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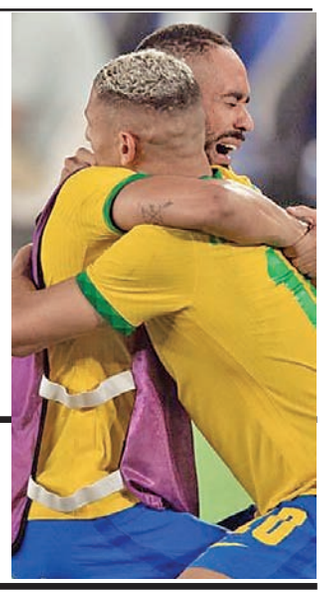

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SC: CAN ACCESS TO FREE EDUCATION, DRINKING WATER, ELECTRICITY BE TERMED FREEBIES?

IN VALID QUESTION!

The Supreme Court on Wednesday orally observed that issues raised during the hearing of petition against freebies promised by political parties during polls is getting "increasingly complicated", and whether access to free education, drinking water, electricity can be termed freebies?

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana orally observed that the court cannot prevent political parties from making promises. However, it added that the question is what constitutes right promises?

The bench, also comprising Justices J.K. Maheshwari and Hima Kohli, further queried, "can we describe the promise of free education as a freebie? Can free drinking water, units of powers, etc., be described as freebies?"

The bench said whether free electronics can be described as welfare? The concern right now is what is the right way of spending public money. "Some say money is wasted; some say it is welfare. The issue is getting increasingly complicated," said the bench, asking the parties involved in the matter to give their opinions, and after debate and discussion on the matter, the court may take a decision. The bench also cited the example of schemes such as MNREGA.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, submitted, "If our understanding of social welfare is to distribute everything for free, then I am sorry to say...it is an immature understanding".

In the previous hearing, the top court had suggested constituting an expert panel comprising representatives from the central and state governments, opposition political parties, Election Commission of India, Finance Commission, Reserve Bank of India, NITI Aayog, etc.,

The top court is hearing a plea by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay seeking directions to the Centre and the Election Commission to take steps to regulate poll manifestos of political parties and also against irrational freebies promised by political parties to induce voters during polls.

'Breaking of ice is taking place', engaging with FIFA to lift AIFF suspension: Centre to SC

New Delhi: *The Centre on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that it is holding talks with FIFA officials, and breaking of ice could take place soon, as the government is making all efforts to lift the suspension of All India Football Federation (AIFF), imposed by FIFA. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta assured the top court that only government officials and authorised persons are holding discussions with FIFA officials and trying to find a way forward to resolve the crisis. Justice Chandrachud said, "Country should hold the tournament...it is a great tournament for under 17..." The bench added that efforts should be focussed on resolving the issue (suspension of AIFF by FIFA). The top court said the Central government should play a proactive role to resolve the matter to hold the tournament and also lifting of suspension of AIFF is duly facilitated.*

CBI, ED PROBE AGAINST HEMANT SOREN STAYED

New Delhi: *The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed the proceedings in the Jharkhand High Court on PILs filed against Chief Minister Hemant Soren, accusing him of money laundering and irregularities while granting mining leases, and also reserved its verdict on pleas filed by the state government and Soren challenging the maintainability of the PILs before the high court.*

The state government and Soren had moved the top court against the high court order, which accepted the maintainability of PILs seeking ED/CBI probe against Soren.

After hearing the arguments, the top court was prima-facie of the view that neither the petitioner nor the ED could establish their case, and asked the ED why it was firing from a PIL petitioner's shoulders, if it were to have strong evidence in the matter.

ABSOLUTE COMMENT

Zafar Alam Khan

INTERNAL POLITICS OR PARTY STRATEGY:

MP's dominance in BJP Parliamentary Board reduces

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has been dropped from BJP's biggest and most powerful body, the parliamentary board and election committee. Satyanarayan Jatiya has replaced him. The Parliamentary Board had two members a year ago from the state, but now there is only one member. In such a situation, the discussion is also intensified about the loss of dominance of Madhya Pradesh. Lot of political meaning are also being extracted from this.

Notably, the Election Committee of BJP takes decisions regarding the selection of Assembly and Parliamentary candidates, the BJP Parliamentary Board takes all the major decisions of the party. It is worth mentioning here that Chouhan was made the state president of BJP before 2005 by removing Jatiya. Now Jatiya has been given a place by taking him out of the parliamentary board. Political pundits say that there are assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh in 2023. That's why Chouhan has been given a free hand by getting him out of the parliamentary board in order to conduct state elections. On the other hand, it is also being said that Chouhan was the only Chief Minister who was included in the Parliamentary Board. In this regard, there was a voice many times to include Yogi Adityanath on the board. In such a situation, the party has also taken this decision because the party does not want to include any Chief Minister. However, it is also discussed that along with Chouhan, former BJP President and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari was also removed from the Parliamentary Board and reduced in stature. At present Chouhan is the longest-serving Chief Minister of BJP in the country.

> *Chouhan was a member of the board for the last five years. Now he has been replaced by former Union Minister and former state president Satyanarayan Jatiya. Jatiya was the Union Labour Minister in the Atal Bihari government. Jatiya, who was an MP from Ujjain, has been the former state president of BJP MP.*

Apart from Chouhan Thawarchand Gehlot was also a member from the Scheduled Caste category in the Board from Madhya Pradesh. Who was removed after being made the Governor of Karnataka about a year ago. Since then, only Chouhan was attending the Parliamentary Board meetings from the state. Now Satyanarayan Jatiya of the Dalit class has been given a place.

No change in ticket booking rule for children in train fare: Railways

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Railways on Wednesday clarified that there has been no change in the rule concerning booking of tickets for children travelling by train after news reports claimed that those in the age group of one to four years are now being charged adult fares.

A circular dated March 6, 2020 of the Ministry of Railways states that children under five years of age shall travel for free. However, it said that in that case, a separate berth or seat (in chair car) shall not be provided.

Passengers can, however, purchase tickets if they require berths/seats for their children who are below the age of 5 years. In that case, the full adult fare will be charged."There have been some recent media reports that claim that Indian Railways has changed the rule with regards to booking of tickets for children travelling in the train. These reports claim that now children between the age of one to four years will have to get a ticket for travelling on the train. On the demand of the passengers, an option has been given to them to buy a ticket and book a berth for their under 5-year-old child if they want. And if they don't want a separate berth, then it is free, same like it used to be earlier," the statement from Railways said.Earlier, the news reports had led to angry reactions from a section.

Female teacher burnt alive dies in Jaipur hospital

Jaipur: A female teacher, who was burnt alive on August 10 at a village near Jaipur, succumbed to her injuries at the SMS Hospital here late on Tuesday night.As per sources, the incident took place at Raisar village, about 80 km from Jaipur. The victim has been identified as Anita Regar (32), who was a teacher at Veena Memorial School.At around 8 am on August 10, some miscreants surrounded Anita when she was going to the school with her six-year-old son.To save herself, Anita entered the house and dialled 100 for help. However, the police did not reach the spot. After this, the accused set Anita on fire by pouring petrol on her.As the woman kept screaming in pain, the people around her kept filming the incident instead of coming to her rescue.After battling for life for seven days in hospital, she died on Tuesday night.According to sources, Anita had reportedly lent Rs 2.5 lakh to the accused persons. When she demanded the money back, they started abusing her and even beat her up. On May 7, Anita had reportedly lodged an FIR in this matter at the Raisar police station. It is alleged that the police did not take any action, which further encouraged the accused.

Banks hike deposit rates ahead of festive season

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Most banks are increasing their deposit rates for boosting deposit to support rising credit off-take as liquidity in the banking system has narrowed.

The hike in deposit rates are in line with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 50 basis points hike in repo rate in the August monetary policy. The rise in deposit will help banks fund the demand for loans during the festive season.

Banks' credit growth has remained in double-digits, handily outpacing the deposit growth. Whereas, credit growth continues to be driven by a low base effect, small ticket size loans, higher working capital requirements due to elevated inflation, and a shift to bank borrowings on account of high yields in the capital market.

The largest state-owned bank, State Bank of India, increased its deposit rate by 15 basis points on deposit maturing between 180 days and 210 days from 4.40 per cent to 4.55 per cent. For all other tenures, the SBI FD interest rates have also been hiked by 15 basis points.

Indian Overseas Bank increased deposit rates by 10 basis points for 444 days and three years and above periods for the retail term deposits.

Indian Bank and Punjab National Bank have also hiked their deposit rates by 5-15 basis points.

On the other, in the private sector, HDFC Bank has increased interest rates by around 15 basis points on fixed deposits greater than Rs 5 crore in August.

ICICI Bank increased interest rates on fixed deposits of Rs 2 crore to Rs 5 crore in August.

Kotak Mahindra Bank has also increased rates by 15 basis points for select tenures for deposits up to Rs 2 crore, CareEdge data showed.

AIRLINES WILL HAVE TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST FLYERS WITHOUT MASK: DGCA

New Delhi: In light of the rising Covid cases in several parts of the country, the aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Wednesday made it mandatory for passengers to follow Covid protocols and wear masks inside the aircraft.

The regulator said that in view of the rise in the number of Covid cases, the airlines have been advised again on August 16, to strictly comply with Covid protocols inside the aircraft.

Airlines have to ensure that all passengers are wearing face masks properly and arrange for their proper sanitisation throughout the journey.

"In case a passenger does not comply with the directions, strict action will be taken by airlines against the passenger," said the regulator.

- ***IN THE LAST 24 HOURS, INDIA HAS LOGGED 9,062 NEW COVID-19 CASES, A SIGNIFICANT DECLINE AGAINST THE INFECTIONS REPORTED THE PREVIOUS DAY, AS PER THE UNION HEALTH MINISTRY REPORT ON WEDNESDAY.***
- ***THE NEW FATALITIES INCREASED THE NATIONWIDE DEATH TOLL TO 5,27,098. THE NATION HAD REPORTED 15,040 NEW COVID INFECTIONS WITH 29 DEATHS. IN THE LAST FEW DAYS, THE NATIONAL COVID TALLY WITNESSED A CONTINUOUS RISE AND DECLINE.A***

Why Covid infection tally goes up and down, experts project true picture

India reported a significant rise at 20,551 new Covid infections on August 5. However, the next day the tally declined to 19,406 cases and again to 18,738 on another day. India had 14,917 Covid cases on August 15. The next day on August 16, there was a marginal rise at 15,040 cases. The cases sharply declined to 9,062 cases August 17.

Avinash Prabhakar | New Delhi

Amid the new scare of monkeypox, Covid cases are seeing a rise and fall on a daily basis at the national level. However, experts believe that this may not be the real picture to ascertain the present Covid condition in India.

"The virus is mutating and when the virus mutates, it may not be the same strain which caused the havoc like situation. There may be another strain too in circulation. We need genome sequencing at regular intervals so we could find out what strain is currently in circulation. We have to keep a watch on the data from sequencing", Dr Sunila Garg, Member Lancet Commission and Covid-19 Task Force, told correspondent.

She told correspondent that accordingly, the vaccine could be made as per the new circulating strain, because if we are vaccinated and the virus has mutated differently, the vaccine could not provide enough protection from the new strain. When we do not have the vaccine against circulating vaccines, we are not fully protected.

"As per the recent data of genome sequencing on August 1, out of total sequenced data, around 40 per cent were BA.2, 19 per cent BA.2.1.2, 30 per cent BA.2.75. And all three strains are transmissible. However, to know the true picture of the actual current condition of Covid infection, one day data of rise and decline is not enough. At least, a data of seven days will make the true picture of Covid. However, because of the low number of tests due to August 15 and other festive occasions, the tally seems to be declining," Dr Garg told correspondent on the question of recent ups

TN GOVT SCHOOL HEAD MISTRESS REFUSES TO HOIST TRICOLOUR ON I-DAY

Chennai: A controversy has erupted in Tamil Nadu after reports of a government school headmistress allegedly refusing to hoist the national flag and salute it on Independence Day.

The woman named Tamil Selvi, a government school Headmistress in Dharmapuri district, did not hoist the national flag stating that she was a Christian and that her religious beliefs do not allow her to hoist and salute the national flag.

In a video recording justifying her act, she said that being a Yahova Christian, her religious belief allows her to salute only God.She, however, added that she does not disrespect the flag and said that she had arranged for the Assistant Headmistress to hoist the flag.

The headmistress did not attend the flag hoisting ceremony last year also and had taken sick leave.

DELHI HC EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER RAMDEV'S STATEMENT ON BIDEN, BOOSTER DOSE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday expressed concern over a recent statement of yoga expert Ramdev on the Covid-19 vaccine efficacy pointing out that US President Joe Biden tested positive for the virus despite taking a booster dose.

"People are being named here. It can have international consequences for our relations, country's relations with foreign countries. World leaders are being named which will affect our good relations with them," Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani orally remarked.

The court was dealing with a suit filed by several doctors' associations alleging Ramdev's public statement affects them as Coronil does not cure coronavirus and it is misleading.

The bench also observed that the public at large must not be misled by making statements against allopathy.

"You are welcome to have your followers, you're welcome to have your disciples, who will believe whatever you say. But please do not mislead the public at large by saying what is more than what...," Justice Bhambhani said.

Senior advocate Akhil Sibal, who represented the doctors' associations, argued that Patanajali's Coronil product was claimed as a cure for Covid without any license.The matter will be further heard on August 23.

In the last hearing also, Sibal had said that the Patanjali website content claims that Coronil is a treatment for Covid-19.

According to an earlier complaint of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), Ramdev has allegedly been propagating false information on social media platforms against medicines being used by the medical fraternity, the Indian government, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), and other frontline organisations involved in the treatment of Covid patients.

Nitish Kumar says not aware of legal status of law minister, BJP seeks his sacking

Patna | Agencies

While Bihar's law minister Kartikeya Singh alias Kartik Master is facing charges of kidnapping and a warrant has been issued against him by the district court, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar said that he was not aware of the legal status of Singh.

Singh took the oath of a cabinet minister on Tuesday and Nitish Kumar allotted him the law ministry portfolio.

Kumar said: "The matter did not come into my cognizance. I was not aware of the warrant issued by the court."

Singh was booked in a case of kidnapping in 2014 in Bihta police station. His anticipatory bail plea was rejected by the Danapur district court and the Patna High Court. The Danapur district court issued an arrest warrant against Singh in the first week of August and he was asked to surrender before a court or in a police station by August 16. Instead of doing this, he took the oath of cabinet minister in the Bihar government on August 16.

This development has given a burning issue to the BJP leaders who are attacking the Nitish Kumar government.

Sushil Kumar Modi, Rajya Sabha MP of the BJP said: "Nitish Kumar government should sack the law minister who is a fugitive person and the court has issued an arrest warrant against him. It is shocking that he, instead of surrendering in court, went to Raj Bhavan and took the oath of cabinet minister."

"Kartikeya Singh was given the law ministry portfolio to work on the wiping out of criminal cases in which RJD leaders were involved. The Jungle Raj of Lalu Yadav has returned to Bihar," Modi added.

Kashmiri Pandit employees protest, demand relocation

Jammu | Agencies

Kashmiri Pandit government employees carried out a protest on Wednesday in J&K's Jammu city demanding relocation from the Valley in the aftermath of the killing of another member of the community.

Protesters gathered in the busy Bikram Chowk disrupting the traffic. The Kashmiri Pandit employees recruited under the Prime Minister's special rehabilitation package and posted in different parts of the Valley said they have become soft targets for the militants and the government has failed to protect them. "We were employed in the Valley under a special package, but everyone is aware about the situation there. We want our relocation to Jammu so that we can at least remain alive," protesters said.

Senior police officers later pacified the protesters after which traffic was restored in the area.

KEJRIWAL LAUNCHES 'MAKE INDIA NO. 1' MISSION

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party National Convener Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday launched 'Make India No. 1' mission to make the country lead on all parameters.

Kejriwal said: "We have to make India the number 1 nation in the world once again. We have to make India great again. We are beginning a national mission called 'Make India No.1' today. Every citizen of this country, 130 crore people have to be connected to this mission."

"Citizens need to come together to make India great again. It has been 75 years since we got Independence and we have achieved many things, but there is an anger among citizens that many small nations that got freedom after us have moved ahead of us," said the AAP Convener.

"Why did India lag behind? Every citizen is asking this," he added, giving example that Singapore got independence 15 years after India, and that Japan and Germany were destroyed in World War II.

Kejriwal went on to say that "If we leave this to these parties and leaders, India will go back 75 more years as some of them love the family and some love their friends." He further urged BJP, Congress, and other political parties to join AAP's national mission, saying that everyone needs to come together for it.

Delhi CM said that people of India are the best people, "yet we were left behind.""We are not short of anything, we 130 crore people will now have to come together and take over the reins of the country," he added.

While counting the parameters, he said that we have to make arrangements for good and free education for 27 crore children. "We cannot say that schools cannot be opened in hills or tribal areas. Whatever money will be spent, we have to do it," he added.

Secondly, he said: "We have to make arrangements of free and good treatment for all."

Third, "Our youth power is the biggest strength. Employment will have to be arranged for each and every youth.""Fourth thing, every woman should get respect. The Right to safety and equality should be given to them."

"And finally, today the farmer's son does not want to become a farmer.Such a system will have to be made that farmers get full price for their crop and the son of the farmer must have a sense of pride to become farmers," Kejriwal said.

"Today I appeal to 130 crore people to join this national mission. We have nothing to do with any party, this is not a mission of any party", said AAP national Convener.

Raj minor's death case: Sachin Pilot questions his own govt

Jaipur | Agencies

Raising questions on the police, administration and his own government in the case of the death of a child due to thrashing by teacher, former deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot has demanded the removal of Jalore's Additional District Magistrate and Deputy Superintendent of Police on charges of lathicharging and snatching the phone of the victim's family members.

Pilot met the relatives of the deceased child in Surana on Tuesday. He said, "As far as this incident is concerned, it is insufficient to say that it happens in other states. If this happens to Dalits, Adivasis, then we need to bring zero-tolerance. We cannot say that if it is happening in other states, it is happening here too."

Pilot said, "We have to take some steps to defeat the mentality which oppresses the downtrodden. In the minds of the downtrodden, we have to make them believe that one cannot escape after committing atrocities against Dalits."

He said, "Should such an incident happen to anyone, we should speak against injustice. Today the government is ours, we cannot escape the responsibility. It's been 75 years since Independence.

"The government should work to replace the shortcomings in the system. "The government's trust should remain. It should be in the mind of the underprivileged that if anyone wrongs them, they will have to face the consequences.

"Wherever there have been atrocities against any poor, downtrodden, helpless, we have gone there. No one should have such courage in future to repeat the act, we are all in responsible positions. Together we will win the trust of the people. Now that child is gone, he will not come back, but we can set an example by taking action."

After meeting the victim's family members, Pilot said that even today this family was living in an atmosphere of fear. "It is the responsibility of the government to protect their lives and property in future and we hope that the government will protect them."

Six bodies recovered from two houses in Jammu's posh area

Jammu | Agencies

Jammu and Kashmir Police recovered six dead bodies from two houses on Wednesday in J&K's Jammu district.

While the exact cause of their death was being investigated, the police said that the bodies recovered from the Sidhra locality of Jammu city were found in a semi-decomposed condition.

Police said the bodies were recovered from two houses in the posh Tawi Vihar residential area of Sidhra in Jammu.

"All the deceased belong to Kashmir and their families have been intimated.

"An SIT is likely to be constituted to investigate the case," police said, adding that the bodies have been sent to the mortuary of the government medical college hospital in Jammu.

A doctor at the medical college told some reporters that all these dead bodies had a drip line attached with them adding that what caused their death would be known after the post-mortem. Police said the post-mortem would be conducted after the family members of the deceased reach Jammu.

The dead bodies have been identified as Sakina Begum and her daughter Naseema, Rubina Bano, Zafar Ali, Noor-ul-Habib and Sajad Ahmad. Further details are awaited.

AZAD QUITS HOURS AFTER NAMED AS CONG'S J&K CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE HEAD

New Delhi: Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad quit as J&K campaign committee head after being named by the party and has conveyed his decision to the party leadership, sources close to him said. However, there is no official word from both sides.

Azad's resignation has come to surprise for many in the party as it was considered that he was consulted in the key appointments and was active in party forums. He even took part in Congress Gaurav Yatra on Monday and had addressed a press conference when Sonia Gandhi was called to ED.

Azad has been upset since being ignored for Rajya Sabha after he retired as Leader of Opposition in the upper house.He is one of the prominent leaders of the party G-23 group which demanded sweeping reforms in the party. The issue has come on fore when the party is to begin process of electing new president.

The party has appointed the office bearers of J&K state unit, in which Vikar Rasul Wani was made the state president.The post had fallen vacant after Ghulam Ahmad Mir stepped down as the JKPCC president. Wani is a loyalist of former Chief Minister Azad.

Odisha: 400 DLs suspended, 77 vehicles seized for violating traffic norms

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

The transport authorities in Odisha suspended 400 driving licenses, issued 2,073 challans and seized 77 vehicles for riding motorcycles without helmets during the last 24 hours, an official said on Wednesday.

The state transport authority (STA) has launched a statewide special drive against riding motorized two-wheelers without wearing helmets on national and state highways on August 16 and it will continue till August 30.

On the first day of the special drive, a total of 2,073 e-challans were issued, and Rs 4.30 lakh fine collected from the violators, the official said.

Sanjay Biswal, Joint Commissioner, transport (road safety) said the main aim of this drive is to create a sense of responsibility among the road users for prevention of road accidents and fatalities.

It has been observed that out of the accidents taking place on national and state highways, many are related to two-wheeler riders. Helmet-less driving is a major cause of road accidents and grievous injury across Odisha, he said.

"Due to continuous enforcement activities people are using helmets in the urban areas but are unfortunately avoiding wearing helmets on highways where protection is much more needed," said the joint commissioner.

Biswal appealed to the two-wheeler riders and pillion riders to follow the traffic rules and wear helmets for their safety.

As many as 1,308 persons, including riders (868) and pillion riders (440) of motorised two wheelers, were killed in road accidents in the year 2021.

Most of them were not wearing helmets.

Similarly, a total of 1,280 persons were grievously injured and 747 had minor injuries in accidents involving two wheelers, he added.

Mysterious posters of 'new-look' Trinamool flood parts of Kolkata

Kolkata: The people in certain pockets of south Kolkata, especially around Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's residence in the Kalighat area, were greeted with 'mysterious' posters and hoardings on Wednesday morning.

The posters and hoardings carrying only the picture of Abhishek Banerjee, the CM's nephew and Trinamool Congress' national general secretary, claimed that the party will emerge with a new look just as people want within the next six months.

Surprisingly, the posters did not carry the picture of Mamata Banerjee, a phenomenon unheard of since the inception of Trinamool in 1998.

While the posters were removed soon, by then speculations started doing the rounds as to whether the Trinamool in its 'new look' will have Abhishek Banerjee at the helm of affairs, replacing Mamata Banerjee.

Trying to downplay the incident, Trinamool spokesman Kunal Ghosh said, "It is quite possible that some party followers may have put up such posters and hoardings based on some recent comments by Abhishek Banerjee. There is nothing to speculate about it.

"Mamata Banerjee continues to be the supreme leader of Trinamool Congress, in which Abhishek Banerjee is the general. Trinamool in the new format means spearheading the party in a more disciplined and systematic manner."

However, opposition leaders in the state have started taking jibes at the development.

CHANGE OF NAME

I RITA SINGH w/o SANJAY KUMAR present Serving at Q.No.317/1 C.T.O. Bairagarh Bhopal Madhya Pradesh pin code-462030 my name is REETA PATEL Registered in the mark-sheet of class 10th of my daughter AKANSHA SINGH PATEL Which should be changed to RITA SINGH Regarding Which affidavit dated 16/08/2022 at Bhopal Court Madhya Pradesh.

ECONOMY OF THE STATE IS GROWING RAPIDLY: DEORA

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Finance, Planning and Economics Statistics Minister Jagdish Deora has said that the state's economy is growing rapidly. Therefore, the data collection system needs to be constantly alert for the accuracy and accurate estimation of the data. For this, information technology will be used at maximum levels. Deora was addressing a workshop focused on "Methodology and calculation for preparation of estimates of Gross Domestic Product of Madhya Pradesh" by the Planning, Economics and Statistics Department at the Academy of Administration on Wednesday.

Deora said that sectoral accounting statistics has an important role in the industry group-wise analysis of the state's economy. Estimates of State Domestic Product are an important indicator for evaluating the level of economy and development of the social and economic sector of the state. Data is the solid basis for the control of a strong economy and the implementation of developmental plans. He also appreciated the innovative efforts of the department.

Deora said that on the basis of state's Gross State Domestic Product (GDP) at constant rate (year 2011-12) is estimated at Rs. 5 lakh 64 thousand 514 crore in the year 2020-21 as compared to Rs. 5 lakh 75 thousand 554 crore in the year 2019-20, while on the basis of advance estimates, the Gross State Domestic Product is estimated to be 6 lakh 21 thousand 653 crore in the year 2021-22 with a growth of 10.12 percent.

Deora said that the Gross State Domestic Product showing an increase of 4.01 percent at the prevailing prices has been estimated to be Rs. 9 lakh 76 thousand 281 crore in the year 2020-21 as compared to Rs. 9 lakh 38 thousand 602 crore in the year 2019-20. According to the advance estimates for the year 2021-22, with an increase of 19.74 percent, it is estimated to be Rs. 11 lakh 96 thousand 4 crore.

Deora said that for the year 2020-21, the per capita income in Madhya Pradesh is Rs. 58 thousand 334 at a constant rate (year 2011-12). The per capita income has been estimated to increase from Rs. 1 lakh 3 thousand 103 in the year 2019-20 to Rs 1 lakh 4 thousand 894 in the year 2020-21 at the prevailing prices, showing an increase of 1.74 percent. On the basis of advance estimates, the per capita income for the year 2021-22 has been estimated at Rs.63 thousand 345 and Rs.1 lakh 24 thousand 685 respectively at constant/prevailing prices.

Principal Secretary Planning, Economics and Statistics Mukesh Chandra Gupta said that the statistics officers should pay attention to the quality of data, because the real progress of major departments like education and health is known only on the basis of data. He said that soon the activities of the Statistics Department would be done online.

MP Forest staff surrender weapons protesting unilateral action by senior staff

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In an unprecedented incident, disgruntled with alleged 'unilateral action' against their colleagues, hundreds of forest officials, including guards and rangers, surrendered their weapons at their respective offices in different parts of Madhya Pradesh.

The step of surrendering weapons, which was first started by the forest employees deployed in Vidisha district, was soon extended support by forest officials from many other districts. One after another, forest officals started reaching out to their respective offices and surrendered their weapons before their seniors. The move was part of their protest against alleged 'unilateral action' against a forest team involved in an incident at Lateri in Vidisha district where a tribal man was killed in alleged firing. Many forest employees even reached the office of Madhya Pradesh Forest Minister Vijay Shah to surrender their weapons.

Following the incident, Vidisha district police had registered a case of murder against eight members of the forest team, though most remained unnamed.One of the named officers Deputy Ranger Nirmal Ahirwara had been arrested on August 12, though he claimed that he was not present on the spot. Associates of the deceased man claimed that the forest patrol team fired indiscriminately at them on August 9 evening near Katiyapura forest beat in Lateri, killing Chyan Singh and injuring three others of Raipura village. The forest employees had however claimed that the firing was in self-defence after stones were hurled at them by the men who were involved in timber smuggling, which is rampant in the area. Videos showing alleged timber theft and smuggling had been circulated on social media.

Later, a judicial probe was also ordered into the incident following directives of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and a compensation of Rs 25 lakh was announced for the family of Chyan Singh. A compensation of Rs five lakh each was announced for the injured persons. Later, six more Raipura locals had claimed that they were also injured in the alleged firing.

Vidisha Divisional Forest Officer, Rajbir Singh had been transferred on August 11 as a fallout of the incident.

Resentment was brewing among the forest staff and many employees in Lateri had left their homes with families to avoid police action. The weapon surrender was reportedly called by State Forest Range Officers Gazetted Association of Madhya Pradesh, sources told IANS. Atul Kushwaha, President of the Vidisha unit of Forest and Wildlife Protection Employees Association, said that forest staff across the state had surrendered weapons in protest of unilateral action in the form of arrests of forest patrol team members in the Lateri incident. "What is use of these weapons, if we cannot fire a gunshot even for self-defence. Therefore, we have decided to surrender the weapons," Kushwaha added.

The employees' association has said that the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department has neither declared the armed forest staff as 'armed forces' nor is there any clear protocol for protection of the armed staff under the section 197 of CrPC. Later, the Forest Minister said that he will discuss the issue with Shivraj Singh Chouhan during their meeting on Wednesday. However, the forest employees continued to deposit their weapons in different parts of the state on Wednesday as well.

In a discussion with the forest workers, Shah said, "There is no need to be disappointed with the developments. I believe the protection of the forest is not based on the strength of guns." The Minister added that the rights of rangers and other forest employees will also be increased. "They say the security of an open forest can't be ensured by relying on 2,000 forest workers. Now, the members of forest committees will be entrusted with the responsibility of security. An outline will be made regarding this," Shah said.

Chief Minister plants Neem, Gulmohar and Khirni saplings

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Neem, Gulmohar and Khirni saplings in the Smart City Garden at Shyamla Hills. Jwala Prasad Vishwakarma, Ashok Vishwakarma, Shyam Vishwakarma, Brajesh Vishwakarma, Devi Singh Vishwakarma and Ajay Vishwakarma of Sarv Vishwakarma Samaj Samiti Bhopal participated in plantation. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Dharmendra Pegwar of Prajatantra newspaper also planted saplings. He presented a special issue of Prajatantra newspaper published on Independence Day-15 August to Chief Minister.The committee constantly motivates the citizens for tree plantation in the society. Free vocational training is provided to women to link them with self-employment. Free medical camps are also organised from time to time for elderly people of Ashirwad Vriddhajan Seva Kendra.Neem planted today is known as the supreme medicine rich in antibiotic properties. Flowers blooming in large clusters among the well-arranged leaves of Gulmohar give it a distinct attraction. It also abounds in medicinal properties. Khirni trees are found in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu in India.

Woman poisons husband with help of 'lover'

A mother of three murdered her husband by poisoning him with help of her lover in Morena district.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A tale of crime weaved within the branches of an illicit affair and jealousy was unwrapped in Morena district where a 28-year-old woman poisoned her husband with the help of her 'lover'. The prime accused, a mother of three children, allegedly admitted to the heinous crime committed in cold blood in front of the village panchayat as well.

The incident took place on July 20 and despite almost a month having passed since the 'confession' by the accused, she has not been arrested. This prompted the victim's family to approach the SP of the district seeking justice for the murder of their kin. According to a report in Bhaskar, the accused, identified as Seema, had given in writing to the village panchayat that she had given poison to her husband on the suggestion of her lover. She also wrote that it was the man with whom she was in an extramarital affair with who supplied her with the poison.

However, police say that the accused cannot be arrested till the viscera report is received from the forensic laboratory. The victim's family had registered a complaint against Seema on July 21 and stated that the woman had confessed to murdering her husband by giving him water mixed with the poison. It was also alleged that the accused had met Dishant five years ago and they fell in love. Subsequently, Dishant bought her a phone which she used to be in touch with him and to keep her husband, Rajesh, in the dark.

MP gets first vista dome coach in Bhopal-Jabalpur Jan Shatabdi Express

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Bhopal-Jabalpur Jan Shatabdi Express with the state's maiden vista dome coach was on Tuesday flagged off from Kamalapati Railway Station by state ministers Usha Thakur and Vishvas Sarang.

Sheo Shekhar Shukla, principal secretary of tourism and culture of Madhya Pradesh, listed the ways in which vista dome would improve the travelling experience. He explained how passengers would now enjoy nature during their journey between the two cities.

Shukla also added that tourists can now enjoy the hills and rivers en route to their destination with this new development towards providing an immersive experience to commuters. "Now travelling to all major tourist destinations line Bhimbaithika, Tawa Dam, Satpuda national park, Madhai and Pachmarhi will become much more enjoyable and refreshing!!" he tweeted. Under the initiative of the Madhya Pradesh tourism board, the coach was installed by the Indian Railways. The board informed that with large windows, 360 degrees rotatable and pushback chairs, with self operational sliding doors, the journey would be much more exciting. Praising the state's many beautiful destinations, the board said now the journey would be beautiful. The vista dome coaches are equipped with large windows and transparent roofs for the passengers to enjoy the surroundings with facilities giving comfortable and ease. India's first vista dome coach was inaugurated between the Visakhapatnam-Araku route in Andhra Pradesh in 2017. As per the recent data from Indian railways, 33 vista dome coaches are attached with 23 pairs of trains.

CHIEF MINISTER PAYS HOMAGE TO MARTYR MADANLAL DHINGRA

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid homage to the martyr Madan Lal Dhingra on his death anniversary. Chouhan paid floral tribute by garlanding the picture of Amar Shaheed Shri Dhingra in the auditorium at the residence office.

Amar Shaheed Freedom Fighter Madanlal Dhingra was born on September 18, 1883 in Punjab Province. He took admission in University College London for higher education. In London, Dhingra came in contact with eminent nationalists Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and Shyamji Krishna Varma. All the patriots there were very furious with the death sentence given to revolutionaries like Khudiram Bose, Kanhai Lal Dutta, Satinder Pal and Kashi Ram. As a result, Madanlal Dhingra fired shots at Sir William Hutt Curzon Wyllie at the annual festival of the Indian National Association. After hearing in the case of Madanlal Dhingra in July, 1909, he was hanged by the British Government on August 17, 1909.

NASSCOM WILL UPSKILL ENGINEERING AND POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS

Bhopal: In order to improve the placement scenario for engineering graduates of the state, the Department of Technical Education in collaboration with NASSCOM has decided to enhance the skills of engineering and polytechnic students from the academic session 2022-23. Engineering, Polytechnic colleges have been placed in 5 sectors for better communication and effective implementation of this programme. All the colleges have been instructed by the Department of Technical Education to share the data of the students region wise by August 24, 2022. The engineering and polytechnic colleges of these regions will be supervised by two nodal officers. Data verification will be done by NASSCOM on August 28 and rectification of errors on August 31. The valid data will be uploaded on the skill prime platform of the future by the DTEMP Group on September 3. NASSCOM will start the Sign Up Orientation-Session (Physical/Virtual) on 5th September.

Near-Catastrophe At Karam Dam Brings Tender Scam In Focus Again

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Karam Dam, at the centre of a near-catastrophe after cracks earlier this week, has been in the headlines for leaks earlier too of public money, that is. Its part-collapse after heavy rain brings back into focus the e-tendering scam that is being investigated for four years and counting.

The scam took place allegedly during the previous BJP governments. The Congress that came to power in 2019, only to lose it in 15 months after a BJP-backed mutiny had listed it among the many "wrongdoings" of Shivraj Singh Chouhan's multiple tenures.

In 2018 media reported about the tampering of the online system, at which the then BJP government ordered a probe ahead of the assembly polls. But a police case was registered only a year later, under the Congress's Kamal Nath-led government. He pegged the losses at Rs 3,000 crore.

It could be higher. The system has been in place since 2014, which means the scam's shadow runs over scores of tenders for nearly Rs 3 lakh crore. The probe hasn't progressed much ever since Shivraj Singh Chouhan managed to topple the Congress government in March 2020. The police have booked officials of some companies which were awarded the tenders. Two IT companies carrying out the work have also been blamed.

The closest that cops have come to touching anyone political is when they arrested two private secretaries of senior minister Narottam Mishra, who held the Water Resources portfolio in the past. But the secretaries, who got bail, remain posted with him. He has denied any connection with the scam and said in the past, "They started the game. We will finish it," in a cryptic reference to the Congress.

The Rs 304-crore, much-delayed Karam Dam project in Dhar district is among those being probed, the state government has acknowledged in the assembly.

This contract was first awarded to a Gujarat-based company, but was cancelled after the scam came to light. A Delhi firm then got the tender. Work began in August 2018. It was to be completed in three years, meaning August last year.

Delay aide, something odd happened at the outset, when the Delhi firm hired another firm from Gwalior for a part of the work. This Gwalior firm took this up for Rs 99.86 crore 14 per cent lower than what the Delhi firm had quoted to the state, meaning that the government overpaid. And that was just about a third of the total work. That, too, was washed away earlier this week. Project insurance may save the contractor from utter loss, though. People from 18 villages had to be shifted out after the dam developed cracks on August 11. It could not handle the water in its reservoir. After channels were dug to release the water, danger to lives was averted, but a portion of the dam was washed away.

Other such, smaller incidents have happened with alarming frequency. Last year, bridges and culverts worth Rs 35 crore were washed away due to heavy rain. These had been built within the last three years. More recently, a part of the Begumganj-Haidergarh bridge caved in on Monday. The Rajghat dam on the state's border with Uttar Pradesh has deteriorated awaiting inauguration. Neither state paid the Rs 50 crore needed for finishing.

For the Karam cracks, the government has formed an investigation team. Yet, the larger question of corruption remains.

Water Resources Minister Tulsi Silavat said, "There's no truth in the allegation that BJP leaders are close to the Delhi company building the dam. It does not matter who was here before me. I just know will not spare the guilty, even if they belong to our party. I want the truth to be out in the e-tendering scam."

Congress leader Kamal Nath has visited the villages that were in danger due to the Karam Dam crack. "There is termite of corruption in the whole state - from panchayat to the ministries," he alleged. "This was the first heavy rain of the season, and they had to do this drama of making channels to release the pressure. Who knows how many dams, bridges and culverts will explode."

ACTIVIST WHO OPPOSED MP GOVT'S BULLDOZER ACTION HELD UNDER NSA

Bhopal: An activist, who was vocal against the bulldozer drive of the Madhya Pradesh government following communal violence in Khargone, has been arrested under the National Security Act (NSA).

Zaid Khan, a resident of Indore, was arrested in Khargone on Monday for allegedly spreading hatred among the communities, disrupting communal harmony, inciting religious sentiments and posting objectionable posts on social media. Indore district administration claimed that "Khan had been involved in several criminal activities before 2021. He (Khan) was deliberately disrupting communal harmony with his relentless posts on social media". Two FIRs have been lodged against Khan, accusing him of disrupting social harmony and inciting Muslims with his hate speeches. One FIR has been lodged in Indore and the other in Khargone district. Notably, Khan was one of those who had criticised the BJP-led Madhya Pradesh government's bulldozer drive in Khargone after a communal clashes broke out there in March this year. The communal violence had erupted after a group of Muslims had attacked a Ram Navami procession on March 10. After the clashes, the administration had imposed curfew in the area. Later, several houses were bulldozed during a drive against illegal encroachment.

EDITOR'S SPECS

Ram temple: Winning saga for BJP in 2024 Election

Ayodhya is all set to be the focal point of BJP's campaign for 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The 2024 elections are perfectly timed with the completion of the grand Ram temple and the various developmental projects earmarked for the holy city will also be near completion by then. Ayodhya, therefore, will be the perfect showcase of BJP's achievement -- both in spiritual and developmental terms. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who has already positioned himself as a torch-bearer of Hindutva, will undoubtedly tout Ayodhya as a major achievement. According to a senior BJP functionary, Ayodhya will have the much-promised temple by the time general elections are held. Yogi Adityanath is pushing all developmental projects hard and this will present a new Ayodhya to the people. Without doubt, this will be our biggest and best report card for the 2024 elections. There is no doubt that with a highly fragmented opposition, Modi's continuing charisma and Yogi Adityanath's Hindutva pull, the focus on Ayodhya will only add to the BJP's strength in the general elections. Yogi Adityanath's deep connect with Ayodhya is understandable. Contentious issues like construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, uniform civil code, ban on cow slaughter and anti- conversion campaign topped the agenda of these meetings organised in east Uttar Pradesh. Yogi Adityanath kept the temple issue alive in east UP by organising Vishwa Hindu Mahasammelan and Virat Hindu Sangam in Gorakhpur and the adjoining districts. The BJP, at the national level, does not promote the Hindu agenda in a blatant manner but Yogi Adityanath makes no bones about his Hindu leanings and it is this that endears him to his voters. He is pushing Ayodhya to the centre stage of politics.

THE INNER MEANING OF JANMASTHAMI

Radhanath Swami Maharaj

Janmasthami is a well-known festival in the Indian subcontinent commemorating the appearance of Lord Krishna. Puja and arati are performed to the deity of Krishna. Sweetmeats and savouries are offered to the deity and the divine remnants are distributed to everyone. Bhajans glorifying Krishna and His pastimes are sung and the verses from Bhagavat Purana are recited. Dahi handis are organized in several parts of Maharashtra commemorating the pastime of stealing of butter. At several places, toddlers are dressed as little Gopal - the cynosure of all eyes in Vrindavan.

Lord Krishna descended on this planet earth on the request of Lord Brahma, devatas and Bhumi devi. Bhumi devi, the goddess of earth, was afflicted by the atrocities of demoniac kings like Kamsa and Jarasandha. Lord Krishna descended as the son of Devaki and Vasudev to annihilate the miscreants and restore law and order as He promised in Bhagavad Gita 4.8. He instilled spiritual focus and harmony in the rulers and the citizens. In this way, He ushered peace and prosperity for one and all.

More importantly, He descended to attract us back into His loving pastimes. We are all searching for love in this world. This is the deepest need of every human being - to love and to be loved. This is the way to true and everlasting happiness and fulfilment. Greatly ignorant of this, the world is distracted to find happiness from matter. We are investing a great deal of time, energy and money through entrepreneurship and technology to extract happiness from matter in form of entertainment. We are also constantly investing limitless resources and talent in exploring new forms of entertainment like metaverse and virtual gaming (BG 16.10). Despite all the progress, the world including the developed nations is still plagued by war, corruption, depression, stress and suicide. With the progress of technology and economics, the problems in the world too are becoming multiplied and complicated like cancer and climate change (BG 16.11).

The problem is that we are looking for happiness in the wrong place. Matter is limited by space, time and circumstance. It can only offer limited happiness. The limited happiness is also coupled with pain and problems. The relationships based on matter i.e. bodily relationships and social relationships can only offer limited happiness and is tainted by selfishness. It is impure love i.e. tainted with lust which is evident in increasing divorce rate and homicides. Then, where to find the real happiness? It is possible to find true and lasting happiness only in the relationship with God. God is all-loving, all-attractive, all-knowing, all-powerful and all-compassionate. In this way, our loving relationship with God is beyond the influence of space, time and circumstance. We can express our love to Lord Krishna and experience His love at any time, any place and any circumstance. Then if Krishna is all-loving, why are we not experiencing His love? Love is reciprocal. Krishna is waiting for us to turn towards him since time immemorial, ever-eager to reciprocate with our love.

Krishna descends to this world along with eternal loving associates like the cowherds and the milkmaids of Vrindavan. He performs various loving pastimes with them to attract us back into His loving fold. His loving pastimes are recorded in the Bhakti texts like Srimad Bhagavatam and these are recited and propagated by loving devotees of Krishna throughout ages. This is the inner meaning of Janmastami i.e we turn towards Krishna and Krishna reciprocates with us. Krishna appears again in our consciousness and remembrance. In this way, He can inundate our existence with His all-pervasive and ever-increasing love. This is real Janmasthami. Krishna also gives detailed instructions in Bhagavad Gita delineating the process of turning back to him i.e. Bhakti-yoga. The process is simple. It does not have any pre-requisites and can be practiced by anyone at any time and any place (BG 9.32). It is the process of cultivating meditation, worship and respect to the all-attractive God-Krishna (BG 9.34).

(The author is the Spiritual Guru of International Society for Krishna Consciousness)

Music which consistently strives to bridge cultures

After releasing a stellar album 'Unbounded -- Abaad' that featured legendary musicians like Bela Fleck and Ustad Zakir Hussain, Indian sitar player and composer Purbayan Chatterjee is set to release a new album 'Saath Saath' with flautist and lifelong friend, Rakesh Chaurasia.

On Wednesday, a new track 'Yaman Drut' -- the second single from the seven-track album -- was made available on streaming platforms.

'Saath Saath', which was recorded earlier this year in Mumbai, features seven ragas for morning and night and is set to be released on September 9. The record, co-written with flautist Rakesh Chaurasia, nephew of legendary flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia, draws inspiration from the original spirit of the raga tradition and provides a beautiful aural experience.Purbayan's music consistently strives to bridge cultures as he seeks out new voices and interprets the classical approach in novel and innovative ways. While 'Saath Saath' adheres most closely to the spirit and traditions of the ragas in style and sound, it is also an evolution from Purbayan's progressive approach to Indian classical music, which began in earnest after a moment of epiphany during one of his many trips to California during the 1990s, when he'd make musical pilgrimage and immerse himself at the Ali Akbar College of Music, founded by the great sarod master, Ustad Ali Akbar. Purbayan's previous recording 'Unbounded -- Abaad' from 2021 was a collaboration with banjo player Bela Fleck and the eminent Ustad Zakir Hussein, among many others, on a progressive jazz-rock opus.

'Saath Saath' was recorded in one or two takes, and the progression of the album follows the passage of day and night, with the first half of the album dedicated to the more soothing morning ragas and the latter night ragas, building to a crescendo like in 'Yaman Drut'.

Purbayan and Rakesh have been friends for over two decades, and have steered a similar musical path, experimenting outside of the classical tradition. 'Saath Saath', which literally means 'doing something together', brings Purbayan and Rakesh's chemistry and friendship to the forefront, and shows the intimate dynamism between the pair, two uniting souls, through their instruments, the sitar and the flute.

international

Chinese premier acknowledges slowing economy, cites unexpected shocks

Beijing | Agencies

Amid an economic slowdown, China must adopt special measures in order to offset "shocks beyond expectation" in the second quarter, says Premier Li Keqiang.

Now is the most critical juncture for economic rebound," he told provincial leaders at a meeting in Shenzhen, according to official statements on Wednesday.Officials must "coordinate Covid-19 response with economic and social development to ensure effective Covid containment, economic stability and development security", he said, referring to the lockdowns imposed under China's strict zero Covid policy which have dampened growth.Li called on the six strongest provinces, which together make up 45 per cent of economic output, to "proactively" drive growth, reports news agency. policy package for stabilizing the economy and unlock their own policy potential," he said. "They should effectively implement the also said those provinces should take a leading role in creating and preserving jobs, noting that "sluggish demand is a pronounced hindrance in economic activity".

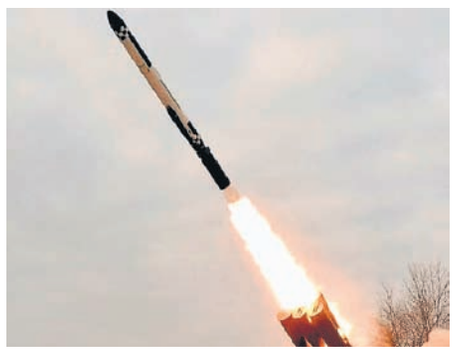
RUSSIA'S DEFENCE MINISTRY SIGNS DEALS FOR SARMAT BALLISTIC MISSILES, S-500

Moscow: The Russian Defence Ministry signed contracts on the delivery of Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missiles and S-500 air defence systems for Russian troops.

The Russian Defence Ministry signed contracts on the delivery of Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missiles and S-500 air defence systems for Russian troops.The contract on the production and delivery of Sarmat missiles was signed by Deputy Defence Minister Alexei Krivoruchko and CEO of the Makeyev State Rocket Center Vladimir Degtyar at the Army 2022 international military-technical forum, news agency reported.The deal for the supply of the latest S-500 air defence system was signed by Krivoruchko and Almaz-Antey Deputy CEO Vitaly Neskorodov at the forum, news agency reported. Russian President Vladimir Putin said in June that the country's first Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile system would enter combat duty by the end of the year.

N.Korea fires 2 cruise missiles: Seoul official

Seoul | Agencies



North Korea test-fired two cruise missiles toward the Yellow Sea on Wednesday, a South Korean military official said, as President Yoon Suk-yeol held a press conference to mark the 100th day since taking office.

"(The military) has detected two cruise missiles launched by North Korea from Onchon, South Pyongan Province, into the Yellow Sea early this morning," the official said without providing further details, including the exact type of missiles and time of the firing.South Korean and US intelligence authorities are conducting a related analysis, with the allies maintaining a firm readiness posture, Yonhap News Agency quoted the official as saying.

In his Liberation Day speech two days ago, Yoon laid out the details of his "audacious initiative" meant to help the North improve its economy in the event it takes denuclearization steps.The North's first known launch of a cruise missile since January also came a day after South Korean and American military troops kicked off preliminary drills just ahead of the start of their annual combined Ulchi Freedom Shield (UFS) exercise.

While the North is banned from making launches using ballistic missile technologies under U. Security Council resolutions, such a firing of a cruise missile is not in violation of them.

Sri Lanka in a critical condition but won't extend state of emergency

Colombo: Emergency declared during the anti-government protests, his office announced on Wednesday. Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe will not extend a state of Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe will not extend a state of emergency declared during the anti-government protests, his office announced on Wednesday. After the improvement of the situation Wickremesinghe sees no necessity to extend the measure, the presidential office said in a statement.The state of emergency gives broad powers to security forces to make arrests, reports dpa news agency.It has been in effect for a month and is officially due to end this Thursday.Amid the ongoing economic crisis, Sri Lanka witnessed months of widespread protests against the government and storming of several key buildings last month which eventually led to the resignation of former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.Wickremesinghe was picked as his successor in a parliamentary vote on July 20.He has in part addressed shortages of gas and fuel and restored some political stability, and the protests have recently largely fizzled out.Sri Lanka still faces an unprecedented economic crisis and is currently negotiating with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to secure a bailout package.

Faisalabad men force girl to lick shoes, chop her hair over refusal to marry friend's father

Faisalabad | Agencies

In a ghastly incident in Pakistan's Faisalabad, a teenager was tortured, humiliated and sexually harassed for refusing to marry an older man, who is the father of her friend, media reports said.

A video of the abuse that took place on August 9 surfaced on Wednesday morning and went viral on social media. In the video, the girl could be seen being tortured while a woman's voice can be heard in the background.

The culprits made the victim lick shoes, her hair was chopped and eyebrows shaved.

The victim said that her friend's father, a factory owner, was forcing her to marry him but when she refused, she was abused, harassed and filmed. She said that her friend also encouraged her to accept the proposal, Geo News reported.

Taking note of the matter, the police registered a case and arrested six people, including the prime suspect (her friend's father) and a female household staff member.

The suspects will be presented before a magistrate in court.Earlier, the police had reportedly said that the arrested suspects included the prime suspect's wife as well, who is reportedly the woman behind the voice in the video.

Later, a separate case was registered against the prime suspect at the Khurrianwala Police Station in Faisalabad, after liquor and weapons were found in his house.

PAK MAKES CURRENCY DECLARATION BY ALL INT'L PASSENGERS MANDATORY

Islamabad: The Pakistan government has made currency declaration by all international passengers mandatory, as part of the measures taken to curb money laundering to fulfil the condition of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), according to a notification issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

The notification came as an FATF team was expected to arrive in Pakistan next month for "on-site" visit to verify steps taken by Islamabad to curb money laundering and terror financing, The Express Tribune reported.

A successful on-site visit would pave the way for Pakistan getting out of the FATF grey list.

The CAA issued the notification on the instructions of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

The notification said that a declaration form would have to be filled and handed over to the airline staff, in which the passenger would show details of domestic and foreign currency.

No international passenger would be able to board the flight or leave the airport without submitting the declaration, it said.

Palestinian President sparks outrage with Holocaust accusation against Israel

Berlin | Agencies

Visiting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas sparked outrage when he accused Israel of committing a "Holocaust" against Palestinians during a joint press conference here with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.During the joint press conference on Tuesday, Abbas said that "Israel has committed 50 massacres in 50 Palestinian locations since 1947" and added "50 massacres, 50 Holocausts", reports news agency.Abbas' remarks were in response to a journalist who asked whether he would apologise to Israel on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the attack by Palestinian terrorists on the Israeli team during the 1972 Olympics in Munich, which resulted in the death of 10 Israeli athletes and coaches as well as one German police officer.Scholz listened to the statements with a look of alarm and annoyance, but did not offer an immediate reply.His spokesperson Steffen Hebestreit declared the news conference over immediately after Abbas' answer, which had been previously announced as the last question.Hebestreit said afterwards that Scholz was outraged by Abbas' statements.

MAHA LEGISLATURE SESSION: OPPN GREETS CM SHINDE WITH CHANTS OF '50 KHOKE, VERY OK' AND 'TRAITOR'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The ruling combine of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis got a taste of the Opposition Nationalist Congress Party, Congress and Shiv Sena's dark mood on the opening day of the Monsoon Session of Maharashtra Legislature here on Wednesday.

A majority of the Opposition leaders and legislators staged a vociferous protest on the steps of the Vidhan Bhavan, carrying posters and placards, condemning and criticising the government at the start of its maiden legislature test.

As soon as the CM and other Shinde Group MLAs started trooping in, the Opposition legislators greeted them with full-throated rants of - "50 khoke (Rs 50-crore), Ekdum Ok" and "Aala Re, Aala Re, Gaddaar Aala (Here comes the traitor)". The opponents were alluding to the alleged suspicions of horse-trading value of each legislator who walked out in June that culminated in the toppling of the Maha Vikas Aghadi government headed by former CM Uddhav Thackeray on June 29, with Shinde-Fadnavis taking the oath on June 30.

They also raised slogans condemning the regime, 'ED Sarkar, Hai Hai' (Eknath-Devendra duo) and 'Gaddaar Sarkar, Hai Hai', as the Shinde Group and BJP legislators walked by. The aggressive agitation follows the Opposition's boycott of the customary session-eve tea-party hosted by Shinde Tuesday evening.

Treacherous govt of Shinde-Fadnavis will crash soon: Aditya Thackeray

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Setting the Opposition tone for the Monsoon Session of Maharashtra Legislature, Shiv Sena leader and former minister Aditya Thackeray predicted that "the treacherous government of (Chief Minister) Eknath Shinde and (Deputy CM) Devendra Fadnavis will collapse soon," here on Wednesday.

Interacting with the media, Thackeray Jr. said the Opposition is pitted against the "killers of democracy, and this illegal government of dishonesty will definitely come down".

"Its an unconstitutional regime, illegal from the start, consisting of dishonest traitors...," said Thackeray sharply, ahead of the session.

Referring to the inciteful statement by a Shinde Group MLA Prakash Surve of Mumbai and the slapping of a canteen manager by Hingoli MLA Santosh Bangar, he said that these are acts of 'cowards' and the people of the state will show them their place.

Thackeray rued that such threatening language is happening in our Maharashtra which is "not acceptable to the people" and wondered "who is really the Chief Minister".

"Goons have no place in Maharashtra politics... If MLAs, who threaten people are walking around freely, then you can guess what will happen to the law and order situation in the state," he added.

Dwelling on the recent cabinet expansion by CM Shinde, which has caused much heart-burns among the Shinde Group MLAs, Thackeray said it has "not included the independents or smaller parties supporting it, there is no representation to women and even a Mumbaikar is not taken on board".

"In such a situation, nobody is concerned about the voice of the farmers or the women... They are more worried about what they got (cabinet portfolios) or what they didn't get," Thackeray pointed out.

He claimed that even the first lot of Shiv Sena legislators who walked over to the Shinde Group in June were not taken in the cabinet, implying that loyalty does not count for them.

The son of former CM Uddhav Thackeray reiterated that "this government will topple" and many of the MLAs, who left Shiv Sena, will return to the party-fold soon.

Sukesh Chandrasekhar 200-crore money laundering case

ED to submit a charge sheet against Jacqueline Fernandez: Reports

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Enforcement Directorate will submit a charge sheet against Jacqueline Fernandez in the Sukesh Chandrasekhar 200-crore money laundering case. The actress may not be detained right now because the court has yet to take cognizance of the charge sheet, but she may be barred from leaving the country. It is also claimed that the actress communicated with Sukesh while he was imprisoned. For this topic, ETimes contacted Jacqueline's team.

The ED has already questioned Jacqueline multiple times. The actress told authorities that she had been in contact with Sukesh Chandrasekhar since 2017 and that the conman claimed to be a member of late Jayalalithaa's family. "I have been speaking to Sukesh since February 2017. In August 2021, he was arrested, after which I never met him. He told me that he is the owner of Sun TV and from the political family of Jayalalithaa," According to a leading news portal, Jacqueline alerted the ED about the charge sheet. The actress further stated that her sister got a $150,000 loan from Chandrasekhar and acknowledged that he transferred roughly Rs 15 lakh to her brother's account in Australia. The ED had already attached Jacqueline's assets worth Rs 7 crore. Among the luxurious items Jacqueline got were diamond earrings, bracelets, Birkin bags, Louis Vuitton shoes, and a Mini Cooper automobile.

Several personal images of Jacqueline and Sukesh were posted online during this incident, fueling speculation that the two were in a relationship. Chandrasekhar had issued a handwritten statement confirming their romance and claimed, "As I have mentioned before, Jacqueline and I were in a relationship. Seeing each other and the relationship was not based on any kind of monetary benefits like the way it is protected, commented and trolled in a bad light. The relationship had lots of love and respect for each other, without any expectations." The pricey presents allegedly included Gucci and Chanel luxury bags, two Gucci gym clothes, a pair of Louis Vuitton shoes, two pairs of diamond earrings, and two Hermes bracelets.

According to reports, Jacqueline's legal team will file a counter-charge claiming that the actress was unaware she was the recipient of extortion money.

Rupee's upside may limit on corporate outflows; local unit ends 22 paise up

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Indian rupee has appreciated 22 paise on Wednesday to close at 79.44 against the US dollar on easing Brent crude oil prices and uptick in domestic equities.

But, further appreciation of rupee can be capped by the corporate outflows lined up in this week.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, rupee ended at 79.44 as against 79.66 close on the previous trading session on Friday against the US dollar.

Indian financial markets were closed on August 15 and 16 on account of Independence day and Parsi New year.

"USD INR spot closed 20 paise lower at 79.44. Fall in oil prices and higher global equity markets helped Rupee to gain against US Dollar. FPI flows have been persistently positive and that is positive for Rupee. However, there are corporate outflows lined up over this week and that can limit downside in USD INR. Over the near term we expect a range of 79 and 80 on spot," said Anindya Banerjee, VP, Currency Derivatives & Interest Rate Derivatives at Kotak Securities Ltd. Brent crude oil prices which were trading at $98 a barrel on Friday has eased to $92.04 per barrel. Crude oil prices in the international market has fallen due to disappointing China's economic data that forced China's central bank to hike lending rates. The prices on crude continue its fall on Tuesday too, but by afternoon trade it rose. Meanwhile, Sensex ended up 417.92 points or 0.70 per cent at 60,260.13, and Nifty ended 119.00 points or 0.67 per cent higher at 17,944.25. About 2,019 shares have advanced, 1,405 shares declined and 132 remained unchanged.

BSE midcap ended up 0.64 per cent, whereas BSE SmallCap and BSE LargeCap closed 0.53 per cent and 0.71 per cent, respectively. BSE IT index and BSE Consumer Durables index ended over 1 per cent up on Wednesday.

Moreover, hawkish comments from several Fed officials indicate that the US Fed is still likely to opt for steep rate hikes and act tough on persistently high price pressures.

"Markets are now eyeing the minutes of the Fed's July meeting for further cues about the monetary policy path of the US central bank that will further dictate the trend for the Indian rupee. We envisage the rupee to trade in the 79.20-80.10 range in the coming days," said Sugandha Sachdeva, Vice President - Commodity and Currency Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Vinayak Mete's death: Maharashtra CID to probe accident

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Following a clamour from various quarters, the Maharashtra government on Wednesday ordered a CID inquiry into the death of prominent Maratha leader Vinayak Mete in a road accident on August 14.

Taking cognisance of the matter, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has directed the Director-General of Police to initiate measures for the CID probe into the accident three days ago.

Mete, 52, president of the Shiv Sangram Party and a face of the Maratha agitation a few years ago, was killed instantaneously when his SUV coming from Beed via Pune to Mumbai crashed into a vehicle ahead of him on the Yeshwantrao Chavan Mumbai-Pune Expressway, early on Sunday.

Soon afterwards, Mete's aged mother, wife Jyoti and on Wednesday his nephew Balasaheb Chavan, besides several leaders of the Maratha Kranti Morcha and other groups raised doubts about the circumstances leading to the accident, the purported delay in rushing medical help to him and other aspects.

On Sunday, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had announced a probe into the mishap with the highway police, Raigad Police setting up around half a dozen teams to investigate Mete's death which shocked the state. Mete's last rites were performed in his native village in Beed on Monday with full state honours, though his family and other Maratha leaders kept raising questions about the highway crash at around 5 a.m. the previous morning.

Speaking to the media in Pune on Wednesday, Mete's nephew Chavan said that among other things, the vehicle driver Eknath Kadam -- one of the three drivers who worked for Mete -- was giving contradictory replies on the accident to the investigators and demanded an in-depth probe into the whole incident. Squarely blaming the driver, who also suffered minor injuries, for the crash, Chavan accused him of not giving the 'exact location of the accident' despite repeated attempts, why was the SUV not visible in the CCTVs and who was the person keeping in regular touch with the driver on the phone.

BJP leader warns NCP of fresh 'expose', Oppn denounces him

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Virtually setting the cat among the pigeons, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) activist Mohit Kamboj-Bharatiya, hinted that he would soon 'expose' a senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader, attracting loud howls of protests from the Opposition, here on Wednesday.

Kamboj-Bharatiya's tweets came late on Tuesday -- strategically, on the eve of the monsoon session of Maharashtra Legislature -- "One NCP Big-Big leader will meet Nawab Malik and Anil Deshmukh soon!"

He followed up with another missive - "The irrigation scam case should be investigated again which was closed in 2019 by Param Bir Singh".

Kamboj-Bharatiya said he would soon hold a press conference and reveal the NCP leader, his assets in India and abroad, benami properties, assets in his girlfriend's name, corruption done as a minister in various ministries, and his family income and assets details.

He also urged Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and BJP's Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis to reopen the irrigation scam which had muddied the state politics a few years ago.

"Har Har Mahadev... Ab Tandaav Hoga," added Kamboj-Bharatiya.

With the reference to the irrigation scam, the needle of suspicion immediately pointed at current NCP Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar, the bete-noire of the ruling alliance, who has not yet reacted to the tweets.

However, other leaders of the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) from NCP, Congress and Shiv Sena, besides anti-corruption activist Anjali Damania, slammed Kamboj-Bharatiya for the tweets.

"It's a mystery... How does he (Kamboj-Bharatiya) come to know what the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is planning to do... Is he an agent of the probe agency," an NCP MLC Amol Mitkari said.

Congress state President Nana Patole said all that the BJP is doing is threaten and terrorise the political opponents to silence them.

Indices end higher for 4th straight session; Sensex tops 60,000 mark

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Benchmark indices ended higher on Wednesday, with Sensex topping 60,000 mark as investors sentiments got boosted on softening inflation and strong buying by foreign investors.

At close, Sensex ended up 417.92 points or 0.70 per cent at 60,260.13, and Nifty ended 119.00 points or 0.67 per cent higher at 17,944.25. About 2,019 shares have advanced, 1,405 shares declined and 132 remained unchanged.

BSE midcap ended up 0.64 per cent, whereas BSE SmallCap and BSE LargeCap closed 0.53 per cent and 0.71 per cent, respectively.

BSE IT index and BSE Consumer Durables index ended over 1 per cent up on Wednesday.

Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Tech Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, among others were top gainers on the BSE on Wednesday.

"Bulls on Dalal Street kept the momentum going as Sensex zoomed past the psychological 60,000-mark and Nifty inched towards 18,000 level on the back of softening inflation and strong FII buying in the current month. While global factors remain hazy, India is seen as a bright spot in today's challenging times," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd.

Meanwhile, Asian markets were trading mixed on Wednesday following the Wall Street trades overnight.

Gujarat ATS seizes 225 kg MDMA from Vadodara valued at Rs 1,125 crore

Ahmedabad | Agencies

The Gujarat Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) has seized 225 kg MDMA valued at Rs 1,125 crore in the international market from a Savli-based factory in Vadodara.

Addressing media persons here on Wednesday, ATS Superintendent of Police Sunil Joshi said, "Since last six months, we were working on an information about drug manufacturing and processing in a factory in Savli. We had picked up one Mahesh Vaishnav from Surat and Dinesh Dhruv in this connection and during questioning, they revealed that the drugs are stocked in the Savli factory."

Earlier, both were arrested under NDPS act, Mahesh was arrested by Customs sleuths in Bhavnagar and Dinesh Dhruv by DRI. Both were jailed. After completing their jail terms, the duo again started a drug racket in 2022.

Police have also rounded up four more persons for the alleged connections to the drugs racket.

Mahesh used to arrange liquid MDMA drug which was dried and processed in Savli. Drugs manufactured in Vadodara were sold in Maharashtra and Rajasthan markets. Police have learnt that these two had three other partners, Rakesh Makani, Vijay Vasoya, Dilip Vaghasia. MDMA processed in the Savli factory were supplied to Maharashtra by Jamnagar-based Ibrahim and his son Baba Ibrahim.

Police officer did not reveal the name of the Rajasthan carrier.

Indian American rom-com No. 2 on Netflix global Top 10

Los Angeles | Agencies

While the streaming fantasy drama 'The Sandman' was watched for 127.5 million hours, landing in the No. 1 position on the newly released Top 10 rankings of Netflix, Season 3 of the Mindy Kaling-created Indo-american teen comedy series 'Never Have I Ever' debuted at No. 2 during the August 8-14 viewing window. 'Never Have I Ever' was watched for 55 million hours after three days of availability, reports Variety. It was followed by the debut of another teen series' third season: 'Locke & Key,' which was watched for 38.4 million hours in its first five days of availability. According to Variety, the fourth place was secured by Season 4 of 'Stranger Things,' which was watched for 35.3 million hours. This was the season's sixth full week of availability since the premiere of the two episodes making up Volume 2 on July 1.

Following 'Stranger Things 4' on heels is the fourth season of the romantic-drama series 'Virgin River'. With 29.6 million hours watched, the show lands at No. 5. Variety further states that 'Manifest' also remains in the Top 10 after reappearing during the July 4-10 window due its recent addition to Netflix in India, Latin America and the Nordic countries. This week, the show's third season came in at No. 6 (28.4 million hours).

The No. 7 position went to 'I Just Killed My Dad,' which was viewed for 26.2 million hours in its first six days of availability. Limited thriller series 'Keep Breathing' took eighth place with 20.9 million hours watched after debuting at No. 3 during the July 25-31 window and taking second place last week.

The 9th and 10th spot on the ranking board are occupied by 'Manifest' season 2 and 'Manifest' season 3 respectively.

Sam Mendes to be honoured with Ebert Director Award

Los Angeles | Agencies

The award has been named after the late film critic Roger Ebert, and recognises filmmakers who have achieved greatness in their profession and have a phenomenal body of work. In the past, it was awarded to the likes of Martin Scorsese, Claire Denis, Ava DuVernay, Wim Wenders and Agnes Varda. The award is an evolution of the festival's Roger Ebert Golden Thumb Award.

TIFF CEO Cameron Bailey announced about conferring the honour upon Sam on Tuesday (Pacific Standard Time), reports a website. "From his first appearance at TIFF with 'American Beauty', director Sam Mendes brought his exacting and lyrical vision of cinema to Toronto," Bailey said. "We are delighted to honour his unique voice and body of work with this year's TIFF Ebert Director Award." The TIFF Tribute Awards will hold a gala fundraiser during this year's Toronto International Film Festival on September 11.

According to Variety, Toronto will also see the Canadian premiere of Mendes' most recent film, 'Empire of Light.' Mendes has written, directed and produced the film.

Set in an English seaside town in the early 1980s, 'Empire of Light' is a story about a relationship and the power of cinema. The film stars Olivia Colman, Micheal Ward, Tom Brooke, Tanya Moodie, Hannah Onslow, Crystal Clarke, Toby Jones and Colin Firth. Renowned cinematographer Roger Deakins, a frequent Mendes collaborator, has shot the film. Mendes made his feature film debut at TIFF in 1999 with the world premiere of 'American Beauty,' which went on to win best picture and best director at the Oscars.

British filmmaker Sam Mendes, who is known for films like '1917,' 'Skyfall' and 'Road to Perdition' will be feted with the Ebert Director Award at this year's Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

ZOE KRAVITZ SHARES WHAT DREW HER TO CHANNING TATUM EVEN BEFORE THEY MET

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Zoe Kravitz was "drawn" to Channing Tatum before they even met. The 33-year-old actress is making her directorial debut with 'Pussy Island', and she thinks Tatum is suited to playing a "dark character" in the movie. She shared: "I think that's exciting to watch someone who's mostly played boy next door, good guy, love interest, all of that." "I felt, even from afar, before I knew him, that he was a feminist and that he wasn't afraid of exploring that darkness, because he knows he's not that. That's why I was drawn to him and I wanted to meet with him. And I was right."

Kravitz and Tatum started dating after working together on the movie.

However, the actress-turned-director wants to keep their romance out of the spotlight for the time being. She told a Magazine that "I guess what I'll say is when you make things with people it's a very sacred space, and when you're compatible with somebody creatively it often opens up other channels, because you're kind of sharing all of yourself.

"I'm really grateful that this movie has brought him into my life that way."

Meanwhile, Kravitz is also relishing the experience of working behind the camera. The actress is one of the most sought-after stars in the movie business, but she's loving the challenge of directing, too. She said: "I'm learning a lot about what it takes to make a movie and how many fires are constantly being put out before the actors show up to set. I'm just kind of sitting back and learning and trying to not constantly be in a state of panic." "If you zoom out too much and think about the whole thing at once, it causes a lot of anxiety but if you focus on the present moment, it's really fun."

Anne Heche named Miley Cyrus, Kristen Bell to play her in biopic

Los Angeles | Agencies

Late actress Anne Heche had said that she would love to see Miley Cyrus play her if a movie was ever made about her life. In an episode of the 'Behind the Velvet Rope with David Yontef' podcast recorded back in January seven months before her fatal car crash, the late actress named Miley and Kristen Bell as the two actresses she'd pick to star in a biopic, reports a website.

"I've already thought about it. Miley Cyrus or Kristen Bell ... The two of them share a personality ability to face the world the way that I would want, that I feel like I have and would want portrayed," Anne said when asked who would portray her on screen. According to New York Post gossip column PageSix, she added the two stars would be able to "pull off the humour that I have" and do justice to "the journey that I've gone through."

When asked what appealed to her about Miley, Anne praised her for breaking away from her Disney child star roots to forge a successful music and acting career. She said: "The ability for her to be able to pull off I've seen her in 'Hannah Montana'. To be able to do that, to be able to express that, to be able to be as bold as she's been - going from Disney into, you know, 'Wrecking Ball' ..."

She previously worked with Kristen in a 2004 TV movie called "Gracie's Choice" and Anne said she saw a lot of herself in the younger actress.

Anne said: "Kristen Bell gave me my second Emmy nomination. She and I played a mother and daughter in a Lifetime movie years ago ... I see myself a lot in her. I don't think it was any mistake that I played her mom, and I want her to play me."

The podcast was recorded in January but was not released until Tuesday (16.08.22). Anne died on August 14 nine days after she was critically injured in a car crash.

'We're all getting older': Joe Jonas

Singer Joe Jonas has revealed that he uses injectables in his face to smooth out fine lines.

Los Angeles | Agencies

"We're all getting older and part of that is being comfortable [in our skin]," the musician told to a website. Joe, who celebrated his 33th birthday on August 15, is the new celebrity brand partner for an anti-wrinkle injectable that temporarily improves the appearance of frown lines using a double-filtered formula.

"I don't think it's necessarily something that we have to shy away from," the "Only Human" crooner said of his experience using injectables. "We can be open and honest about it and be confident and not really shy away from speaking our truth." He uses the treatment for not only his frown lines, but also to smooth out a scar between his eyebrows. "I appreciated that it wasn't over the top. It's very light," he raved. Joe hopes that by speaking out about his cosmetic treatments, other men might feel comfortable doing the same.

"There were all these talks at one point, like, 'Oh, men can't do this or it's weird for guys to do that,' and I think there's a stigma that's fading and I like that," he said. "Guys are more openly wearing makeup, and it's great to see. It's like, do whatever you want, you know? It's a beautiful generation that we're living in." Joe also spoke about his new partnership. "I didn't feel like I was going into this big thing that you only see on film and TV a I went with a friend and they also did it with me, so it wasn't stress-inducing,", "To me, there's nothing more beautiful than confidence." he said.

Bruce Willis does an impromptu jam session following Aphasia diagnosis

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Bruce Willis, who was diagnosed with aphasia in March, enjoyed an "impromptu jam session" in a new video shared online.

Posted by his wife Emma Heming-Willis on social media this week, the heartwarming clip shows him performing a tune with musician and family friend Derek Richard Thomas.

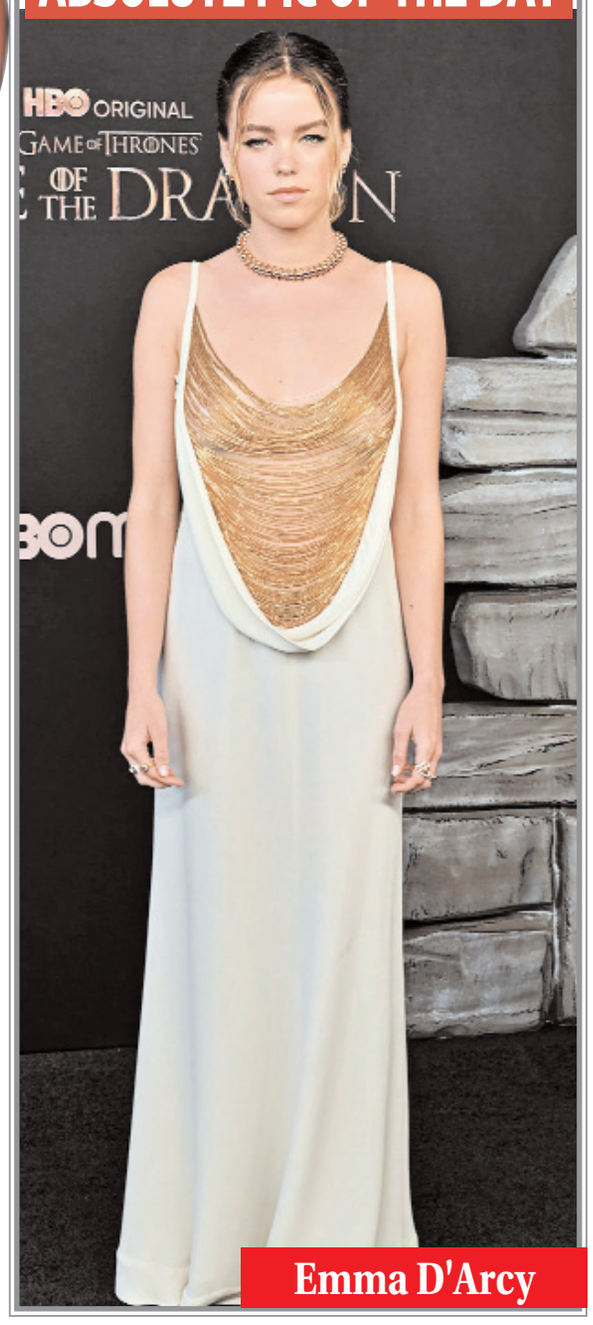
In the video, the 'Die Hard' star is sat at the bottom of the stairs playing a harmonica while his friend sings and plays guitar.

She captioned the post: "Their talent is speaking for itself. I'll just leave this here." She added on her Instagram Story, "Impromptu jam session with @derikrichardthomas"

Willis is no stranger to the world of music, having released 1987 album 'The Return of Bruno' and the follow-up "If It don't Kill You, It Just Makes You Stronger" two years later.

The 'Die Hard' star, who has been married to Emma since 2009 and also has eight-year-old Evelyn with her as well as Rumer, Scout, and Tallulah, with ex-wife Demi Moore, was said to be "stepping away" from acting back in March due to his diagnosis and just months later, Emma, said that she had been "struggling" with having to care for her husband full-time and it had "taken a toll" on her mental health. She said: "When you put everyone's needs above your own, no one wins. I don't do this perfectly but I really am trying so I can be the best I can be for the people I love and adore. I struggle with making the time for self-care every day." "I put my family's needs above my own, which I found does not make me any kind of hero." "That amount of care for everyone else within my household had taken a toll on my mental health and overall health, and it served no one in my family."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Emma D'Arcy

INDIA v ZIMBABWE ODI SERIES

KL RAHUL,DEEPAK CHAHAR IN FOCUS AS INDIA FACE CONFIDENT ZIMBABWE

Harare | Agencies

The last time India came on a tour of Zimbabwe, it was in 2016 and KL Rahul, who had been in the Test fold, was starting to get into white-ball scheme of things after a breakthrough IPL season with Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB).

In the first ODI of that tour, making his debut in 50-over format under MS Dhoni, Rahul became the first India batter and eleventh overall to make a century on debut. He ended the ODI leg of the tour as the leading run-getter and took Player of the Series award as well.

Six years later, Rahul will be returning to Harare as the captain of the side, to the place where his white-ball mainstay story for India began. But he is coming back after a long time on the sidelines. A groin injury was followed by sports hernia surgery and testing positive for Covid-19.

Thursday's match, the first of the three ODI matches between India and Zimbabwe, will have the majority of focus on how Rahul as well as Deepak Chahar shape up, especially with Men's T20 World Cup coming in October-November and before that, the Asia Cup, starting from August 27.

Just like Rahul, who last played a competitive cricket match in May, Chahar was last seen in action in February in the T20Is against the West Indies. A quadriceps tear he picked during the series got him on sidelines and with the back injury picked up, he had to spend more time away from playing action.

The ODIs against Zimbabwe give time and chance for both Rahul and Chahar to get back into playing groove in international cricket, especially with back-to-back action coming up. Rahul has got success as a number five batter in ODIs and should be interesting to see if he comes to bat in same position or gets fit on top of the order, which he does in Tests and T20Is. Others like Shikhar Dhawan, Shubman Gill, Mohammed Siraj, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Ishan Kishan and Avesh Khan would be itching to continue their impressive run in recent matches.

On the other hand, Zimbabwe are full of confidence and are coming into the series against India on the back of series victories against Bangladesh in T20Is and ODIs. The series against India gives them the chance to see where they stand against strong teams in ODI cricket and collect some crucial points for the 2023 ODI World Cup Super League.

Border-Gavaskar Trophy

Two sets of five-match in ICC Men's FTP cycle of 2023-27

Dubai | Agencies

Two sets of five-match series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in each of the upcoming cycles of the ICC World Test Championship has been one of the major highlights in the ICC Men's FTP cycle of 2023-27 released on Wednesday.

The 12 members in men's cricket will play a total of 777 international matches -- 173 Tests, 281 ODIs and 323 T20Is -- in the 2023-2027 FTP cycle compared to the 694 in the current cycle.

As per the FTP, Australia are set to welcome India for a five-match series in the 2023-25 cycle of the WTC while a reciprocal tour is set to be played in the 2025-27 cycle. It will be the first time in over 30 years that the two sides will clash in a five-match Test series, the last time being in 1992. Australia, England and India all play five-match Test series as part of the third and fourth editions of the WTC, which also comprises 19 two-match series and five three-match series each in the two editions of the Championship that run from 2023-25 and 2025-27.

Also, England, Australia and India will feature in the greatest number of Test matches during the cycle, as they are set to play 22, 21 and 20 matches in the longest format of the game respectively. India will also be playing one home Test against Afghanistan in June 2026. In that particular series, three ODIs will also be played between the two teams. Later in the year, India are also slated to play three away T20Is against Afghanistan.

The FTP also confirms that India will play 38 Tests in the 2023-27 WTC cycles to start post IPL 2023, 20 of which are against Australia and England combined. In the 2023-25 WTC cycle, India will be hosting New Zealand, England, Bangladesh while they play Australia, West Indies and South Africa away.

Raducanu beats Serena Williams in Western & Southern Open first round

Cincinnati | Agencies

In what could end up being the second-last tournament of Williams' career, after confirming she will retire after the U.S. Open beginning later this month, the 40-year-old showed fight early on against the 19-year-old world number 11 on Tuesday, reports DPA.

After getting broken to love in the very first game of the match, Williams found her footing, and even secured a break of her own in the opening set, but a second for Raducanu saw her comfortably serve out the opening frame. The second set was domination, as Williams was only able to win 35 per cent (seven-of-20) of her service points, and 20 per cent (three-of-15) while returning.

Venus Williams, 42, was also eliminated in her opening match, going down 7-5, 6-1 against Karolina Pliskova, with Pliskova now scheduled to take on Elise Mertens in the second round after a 6-1, 6-1 thrashing of Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina.

MINISTRY TO FUND RAVI DAHIYA'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP PREPARATION IN RUSSIA

New Delhi: The Sports Ministry will finance Olympic 57kg category silver medallist Ravi Dahiya's travel and training in Vladikavkaz, Russia, ahead of the World Wrestling Championships in Belgrade, Serbia next month.

Cleared under the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), Dahiya will travel to Vladikavkaz on Wednesday night. The 24-year-old will be accompanied by his coach Arun Kumar, sparring partner Sahil and physiotherapist Munish Kumar. The travel, visa, boarding and lodging cost of all four will be covered under TOPS. The camp is scheduled to last for 29 days with Ravi set to travel to Belgrade, Serbia for the World Championships. Ahead of the Commonwealth Games earlier this year, Dahiya, a 2019 World Championship bronze medallist, was sanctioned a special training camp in Bulgaria besides competitive exposure in Bulgaria, Turkey and Mongolia.

Tim Gajser becomes five-time World Motocross Champion

Finland | Agencies

Team HRC's Tim Gajser became the most successful current MXGP rider after winning his fifth world title and the fourth in the premier MXGP class at the MXGP of Finland.

The Honda CRF450R rider wrapped up this year's championship two rounds early, after dominating periods of what has been a very challenging campaign.

Starting off the season with six wins in the first seven rounds gave him a platform that none of his rivals could get near, and further wins in Germany and a perfect performance in Indonesia meant that he was able to cement his crown and cruise home to yet another world title.

This weekend at the sandy Hyvinkaa track, No. 243 wasn't at his best, but he was still able to post six-seven results, which was more than enough to give him a 104-point advantage and wrap-up the championship with two rounds still to race. With the pressure of winning his fifth world championship over, expect Gajser to be battling for wins once again, and adding to what is already a remarkable 2022 season.

Unfortunately, teammate Mitch Evans wasn't able to put his practice and qualification speed into either of the two motos, as first lap crashes in each race ruined his chances of challenging for a podium.

Brazil-Argentina replay called off

- England's Emma Raducanu collected a memorable win in the opening round of the Western & Southern Open, defeating Serena Williams 6-4, 6-0 in the pair's first ever meeting.

Rio de Janeiro | Agencies

Brazil and Argentina will no longer be required to replay a World Cup qualifier that was controversially abandoned last year, both countries' football associations have said.

The South American rivals had been slated to play the qualifier last September but the fixture was suspended less than 10 minutes after kickoff because of alleged Covid-19 rule breaches by Argentina.

FIFA had ordered the match be rescheduled for September 22 but changed its mind following appeals from the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) and the Argentine Football Association (AFA), Xinhua reports. "Finally, the match between Brazil-Argentina will not be replayed and the open date will allow for our national team to play a friendly as a result, in preparation for Qatar World Cup 2022," the CBF said.

"(We are) grateful to FIFA for the willingness and availability to resolve this problem under these very specific circumstances in this short span of time."In a separate statement, the AFA said it would also seek to play a friendly on the now vacant FIFA date.

Brazil and Argentina finished first and second, respectively, in the South American zone qualifying standings for the World Cup, to be played in Qatar from November 21 to December 18. Brazil are in Group G with Serbia, Switzerland and Cameroon while Argentina will face Mexico, Poland and Saudi Arabia in Group C.

Thailand Para Badminton International

Pramod, Sukant reach semis in men's doubles and quarters in singles

Team Absolute | New Delhi

World No 1 Pramod Bhagat and World No 4 Sukant Kadam have reached the semifinals of the men's doubles SL 3 - SL 4 event and have also reached the quarterfinals in singles.

According to information received here, in singles, Pramod Bhagat secured his quarterfinals birth with an easy win over Ukraine's Oleksandr Chyrkov with a straight set win. He will be facing France's Mathieu Thomas in the quarter finals. The score line read 24-22 and 21-15 and the match lasted for 37 minutes.

In the men's doubles, Pramod and Sukant defeated Thailand's Mongkhon Bunsun and Siripong Teamarrom in straight sets with the score line of 21-17 and 22-20, the also defeated France's Faustine Noel and Lucas Mazur in straight sets to secure their semifinals spot. The match ended in 24 minutes with the score line of 21-7 and 21 -15. Pramod Bhagat and Manisha Ramadass also won his mixed doubles match against Korea's Shin Kyung Hwan and Joo Dongjae in straight sets with the score line of 21-16 and 21- 19.

Sukant defeated his German counterpart Tim Haller in straight sets to fix his place in the quarterfinals. He won the game in straight sets with the score line of 21-13 and 21-12. Sukant will be facing France's Guillaume Gailly in the quarterfinals.

ANSHUL BHATT WINS TRIPLE GOLD AT U-16 WORLD YOUTH BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIPS

New Delhi: After winning the pairs event, 13-year-old Anshul Bhatt captained Team Blitz to win the teams event in the U-16 World Youth Transnational Bridge Championships teams event in Salsomaggiore, Italy.

He was awarded the Gold in Overall Performance in the U-16 category. Anshul, who has been playing bridge since the age of six, is the youngest winner of three Gold medals at the World Bridge championships where participants from over 30 countries took part. Anshul Bhatt (captain), Canada's Darwin Li, and Estonia's Jasper Vahk and Albert Pedmanson won the Gold medal on August 13. The four players came together in July 2022 to form Team Blitz.

Eleven teams had participated in the qualifying rounds, and Team Blitz was the fourth and last team to enter the semifinals, which were played on August 12 against Poland's CKIS Skawina U15.

In the finals against the USS Unsinkable, the Blitz team, which was trailing by 10 points after the second round, recovered lost ground in the third round with a two-point lead and ended the fourth round with a 23-point lead to bag the championship.

Anshul won the gold medal with Canada's 15-year-old Darwin Li in the pairs event at the under-16 World Youth Transnational Bridge Championships.

Russell keen to play in T20 World Cup but wants West Indies to agree to his terms

Bridgetown (Barbados) | Agencies

Ace West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell has declared he wants to be a part of his country's campaign in the ICC T20 World Cup in Australia in two months' time, but has added that Cricket West Indies (CWI) should also agree to his terms.

Russell, who last featured for his country in last year's ICC T20 World Cup in Dubai, said at 34 it was his wish to win the Cup for his country.

Speaking to former team-mate Daren Sammy about his international availability prior to a domestic match in England, Russell told Sky Sports: "I always want to play and give back. But at the end of the day, if we are not agreeing on certain terms...they (CWI) have to respect my terms as well. At the end of the day, it is what it is. "We have families and we have to make sure that we give our best opportunity while we have one career. It's not like I can start over again. I'm 34 and I want to win another World Cup -- or two more -- for West Indies because at the end of the day, I'm here now, and I'm just taking it day by day," he added.

Russell has played 67 T20Is and has been a part of West Indies' successful T20 World Cup-winning teams as a two-time winner of the trophy in 2012 and 2016.

Russell's comments come days after West Indies coach Phil Simmons vented his frustration at the non-availability of key players at international level, with the likes of Chris Gayle, Sunil Narine and Russell reportedly not showing their keenness for the T20 World Cup.

However, Russell insists he wants to get involved in the preparations.

PRAGGNANANDHAA, CARLSEN SHARE FTX CRYPTO CUP LEAD

Miami: India's chess star Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa and world champion Magnus Carlsen made it two wins out of two as the FTX Crypto Cup favourites powered into an early lead.

On Tuesday night, Praggnanandhaa narrowly beat Anish Giri in the four-game match to avenge a costly defeat the Dutch number 1 inflicted on him earlier this year in the Oslo Esports Cup. Pragg and Giri played out three draws before the India struck in the final game.

The youngster sits alongside Carlsen at the top of the leaderboard on 6/6 points. On Wednesday, Praggnanandhaa will play American teenager Hans Niemann, while Giri, still yet to get off the mark, will face French-registered Alireza Firouzja.

World champion Carlsen recovered from a shock loss against Niemann to march into Round 3 of the Meltwater Champions Chess Tour round-robin. Carlsen's day started badly as he was blown away by Niemann, the lowest rated player in the tournament.

Niemann, coming off a 3-0 loss on Monday, was super-smooth with the black pieces. The killer move was 35... Be4, which wreaked havoc in Carlsen's defence and ended Niemann's tilt.

In a media interaction ahead of the film's release, the actress spoke about her journey, trolls affecting her, box-office expectations, and much more.

I get very upset and was crying: Charmme Kaur

Aakruti Bagla | Mumbai

Former actress and now producer, Charmme Kaur is gearing up for the release of her much-anticipated Pan-India film 'Liger'. She is majorly known for her contribution to Malayalam and Tamil films.

Excerpts: What do you have to say about your transition from acting to producing?

It's good and amazing. I think I enjoy this job and this role as a producer the most. I feel I was born to produce films and nothing else.

- **Do you miss acting?**
  I don't want to act. I have completely lost interest in it. Even for my films when people insist me for a cameo, I vehemently refuse. I don't want to see myself on-screen anymore.
- **Do you think being a female producer in a male-dominated industry is challenging?**
  In my case, this female gender has worked to my benefit. Most of the men that I work around with, say that you are such a strong woman and we want a daughter like you. At the same time, some people are saying that she is so strong, 'isko kaise girayenge'. There are both sides to it. It is how you take it, fight it, and go back.
- **Why do you think Hindi films are not intriguing people down South?**
  This is a wave happening right now. I remember people going berserk when Bollywood films like DDLJ and Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham were released down South. I feel things have impeded post-pandemic. It's a very scary and upsetting situation. We need to analyse and look into it by talking to people and trying to understand why they are not coming to theatres.
- **How do you tackle trolls and rumours about link-up with Puri Jagannadh?**
  It affects and upsets me to an extent that I have spent days crying. At the end of the day, I am a normal human being. I want people to see me as a producer and a hardworking woman. But if things like this come, I ponder whether I am doing anything wrong in my life or do I have to do anything more to convince people that I am a woman who is working very hard for myself and my family.
- **Looking at the current box-office scenario, are there any apprehensions ahead of release despite being confident about the film?**
  I know liger is opening to huge numbers down South and overseas. 25th August is a Thursday, which is not a very good day for Hindi films. So I am aware of that, but it was the decision taken because on Thursdays the numbers are going to be huge in South. But I know this film will keep on growing in the north from Friday. I know it for the fact that this film is here to stay it is just not here for three days. And I know for the fact that this film will not only have audience, but also repeat audience.

Have I committed a crime?: Taapsee Pannu

Actress Taapsee Pannu on spat with paparazzi "Why should I be at the receiving end of this tone, as if I have committed a crime?"

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Taapsee Pannu is the centre of attention as she prepares for the premiere of her upcoming film. The actress is on a promotional tear and has left no stone unturned in order to promote her flick. In a recent interview, the actress said that she had a public altercation with a photographer while on her way to a promotional event for her upcoming film. The actress discussed the feud in a recent interview with a leading portal.

Photographers were irritated with Taapsee Pannu because she arrived late to the event and did not stop to pose for them. According to Taapsee, the photographer treated her cruelly, which enraged her, and she explained that she was merely following the organizers' instructions. Taapsee revealed in the interview that the photographer was so nasty to her that she thought he was doing her a favor by clicking her photographs. The actress went on to say, "Even my parents don't scold me in that tone. I don't even know how to describe it to you. I was given a schedule to follow. I was doing that. Why should I be at the receiving end of this tone, as if I have committed a crime?!" the actor said. Meanwhile, Taapsee will be seen in Rajkumar Hirani's film, which will be released in the coming months. Shah Rukh Khan will also play the lead. Several images from the sets of movie in London have gone popular on social media.

Vijay Deverakonda's mother does puja for him and Ananya Panday

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Co-stars Vijay Deverakonda and Ananya Panday offered prayers at Arjun Reddy's opulent Hyderabad home ahead of the film's release this month. These two can be seen with folded hands and scarlet shawls over their shoulders in puja sneak glimpses.

VD posted on Twitter after sharing some images from the puja.

"This whole month touring across India and receiving so much love already felt like God's blessing! But Mummy feels we needed his protection, So Pooja and sacred Bands for all of us...Now she will sleep in peace while we continue our tour." Also, Ananya Panday penned a small note on Instagram, "Blessings from Vijay's amma @deverakonda and a pooja at his home in Hyderabad for #Thankful #Grateful #Blessed thank you auntyyyyy."

As we know, Vijay Deverakonda and Ananya Panday have been on a countrywide tour promoting their upcoming film. During a recent media appearance in Hyderabad, he was questioned if the movie was a remake or influenced by Puri Jagannadh's 2003 film, Amma Nanna O Tamila Ammayi, to which he replied, "It's nothing about Amma Nanna O Tamila Ammayi and it's not related to it too. In this, we are doing MMA, which is very much from boxing and the entire drama. The son and mother bond and the sentiment are very important in the film and other than that there is no similarity with Amma Nanna O Tamila Ammayi. I'm a fan of that movie and I really liked it, it's my favourite. Also, I'm not somebody who will do remakes, so the movie is not related to Amma Nanna O Tamila Ammayi. When you watch the movie you will understand."

Disha Patani shares cryptic post amid break-up rumours with Tiger Shroff

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Disha Patani has been in the headlines for a while for her rumoured breakup with Bollywood actor Tiger Shroff. Both the actors, however, have maintained silence over their breakup rumors. However, on Tuesday the Ek Villian Returns actress took to her social media stories and shared a post that left everyone confused. She wrote, "If no one ever told you, it's all gonna be okay". The story also had a butterfly emoji. Interestingly, a few days back, it was also reported that Tiger and Akansha Sharma have been dating. Both Akansha and Tiger have worked together in two music videos. Tiger, at the same time, clarified that he was not dating Akansha. Meanwhile, on the work front, Disha was recently seen in Ek Villain Returns. The star cast of the movie also includes Arjun Kapoor, Tara Sutaria, and John Abraham.

LAUREN GOTTLIEB MAKES HER RELATIONSHIP WITH BOYFRIEND OFFICIAL

Actress and dancer Lauren Gottlieb, who became a household name for her stint in the film ABCD: Any Body Can Dance.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The diva recently took to her social media and surprised netizens by making her relationship official. She is in love with video creator Tobias Jones. On Tuesday afternoon, she took to her social media handle to confirm her relationship status in a series of romantic photos alongside Jones.

Sharing the pictures she wrote, "Happier with you". Tobias Jones also shared a slew of pictures showering love on her ladylove.

Within hours, the photos garnered over 67 thousand likes on Instagram. Not only fans but even popular faces from the entertainment industry reacted to Lauren's post to congratulate her. Rockstar fame Nargis Fakhri wrote, "I love this. Yay for love," meanwhile, Karanvir Bohra commented, "Official." Actress Drashti Dhami added dropped a slew of red heart emoticons in the comment section to support her decision.

Apart from ABCD, Lauren has also starred in Ambarsariya, Welcome 2 Karachi, and more.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

Rashmika Mandanna

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