assessments that our ROK counterparts have made public that the DPRK regime has conducted all necessary preparations for a potential nuclear test. That has not changed," he said in a department press briefing, referring to South and North Korea by their official names, respectively the Republic of Korea and the People's Democratic Republic of Korea.

15 killed in protests targeting UN peacekeeping mission in DR Congo

Kinshasa | Agencies

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has said that at least 15 people, including one peacekeeper and two United Nations police officers, were killed and 50 others injured during protests targeting the UN peacekeeping mission since Monday in the northeastern province of North Kivu.

During a joint press briefing late Tuesday, government spokesman Patrick Muyaya, alongside Khassim Diagne, the acting head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the country (MONUSCO), said authorities have arrested several protesters. An investigation is underway. The spokesman called for calm and pledged to take all possible measures to ensure the security of MONUSCO personnel and its property. "Nothing justifies violence against blue helmets," Xinhua news



agency reported quoting the spokesman as saying.

"Those responsible will be brought to justice," the spokesman added.

Diagne called for efforts to de-escalate tensions. "Nothing can be resolved in tensions. We must initiate a new phase to find the solution," he added.

UN Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters that hundreds of protesters had attacked the mission's base in the city of Goma and other parts of North Kivu province.

"Mobs are throwing stones and petrol bombs, breaking into bases, looting and vandalizing, and setting facilities on fire," Haq added.

MONUSCO took over from an earlier UN peacekeeping operation, the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on July 1, 2010.



UNIVERSITIES SHOULD BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY: GOVERNOR

University arrangements should be student-friendly, said Governor Mangubhai Patel

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that universities are the center of future generation. The educational systems and management of the university should be student friendly. There should be strict restrictions on the work done beyond this limit. Strict preventive measures should be taken immediately against any such attempt.

Governor Patel was holding talks with the members of the recommendation committee constituted for the arrangements related to multi-disciplinary university, community links, community service, vocational education, distance and open education in accordance with the intention of the National Education Policy in the state.

Patel said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given an opportunity to create a generation capable of facing global competition and challenges of 21st century through National Education Policy. It is essential that the nature of the university should be student oriented as per the policy. Educational quality and financial management should be done in this spirit and with these senti-



ments. The nature of universities should be integrated with the policy. There should be uniformity in the policies and provisions of the universities.

Principal Secretary to Governor DP Ahuja, member of the committee, Vice Chancellor Barkatullah University,

Bhopal, Prof. RJ Rao, Vice Chancellor Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya Indore, Renu Jain, Vice Chancellor Vikram University Ujjain, AK Pandey and Vice Chancellor Rajiv Gandhi Proudyougiki Voshwavidyalaya Bhopal, Sunil Kumar were present.

CHILDREN STUDY WITH UMBRELLAS IN CLASS

Bhopal: A picture of a primary school in Seoni district of Madhya Pradesh is going viral on social media, in which children are sitting in the classroom with umbrellas.

While sharing the picture, the Congress has raised questions about the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government. Congress' state president Kamal Nath's media coordinator Narendra Saluja has tweeted a picture in which the children are seen sitting in the classroom with the umbrellas while teachers are teaching. The picture is revealing the condition of the school buildings.

Saluja wrote in a tweet, "Big claims about state-of-the-art CM Rise School in Shivraj government in Madhya Pradesh on one hand and students forced to study with umbrellas inside the school to avoid water dripping from the roof in the primary school of Khairikala village of Seoni district of the state on the other. This is the reality of Shivraj govt."

People from several quarters have taken a jibe at the picture going viral on social media. "This is the condition of the school buildings of the state that children are sitting with umbrellas during the rain even in the classroom," they said. Earlier, an incident of students using ropes to cross a river to go to school had come to light.

'Pancham' will now roar in India's biggest zoo in Jamnagar

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A five-year-old tiger named - 'Pancham', who was living at rehabilitation centre of Van Vihar National Park located in Madhya Pradesh's capital city Bhopal, was transported to Gujarat on Tuesday.

Now, tiger 'Pancham' will be living in Green Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre (GZRC) at Jamnagar in Gujarat, which is owned by Reliance Group. Newly established on over 280 acres of land, GZRC is considered the world's biggest zoo, in terms of number and species of wild animals at one place.

As per the officials in Wild Life Department in Bhopal, a team of GZRC had visited here to complete legal procedures of transformation of big cat and had taken 'Pancham' to Jamnagar on Tuesday. Officials said that tiger was sent to the Jamnagar-based facility in a healthy condition.

The tiger was transferred to Gujarat following the direction and approval from the Central Zoo Authority (CZA), New Delhi. "The Central Zoo Authority has permitted to transfer tiger to Jamnagar zoo in January this year. Some leopards from Van Vihar Bhopal will also be sent to Jamnagar," a senior official from Madhya Pradesh's Wildlife Department told IANS on Wednesday.



Before living in Bhopal's Van Vihar National Park, 'Pancham' lived in Panch Tiger Reserve, which is located in Seoni and Chhindwara districts of Madhya Pradesh. Now, Van Vihar National Park is left with 13 tigers after Pancham's relocation.

As per the officials, Pancham was rescued and shifted to Bhopal's Van Vihar National Park in December 2020. Pancham was three-and-a-half-year-old when his canine teeth got damaged due to an unidentified reason.

Apart from Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand Central Zoo Authority has also allowed the transfer of two tigers named - 'Betal and Shikha' from Nainital's Govind Ballabh Pant Zoological Park and Ranibagh Rescue Centre to Reliance group owned Green Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre in Jamnagar in Gujarat.

CM will release "Financial Inclusion Index Report" Election of President and Vice President in 143 Janpad Panchayats on July 28

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will release the "Financial Inclusion Index Report" on July 29 at 4 pm at Kushabhau Thackeray International Convention Centre. Deputy Governor of Reserve Bank of India will also be present on the occasion. The report has been prepared by Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis. A seminar will be organised after the release of the report.

Vice President of the Institute Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi pointed out that the Government of India and the Reserve Bank of India have collectively taken sever-

al steps to ensure financial inclusion. The core strategy of India has been to develop effective financial access of Jan Dhan accounts to the common citizens through jam trinity, Aadhaar digital ID and mobile phones. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has envisioned "Banking for all". The central bank has worked to intensify competitive banking with the issuance of new banking licenses. Madhya Pradesh has decided to take this agenda forward by taking measures at the state and district level. The state has made efforts to expand digital financial services by including direct account transfers in all major beneficiary oriented government schemes. Madhya

Pradesh has taken concrete steps to link Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana accounts with Aadhaar to prevent the possibility of financial leakages.

AIGGPA worked out an index to measure the level of financial inclusion in all districts. This index can be specifically used to help the marginalized section of the society through the availability of effective financial products and services.

Big financial service providers including commercial banks, state government officials, non-banking financial companies, NGOs working in the field of financial literacy, NABARD, RBI, SIDBI, SHGs, academics will be present in the programme.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The election of the President and the Vice-President of the Janpad Panchayat was concluded on July 27 in 170 Janpad Panchayats. In the second phase, the election of the President and the Vice-President will be held on July 28 in 143 Janpad Panchayats. The election of the president and vice-president of the district panchayats will be held on July 29.

Secretary State Election Commission Rakesh Singh apprised that the election of president and vice-president will be held on July 28 at Janpad Panchayat Berasia of District Bhopal, Khilchipur, Narsinggarh, Sarangpur of District Rajgarh, Begumganj, Sanchi, Obedullaganj of District Raissen, Ashta, Budhni of District Sehore,

Kurwai, Gyaraspur, Lateri of District Vidisha, Sanwer, Depalpur of District Indore, Kasrawad, Bhikangaon, Gogawan, Khargone of District Khargone, Punasa, Pandhana, Chhaigaon Makhan of District Khandwa, Dharampuri, Manawar, Sardarpur, Nalchha, Dhar, Tirla of District Dhar, Meghnagar, Ranapur, Rama of District Jhabua, Khaknar of District Burhanpur, Sondwa, Udaigarh, Jobat of District Alirajpur, Niwali, Pati, Barwani of District Barwani, Ghatigaon, Dabra of District Gwalior, Aron, Chachoda of District Guna, Kolaras, Pohri, Karera, Shivpuri of District Shivpuri, Mungaoli, Chanderi of District Ashoknagar, Bhandar of District Datia, Kundam, Panagar, Shahpura of District Jabalpur, Saunars, Pandhurna, Mohkheda, Junnardeo, Chaurai of District Chhindwara,

Dhanora, Keolari, Chhapra, Kurai of District Seoni, Kirnapur, Katangi, Balaghat, Lalbarra, Birsra of District Balaghat, Mandla, Narayanganj, Niwas, Bijadodi of District Mandla, Samnapur, Bajag, Karanjia of District Dindori, Saikheda, Babai Chichli, Gotegaon, of District Narsinghpur, Katni, Bahoriband, Rithi of District Katni, Ghatiya, Mahidpur, Tarana of District Ujjain, Manasa of District Neemuch, Jaora, Piploda, Ratlam of District Ratlam, Shujalpur, Kalapipal of District Shajapur, Susner, Nalkheda of District Agar-Malwa, Garoth, Malhargarh of District Mandsaur, Tonkhhurd, Khategaon, Sonkaccha of District Dewas, Bina, Rahatgarh, Khurai, Shahgarh, Jaisinagar of District Sagar, Barigarh (Gaurihar), Naugaon, Lavkushnagar, Bijawar of District Chhatarpur, Tendukheda,

Batiyagarh, Patera of District Damoh, Palera, Jatarra of District Tikamgarh, Prithvipur of District Niwari, Powai, Shahnagar of District Panna, Gangeo, Sirmaur, Jawa, Teonthar of District Rewa, Chitrangi of District Singrauli, Majhauri, Sidhi of District Sidhi, Amarpatan, Ramnagar, Rampur Baghelan, Maihar of District Satna, Narmadapuram, Makhan Nagar, Bankheri of District Narmadapuram, Athner, Chicholi, Prabhapatnan, Bhainsdehi, Bhimpur of District Betul, Khirakia of District Agar, Pali No. 1, Gohparu, Budhar in District Shahdol, Pali No. 2 of District Umaria, Anuppur, Kotma of District Anuppur, Bhind, Mehgaon, Gohad of District Bhind, Vijaypur of District Sheopur and Sabalgarh, Kailaras and Pahargarh of District Morena.

YOUTH CONG WORKERS DEFACE ED OFFICE BOARD IN MP

► THE MADHYA PRADESH YOUTH CONGRESS WORKERS WERE ALLEGEDLY SEEN DEFACTING THE ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE (ED) OFFICE IN THE STATE ON TUESDAY TO PROTEST AGAINST THE QUESTIONING OF PARTY'S INTERIM PRESIDENT SONIA GANDHI BY THE CENTRAL INVESTIGATING AGENCY IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Youth Congress workers were allegedly seen defacing the Enforcement Directorate (ED) office in the state on Tuesday to protest against the questioning of party's Interim President Sonia Gandhi by



the central investigating agency in the national capital.

In Indore, a Congress Youth worker barged into ED's office and painted the agency's office board in black. This incident made the police angry and they beat up the party worker for his act. A video of the alleged incident surfaced on social media showing a

Congress Youth worker blackening the ED office board while the party's youth wing held a protest outside the ED office in Indore.

Similarly in Bhopal, a group of protesters covered ED's board with a banner calling it BJP's office.

Responding to ED's action against the Gandhi family, Madhya Pradesh

Congress Committee Head and former state Chief Minister Kamal Nath accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of dictatorship. Nath alleged that the way "Sonia Gandhi is being called to appear before the ED for questioning regarding a false case and detained Rahul Gandhi, is opposite to functioning of a democratic system". He added, "It showed that democracy is in danger in the country. I want to tell the Central government that by doing politics of horse-trading, you can oppress leaders but time does not take long to change."

The ED has summoned Sonia Gandhi again on Wednesday to join the investigation in connection with the National Herald case. Wednesday will be the third day of her questioning. Earlier on Tuesday, the interim Congress President arrived at ED headquarters at 11 a.m. along with her daughter Priyanka Gandhi, who was carrying a medicine box.

After three hours of questioning, Sonia Gandhi was allowed a lunch break after which she again joined the probe.

Chief Minister plants Banyan, Neem, Moulshree and Kadamba saplings

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Banyan, Neem, Moulshree and Kadamba saplings in the Smart City Garden. Senior journalist Sudhir Saxena was also with him during the plantation. Giriraj Amar Singh, Nihal Soni, Abhishek Jagwani, Saurabh Dubey, Amit Gautam and Raj Dubey of Ehsaas Welfare Society also planted saplings. Also Dipesh Maheshwari, Poonam Maheshwari, Kumari Yogita Maheshwari participated in the plantation. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Ladli Laxmi Kumari Sriшти Doby, Palash Doby, Aarti Doby and Bhagwan Das Doby also planted saplings.

Ehsaas Welfare Society is active in the fields of environment and education in



Indore, Dhar and Katni districts besides Bhopal. Along with this, work is done for the continuity of education of children of needy families.

Banyan sapling planted today has religious and medicinal significance. According to Ayurveda, many diseases can be treated with the help of Banyan leaves, bark etc. Consumption of its decoction boosts the immu-

nity. Rich in antibiotic elements, Neem is known as the ultimate medicine. Moulshree is a medicinal tree, which has been used in Ayurveda for centuries. The Kadamba tree is well-known for its medicinal properties in Ayurveda. Its flowers have special significance. Its fragrant flowers find a mention in ancient Vedas and compositions.

CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN PAYS TRIBUTE TO DR. KALAM



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid homage to the great scientist and former President of India, Bharat Ratna APJ Abdul Kalam, popularly known as Missile Man, on his death anniversary. Chouhan paid floral tribute by garlanding the picture of Dr. Kalam in the auditorium at the residence office. Kalam was born on 15 October 1931 in village Dhanushkodi (Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu). He was the 11th elected President of the Republic of India. Dr. Kalam served the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for four decades. He played an important role in India's space programme and in the field of military missile development. He played a decisive, organisational and technical role in nuclear testing. Dr. Abdul Kalam was awarded the country's highest civilian honor "Bharat Ratna." He passed away on 27 July 2015.

A myth constant with Scindia family, Gwalior's win thrills Congress

The Madhya Pradesh Congress won five mayoral seats against the ruling BJP's nine in the recently concluded urban body elections, but the win that elated the Opposition the most was undoubtedly the Gwalior mayoral post.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Congress won five mayoral seats against the ruling BJP's nine in the recently concluded urban body elections, but the win that elated the Opposition the most was undoubtedly the Gwalior mayoral post.

The reason was that the grand old party got to taste a win in Gwalior after nearly seven decades and more importantly this victory was against Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, whose shifting to the BJP had resulted in the fall of the Kamal Nath-led Congress government in Madhya Pradesh in 2020.

Also, the BJP had always won the Gwalior mayoral post, but lost this time despite the Scindia family campaigning for the party's candidate in their home turf for the first time, reports suggest.

The Scindia family has held full sway over

the politics of the Gwalior-Chambal division, which includes Morena. The Congress also won the Morena mayoral seat against the BJP despite the saffron party having two senior politicians from the Gwalior-Chambal division in the Union cabinet -- Jyotiraditya Scindia and Narendra Singh Tomar.

The Congress won the Gwalior mayoral post for the first time in 57 years. There was a myth that the Scindia family could never win this post despite having strong domination in its home turf. Scindia switched to the saffron party, but the myth remained constant.

Like his father, late Madhavrao Scindia, Jyotiraditya also maintained a distance from the local elections in Gwalior, except giving tickets to candidates loyal to the family. This time, Jyotiraditya campaigned for the BJP's candidate Suman Sharma.

During the selection of mayoral candidates, Scindia was strongly backing Maya

Singh, whom he address as "mami ji", but the party gave the ticket to Suman Sharma, who is considered close to Tomar and state BJP president V. D. Sharma.

Sources in the BJP told IANS that the party was confident of winning Gwalior, but lost because of factionalism. "Gwalior's loss has undoubtedly dented the BJP and the party's leadership has taken the issue seriously," a BJP leader said requesting not to be named.

What is interesting is that the mayoral candidates fielded by both the BJP and the Congress had switched from their parties to join the rival unit. The Congress' Shobha Sikarwar, wife of Congress MLA, Gwalior East, Satish Sikarwar, had switched to the Congress from the BJP in 2020. Similarly, Suman Sharma, the BJP's candidate for the mayoral post, had shifted to the saffron camp from the Congress.

Talking to IANS, Satish Sikarwar said the



Congress won in Gwalior because of the strong determination of the party's local workers. After Scindia switched to the BJP, it was said that the Congress has lost ground in Gwalior. "No doubt, I got support from all sections of people as my family has been in politics for the last several decades, but honestly speaking, we could win the Gwalior mayoral post because of the strong determination of party workers. They had decided to give a message to the BJP that the Congress still has domination in the Gwalior-Chambal division. The entire Congress unit under the leadership of Kamal Nath fought the elections and won," Sikarwar said.



DEMI MOORE REGRETS SHAVING HER HEAD FOR 1997 FILM 'G.I. JANE'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Demi Moore famously shaved her head to play the lead role in 1997's 'G.I. Jane' but she'd now be "hard-pressed" to alter her trademark waist-length tresses again because she has nothing to "prove". "I think now that I'm older, I also know, I don't have anything to prove. So if they really need my hair different, they can give me a wig," she said, reports aceshowbiz.com. She added: "It's also not as clear how it would grow back!" While the

"Indecent Proposal" actress has tried a variety of styles over the years, these days she does "as little as possible" with her locks and finds it "stressful" when people even touch her hair. She added to People: "I've done everything to my hair. I've shaved it. I've dyed it. I've had a bob. When I'm not working, I try to do as little to it as possible." "It's stressful even having someone touch it. If I don't have anywhere to go, I don't put heat on it -- I just try to let it do its own thing," Moore continued. She went on stating: "And I don't wash it too often." Moore opts for "dustings" to keep her hair healthy when it

comes to having them cut. She said, "I get regular tiny trims. The rest comes from the inside out. You have to eat well, all those things." The actress vowed to keep her hair long to defy stereotypes. She said, "I remember hearing someone say that when women get older, they shouldn't have long hair. And something about that stuck with me." "Like who says? It made me feel like, well, if it can grow and it's not unhealthy, then why shouldn't we?" Moore shared. "I'm not comfortable with rules that don't seem to have any real meaning or justification."



A New Universe: Russo brothers, Gosling all set to roll out 'The Gray Man' sequel

Los Angeles | Agencies

Boyed by the audience response to "The Gray Man", Netflix, according to 'Variety', has grand plans to turn the \$200-million action thriller into a sprawling spy franchise. "The audience reaction to 'The Gray Man' has been nothing short of phenomenal," "The Gray Man" helmers Joe and Anthony Russo said in a statement. "We are so appreciative of the enthusiasm that fans across the world have had for this film. With so many amazing characters in the movie, we had always intended for 'The Gray Man' to be part of an expanded universe, and we are thrilled that Netflix is announcing a sequel with Ryan (Gosling), as well as a second script that we're excited to talk about soon," the blockbuster-producing brothers added. Gosling and The Russo Brothers are set to return for the sequel. "The Gray Man" co-writer Stephen McFeely, whose credits also include "Avengers: Endgame" and "Captain America: Civil War", is writing the screenplay, 'Variety' reports. ABGO, the production company The Russo Brothers had previously teamed with Netflix on 2020's "Extraction", starring Chris Hemsworth (most recently seen in "Thor: Love and Thunder"). A sequel to that film is also set to be released on Netflix in 2023. "With 'The Gray Man', the Russos have delivered an edge-of-your-seat spectacle that audiences around the world are loving," 'Variety' quotes Netflix's head of global film Scott Stuber as saying. "We are excited to continue to partner with them and the team at AGBO as they build out 'The Gray Man' universe."

'Black Panther: Wakanda Forever' trailer gets 172 mn views in 24 hours

Los Angeles | Agencies

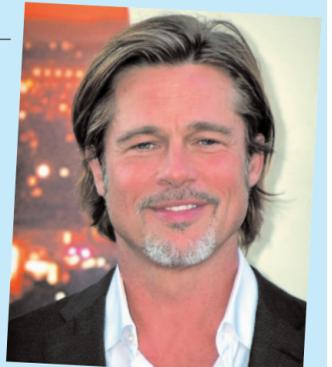
The 'Black Panther: Wakanda Forever' trailer has got 172 million views in its first 24 hours, turning out to be one of the Marvel Cinematic Universe's top trailer debuts for a superhero movie. A source close to Marvel confirmed the viewership number to 'Variety'. The 'Wakanda Forever' teaser's viewership nearly doubled the 88 million views the original 'Black Panther' teaser garnered in 2017, reports 'Variety'. The teaser also set social media ablaze, with topics relating to 'Black Panther' garnering over 893,000 mentions. Chadwick Boseman, Namor, Shuri, T'Challa, Ryan Coogler and Angela Bassett all became national trending topics after the teaser's debut, and the hashtag #WakandaForever held the No. 1 trending spot for over five consecutive hours. By pulling in 172 million views in its first 24 hours, 'Black Panther: Wakanda Forever' becomes one of the top trailer launches for a standalone Marvel movie following titles like the 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' teaser and the 'Thor: Love and Thunder' teaser. Four 'Avengers' trailers also pulled in bigger numbers: 'Avengers: Endgame' final trailer, 'Avengers: Infinity War' teaser and 'Avengers: Infinity War' final trailer. The teaser marked the first unveiling of the 'Black Panther' sequel, which marks the next feature film entry in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. 'Black Panther: Wakanda Forever' will hit theaters on November 11.



BRAD PITT'S 'BULLET TRAIN' TO RELEASE IN INDIA A DAY BEFORE ITS US ROLLOUT

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Brad Pitt's upcoming film 'Bullet Train' is all set to release in India on August 4, one day prior to the US. The movie, helmed by 'Deadpool 2' director David Leitch, will comprise a stellar ensemble cast with some of the most popular names from Hollywood. The movie will also star 'Kissing Booth' actor, People's Choice award winner and Golden Globe award nominee, Joey King along with multiple Primetime Emmy award nominee Brian Tyree Henry, 'Avengers: Age of Ultron' fame Aaron Taylor-Johnson, 'The Boys' fame Karen Fukuhara, 'Fury' fame Logan Lerman among others. While Brad Pitt returns to the big screen in a starring role for the first time since 2019, actor Sandra Bullock will also be seen making an appearance in the movie. Actor Aaron Taylor-Johnson will also be seen next as Marvel's Kraven the Hunter. Sony Pictures Entertainment India will release 'Bullet Train' across theaters in the country in languages - English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu, on August 4.

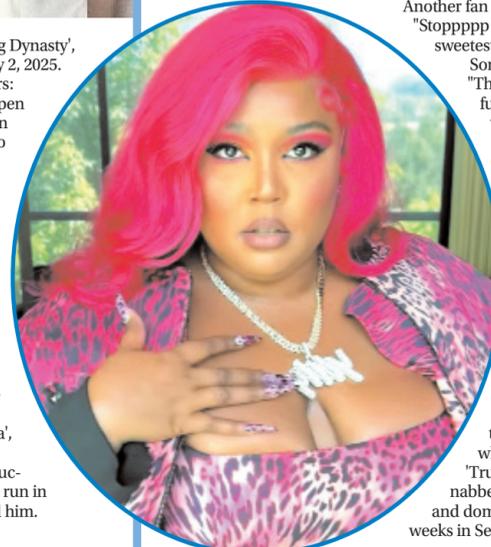


Los Angeles | Agencies

'Shang-Chi: The Legend of the Ten Rings' director Destin Daniel Cretton will be seen helming 'Avengers: The Kang Dynasty', a representative for Marvel Studios confirmed. Marvel Studios chief Kevin Feige announced 'The Kang Dynasty' during the company's wide-ranging presentation at San Diego Comic-Con, as part one of the two-part conclusion to the Multiverse Saga - similar to how 2018's 'Avengers: Infinity War' and 2019's 'Avengers: Endgame' concluded the Infinity Saga, reports Variety'. Unlike those films, which were filmed and directed back-to-back by MCU veterans Anthony and Joe Russo, Cretton

'Shang Chi' director Destin Daniel Cretton to helm 'Avengers: The Kang Dynasty'

will only be directing 'The Kang Dynasty', which is set to debut on May 2, 2025. The follow-up, 'Avengers: Secret Wars', is due to open just six months later, on November 7, 2025. No director has been announced for that film. While there have been no screenwriter or casting announcements for 'The Kang Dynasty' either, the title makes clear that Jonathan Majors' 'Kang the Conqueror' who will be first introduced in 2023's 'Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania', will play a central role in the film. As his name suggests, Kang did indeed successfully conquer Earth in a Marvel comics run in the early 2000s, until the Avengers defeated him.



HARRY STYLES SENDS LIZZO FLOWERS AFTER SHE KNOCKS HIM OFF BILLBOARD HOT 100

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Lizzo revealed in a TikTok video that Harry Styles sent her some flowers after her mega hit 'About Damn Time' ended the reign of his tune 'As It Was' on the Billboard Hot 100 songs chart. In the clip, Lizzo showed off a beautiful flower arrangement, reports aceshowbiz.com. "Thanks for the flowers, Harry," she said to the camera before sniffing one of the roses and smiling coyly. Meanwhile, she wrote in the caption: "Yall Harry got me flowers congratulating me on about damn time going #1." Fans were loving the interaction between the stars with one of them commenting, "WE NEED A HARRY AND LIZZO SONG."

Another fan gushed: "Stoppsss literally he's the sweetest being ever." Someone else said, "This friendship fuels my soul," while another comment read, "this is so cute im crying." 'About damn time', which is off Lizzo's latest album 'Special', is the singer/rapper's second No. 1 single. She topped the chart for the first time when her tune 'Truth Hurts' nabbed the No. 1 spot and dominated for seven weeks in September 2019.



Draya Michele



Stage set for CWG 2022

6.5K athletes to compete for top honours; opening ceremony today



B Shrikant | Birmingham

In all 6,500 sportspersons and team officials from a record-equalling 72 nations and territories will gather here in Birmingham and West Midlands region of England for the 22nd edition of the Commonwealth Games which start on Thursday, hoping to claim silverware from the 280 medal events to be contested across 19 sports.

The second biggest multi-discipline sports extravaganza after the Olympics, the Commonwealth Games of Birmingham 2022 has competitors from 72 nations and territories entered to compete, equalling the record held by the 2002 edition held at Manchester, around one-and-a-half-hour drive from here. The sports will open with a gala opening ceremony on Thursday with competitions set to start early on Friday. The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games are unique as for the first time in a multi-national, multi-discipline sports event, there will be more events in offering for women competitors than their male counterparts. Birmingham will have 136 women's events as compared to 134 events for men. There will be 10 mixed team events.

While 3x3 basketball makes its Commonwealth Games debut, cricket in the form of women's T20 returns to the competition schedule after the 1998 edition in Kuala Lumpur. All in all 61 nations have won medals at the Commonwealth Games so far and the organisers are hoping that there will be a few more countries bagging their maiden medals in 2022.

However, Indian fans may have to keep their hopes in check this time as the country's overall medals tally takes a hit because of the non-inclusion of shooting and archery. India had bagged 66 medals in the previous edition of the Commonwealth Games held at Gold Coast in Australia and shooting contributed 16 of them including seven of the 26 gold medals that India won. The Indians will be participating in 15 sports disciplines in Birmingham.

Though the Indians are expecting to bag a few medals in para-sports and athletics to make up for the shortfall, it may still not be enough. However, if they manage to equal their Gold Coast haul of 66 medals, it would mark a huge uptick for the contingent that has already lost a sure-shot medal winner in javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, who will not be defending the gold medal he won in Gold Coast. Chopra had to pull out of the Commonwealth Games due to an injury that he suffered during the Athletics World Championships in Oregon, the USA where he won India's maiden silver medal in World Championships despite a below-par overall performance. With shooting out of the equation, India are expected to bag a rich haul of medals from wrestling, weightlifting, badminton, table tennis, squash, and athletics. By a conservative estimate, the Indians should cross the half-century mark though equalling their best-ever medal haul of 100-plus achieved in the 2010 edition in New Delhi may prove a big ask for the 215-odd sportspersons that will participate in Birmingham. Besides shooting and archery, other sports that will be missing from the sports programme in Birmingham are artistic swimming, basketball (5x5), bowling, fencing, rowing and water polo. Australia are expected to dominate the games and the medals table as they have done for the last many editions. They have won 2,419 medals in the Commonwealth Games, which had started in 1930 as the British Empire Games, and are expected to add around 200 medals to that tally. Hosts England are hoping to use the home conditions to their advantage and give Australia a run for their money. Canada and South Africa too will be hoping to improve their tally from Gold Coast and give England and Australia a tough fight in swimming, cycling and gymnastics. Competitions will be held in 15 venues spread around the West Midlands region with track cycling to be held at the Lee Valley Velodrome in London.

PV SINDHU WILL BE FLAGBEARER FOR TEAM INDIA



Birmingham: The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Wednesday announced that shuttler PV Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, will be the flagbearer of Team India at the opening ceremony of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Alongside Sindhu, who medalled at the Rio 2016 Olympics and the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, two other highly deserving athletes were considered to be Team India's flagbearer: weightlifter Mirabai Chanu and boxer Lovlina Borgohain, who are both Olympic medallists.

SAFF U-20 Championship

Indian boys lose to Bangladesh in opener

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Defending champions India U-20 went down to Bangladesh U-20 1-2 in their first match of the SAFF U-20 Championship at the Kalinga Stadium here on Wednesday.

Bangladesh striker Md Piash Ahmed Nova scored a brace for the winners, while Gurkirat Singh netted one for India. All the three goals came in the first half.

Though India tried to seize the initiative early, Bangladesh proved smarter as they caught the Indian defence unaware with their quick counter-attacks and long balls played with intent behind the Indian defence.

Even as India tried to play short passes in their effort to build it up, the rivals were content playing it long, and it



eventually paid them dividends in the 29th minute. Indian captain Bikash Yumnam failed to intercept and clear a long ball from the rival defence line. Much to his frustration he saw it falling to Nova who side-stepped Halen Nongtdu, and slotted home. However, more drama was in store as

Bangladesh earned a penalty in added time of the first half, when the referee found Tankadhar Bag guilty for pulling Md. Nahian inside the box. Nova gleefully buried it from the spot as Bangladesh headed to the interval enjoying a 2-1 lead. India next play Sri Lanka on August 29.

DUTCH TENNIS COACH MAX WENDERS BANNED FOR MATCH-FIXING

London:

Dutch tennis coach Max Wenders has been banned from the sport for 12 years for match-fixing, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) confirmed on Wednesday.

According to ITIA, Wenders admitted to "multiple match-fixing charges" and also admitted to destroying evidence and failing to report a corrupt approach.

"The International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) has today confirmed that Dutch tennis coach Max Wenders has been banned from the sport for 12 years after admitting multiple match fixing charges," ITIA said in a statement.

Notably, one of the charges against Wenders came under a rule which forbids people involved with tennis to "directly or indirectly, facilitate any Player to not use his or her best efforts in any Event."



Confident teen squash star Anahat ready for the biggest stage

Birmingham | Agencies

India's teenage squash sensation Anahat Singh is raring to go at some of the top players at the Commonwealth Games, hoping to test her reputation as a world-beating junior on squash's biggest stage.

The 14-year-old is the youngest member of the Indian contingent and the only Indian girl to win a US junior open title and has also collected the British, German and Dutch junior open and Asian championship trophies. Added to her success on the Indian junior circuit, she has won more than 50 titles.

"In one match I was two games down but won in a five-setter," Anahat told the Birmingham Commonwealth Games organising committee in an interaction.



"Since then I have improved quite a bit, so the gap between me and the other girls is pretty big."

"When I won the British and US Open it was really exciting for a few days, but I felt like I needed to enjoy it then leave it behind, otherwise I wouldn't be able to focus on getting better for my next tournaments," Anahat added. Anahat is the youngest squash player at Birmingham 2022 and opens her campaign against Jada Ross of the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on the opening day of the squash competition on Friday (July 29). It is a measure of her talent that she and is already talking confidently about taking on the higher-seeded Emily Whitlock of Wales in the second round.

WE ARE FOCUSED ON PODIUM FINISH: MANPREET & REID

Birmingham | Agencies

Indian men's hockey team captain Manpreet Singh and chief coach Graham Reid on Wednesday said that they are not burdened by the expectations of the fans as they prepare for their tournament opener against Ghana on Sunday.

The national side reached here on Saturday for the 12th edition of the Commonwealth Games (CWG) and ever since their arrival they have been training vigorously as they aim for a podium finish in the colossal event.

Asked about the expectations of the Indian hockey fans during a virtual press conference, Reid said, "I must say, I don't think that anyone's expectations of us are more than that of our own expectations. We really have high expectations of what



we expect from ourselves and also from each other. So, yes, we are not weighed down by these expectations."

The chief coach added, "Of course, we cannot do much about the external expectation, but we can do something about our own expectations and that's what we do as it keeps the pressure on us but it's in a good way because we are the ones that can control that."

Meanwhile, Manpreet Singh, who is set to make his 300th appearance for India in the CWG tournament opener against Ghana said, "I am really glad to have played 299 games for India. I am excited about it but my focus at the moment is on the game against Ghana and the team and I am not that concerned about the personal milestone."

Wouldn't be surprised at all if IPL could expand to having two seasons: Ravi Shastri

London | Agencies

Former India head coach Ravi Shastri stated that he wouldn't be surprised if the Indian Premier League (IPL) expands to having two distinct seasons in a year. Shastri added the TV demand for more IPL matches could be met by adding a second season later in the year and by expanding the number of teams in the current form.

"I think you might have two (IPL) seasons. I wouldn't be surprised at all. If bilateral cricket is reduced, you might well have a shorter format of the IPL in the latter half of the year, more like a World Cup format with a knock-out that decides the winner."

"The full competition with 10 teams could go to 12 teams in the future with the schedule stretching from one-and-a-half to two months," said Shastri on the latest episode of Vaughany and Tuffers Cricket Club Podcast.

Shastri, a former India all-rounder who played 80 Tests and 150 ODIs, believes the IPL's growth is not only inescapable but also does good for the sport too. "All that is possible because it is driven by the money and



supply and demand. The demand is big for that type of format."

"The IPL will be tempted to go in that direction. It's great for the sport, great for the players, broadcasters and people who work around the teams. It's (the IPL) an industry on its own now." The global cricketing schedule came under huge debate last week after all-rounder Ben Stokes' retired from ODI cricket citing "unsustainable" workload of playing all three formats of the game. Shastri believes reducing bilateral T20Is is the apt solution to solve scheduling problem.

Determined Harika eyes medal at the 44th Chess Olympiad

Chennai | Agencies

Star India chess player Dronavalli Harika is raring to go all out and give her best shot to win a medal at the 44th Chess Olympiad, starting on Thursday in Mamallapuram, Chennai.

The 31-year-old has been the backbone of the Indian women's team at the Olympiad for the last 18 years. Playing her eighth Olympiad in a row, Harika is in the process of setting the national record of continuous successive Olympiad appearances since she made her debut in 2004.

"I am optimistic about our chances but don't want to put any pressure on ourselves. Of course, we are the



top seeds on paper but at the end of the day, it matters on how we perform collectively," Harika said.

Pregnant in the advanced stages, Harika said she is still in the best possible shape mentally and is determined to give her best.

"Off board I have tried to keep myself in the best shape possible and chess-wise have kept up my practice and played in some online chess events till last week to stay in touch. I am very happy with the Team composition and I am sure that we will be aspiring to perform above our capacity."

The combination of Koneru Humpy on the top board and Harika on the second board offers an almost insurmountable barrier for their opponents and eases the pressure on the lower boards.

Reliance Industries partners with Indian Olympic Association

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and Indian Olympic Association (IOA) announced a long-term partnership that aims to elevate the performances of Indian athletes, support the national sports federations and build the credentials of India as a global sporting nation, with an aspiration to host the Olympic Games in the future.

Under this partnership, RIL and IOA will also establish the first-ever India House at Paris Olympics 2024. As IOA's Principal Partner, RIL will support Indian athletes in major multi-sport events including the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and the Olympics Games. In addition, the Olympic hospitality houses are a games tradition, and India's first Olympic House at Paris 2024 Olympics will be a historic milestone. Establishing this home away from home and showcasing India to the world at the pinnacle



event of world sport is yet another example of RIL's commitment to the Olympic movement.

Nita M. Ambani, IOC Member and Director, Reliance Industries Ltd, said, "It is our dream to see India take centre stage in the global sporting arena. Our partnership with the IOA reinforces Reliance Foundation's deep commitment to sup-

porting and empowering young athletes across the country with world-class infrastructure and opportunities. We are also very excited to host the first-ever India House at the Paris Olympic Games in 2024. It will be a great opportunity to showcase India's immense talent, potential, and aspiration to the world!"

IOA Secretary General, Rajeev Mehta said, "I thank Reliance Industries and Mrs. Nita Ambani for this partnership with the Indian Olympic Association and for their continued support over the years in supporting Indian sports and inspiring the next generation of children to join the Olympic movement. It will be a momentous occasion to have an India house at Paris 2024. This is a giant step in reiterating India's commitment to the Olympic Movement."

In the run-up to the Paris 2024 Olympics, India will also be hosting the 140th prestigious IOC Session in June 2023 at the state-of-the-art Jio World Centre in Mumbai.



Happy Birthday Kriti, here is a flashback from MIMI to Dimpy

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Kriti Sanon is one of Bollywood's most popular actresses today. She has a sizable fan base as a result of solid filmography and commendable performances. In a relatively short career, the actor has appeared in several blockbusters, including Heropanti, Bareilly Ki Barfi, Luka Chuppi, and Dilwale, as well as the hugely successful OTT film, Mimi. Her stock is expected to rise with her upcoming slate, which includes Bhedhiya, Ganapath, Adipurush, and Shehzada.

Meanwhile, in honour of the actress's birthday today, let's take a look back at her incredible career in Bollywood.

Mimi

Kriti Sanon delivered one of her best performances in 'Mimi.' The actress then stunned the audience by portraying a surrogate mother, and her performance was praised by both critics and fans. Such an important subject was showcased on the screen with ease thanks to her strong acting.

Barfi Bareilly

Sanon plays the role of Bitti Mishra, a girl who flees her home to avoid an arranged marriage. On her way, she purchases a book titled Bareilly Ki Barfi and discovers that she is the main

character of the book, prompting her to seek out the author. This creates an intriguing love triangle between the main leads.

Luka Chuppi

Along with Sanon, Kartik Aaryan plays the lead in this romantic comedy directed by Laxman Utekar. The film, directed by Dinesh Vijan, focuses on live-in relationships and tells the story of a local television reporter who cohabits with his intern, and their traditional families believe they are married.

Dilwale

The story of Dilwale takes place in two timelines, one in the present day and the other in Bulgaria in the year 2000, and follows the lives of Raj and Meera, played by Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol. The film's main characters fall in love but are forced to stay away due to their belonging to rival mafia families. Years later, their siblings fall in love with each other, giving their relationship a second chance.

Heropanti

Sanon makes her film debut as Dimpy, whose sister elopes with her boyfriend and her father vows to find them at any cost. Meanwhile, in the premise of this search, another love story between Sanon and Shroff's characters takes place. Heropanti, Kriti Sanon and Tiger Shroff's debut film, is a remake of the Telugu film Parugu, which focuses on a strict Jat family from Haryana.

Alia Bhatt on having twins: 'We are only having one baby'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Alia Bhatt was as surprised as the rest of the country when her husband, actor Ranbir Kapoor, started the whispers about them having twins. In a recent interview, Ranbir was asked to tell some truths and some lies about himself, and he revealed that he and Alia may be having twins.

It was then revealed that everything was a joke. Alia has also put the rumours to rest, stating that they are only having one child. The pair married in April, and she recently revealed her pregnancy.

Speaking with RJ Siddharth Kanan, Alia said, "Oh god, pardon my french. Singular. Ranbir was doing some joke on some Reel and apni hi paed pe unhone kulhadi maar di (He walked into it). Clearly humare paas dearth of info aur news hai toh yeh bhi ek news item ban gaya hai (Clearly we don't have enough things making headlines in the country that this did). The world should pray for health, happiness and goodness for me and Ranbir... Mujhe bhi baad m pata chala (even I learnt about this later)."

Following his comments, Ranbir urged the media not to stir up any controversy. "Don't create controversy. They asked me to state three things: two truths and a lie. Now I can't reveal what is the truth, and what is the lie," a portal reported him as saying.

Ranbir began the rumour by telling two facts and one lie in an interview with a portal. He stated, "I am having twins, I am going to be part of a very big mythological film, I am taking a long break from work," leaving his admirers to speculate on the truth.

In Brahmastra, Ranbir and Alia will be seen together for the first time on the big screen. The movie will be released in September. Ranbir's other projects include Animal and another with Luv Ranjan. Darlings will be Alia's debut film, followed by the Hollywood films Heart of Stone, Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani, and Jee Le Zaraa.

Arjun Kapoor flaunts his tattoos says, 'They define my personality'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

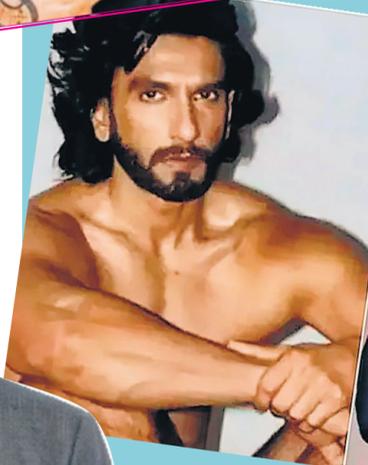
Bollywood actor Arjun Kapoor is currently gearing up for the release of his upcoming film, Ek Villain Returns. Ahead of his film's release, Arjun opened up about his love for tattoos at length and revealed what getting inked means to him.

Sharing a couple of photos, where he flaunted the tattoos on his arm, the actor wrote, "For me, tattoos are a form of expression and I love it! It's cool, sexy, beautiful and I dig it. I have always wanted to sport tattoos in my films and it is not a secret that I love tattoos deeply. For me, they are always personal. I'm always hunting for cool designs and talking to people about what my next one will be. So, Ek Villain Returns was an amazing project for me because I got to sport such insane tattoos that define my character and personality in the film. Getting inked holds a different meaning for everyone, for me it was always about imprinting a part of your soul on to your body."

His note continued, "With this film, I can safely say that I have been reunited with my love for body art and I thank Mohit Suri for covering me with tattoos that I will cherish forever. I already have 3 tattoos. Time to maybe get 1 more."

Talking about Ek Villain Returns, helmed by Mohit Suri, the film also stars Tara Sutaria, Disha Patani, and John Abraham in pivotal roles.

On the work front, the actor also has 'Lady Killer' and 'Kutty' in his kitty.



Our films are not rooted: Anurag Kashyap

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Dobaaraa is a 2022 Indian Hindi-language mystery drama film directed by Anurag Kashyap and written by Nihit Bhave, with Ekta Kapoor producing.

The film's trailer was released today. Producer Ekta Kapoor and director Anurag Kashyap interacted with the media, answering some of the most interesting questions.

Ekta cracked a joke while discussing her thoughts on making Dobaaraa a theatrical release and quipped "Nowadays only South films are doing well or some big budget films are working, only mass films are doing well but my friends said the film is so good please bring it to theatres."

Later when asked about why Hindi films are not doing great, director Anurag Kashyap said "Telugu films are working because they are connected to their culture. Our films are not rooted. People who can't speak Hindi are making Hindi films. Films that are rooted, work well at the box office. When Our mainstream filmmakers make films of their genre works. Gangubai and bhool bhulaiya 2 are examples. Basically, some filmmakers are trying to make films that are not for them. They are trying to impress the audience. The time we will connect to our roots film will start working."

Taapsee Pannu starrer this film is a remake of the Spanish film Mirage and it is scheduled to hit the theatre on 19 August 2022.



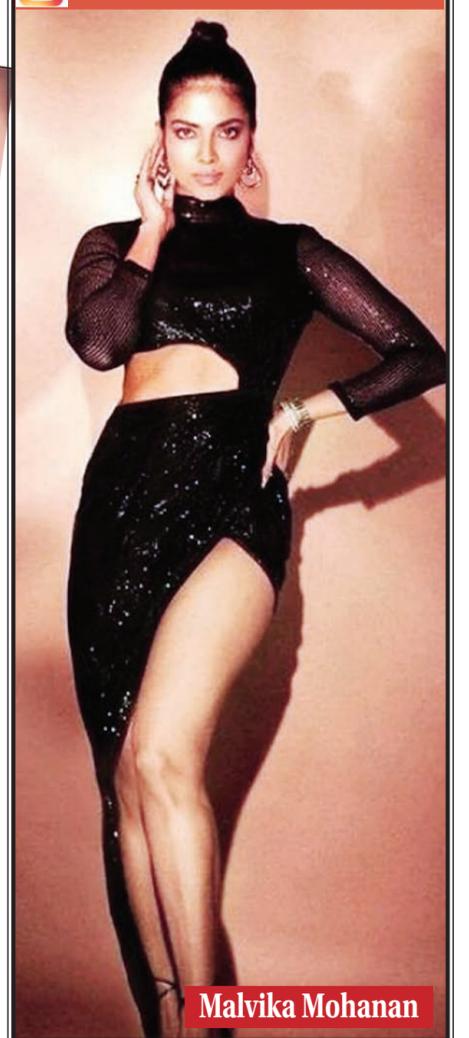
RANVEER WILL INSPIRE MEN AND WOMEN TO BECOME MORE NAKED: RAM GOPAL VERMA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ranveer Singh had left everyone stunned with his nude photoshoot. Netizens went crazy and could not stop talking about this. While many celebrities are congratulating the actor for such an incredible outing, he is also encountering numerous internet trolls. His friends like Arjun Kapoor and Alia Bhatt have stood in support of the Bekre actor and now the latest name to get added to this list is that of filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma. Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma is known for wearing his heart on the sleeve. Expressing his opinion on the controversies about the nude photo shoot, RGV shared a series of tweets along with the pictures. His first tweet read, "Only insipid imbeciles will be offended with these beautiful pics of @RanveerOfficial and on those hypocritically double standard amoebic bi produced people, bent upon eradicating pleasure and happiness from the world, I request all women and gays to wish DEATH to them." He concluded by saying, "And for sure this honest act of @RanveerOfficial will inspire a lot of men and women to become more naked in their honest expressions of their own selves and will forward the society (sic)."

Mumbai Police has also registered an FIR against Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh for "hurting sentiments of women" after the pictures from his nude photoshoot went viral on social media.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Malvika Mohanan