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World's Oldest Tortoise, Jonathan, Turns 190

LONDON | Agencies

He was born not long after Napoleon died, and is now officially the planet's oldest known living land animal. Jonathan the Seychelles Giant Tortoise is celebrating his 190th birthday -- more or less -- on St Helena in the remote South Atlantic, where the defeated French emperor died in exile in 1821. Jonathan, it is believed based on shell measurements, was hatched around 1832, and he was brought to the UK overseas territory from the Seychelles 50 years later.

He lives out a comfortable retirement in Plantation House, the official residence of the St Helena governor, where his birthday is being marked with events all weekend including the issuance of a special stamp.

The celebration climaxes Sunday with a "birthday cake" made out of Jonathan's favourite foods. He is particularly partial to carrots, lettuce, cucumber, apples and pears, according to his handlers interviewed by AFP in 2017. Despite his advanced years, he is also partial to a female tortoise called Emma, who is merely in her 50s.

At the start of this year, Jonathan was given the Guinness World Records title as the world's oldest living land animal, and this month was also named as the oldest tortoise ever.



'COVID-INDUCED MENTAL ILLNESSES SPIKE GENDER VIOLENCE IN DELHI, GUJ, J'KHAND'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Nearly 25 per cent Covid-hit patients suffered from mental health issues across Delhi, Gujarat and Jharkhand -- more in the urban areas than the rural settings -- even as the pandemic waned which resulted in more gender-based violence the the three states, a study said on Friday.

A strong linkage was established between gender-based violence issues and mental health as nearly 77 per cent of gender-based violence affected individuals were found to have mental health issues.

The study also highlighted that 16 per cent family members of Covid-19 patients reported having mental health issues, according to World Health Partners (WHP), a leading public health organisation.

The WHP's tele-counselling service helped Covid-19



patients, their family members and gender-based-violence affected people in overcoming mental health issues. "Learning from the project highlighted the Covid-19 pandemic's mental health impact by focusing on the need for accessing affordable and timely mental health care," said Prachi Shukla, Country Director - World Health Partners. The project was implemented from June 2021 - November 2022 in 26 districts across the three states. The teams reached out to

more than 500,000 people to assess their mental health status.

During the project duration, WHP's tele-health platform received more than 70,000 calls for mental health support.

Nearly 95 per cent persons with mild mental health issues were found to be normal after completing the tele-counselling sessions. In urban settings across all the three states, prevalence of mental health issues among men and women in the 35-59 age group was higher at 21.2 per cent, as compared to rural settings at 13.2 per cent.

"Tele-mental health is a game changer when it comes to creating ease of access of services to the parts of the country that may not have access to the kind of quality care that is available to people in metros or tier 1 cities," said Dr Rajesh Sagar, Professor and Head-Psychiatry, AIIMS.

ED ARRESTS CHHATTISGARH CM'S DEPUTY SECRETARY IN PMLA CASE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday arrested Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel's Deputy Secretary Saumya Chaurasia in connection with a money laundering matter pertaining to an illegal mining case.

The ED in September arrested Chhattisgarh-based IAS officer Sameer Vishnoi, Sunil Agarwal of Indramani Group and one Laxmikant Tiwari.

In October, an absconding accused Suryakant Tiwari had surrendered before a court and was arrested.

Another IAS officer Ranu Sahu was reportedly missing but she wrote a letter to ED in October and told the officials that she was on medical leave.

Later, ED had conducted search operations at her mother's residence in the third week of October.

Bishnoi was questioned by the ED officials regarding the commission money he allegedly used to take in connection with coal mining.

ED had also raided some locations in Chhattisgarh for two consecutive days and recovered around Rs 4 crore.



The Income Tax department had earlier written a letter to the Chhattisgarh government in which it was alleged that "a few officials very close to Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel" were involved in getting commission/bribe from those involved in the business of coal and others.

However, no action was taken by the state government in this respect.

According to the information, IAS officers J.P. Maurya and Ranu Sahu's premises were among the places that were raided by the ED. The ED team had also searched the premises of three IPS officers.

Earlier, when the raids were conducted, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel had termed it 'political raids'.

UP court asks SSP to arrest ex-Minister Chinmayanand

Team Absolute | Shahjahanpur

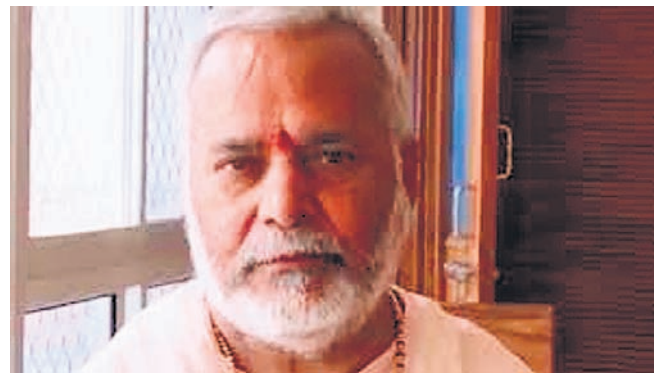
A special MP/MLA court in Shahjahanpur has issued a non-bailable warrant against former Union minister of state Swami Chinmayanand after he failed to surrender before the trial court despite the fact that a stay granted by the Supreme court in a 2011 rape case had lapsed.

Special MP/MLA judge Asma Sultana has also written to the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shahjahanpur to arrest Chinmayanand and produce him before the court.

The next date of hearing in this case is December 9.

The case was filed in 2011 and a charge sheet was subsequently filed in the court in October 2012.

Public Prosecutor Neelima Saxena said that, "Accused Chinmayanand had approached the Supreme court to get relief in this case as the Allahabad High Court had refused to quash the



case by accepting a withdrawal application of the complainant."

The apex court said that it is not inclined to interfere with the impugned judgement and order passed by the high court, but Chinmayanand was given time to surrender till November 30.

On December 1, his counsel appeared in the court and requested to extend his stay as he has applied for a regular bail in the high court. Since his stay was over, the

court issued a non-bailable warrant and directed the SSP to arrest him. Trial proceedings of this case never started following the Allahabad High Court's stay order. In 2018, the Yogi government decided to withdraw the case against him and filed an application before the court of chief judicial magistrate (CJM) under section 321 of CrPc. The application was rejected by the CJM after the rape survivor filed an 'objection'.

STRIKES ON UKRAINE'S INFRASTRUCTURE "INEVITABLE": PUTIN

Moscow: President Vladimir Putin said on Friday Russia's strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure were "inevitable" as the Kremlin rejected US President Joe Biden's terms for talks and warned the assault would continue.

After suffering humiliating military defeats during what has become the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II, Russia began targeting Ukrainian energy infrastructure in October, causing sweeping blackouts.

Speaking with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz for the first time since mid-September, Vladimir Putin slammed what he called the West's "destructive" policies in Ukraine and said Russian strikes were a response to "provocative" attacks from Kyiv.

Moscow "had long refrained from precision missile strikes against certain targets on the territory of Ukraine", Vladimir Putin told Olaf Scholz, according to a Kremlin readout of the phone talks.

"But now such measures have become a forced and inevitable response to Kyiv's provocative attacks on Russia's civilian infrastructure," the Kremlin said, referring in particular to the October attack on a bridge linking Moscow-annexed Crimea to the Russian mainland.

AIIMS hacking: Chinese involvement suspected; four more servers were on target

New Delhi: Chinese involvement is suspected in the hacking of the server of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here, a top source said on Friday, adding that four more servers were on the hackers' target. The source said that a total of five main servers of AIIMS were targeted by the suspected Chinese hackers. The data hacked from the AIIMS server has reportedly reached the main domain of Dark Web from where it may be sold.

Meanwhile, AIIMS is currently working on devising a cyber security policy with the guidance from investigating agencies, as its server remains down following the cyber attack on November 7.

Delhi Police said on Friday that the forensic images of the impacted server have been sent for analysis.

AIIMS administration and other agencies are in the process of restoring normal service. On Tuesday, AIIMS had said that the eHospital data has been restored on its server and the network is being sanitised before services can be restored.

"Network being sanitised before services can be restored. The process is taking some time due to the volume of data and large number of servers/computers for the hospital services. Measures are being taken for cyber security," AIIMS had said in a statement.

However, all hospital services, including out-patient, in-patient, laboratories etc., continue to run on manual mode presently.

Meanwhile, the number of incoming patients visiting the hospital has significantly increased leading to a rush-like situation as people are visiting the hospital directly since online appointment is not working.

Shots fired at Pakistan Embassy in Kabul

Kabul | Agencies

A security guard was wounded Friday by shots fired at Pakistan's embassy in the Afghan capital in what Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called "an assassination attempt" on the head of the mission.

"I demand immediate investigation & action against perpetrators of this heinous act," Sharif tweeted.

Although Pakistan does not officially recognise Afghanistan's Taliban government, it kept its embassy open even as the hardline Islamists took over in August last year, and maintains a full diplomatic mission.

An embassy official told AFP a lone attacker "came behind the cover of houses and started firing".

"The ambassador and all the other staff are safe, but we are not going outside of the embassy building as a precaution," he said.

A spokesman for Afghanistan's foreign ministry said they strongly condemned the "failed attack".

"The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan will not allow any malicious actors to pose a threat to the security of diplomatic missions in Kabul," it said in a statement.

"Security agencies will investigate this incident seriously. After identifying the perpetrators, they will be punished according to law."

The attack comes just days after Hina Rabbani Khar, Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, visited Kabul for talks with the Taliban government.

Use of regional languages in courts will help common people get justice: Rijju

Chennai | Agencies

Union law minister Kiriti Rijju said on Friday that the use of regional languages in Indian courts will help the common people to access justice in their respective languages.

He was delivering the convocation address at the Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University in Chennai. He said that he was against imposing one language in the country and added that in Tamil Nadu, Tamil taking centre stage at the Madras High Court as well as the district and subordinate courts will make every-one proud.

The minister said that he had spoken to the Chief Justice of India, senior



judges of the Supreme Court, and the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court on the need to prioritise local languages. Rijju added that the Union government

has taken initiatives to collect legal glossaries in all local languages and make them available to the public. He said that an online platform would be created to crowdsourcing and collect legal glossaries in regional languages and to digitalize them.

He said that instant translations of the legal proceedings in the court can be made available with the advancements in technology and would lead to the plaintiffs and the victims in a case understanding what was going on in court.

The minister said that the pendency of cases in courts is a matter of grave concern and that at present 5 crore cases are pending in Indian courts.

GUJARAT POLLS:

60% FEMALES AND 65% MALES VOTED IN FIRST PHASE, TOTAL TURNOUT 63.31%

Team Absolute | Gandhinagar

In the first phase, 63.31 per cent of the voters cast their votes in 89 assembly seats in Saurashtra and Kutch and South Gujarat. Out of the total 2,39,76,670 voters, the polled votes are 1,51,78,862, which includes 81,66,905 males and 70,11,795 females -- 65.69 percent males and 60.75 percent females voted. The highest voting was reported for the Kaprada seat at 79.57%, followed by Dharampur at 78.32% and Bansda with 78.23%. All three are tribal reserved seats. The lowest voting was for Gandhidham seat at 47.86%, Gadhada (51.04%) and Karanj (50.54%). For the second phase of voting in Central and North Gujarat, 48

hours are left and campaigning will end on Saturday evening. To win over the voters, the candidates and their supporters are making last minute efforts. A video that is in circulation on social media, shows a BJP worker distributing tiffin to women voters in a godown and asking to them vote for candidate Pravinbhai. One more video is in circulation from Central Gujarat's Shahera constituency, which shows the sitting MLA and BJP candidate threatening the voters that if they do not vote for him, he will come to know on December 8 and then he will see how to deal with such voters. He claimed that he is going to get elected and will decide who will be the party candidate in 2027.





"We Continue To Raise It With India": US Envoy on communal rhetoric in election campaign

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The topmost American diplomat in India today said the US government "will continue to raise" the Indian election campaign rhetoric that verges on communal hate. "This is a conversation we have perpetually with our Indian colleagues," said Elizabeth Jones, the US Charge d' Affaires.

"That's one of the benefits of this consequential relationship, that we can discuss a great variety of issues - easy issues, difficult issues; issues on which we agree, issues on which we don't," she said.

About the communal rhetoric, she further said, "We have been discussing this for a long time and will continue to do so."

The campaign in Gujarat, PM Narendra Modi's home state, has taken a turn towards communally charged statements by his party BJP. Union Home Minister Amit Shah's statement about the 2002 riots allegedly gaslighting Muslims has stood out: "There was no room for development in Gujarat because of chaos. In 2002, they tried to indulge in communal violence... we taught them such a lesson, we put them in jail."

Shah did not name any community



but, in the context of BJP's aggressive Hindutva brand of politics, it was interpreted as a reference to Muslims, who in fact formed the majority of the victims in the 2002 riots when PM Modi was Chief Minister.

Other BJP leaders, such as Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma,

have since built on this rhetoric as the BJP seeks to continue its 27-year unbroken reign in Gujarat and also hopes to retain Himachal Pradesh.

"Hindus normally do not contribute to riots. Hindus do not believe in 'jihad'," Mr Sarma said on Thursday in an interview with NDTV.

The US interim envoy, besides responding to questions on this rhetoric - she did not specify any statements - also spoke on the India-US military exercises in Uttarakhand's Auli that China has objected to.

"I would point you to the comments by my Indian colleagues, that it's none of their (China's) business," said Ms Jones, firmly taking a side. The Indian foreign ministry has said, "India exercises with whomsoever it chooses to and we do not give veto to third countries on this issue."

On trade and a possible priority deal for India, however, Ms Jones said that since trade has doubled in the last seven years to \$157 billion, "I don't think anyone believes we need a trade deal. There is no discussion on that at this point."

She was interacting with some journalists as part of a briefing. The Joe Biden administration has not appointed a permanent envoy to India since Kenneth Juster, a political appointee of the Donald Trump administration, departed after the change of government. Ms Jones, who has held senior positions in Pakistan and worked in Afghanistan and Europe policies of the US, is the sixth interim envoy to India since then, having joined only about two months ago.

Jeddah-Calicut SpiceJet flight diverted to Cochin, makes emergency landing

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A SpiceJet flight from Jeddah to Calicut was diverted to Cochin where it made an emergency landing on Friday.

The flight carrying 197 passengers had to make an emergency landing at the Cochin International Airport (CIAL) on Friday evening following hydraulic failure.

"SpiceJet B737-8 MAX aircraft VT-MXJ operating flight SG-36 (Jeddah - Calicut) diverted to Cochin. After take-off from Jeddah, anti-skid lights illuminated. Crew carried out associated non-normal checklist actions and the aircraft continued further climb," said a senior official of aviation regulator DGCA on Friday.

The official said that later, the Jeddah ATC confirmed that tyre pieces were found on the runway. "During further flight, a low pressure light got stuck illuminated. Associated NNC actions were carried out. As such the pilot decided to divert the aircraft to Cochin. During approach to Cochin, the aircraft carried out three low passes to verify the landing gear lever was down and locked," added the official.

Post confirmation from ATC of landing gear extension, a safe landing was carried out at Cochin. Detailed inspection is under progress, said the official.

"On December 2, SpiceJet B737 aircraft was operating flight SG-36 (Jeddah - Calicut). After take-off from Jeddah, ATC informed the pilots that tyre pieces were found on the runway. During further flight, a caution light illuminat-



ed. The pilots decided to divert to Cochin where low passes were carried out to verify whether landing gear lever was down and locked. Post confirmation from ATC of landing gear extension, the aircraft safely landed at Cochin and passengers were debarked normally," said an airline spokesperson.

Following an incident of smoke in a SpiceJet plane cabin, the aviation regulator DGCA had directed the airline on October 17 to send the engine oil samples of the entire Q400 fleet consisting of 14 operational aircraft to Pratt and Whitney, Canada, to ascertain presence of metal and carbon seat particles.

Moreover, the DGCA had also directed SpiceJet for inspection of bleed-off valve screen and housing for evidence of oil wetness. DGCA had initiated a probe after a SpiceJet flight made an emergency landing at Hyderabad airport after smoke was detected in its cabin on October 12. The regulator had said that it is keeping a close watch on the situation and will take all appropriate action to avert any untoward incident.

Congress worked with British for several years: PM Modi

Team Absolute | Ahmedabad

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday accused the Congress of disowning Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and said it absorbed a "slave mentality" after working with the British prior to Independence.

He was speaking at a campaign rally at Sojitra town in Gujarat's Anand district where voting will take place in the second phase of the state Assembly elections on December 5.

"The Congress has a problem not only with Sardar Patel but also with the unity of India because their politics is based on the policy of divide and rule while Patel believed in uniting everyone. Due to this stark difference, Congress never considered Sardar Patel as their own," the PM said.

The Congress's "policy" of inciting one community, caste or religion against another weakened Gujarat, Prime Minister Modi said.

"Congress people had worked with the British for several years (ahead of Independence). As a result, the party absorbed all the bad habits of the British,



such as this policy of divide and rule and the slave mentality," he added.

The opposition party's leaders avoid visiting the Statue of Unity, Patel's statue and memorial in Narmada district, he alleged.

"Just because the statue has been built by Modi, Patel became untouchable for you? I am sure that people of Anand district will punish Congress for insulting Sardar Patel," the PM added.

Woman, boyfriend kill 22-yr-old girl in Greater Noida, plant suicide note

Team Absolute | Greater Noida

Taking inspiration from crime shows, a woman along with her boyfriend allegedly killed a girl and disfigured her face in a bid to hide her identity in Greater Noida. The accused girl, Payal, also wrote a note and made a plot to fake her own death so that she can avenge the deaths of her parents who had committed suicide.

The accused and her boyfriend have been arrested by the police, who have also recovered a country-made pistol and some bullets from them.

The police said that Payal had four people on her hit list, as she held them responsible for her parents taking the extreme step.

To avenge the deaths of her parents, Payal faked her own death and to deceive the world, killed the girl, disfigured her face and put her own



clothes on her. She then eloped with her boyfriend after writing a suicide note. Payal hatched the plot after watching the serial 'Qubool Hai' and many other crime shows on TV.

Additional Commissioner of Police, Central Zone, Saad Miyan, said that a girl named Hema Chaudhary (22), who worked at a mall, had gone missing on November 12 from near the Gaur City Mall. When the police checked

Hema's call details, her last location was shown as Payal and her boyfriend Ajay Thakur's village.

Payal had included Ajay, a father of two children, in her plan. She told Ajay that four people who were responsible for the suicide of her parents have not been jailed, and she wanted to take revenge by killing them. But before, that she will have to hide her identity for which she killed Hema with the help of Ajay and burnt her face with acid after putting her own clothes on Hema.

Payal had reportedly married Ajay seven days after killing of the incident. During the marriage of Payal's brother, her cousin Sunil had lent Rs 5 lakh to Payal's parents. Payal's parents committed suicide after not being able to return the money. Payal held Sunil, her sister-in-law Swati and her two brothers, Koshinder and Golu, responsible for the death of her parents.

KARNATAKA MAN FILES CASE AGAINST WIFE FOR FORCED RELIGIOUS CONVERSION BID

Bengaluru: A man has lodged a complaint against his wife alleging forceful religious conversion bid in Bengaluru, police said on Friday.

The man has lodged the complaint against his wife and her parents at Mahalakshmi police station.

In 2019, the man, a Hindu working at a welding shop, had love marriage with a Christian girl. But, his wife and her family pressurised him to get converted to Christianity. He had stated in the complaint that the harassment has become unbearable and his wife and her parents are now giving him life threats to get converted to christianity.

He told police that whenever he went to other states for job, his wife lodges missing complaints deliberately to harass him. He also said that his wife had taken a loan in his name from neighbours.

Details are awaited.

DRONE WITH 5.60 KG HEROIN SEIZED ALONG INDIA-PAK BORDER

Chandigarh | Agencies

Punjab Police on Friday foiled a major drug smuggling bid by Pakistan-based smugglers with the recovery of five packets of heroin, weighing 5.60 kg, along with a hexacopter drone, which was used to drop the consignment, during a search operation at border area of Khemkaran in Tarn Taran. The operation was carried out with the support of the Border Security Force (BSF), a statement by the government said.

Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said after noticing the drone movement in India-Pakistan border on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday, police teams from Tarn Taran district shared the pin-pointed inputs with the BSF and jointly conducted a search operation in the area, which was just 2 km away from the border.

"During the search, a blue and black coloured hexacopter drone (model E616S) along with black tape-wrapped five packets of heroin weighing 5.60 kg was found lying in the agricultural land of a local resident," he said, adding the preliminary investigations suggest this drone was found to be having a modern technology and it could lift a good amount of weight. This is the third such drone recovered by the Tarn Taran Police in less than a week.



'Indian constitution is a feminist document', says CJI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Mentioning how the rights which we now consider as universal were not universal all the time, Chief Justice of India (CJI), Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, on Friday delivered the 8th Dr L.M. Singhvi Memorial Lecture hosted by the OP Jindal Global University (JGU) on the theme 'Universal Adult Franchise: Translating Indias Political Transformation into a Social Transformation'.

Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar, who was the chief guest of the event, also addressed the gathering at the memorial lecture, saying that power resides with the citizens in a true democracy through their electoral mandate. The lecture commemorated the life and work of diplomat, jurist, lawyer and Parliamentarian, L.M. Singhvi (1931-2007).

Addressing an august gathering of distinguished guests from the Indian legal and political fraternity at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, Justice Chandrachud said, "In India, we find a historic social system in which power was concentrated in the

hands of the upper class of the society. The rights which we now consider as universal were not universal all the time. They were denied to the oppressed. This was the norm across the world. Those who did not hold power were subjected to several levels of oppression against this power hegemony.

"In this regard, our Constitution is a feminist document as well as an egalitarian and socially transformative document. It was a break from the colonial and pre-colonial legacy. The boldest move adopted by the Indian Constitution that was a product of Indian imagination. Universal adult franchise was a solid determination of India's founding leaders to create a democratic state. Universal adult franchise helped establish a sense of belonging and responsibility among citizens as equal stake holders in the country's progress. The Indian experiment with the universal adult franchise contradicts all myths against it. Therefore, we must reject every form of elite understanding of the democratic process which we keep hearing constantly that only educated are better decision makers," he said.

Nora Fatehi joins ED probe in Rs 200 cr money laundering case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Bollywood actress Nora Fatehi on Friday joined the probe of Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the Rs 200 crore money laundering case involving multimillionaire conman Suresh Chandrasekhar and Jacqueline Fernandez. Fatehi is being grilled by a team of elite officials of the anti-money laundering agency.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had recently filed its second supplementary charge sheet in which Fatehi had been named as an accused.

Jacqueline Fernandez and Nora Fatehi had recorded her statement as witnesses in the case.

Earlier, fixed deposits worth Rs 7.2 crore belonging to Fernandez were attached by the ED. The ED termed these gifts and properties as proceeds of

crime received by the actresses.

In February, the ED filed its first supplementary prosecution complaint against Pinky Irani, an alleged aide of Chandrasekhar who introduced him to the Bollywood actresses.

It had been alleged in the charge sheet that Pinky Irani used to choose costly gifts for Fernandez and later used to drop it at her house after the payments were made by Suresh Chandrasekhar.

In December last year, the ED filed the first charge sheet in this case before the court of Additional Sessions Judge Praveen Singh. Later on in February, the ED filed a supplementary charge sheet against Pinky Irani.

Suresh has spent around Rs 20 crore on different models and Bollywood celebrities. A few had refused to take the gifts from him.

Man dies after iron rod pierces through his neck in moving train

Team Absolute | Lucknow

In a freak incident, a man died after an iron rod crashed through the window of a moving train and pierced his neck.

The incident took place at 8.45 a.m. in Friday, a place between Danwar and Sonma railway stations in Prayagraj division, Uttar Pradesh. The train was going from Delhi to Kanpur. The Indian Railways said the GRP and the RPF are investigating the matter.

The passengers sitting in the train said that a rod came crashing through the window of the coach and hit the neck of a young man sitting on the window seat. According to Railway officials, on Friday morning, when the Nilanchal Express was passing through Davar and Sonma railway stations in Prayagraj division, an iron rod came from outside



towards the general coach and it hit a traveller, Harikesh Kumar Dubey, who died on the spot.

The officials said that a probe is on to ascertain how the iron rod came crashing through the window. The incident sent shock waves to the

passengers sitting in the general coach of Neelanchal Express.

After the accident, the train stopped at Aligarh station at around 9.23 a.m., where the body of the deceased was handed over to Aligarh GRP and an inquiry was ordered.



LACK OF POLITICAL WILL LED TO SUFFERINGS OF GAS TRAGEDY SURVIVORS

- As per the official information, around 337 tonnes of hazardous waste at the Union Carbide's plant was lying over more than 100 acres of land.
- In 2007, a Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) team found that groundwater in the area was contaminated by the presence of hazardous waste at the plant.
- In 2010, the Madhya Pradesh government proposed to transport the waste to Germany for safe disposal but the plan had to be shelved after opposition from some people in Germany.
- In 2015, the Supreme Court allowed the government to dispose off 10 tonnes of waste at the Pithampur incinerator.
- A team of experts did not find any adverse impact on the air, water and soil because of the waste burning. However, the plan to dispose off the entire waste was shelved following protests by the owners of industrial units in Pithampur and residents of the area, the officials told correspondent.

Praveen Dwivedi | Bhopal

The hearing on a curative petition in the Supreme Court, which is scheduled on January 10, and also a debate in the UK Parliament to call for "justice for the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy" has come as a ray of hope for thousands of people affected by the MIC gas which leaked from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal in 1984.

But, the sufferers would need a stronger will from the local politicians in Madhya Pradesh, as the lack of political will has affected them a lot especially on rehabilita-



tion, compensation and cleaning up of toxic waste even 38 years after the disaster. As the areas affected by the disaster are in old Bhopal, and a new Bhopal has also emerged now, the politicians formulate policies for the affected population focussing more on their political arithmetic. This has been one of the main reasons that rehabilitation and shifting of the hazardous waste still lying at the site of the Union Carbide factory are not happening fast.

Had the local politicians, especially those who have been representing the affected areas for several years shown some seriousness, a lot of issues would have been resolved so far. But they played politics and even today are doing the same. Interestingly, it is happening

not only party wise but among the leaders belonging to the same party, be it the BJP or the Congress. Forget about justice and additional compensation, which is not in their hands, but shifting of hazardous waste is in their hands. They would do it because it has been a political issue," said a Bhopal based senior journalist, who is also a survivor of the gas tragedy.

An official at the Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation (BGTRR) department said, "The state government has sent a letter to the Union environment ministry for Rs 150 crore so that the disposal can be started within a month."

"24-CARAT TRAITOR"

CONGRESS ON JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA AND COMEBACK CHANCES

Team Absolute | Agar Malwa

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Friday said people like Kapil Sibal who maintained a "dignified silence" after leaving the party could be allowed to return, but not the ones like Jyotiraditya Scindia or Himanta Biswa Sarma. Ramesh, who is the Congress's media head, also termed Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia as a "24-carat traitor".

Asked what would be the party's stand if any of the renegade leaders wished to return, Ramesh told media, "I think the people who have left the Congress should not be welcome back."

"There are people who left



and abused the party, so they should not be taken back. But there are people who left the party with dignity and have been maintaining a dignified silence on the Congress party and its leadership," he said.

Ramesh was speaking on the sidelines of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra which reached



Agar Malwa in MP on Friday. When asked would Scindia have left the Congress if he had been offered the post of party president, Madhya Pradesh chief minister or a Rajya Sabha berth, Ramesh said, "Scindia is a 'gaddar' (traitor), true gaddar, real gaddar and 24 carat gaddar."

Reacting to Ramesh's comments, Madhya Pradesh BJP

secretary Rajneesh Agrawal said Scindia was a "24 carat patriot with strong cultural roots." He said both Scindia and Sarma have "24 carat" commitment to their work and Ramesh's remarks were "uncultured" and "totally undemocratic".

Sarma left the Congress in 2015 blaming Rahul Gandhi's 'mismanagement' for the party's electoral debacle and joined the BJP. He went on to become a Union minister and later chief minister of Assam. Scindia quit the Grand Old Party in 2020 which resulted in the fall of the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh. He was later inducted in the Union cabinet and made civil aviation minister.



Peoples rule will prevail in the state, those who commit irregularities will not be spared : Chief Minister

Those who earn will have control over their money, the looter will go to jail. Chief Minister suspended CMHO and Mineral Officer of Betul. Two JEs of the Electricity Department were also suspended.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that a new era is coming. Now there will be people's rule the state, no one will be spared who commits irregularity. Those who earn will have the control over their money and the looters will go to jail. Chief Minister, Ministers, Commissioners, Collectors will go to the public and do their works. Under the Mukhya Mantri Jan Seva Abhiyan, camps will be organised in villages, panchayats and wards and people will be given the benefits of various schemes and their rights.

Chouhan participated in the acceptance letter distribution programme to the identified beneficiaries under the Mukhya Mantri Jan Seva Abhiyan in Kundabkajan village of Betul district.

From the stage itself, the CM gave instructions to suspend 4 officers - Chief Medical and Health Officer of Betul, Mineral Officer and 2 junior engineers of the Electricity Department, who were committing irregularities in public works.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that in the Mukhya Mantri Jan Seva Abhiyan, camps are being organised in every panchayat and every ward, and sanction letters are being distributed in various schemes of the government. The villagers are being given benefits after reaching their villages. Now they will not have to worry for their works. He said that do not give even a single penny to anyone in any government scheme. If anyone asks, then directly complain to the CM House. Whoever does wrong, I will not leave him fit for doing the job.

On the demand of the residents of the

area, Chief Minister Chouhan announced construction of a bridge on the road from village Bakajan to Bhojpur, widening of the Bhojpur-Chincholi road and construction of 132 KV electric sub-station at a cost of 80 crores in village Patraiayat. The Chief Minister said that to solve the existing voltage problem of the village, a 22 km long 33 kv power line is being laid from village Chincholi to Bhimpur. Its work will be completed by December 15. The Chief Minister announced the suspension of the concerned two sub-engineers from the dais on receiving complaints related to electricity problems.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that he has also received complaints related to health and minerals in the district. On the basis of these complaints, Betul's Chief Medical and Health Officer and Mineral Officer are also suspended.

CONGRESSMEN EXCITED BY THE INCREASING CROWD IN BHARAT JODO YATRA

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The convoy of Bharat Jodo Yatra is slowly moving towards Rajasthan from Madhya Pradesh. After the initial disappointment in this yatra, the increasing crowd from Indore has enthused the Congressmen.

Bharat Jodo Yatra had entered Madhya Pradesh on November 23 and this yatra is going towards Agar-Malwa via Burhanpur, Khandwa, Khargone, Indore, Ujjain and after next three days this yatra will enter Rajasthan.

When the Bharat Jodo Yatra entered Burhanpur district of Madhya Pradesh, the crowd of people present there was fine, Sanawad of Khargone also saw a crowd, but as the yatra progressed, the number of people present was not as per the expectation of the Congress leaders. That enthusiasm was not visible in the rural areas which the Congress was carrying. After the Yatra entered the Indore border, the Congress began to see the enthusiasm and passion it was expecting.

Talking to reporters between Indore and Ujjain, Rahul Gandhi claimed that Madhya Pradesh is a better journey than Karnataka, Maharashtra, but there are many people who are traveling together, they denied this, as well as He also said that the attraction of people in the yatra has increased after reaching Indore.

If sources related to the Congress are to be believed, Kamal Nath and Digvijay Singh entrusted the responsibility to many close ones for the systematic conduct of the yatra. The road through which the Yatra had to pass was sprinkled with water an hour in advance through tankers, so that the dust did not become a problem for the walkers. Along with this, after Rahul Gandhi's



WHEN LIZHO AND REXY WELCOMED YATRA

Tanodiya (MP): A pair of dogs welcomed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with bouquets when he stopped for tea during the party's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' in Madhya Pradesh's Agar Malwa district on Friday.

Sarvamitra Nachan, the owner of the six-year-old labradors, reached Tanodiya town with his pets to welcome the Congress leader.

The dogs, Lizho and Rexy, held a basket of bouquets with the messages "Chale Kadam, Jude Vatan" and "Nafrat Chhodo, Bharat Jodo," and handed it over to Gandhi. Gandhi not only took the bouquets from Lizho and Rexy, but also got himself photographed with them on the occasion, it was stated.

displeasure over the problem of food, a second camp was also started to ensure that the walkers do not face any problem in eating. This series continues even further. It is also being said that the people associated with Congress had also instructed Rahul Gandhi to prostrate after reaching the court of Mahakal, as well as the meeting with Jain Muni was also arranged under a special strategy.

A senior Congress leader says that even though initially the yatra did not get the same response from the people and workers as the party had expected, but the situation changed rapidly after reaching Indore and the picture was completely complete by the time it reached Malwa. The crowd may increase further in the coming days, which is sure to benefit the Congress.

College official arrested for molesting female professor

Team Absolute | Bhopal

An HOD (Head of Department) of the Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) Bhopal was arrested for allegedly molesting a female professor of the same institute on Thursday, the police said. The accused HOD has been identified as Pramod Kumar Modi. The female professor had lodged a complaint against him at Habibganj police station on November 26. The Habibganj police station in charge Manish Raj Singh said that acting on the complaint of the woman, a case was registered under section 354 (Assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) of the IPC and arrested the accused HOD. The woman alleged that the accused was harassing her for around the last two years, SHO Singh added.



Tribute meeting will be held in the memory of the deceased in Bhopal gas tragedy

Bhopal : In the presence of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, there will be a tribute meeting and an all-religion prayer meeting in the memory of the deceased in the Bhopal gas tragedy on December 3. The 38th anniversary of the Bhopal gas tragedy will be celebrated at 10:30 am at Barkatullah Bhawan (Central Library).

Chief Minister Chouhan will pay homage to the deceased in the Bhopal gas tragedy after recitation by various religious leaders in the meeting. After this, tribute will be paid to the memory of the departed by keeping silence for 2 minutes.

6 govt law college teachers taken off duty after ABVP complaint

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A government-run law college in Indore has taken six teachers, including four Muslims, off duty temporarily after the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) accused them of promoting fundamentalism and 'negative thoughts' about the government and Army.

These teachers would not teach classes for five days while a judicial inquiry is conducted into the allegations of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-affiliated student union, the college principal said on Thursday.

Activists of the ABVP, the student wing of the RSS, created a ruckus on the campus of Shashikya Navin Vidhi Mahavidyalay (Government New Law College) on Thursday, demanding action against four Muslim and two Hindu teachers.

Dipendra Thakur, head of the



ABVP unit at the college, alleged in a complaint to principal Dr Inamur Rahman that some teachers promoted 'religious fundamentalism and

negative thoughts about the government and the Army' among the first-year students.

On Fridays, the principal, Muslim

teachers and students offer namaaz and during this time classes are not held, he alleged.

'Love jihad' and 'non-vegetarianism' was being promoted on campus, the complaint further said.

Love Jihad is a term used by right-wing Hindu groups which claim that there is a 'conspiracy' to lure Hindu girls into marriage and convert them to Islam.

Principal Rahman said the atmosphere in the college was not like that described in the complaint.

"As the ABVP's complaint is serious, I have decided that an inquiry should be conducted by a retired judge of the district court," he told reporters.

To ensure that the inquiry can be conducted in a fair manner, the six teachers who faced accusations have been taken off duty for five days, he said.



EDITOR'S SPECS

BJP, SP sharpen amid bypolls in UP

With just day left for campaigning before the bypolls to two Assembly and one Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP and Samajwadi Party are sharpening their attacks on each other. Slamming the previous SP rule, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that in the Akhilesh government, farmers could not visit their land as their tubewell connections were snapped, machines were stolen and their throats slit. He urged the people not to allow "professional criminals" of Samajwadi Party to enter the realms of power. Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Maurya, meanwhile, accused SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and his uncle Shivpal Yadav of being driven by a "feudalistic" mindset. Maurya said that it was due to this feudalistic thinking, the rule of uncle and nephew prevailed in both the government and the organisation of the Samajwadi Party. He slammed Shivpal for using derogatory words for BJP candidate Raghuraj Singh Shukla and said that people would answer Shivpal and his nephew by puncturing SP's cycle and ensuring victory of Shukla in Mainpuri. Describing Akhilesh as "anti-backward", Maurya said that he and his family are not socialists but opponents of backward people. He said not only Akhilesh but his uncles Shivpal, Ram Gopal and the whole family have only one thing in their mind and that is how to maintain their fear and terror among the common people on the basis of corruption, hooliganism and anarchy while remaining in power. Shivpal Yadav, on the other hand, said that the BJP was getting increasingly jittery after seeing the unity in the Samajwadi Party and the Yadav family. The polling will be held on December 5 and votes will be counted on December 8.

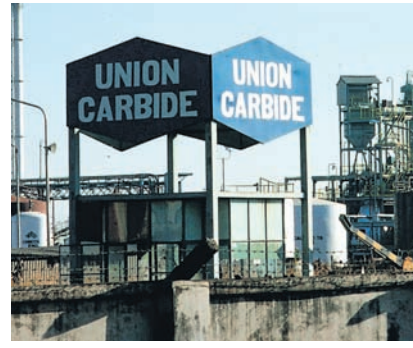
UNION CARBIDE FACTORY A DAILY REMINDER FOR BHOPAL OF HAVOC IT WREAKED

Praveen Dwivedi

It has been 38 years since the fateful intervening night of December 2 and 3 when the world's worst chemical industrial disaster - 'Bhopal Gas Tragedy 1984' -- swallowed thousands of people, animals and birds within a span of a few hours. Besides, lakhs of people left with prolonged illnesses and incurable diseases are still running from one to another hospital for treatment.

Even after nearly four decades, the aftermath of that disaster is visible here in many ways -- like anyone visiting any government-run hospital in Bhopal, the patient registration form given at the OPD counter will have a specific disclosure before reaching the doctor, that is - 'Are you affected by the Bhopal gas disaster?'

People living in J.P. Nagar, which is located hardly 200 metres from the boundary wall of the 85-acre Union Carbide factory, would



often be seen peeking into the site through the broken boundary wall, even children would be seen playing in the backyard of the factory.

Around half a dozen buildings, which include offices, guest rooms, canteen for employees and workers, and so on situated at different locations at the site are in a dilapidated state. Each one of these buildings had a specific role to play in the process of making

and storing of the highly toxic substance -- methyl isocyanate (MIC).

Surrounded by dense bushes, and a warning note as a prohibited zone for general public, the only building appearing to be in a better condition is the three-storey structure which used to be the office and the residence of senior employees of Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), an American chemical corporation owned by Dow Chemical company. In the other buildings, time and thieves have left their mark.

Apart from the buildings, some other residue such as big size tanks, iron pipes along with flare towers and some other material are also visible. A concrete portion of land within its boundary, located hardly 300-350 meters away from the MIC production site, appeared to be a helipad.

One of the three iron tanks (Tank - E610), whose malfunctioning had resulted in the leakage of toxic MIC gas and caused the deaths of around 3,000 people within a few hours after the leak, is seen lying along the

roadside within the premises. Reports suggest that the Bhopal UCIL facility had housed three underground 68,000 litres liquid MIC storage tanks, named E610, E611 and E612.

The underground tank E610, that had stored around 42 tonnes of MIC gas at the time of the disaster on the intervening night of December 2 and 3 was removed from its foundation and set aside later in 2010.

Outside the factory, the iconic statue of a woman with a child on her lap gasping for breath some 200 metres from Union Carbide factory's boundary wall in JP Nagar colony, encapsulates the pain and agony of every 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy victim.

It is a memorial dedicated to the victims by a Dutch sculptor Ruth Waterman, during a visit to Bhopal in 1985 and speaks volumes of the trauma and misery endured by the victims. This iconic statue reminds of the screams of people who were running haphazardly shouting "bhago bhago, gas leak ho gayee hai" (run-run, gas is leaking) on that fateful night 38 years ago.

Even after 38 years, the victims of the gas tragedy are fighting for justice

Praveen Dwivedi

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy, the worlds largest and most lethal chemical disaster, occurred on the intervening night of December 2 and 3 in 1984, 38 years ago. Its aftermath continues to wreak havoc in the lives of hundreds of thousands of survivors. According to the Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation (BGTRR) of the Madhya Pradesh government, which functions under the supervision of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), more than 120,000 people continue to suffer from chronic illnesses and several hundreds continue to die untimely deaths due to cancer, lung problems, kidney failure and immunological damage.

Reports also suggested that thousands of children are being born with birth defects. A global toxic hotspot exists in the middle of the city which has contaminated the soil and groundwater for more than two lakh people but no clean up is even

in sight. The annual report of the ICMR run Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Center (BMHRC) released in 2016-17, mentioned that from the period between 1998-2016, around 50.4 per cent of gas exposed persons suffered from cardiovascular problems and 59.6 per cent suffer from pulmonary problems. Correspondent spoke to various persons associated with different authorities, including doctors, sufferers and relatives of the victims and also those looking after issues like rehabilitation and compensation. It has learnt that though a lot of work has been done in the last many years, there are several issues that still remain unresolved. First and foremost, the difference in the number of deaths which occurred due to this chemical disaster. Surveys conducted by agencies at different times have given a different figure of casualties. Some earlier reports suggested the number of casualties was between 5000-6000, while in some other reports, the number of deaths have increased up to 15,000. And

some other reports claimed the death toll could be over one lakh, however, there is no accurate data regarding the number of casualties. For instance, ICMR's report in its survey conducted between 1984-1993, has mentioned as many as 9,667 deaths attributable to the disaster up to 1994. Statistical projection beyond 1994 provides a figure of 23,000 till 2009. In a letter written in 2010 by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for recommendation of more compensation to the kin of the victims and the survivors, it was mentioned that, "There at least 10,047 persons, who should be counted in death figure." Other issues which still remain unresolved include assessment of cleaning of toxic waste lying inside and outside the Union Carbide factory. More importantly, one of the three iron tanks (Tank - E610), whose malfunctioning had resulted in the leakage of toxic MIC gas and caused the deaths of around 3,000 people within a few hours after the

leak, is still lying along the roadside within the premises. The reports suggest that the Bhopal UCIL facility had housed three underground -- 68,000 liters liquid MIC storage tanks, named E610, E611 and E612. Further, a legal battle to seek justice and compensation still continues. In a fresh development, the Supreme Court, earlier in September this year, asked the Centre to clear its stand on additional compensation. As per reports, in response, the Centre has submitted that it



would pursue its curative petition seeking Rs 7,844 crore as additional funds from successor firms of the US-based Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) for giving compensation to the victims of the gas tragedy. The matter will now be taken up for hearing on January 10, 2023.

international

In day showing New Delhi's rising global profile, India becomes UNSC president

Arul Louis | United Nations

In a day marking India's rising global profile, it assumed the presidency of the UN Security Council -- hours after taking over the leadership of the G20, with the promise of working to promote unity in a fractured world.

Echoing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement on his goals for the G20, India's Permanent Representative Ruchira Kamboj said on Thursday that at the Council "India will work towards unity". As at the G20, the group of major industrialised and emerging economies, India faces the daunting task of presiding over a polarised Council when the world faces dangers from wars and economic crises. In both of them, the western nations and Russia and China are ranged against each other.

India has been "a very effective first responder" in international crises, she said, and "we will continue to do that in the council as well, to be a bridge



builder and to be a voice of moderation". "That is the India way," she said at her news conference after assuming the presidency. India is a big country that can stand on its own and have its own policies, she added. Sixty-nine years after Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit became the woman to become the president of the General Assembly, Kamboj became the first Indian woman to head the Security Council. India got its Council presidency

for December -- the last month of its two-year term -- on a system of rotation based on alphabetic order.

Kamboj said that during the presidency, India will hold two sessions to highlight issues most important to it: fighting terrorism and reforming the international system, including the Security Council, stuck in the 1940s.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will preside over the two meetings known as Signature events, on "New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism" -- which includes Security Council reform -- on December 14 and on "Global Approach to Counter Terrorism - Challenges and Way Forward," the next day.

India will also be holding two side events, unveiling a bust of Mahatma Gandhi at the AUN headquarters and organising a group of nations to counter attacks on peacekeepers. The Council has been paralysed on the most pressing issue of the worsening war in Ukraine.

TORONTO DRIVER ARRESTED FOR DEATH OF INDIAN STUDENT

Toronto: Toronto Police have arrested a 60-year-old driver in connection with the death of an Indian student from Karnal on November 23.

Twenty-year-old Kartik Saini was killed when his cycle was hit by a pick-up truck and dragged at the intersection of Yonge Street and St. Clair Avenue in midtown Toronto.

The driver was charged on Thursday with careless driving and violating traffic signs. He will appear in court on February 16, 2023.

Saini was a student at Sheridan College.

According to Toronto Police, the driver of the pick-up struck Saini and drove on with him underneath the vehicle. Paramedics tried to revive the Indian student, but he succumbed to his injuries.

Canadian party calls for boycott of G20 activities in India



Toronto | Agencies

An opposition party in Canada has called on the government to boycott G20 activities in India over its alleged treatment of religious minorities and human rights record.

The boycott call came as India formally assumed the G20 Presidency on Thursday under the theme 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' -- world is one family. New Democratic Party

(NDP) MPs Heather McPherson and Blake Desjarlais in statement called on the ruling Liberal government to engage in a diplomatic boycott of G20 activities in India.

Asserting that it is deeply concerned about ongoing reports of "violations of civil liberties and human rights in India", the NDP statement read: "India's BJP government bears responsibility for ensuring respect for human

rights and civil liberties of all Indian citizens.

"However, it is clear the Indian government is not only ignoring this responsibility, but also defying it with impunity." Expressing its displeasure with the present government in India, NDP said: "Canada should reject any G-20 activities planned in Kashmir and refuse to attend while these human rights abuses continue." The party, which is headed by Sikh leader Jagmeet Singh, has called on the Canadian government to take a "stand for human rights and show solidarity with all people of India, who have a right to live freely and without persecution".

Canada, meanwhile, has termed India a "critical partner" under its Indo-Pacific strategy that was released last week.

AFGHANS MARRYING OFF YOUNG DAUGHTERS TO AVOID FORCED MARRIAGES WITH TALIBAN

Kabul: Since Kabul fell to the Taliban in August 2021, there has been a dramatic increase in early marriages of Afghan girls -- a trend activists and human rights campaigners attribute to parents' belief that securing a spouse for their girls is better than seeing them forced to marry members of the Taliban, a media report said.

Marrying their girls off also provides some sense of security: fewer mouths to feed at a time when Afghan girls have been banned from attending school and face harassment as the country deals with a humanitarian crisis and economic ruin, said the RFE/RL report.

Shukria Sherzai, a women's rights activist in Ghor province, says the cases of forced and underage marriages have increased exponentially since the Taliban seized power. She says that many families agree to early unions in the hope of sparing them from being forced to marry Taliban members. But even if the reasoning is based on securing a better life, the effect has been devastating to the family structure, RFE/RL reported.

"Forced and underage marriages have resulted in violence and turmoil within families," she said.

International rights watchdogs have documented similar trends.

Up to 13,000 Ukrainian soldiers killed since war began: Official

Kiev | Agencies

A top government official in Kiev has revealed that up to 13,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed since Russia waged its ongoing war on February 24.

Speaking to Ukrainian media on Thursday, Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to President Volodymyr Zelensky, said: "We have official evaluations by the General Staff, official evaluations by the commander-in-chief (Zelensky), and they range from 10,000 to 12,500-13,000 killed," the BBC reported.

He said that the number of civilians killed could also be "significant".

Podolyak further suggested that up to 100,000 Russian soldiers had been killed since the invasion began, and that an additional 100,000 to 150,000 had been wounded, or were missing or unable to return to combat.

The Ukrainian military has however, not confirmed the tally given out by



Podolyak. The latest figures come after General Mark Milley, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last month that around 100,000 Russian and 100,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed or injured till date.

But Moscow's latest update in September said that just 5,937 troops had

been killed since the start of the war.

The American General had also noted that between 15 and 30 million refugees have been created since Russia launched its invasion.

The UN has recorded 7.8 million people as refugees from Ukraine across Europe, including Russia.

US designates AQIS, TTP leaders as global terrorists

Washington | Agencies

The US Department of State has designated four leaders of the Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs), as part of Washington's "relentless efforts to ensure that terrorists do not use Afghanistan as a platform for international terrorism".

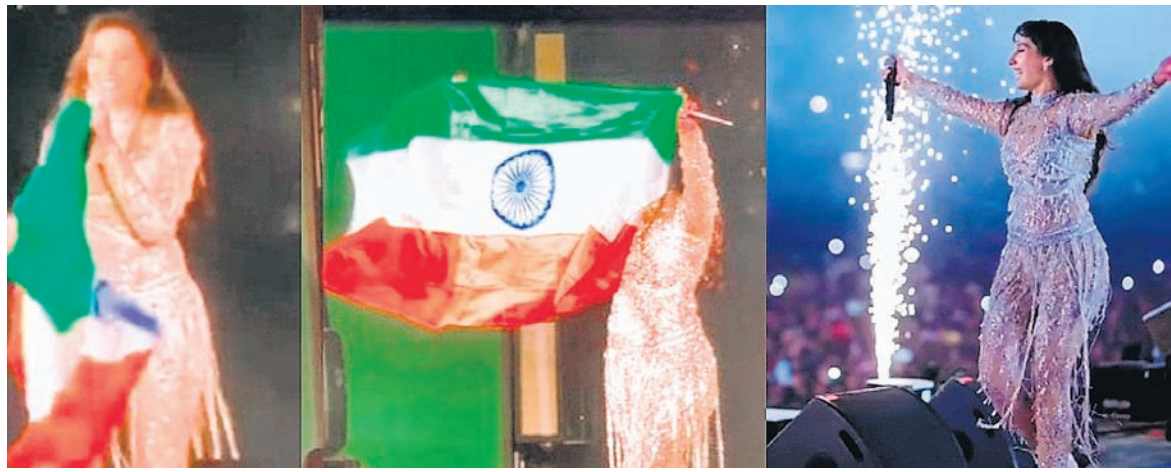
In a statement issued by the Department on Thursday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the "US is committed to using its full set of counterterrorism tools to counter the threat posed by terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan, including the AQIS and TTP".

The four terrorist leaders designated as SDGTs are

Osama Mehmood, emir of AQIS; Atif Yahya Ghouri, deputy emir of AQIS; Muhammad Maruf responsible for AQIS' recruiting branch; and Qari Amjad the deputy emir of TTP who oversees operations and militants in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

"As a result of these actions, all property and interests in property of those designated that are subject to US jurisdiction are blocked, and all US persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with them," Blinken was quoted as saying in the statement.

"The actions again demonstrate that we will continue to use all relevant tools to uphold our commitment to see to it that international terrorists are not able to operate with impunity in Afghanistan".



Nora Fatehi draws flak for holding Indian flag upside down at FIFA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Nora Fatehi, who performed at the FIFA fan fest event, has drawn flak for holding the Indian flag upside down.

Nora, who performed on the official FIFA World Cup anthem 'Light The Sky', 'O Saki Saki' and others, was criticised

for "disrespecting" the Indian flag at the event. In a video that has gone viral on social media, Nora can be seen dressed in a shimmering outfit waving the Indian flag and saying 'Jai Hind' on the international stage. Holding the Tricolour, the actress is saying, "Jai Hind!! Zor se, Zor Se Jai Hind!". She adds: "India is not part of the FIFA World Cup but we are now in spirits through our music and dance." It

was not long when social media users noticed that she held the National flag upside down. She picked up the Indian flag from the stage that was lying, then waved it, but due to windy weather, the flag turned upside down. Without realising, she held the flag clenched in her palms. Indians all over social media were unhappy and called out Nora for "disrespecting" the Indian flag.

ED SEIZES RS 1 CR CASH, ATTACHES PROPERTIES AFTER RAIDS IN MUMBAI, CHENNAI & DELHI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday said that they recently conducted search operations at 16 premises across Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi covering office and residential premises of some companies.

The companies are Securecloud Technologies Limited, a listed entity, Pro Fin Capital Services Limited, Quantum Global Securities Limited (QGSL), another listed company, Unity Global Financial Services Pvt Limited, Desert River Capital Pvt Ltd, which are share brokerage and financial services companies and its promoters.

The searches led to the seizure of Rs 1.04 crore in cash, gold and diamond jewellery, identification of immovable properties of more than Rs 30 crore and other movable assets in various DEMAT accounts as well as seizure of incriminating documents and digital evidence.



The ED initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of the FIR filed by Suresh Venkatachari, the promoter and CEO of Securecloud Technologies Limited (STL), before CCB-I Chennai under sections 420, 465, 468, 471 and 120B of IPC against QGSL and its Directors and one Rohit Arora. The company, Securecloud Technologies Limited (STL), earlier known as 8k Miles Software Services Limited, a software and IT services company, is having presence in India and the US. The complaint was lodged

against some share brokers and financial service provider companies, which sold the shares pledged by the promoter of STL in order to borrow against STL shares. The complaint also stated that the share brokers, who have provided loans, forged the signatures on Delivery Instruction slips and sold the shares off-market.

The ED has learnt that the directors and beneficial owners of these share brokerage and financial services companies have transferred the shares worth Rs 160 crore in off-market and subsequently

sold the same to generate huge proceeds of crime.

The investigation also revealed that the complaint lodged by the Promoter of STL was misleading as he and his CFO were involved in a larger conspiracy of cheating the general public by way of inflating books, diverting funds of the company to the unrelated business activities of companies having stakes of the CFO and CEO of STL.

"Even the suspicious activity for share price manipulation was being done by some unscrupulous share traders with tacit support and connivance of senior management of STL which was noticed and the same is being looked into. The larger conspiracy of promoters of the listed company and the share brokerage companies that have provided loans and allegedly sold away the shares of the company is under investigation from the perspective of money laundering," said the official. Further investigations in the matter were on.

MAHA GOVT OFFICES TO GO PAPERLESS FROM APRIL: CM

Mumbai: In a major decision, the Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has said that the e-office system will be started at all government offices, the news agency reported.

CM Shinde said that all government offices in the state from April 1 next year will have e-office system so that the work speeds up and becomes it becomes "paperless".

CM Shinde made the announcement on Thursday following an important meeting with V Srinivas, secretary of the central administrative reforms and public grievances department.

The e-office system will enable faster functioning and the business will also be paperless, CM Shinde said.

Once all government offices switch to the e-office mode, officials can access files documents on their mobile phones as well, he added.

Air India graduates its 1st batch of cabin crew trainees after privatisation

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Air India on Friday announced that its maiden batch of cabin crew trainees and significant batch of new pilots since privatisation have graduated.

The batch of 215 cabin crew and 48 pilots, all Indian nationals, received their wings following extensive training, and are now cleared to operate as fully-qualified crew.

Selected from more than 13,000 candidates from around the country, the cabin crew trainees passed through a 15-week programme imparting safety and service skills, and were coached to exemplify the best of Indian hospitality and Tata group culture. The training programme included extensive classroom and in-flight training at the airline's training facility in Mumbai as well as familiarisation flights.

The new pilots, comprising 40 men and eight women, completed their training at Air India's Hyderabad training



campus, and will commence operating on the Airbus A320 fleet. Besides the two graduating batches, more than 59 new pilots are in various stages of training to support the airline's ambitious growth plan.

The reinforcement in the cabin crew will support the continued expansion of the network and fleet at Air India. The company has raised the frequency of flights between key cities in the domestic sector and has also announced direct flights between Indian cities and key global destinations like Doha, San Francisco, Vancouver and Birmingham. Further, Air India is set to commence direct flights from Delhi to key European cities like Milan, Vienna and Copenhagen, and from Mumbai to New York, Paris and Frankfurt.

VANDE BHARAT TRAIN COLLIDES WITH CATTLE IN GUJARAT

Vapi: The Gandhinagar-Mumbai Vande Bharat Superfast Express train collided with cattle between Udvada and Vapi station in Gujarat.



A railway official said that the train's front panel got slightly damaged due to the collision on Thursday evening. The train started running on this route two months ago, in September.

According to the Railways, the incident took place near crossing gate number 87 between Udvada and Vapi at around 6.23 p.m. The train proceeded towards its destination at 6.35 p.m. after halting for some minutes. The Railway authorities said that no passenger was hurt in the accident.

The train has been involved in similar incidents before.

On October 29, the Vande Bharat train rammmed into a bull. In another incident on October 6, the train collided with cattle which damaged to its front part.

"Lunch With 2 Gentlemen": Korean YouTuber's video after Mumbai incident

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A young YouTuber from South Korea, who was sexually harassed on a street in Mumbai while she was livestreaming, has tweeted a thank-you photo with two Indian men who helped her amplify the incident and push for action.

The Korean tourist, Hyojeong Park, in the tweet thanked the two men, Aditya and Atharva, for helping her post the video and saving her from harassment.

"Lunch with two Indian gentlemen who help me to post the video and save me on the street. Aditya and Atharva," Park tweeted along with a photo of them having lunch at a Mumbai restaurant.

Many Indians on social media had asked the Mumbai Police to take

action against the men who harassed the tourist.

Two accused, Mobeen Chand Mohd Shaikh, 19, and Mohd Naqib Sadarialam Ansari, 20, were arrested later and a police case was filed against them.

While livestreaming in Mumbai, Park's video showed one of the accused getting close to her and holding her hand despite her protesting. As she walks away, he appears again with another man on a bike and offers her a lift.

In a video she uploaded on YouTube, the Korean tourist said, "My name is Hyojeong Park. I am from South Korea. I was assaulted in Mumbai, India. This is the video."

Park, who goes by the online handle 'Mhyochi', says she loves playing video games and connecting with others through Twitch.

K'taka-Maha border row is conspiracy, says Congress

Team Absolute | Kalaburgi

Amid tension arising out of border dispute with neighbouring Maharashtra, the Karnataka Congress has dubbed the present situation a "conspiracy".

Karnataka Congress President D.K. Shivakumar said that there are attempts to spoil the peace in the state ahead of the elections. (Assembly elections will be tentatively held in May 2023).

"Our Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai is making it a big issue to hide slurs on the ruling BJP government in the state. There is a conspiracy behind this," Shivakumar explained.

The border dispute has been resolved already. "The region within our borders is ours, the area lying in their territory is theirs. Whoever is on our side is our people," he maintained.

It is not appropriate on part of anyone belonging to any party in Maharashtra to disturb peace in the pretext of border dispute, Shivakumar stated.

"We have built Suvarna Soudha in Belagavi. No one should indulge in disturbing peace," he said.



The Maharashtra government has submitted a petition in 2004 to the Supreme Court claiming its rights over Belagavi city and 865 villages in four districts of Karnataka. The Supreme Court is likely to take up the petition later in the day. There is a tense situation at the border district of Karnataka and the police department has made elaborate security arrangements throughout the

border region to ensure law and order. Maharashtra Ekikarana Samithi (MES), a political outfit, has invited two ministers of the BJP-Shiv Sena coalition government to Belagavi and Kannada organisations have warned the state government not to allow them into the state. However, the statement by the Congress on the situation has raised a new debate in the state.

CLASS 8 STUDENT GANG-RAPED BY 2 CLASSMATES IN SCHOOL



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Two boys allegedly raped their 13-year-old classmate inside the classroom of their civic-run school in Mumbai, after which the police registered a case against them, an official said. The incident took place on Monday, he said.

"The girl was sexually assaulted by her two classmates, when their fellow classmates stepped out of the classroom for dance practice. The two accused indulged in the crime by taking advantage of the situation," an police official said.

The girl and the accused are students of Class 8, he said. "The incident left the girl in

shock and she shared her ordeal with her family members, who immediately filed a complaint against the accused," the official said.

Based on the complaint, the police registered a case against the boys under Indian Penal Code (IPC) section 376 DA (gang-rape of a woman under sixteen years of age) and under relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, he added.

The minor accused were produced in a juvenile court, which sent them to the juvenile detention centre at in south Mumbai. Further investigation is being carried out, said the police.

Anil Deshmukh's bail plea deferred till December 6

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Friday postponed the hearing on the bail petition filed by former Maharashtra Home Minister and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Anil Deshmukh till December 6 in connection with the Rs 100 crore extortion case filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The CBI has opposed the bail plea. Earlier on November 29, the High Court had deferred the bail plea hearing to December 2.

The former Maharashtra Home Minister on October 26 moved the Bombay High Court for bail in connection with the case after a special CBI court rejected Deshmukh's bail plea on October 21.

Earlier, rejecting the bail application of Anil Deshmukh, the CBI court said that in this case, the statement of public witness Sachin Waze has been recorded by the CBI during the hearing of the bail application.

He had been accused of asking policemen to collect Rs 100



crores illegally for him every month from bar owners in Mumbai.

"It is clear from the statements of the witnesses that Anil Deshmukh is the main conspirator in this whole case. The charges against him are very seri-

ous. In such a situation, if he is granted bail, he can influence the case and the witnesses," the CBI court had said.

"Whatever medical facilities Anil Deshmukh needs is being given to him, so he cannot be granted bail even on medical

grounds. CBI's investigation is still in the preliminary stage, so it is not right to grant bail to Anil Deshmukh at this stage," the court added.

Deshmukh continues to be in judicial custody in Arthur Road prison as he is also being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in a corruption case.

Deshmukh was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in November 2021 and is currently in judicial custody.

According to the ED, Deshmukh had misused his position as state home minister and collected Rs 4.70 crore from various bars in Mumbai through some police officers.

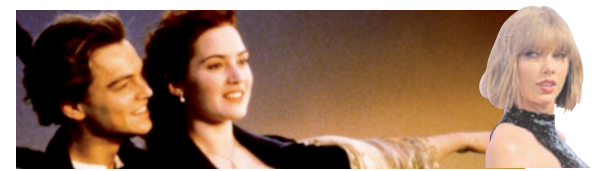
Earlier on October 11, the Supreme Court refused to cancel the bail granted to the former home minister in the money laundering case lodged against him by Enforcement Directorate (ED). On October 4, the Bombay High Court had granted bail to Deshmukh in a money laundering case being investigated by the ED.

MUMBAI REPORTS 2 NEW COVID-19 CASES



Mumbai: Mumbai reported 2 new Covid-19 cases on Thursday. The fresh cases raised the tally of infections to 11,54,911, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said in bulletin.

According to bulletin, no death was reported on December 1, the toll in the city remained unchanged at 19,744. The count of recoveries in the city reached 11,35,096 after 10 patients recovered from the infection in the past 24 hours, it said. The city now has 71 active cases, as per the health bulletin. Mumbai now has a recovery rate of 98.3 per cent.



I'M ON A VERY PERSONAL JOURNEY: CARA DELEIVINGNE

Los Angeles | Agencies



Cara Delevingne admits she still struggles with 'being open' about how much she 'loves women'... as her documentary Planet Sex trends on social media. Cara Delevingne has admitted that she still struggles to be 'open' about her sexuality as she spoke candidly in her new documentary Planet Sex. The model, who identifies as queer and gender fluid, said she was on a 'very personal journey' into her sexuality with her new six-part BBC series.

The documentary sees Cara talk to scientists and activists about sexuality and meet LGBTQ+ people from all over the world to discuss topics including porn and the orgasm gap. Reflecting on her own sexuality in episode two, out and Proud? Cara admitted that she still struggles

with being 'really open' about how much 'I love women'. She said she grew up with a lot of 'shame' surrounding her sexuality and said she felt she was never a part of the LGBTQ+ community due to her 'internalised shame'. 'I'm on a very personal journey into my own sexuality. You may or may not know I have had relationships with both men and women,' she explained in a voiceover. 'But I still struggle with being open - really open - about just how much I love women.' 'I grew up with a lot of shame is thinking, this isn't normal, this isn't human,' she added, saying her shame stopped her from coming out for a long time. She said she dates women more than she does men, adding: 'Sexuality is a spectrum and mine wavers, but I'm probably, definitely more on the side of women. I like having sex with men, I just don't date them. I might though, you never know.'



ASHANTI CLAIMS PRODUCER ASKED HER TO SHOWER WITH HIM

Los Angeles | Agencies

Pop star Ashanti has claimed a music producer demanded she 'shower with him or face paying him \$40,000 for each track he worked on with her. The singer said she had a "crazy situation with one producer" she had worked with for several weeks who then ordered her to get naked with him or face paying him \$40,000 for each track he recorded with her, reports. Speaking on the 'Breakfast Club' radio show, she said: "We did two records together, he was like, Okay, I'm not gonna charge you, you know you my homie". When it came time to put it on the album, he was like, Well, let's take a shower together. I thought he was joking, and then he was like, Nah, I'm dead serious. Let's go out, or let's take a shower together, and I'll give you the records. If not, I need 40 racks per record." Host Charlamagne tha God was horrified by the story and remarked: "Jesus Christ," before Ashanti went on to reveal that after the proposition she made sure the situation was "handled". She added: "I thought he was joking, because we had been working together for a couple weeks. But it turns out that he was serious. I had to make some phone calls and stuff was handled. It was wild." Ashanti did not name the man involved but previously spoke out about the same incident back in 2018 when she revealed she turned down a producer who had "a little crush" on her and "all of a sudden the track became \$45K". She said her family stepped in and the man apologised by giving her "three records for free", adding: "And I got two of them mixed and mastered for free."



Elton John announced as headline act on Pyramid stage for his final UK gig

London | Agencies

Elton John is set to headline the 2023 Glastonbury Festival. The singer was the first headline performer announced for the festival on Friday, with Elton set to take to the Pyramid stage next summer at Somerset's Worthy Farm. The Rocket Man hitmaker's performance on Sunday 25th June will mark the final ever UK show on Elton's record breaking Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour. Elton had previously announced a final show in 2019 after vowing to never tour again, however, he's since done a U-turn and has taken to the road again after having a 'restful break at home' - with his current tour now being his last. Speaking of the announcement of Friday, Elton said: 'I couldn't be more excited to be headlining the Pyramid Stage. As the end of my Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour comes into view, there is no more fitting way to say goodbye to my British fans. They have been beyond brilliant, and have supported me through all the highs and lows of my career. Every week I speak to new artists on my radio show and Glastonbury is often cited as a pivotal moment in launching their careers - the festival's genuine, enthusiastic support for the best emerging talent is something I've long admired. I've been talking to Emily Eavis about it over the last few weeks and I can't wait to embrace the spirit of the greatest festival in the world. It's going to be incredibly emotional.'

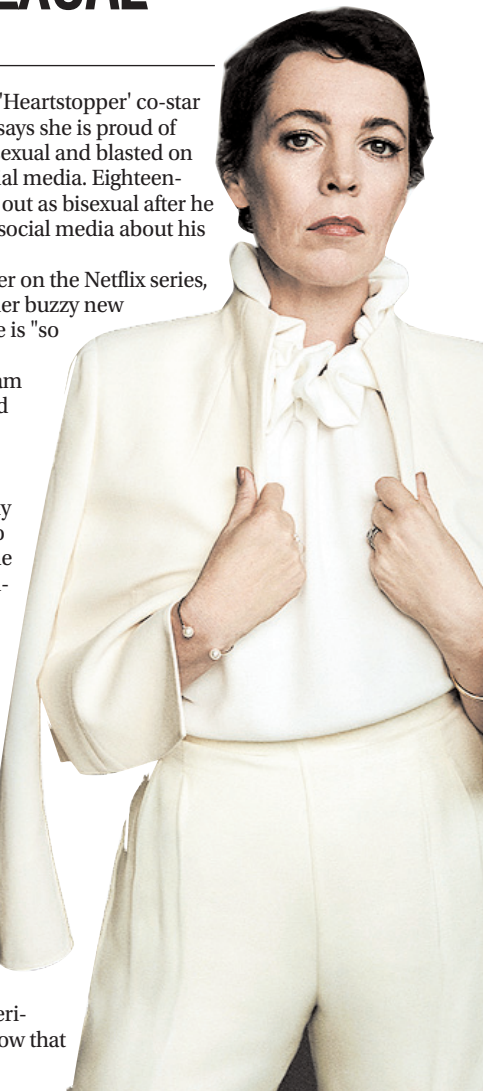
OLIVIA COLMAN IS PROUD OF KIT CONNOR FOR COMING OUT AS BISEXUAL

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Olivia Colman has 'Heartstopper' co-star Kit Connor's back as she says she is proud of him for coming out as bisexual and blasted on people who bullied him on social media. Eighteen-year-old Connor recently came out as bisexual after he was relentlessly questioned on social media about his sexuality, reports.

Colman, who plays his mother on the Netflix series, shared at the L.A. premiere of her buzzy new drama 'Empire of Light' that she is "so proud" of Connor. "I am so proud of him, but I am not proud of how people bullied him," Colman told Variety on Thursday night. "I think people should be allowed to have their own journey. But I'm incredibly proud of him as a young man to deal with all of that and be in the spotlight. It's unfair," she continued. "But he's amazing. He's a very beautiful human being."

In Connor's Twitter post on October 31, he wrote, "Back for a minute. I'm bi. Congrats for forcing an 18 year old to out himself. I think some of you missed the point of the show. Bye." Colman joined 'Heartstopper' after previously working with its director, Euros Lyn, on 'Broadchurch'. "I said yes before I had read it and when I read it, I went, 'Oh, it's really important'," Colman said. "If any of my children experienced that, I'd want them to know that the world can be beautiful and accepting and loving."



'The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power' gets seven new cast members

Los Angeles | Agencies

Seven new actors including names such as Gabriel Akuwudike, Yasen Atour and Ben Daniels have joined the existing cast of the series in recurring roles for its forthcoming second season, currently in production in the UK.

"Since its premiere, The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power has been bringing audiences together to experience the magic and wonder of J.R.R. Tolkien's magnificent Middle-earth. To date, season one is the top Original series for Prime Video in every region and has been viewed by over 100 million people worldwide, a truly global hit that speaks to the universal nature of powerful storytelling. We welcome these wonderful actors to our fellowship" and look forward to telling more incredible Second Age stories in season two," said Vernon Sanders, Head of Global Television, Amazon Studios.

The cast members are Gabriel Akuwudike, Yasen Atour, Ben Daniels, Amelia Kenworthy, Nia Towle, and Nicholas Woodeson. The role of Orc leader "Adar" has been recast for season two, and will be played by Sam Hazledine.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Zara McDermott



FIFA WORLD CUP

JAPAN SHOCK SPAIN 2-1 TO TOP GROUP



Doha (Qatar) | Agencies

Japan rallied from a goal down to shock European giants Spain 2-1 in the concluding match of Group E to emerge as group winners while booking a place in the knockout of the FIFA World Cup.

In material of losing the last league match of the group Spain qualified along with Japan to the knockout stage of the tournament.

In a night of chaotic pair of games, at the Khalifa International Stadium, Japan trailing by a 11th minute goal scored by Alvaro Morata to go into the half time break trailing 1-0.

The Samurai Blue however stormed back with full gusto in the second half to score two goals within a span of three minutes.

Coach Hajime Moriyasu drew level through Ritsu Doan in the

48th minute and went into the lead with a goal from Ao Tanaka three minutes later.

Japan's 2-1 win over Spain meant Japan and Spain were through, Japan finished with six points from two wins and loss.

Germany's failure to advance for the second straight World Cup is a remarkable fall for a national team that won the event in 2014, finished third in 2010 and 2006 and was the runner-up in 2002.

On Thursday, both Group E and Group F had surprising group winners. Group E champion Japan will face Croatia in the round of 16 on Monday. Group F winner Morocco will face Spain on Tuesday.

The World Cup continues Friday, when the round of 16 will be set after the finales in Group G and Group H.

SOUTH KOREA STUNS PORTUGAL TO QUALIFY FOR KNOCKOUTS

Doha: A stoppage time goal from Hwang Hee-chan helped outsiders South Korea register a shocking 2-1 win over Portugal in the Group H match of the FIFA World Cup and qualify for the knockout stage of the tournament.

On Friday at the Education City Stadium, The Koreans took second place in the group behind leaders Portugal who had already qualified for the last 16 round before their match against the South Koreans.

Portugal topped the group with seven points, followed by South Korea and Uruguay with four, and Ghana with three.

Portugal had taken an early lead in the very 5th minute through Ricardo Horta but the Koreans equalised 22 minutes later with Kim Young-Gwon finding the back of the net.

The teams went into the half-time break tied at one-all.

There were no goals thereafter till Hee-chan announces himself as a new sporting hero as his stoppage time goal put South Korea through to the next round and was greeted with a rising crescendo of noise from the South Korean fans.

In the Uruguay-Ghana tie, the African side lost 2-0, but despite the win, Uruguay could not make it to the next stage as the Asian side pipped them to the post on a better goal difference.



Four-time champions Germany defeat Costa Rica by 4-2

Doha (Qatar) | Germany defeated Costa Rica 4-2 in their concluding Group E match of the FIFA World Cup but that was not enough for Die Mannschaft to qualify for the knockout stage of the tournament.

Germany's exit meant they crashed out of the world at the group stage for the second successive time having suffered the same fate at Russia 2018. Costa Rica was also eliminated, with Japan and Spain moving on.

Germany's simplest path to the knockout stage was a win over Costa Rica coupled with a Spain win over Japan, but it also would have advanced with a Spain-Japan draw after its multi-goal win. Japan's 2-1 win over La Roja spelled elimination for Die Mannschaft, which had an uphill road to climb after its upset loss to Japan in the opener.

Germany dominated Costa Rica in the first half, with Serge Gnabry giv-

ing Germany a 1-0 lead in the 10th minute with a glancing header off a cross from David Raum. Manuel Neuer, making his World Cup record 19th start in goal, denied a close-range shot by Costa Rica's Keysher Fuller just before the break.

Costa Rica, which needed a win to advance, scored the equalizer - the first of five second-half goals between the teams - in the 58th minute, when Yeltsin Tejada buried a rebound into the back of the net. Juan Pablo Vargas gave Los Ticos a 2-1 lead in the 70th minute, but Germany's Kai Havertz answered with the first of his two goals three minutes later.

Niclas Füllkrug provided the final tally. Germany's failure to advance for the second straight World Cup is a remarkable fall for a national team that won the event in 2014, finished third in 2010 and 2006 and was the runner-up in 2002.

Knockout rounds start with Argentina, Netherlands facing different tasks

Doha (Qatar) | The knockout stage of the FIFA World Cup gets underway on Saturday with two ties in the last 16 as the Netherlands face the USA, while Argentina take on Australia. The tournament moves to a moment where any error can be fatal and where the added drama of extra time and penalties can come into play. The USA are facing doubt over captain Christian Pulisic with a pelvic injury that he suffered in their 1-0 win against Iran on Tuesday night. The Chelsea forward would be a significant loss to the USA, where he has played in a more central role than for his club. The Netherlands have Memphis Depay fully fit, while Cody Gakpo goes into the match after scoring in each of the three group matches. Argentina are clear favourites to beat Australia, despite coach Lionel Scaloni warning that "everyone is difficult" in the World Cup. Fernandez and Alvarez know each other well from junior levels and with Lionel Messi leading, they should be too strong for a rival that has already overperformed, reports. Australia have led in all three of their matches, taking the lead before losing 4-1 to France and then beating Tunisia and Denmark 1-0 each.



JAPAN'S MATCH WINNING GOAL COMES UNDER SCANNER

Football fans watching the FIFA World Cup matches are left to guess with little confidence if all the decisions taken after VAR review are correct ones. Japan's path to the last 16 stage is now mired in controversy. The 51st minute goal which Ao Tanaka scored is the talking point on social media and debated hotly on television by soccer pundits and experts.

The goal was initially disallowed because the ball, a second before the goal, seemed to have crossed the goal line. The assistant's flag went up for the ball being out of play indicating that Kaoru Mitoma, who cut the ball back into play, had dragged it into the paying area much after the ball had crossed the goal-line. But the video assistant referee (VAR), after reviewing the play, overturned the call on the field because, although replays and still photos both appeared to show the ball crossing the line, it didn't - at least not fully, apparently.

For the VAR, Fernando Guerrero of Mexico, to overturn the decision of the assistant, he has to have definitive evidence that part of the ball is on the line. Importantly, this isn't just about the ball touching the ground. The curvature overhanging the line also counts, even if a very small part of the ball is doing so.

It may be that subsequent pictures are eventually released, perhaps from the VAR-only cameras within the goal, but right now fans are being left to guess with little confidence this decision was correct.

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

Jackson overshadows Gaikwad as Saurashtra beat Maharashtra to lift title

Team Absolute | Ahmedabad

Veteran Sheldon Jackson's fantastic unbeaten 133 not out overshadowed Rituraj Gaikwad's 108 as Saurashtra beat Maharashtra by five wickets in the final, here on Friday, to win the Vijay Hazare Trophy for the first time since their title triumph in 2008.

Continuing his superb form, Rituraj hit his third century on the trot and overall four from five games in the 2022 edition of the tournament, but he didn't get ample support from other batters Maharashtra posted a total of 248/9 in their 50 overs.

Chasing a par total, Jackson and Harvik Desai (50) stitched an opening partnership of 125 runs to put Maharashtra on the backfoot. Both openers looked in brilliant touch and scored boundaries at regular intervals to bring their century stand in 21 overs. Jackson reached his fifty in 66-ball while Desai got it in 61 deliveries as Saurashtra were in control of the chase. Eventually, Saurashtra needed



57 to get off the last 10 overs and Jackson and Chirag Jani approached the end overs with calmness, playing risk-free cricket.

Earlier, put into bat, Maharashtra lost Pavan Shah early to a run-out and could manage only 18 runs in the first 10 overs. Gaikwad, who was on 4 off 32 deliveries at that stage, managed his first boundary only in the 17th over when he swept a Dharmendrasinh Jadeja delivery over backward square leg.

Unadkat, despite going for a boundary in his final over, finished with economical figures of 1-25.

Jani picked up a hat-trick in the 49th over, removing Saurabh Navale, Hangargekar and Ostwal with full deliveries. Naushad Shaikh then struck three successive fours off Kushang Patel in the final over to help Maharashtra finish with a respectable total, which was not enough in the end.

Brief scores: Maharashtra 248/9 in 50 overs (Rituraj Gaikwad 108, Azim Kazi 37; Chirag Jani 3-43) lost to Saurashtra 249/5 in 46.3 overs (Sheldon Jackson 133 not out, Harvik Desai 50; Vicky Ostwal 2-20) by 5 wickets.

SURYAKUMAR YADAV WILL SOMEDAY WIN A WORLD CUP FOR TEAM INDIA: BRETT LEE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Legendary Australia fast-bowler Brett Lee believes India's in-form batter Suryakumar Yadav will someday be a major factor in winning a World Cup for the Indian team. 2022 has been a year in which Yadav, through his 360-degree play and astonishing shots became the toast of T20I cricket.

"SKY was one of the highlights for me at the T20 World Cup. He continues to bat with the same attitude. Not only will he score big runs but he will also someday win a World Cup for Team India. I love watching him play. My advice to SKY would be no advice. Keep doing what you are doing, don't change, don't complicate things, back yourself," said Lee on his YouTube channel. "India did not win the T20 World Cup by the SKY rose. Of course, I am talking about Suryakumar Yadav. He is the new global T20 superstar. What a sensational 12-15 months he has had on the big stage."

"He has shown here on



Australian grassy wickets where the ball skids through. His fearlessness and his shot selection are like a chess grandmaster. His execution is awe-inspiring and the smile on his face when he played it, it is priceless," added

an impressed Lee.

"I like the way he executes the impossible shots because his basics are in place. He doesn't go out there and just try to hit the ball that isn't there to hit. He has a wonderful technique and he is

definitely a player for the future." "You can trust Rahul Dravid and Rohit Sharma to just let him be the person he needs to be. The SKY would rise and this could lead to many more peaks for India in years to come."

IPL 2023

Dwayne Bravo ends IPL playing career



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Fast-bowling all-rounder and T20 stalwart Dwayne Bravo on Friday ended his IPL playing career and signed up with four-time IPL champions Chennai Super Kings, who he represented from 2011-15 and 2018-22, as their bowling coach ahead of IPL 2023.

"I'm looking forward to this new journey because it's something I see myself doing after my playing days is fully over. I enjoy working with bowlers and it's a role I'm excited about. From player to coach, I don't think I have to adjust much because while I'm playing, I always work with bowlers and try to come up with plans and ideas on how to have that one step ahead of the batsmen."

"The only difference is I will no longer be standing at mid-on or mid-

off! I never thought I would be the leading wicket taker in the history of IPL. But I'm just happy to be a part of IPL history!" said Bravo in an official statement.

Bravo had played in the tournament since its inception in 2008. He ends his IPL playing career as the leading wicket-taker of the competition with 183 scalps from 161 matches, averaging 23.82 and at an economy rate of 8.38.

Bravo has been an integral part of the Chennai Super Kings since 2011. He was a part of Chennai Super Kings' IPL victories in 2011, 2018 and 2021 and the Champions League T20 victory in 2014. He was also the first player to win the Purple Cap for most wickets in an IPL season twice (2013 and 2015). Overall, he played 144 matches for Super Kings, picking up 168 wickets and scoring 1004 runs.

PLAYER AUCTION: CURRAN, STOKES, GREEN, FEATURE IN HIGHEST BASE PRICE LIST

Mumbai | The big names of modern-day cricket like England Test captain Ben Stokes, all-rounder Sam Curran, Australian all-rounder Cameron Green, and New Zealand captain Kane Williamson are among the players with the maximum reserve price of INR 2 crore as a total of 991 players including 714 Indian and 277 overseas have registered to be part of the IPL 2023 Player Auction, which is set to take place on December 23 in Kochi.

Apart from Stokes, Curran, Green and Williamson, the likes of Nicholas Pooran, Chris Jordan, Rilee Rossouw, and Rassie van der Dussen are the other noticeable names among 21 players, who have been included in the highest bracket. Notably, if every franchise were to have a maximum of 25 players in their squad, 87 players are available to be bought in the auction (of which up to 30 players can be overseas players). In what is a first, not one Indian player is listed in the highest reserve price band of Rs 2 crore. Amongst the Indian players registered, those with a base price of Rs 1 crore are Mayank Agarwal, Manish Pandey and Kedar Jadhav. Indian national players like Ajinkya Rahane, and Ishant Sharma, who are not in the scheme of things as of now, have reduced their prices for the auction. Rahane's base price this time is Rs 50 lakh while Ishant, who had gone unsold in 2022, is asking for Rs 75 lakh.





You can't compete with my outfit: Uorfi to Sunny Leone

Team Absolute | Mumbai

'Bigg Boss OTT' fame Uorfi Javed is known for her unusual fashion statement. Her unique outfits often grab eyeballs. From choosing ropes, wires, stones, broken glasses, or flower petals, she keeps experimenting with her dressing style. In fact, the host of 'Splitsvilla X4' Sunny Leone also complimented her for her short black dress with two swans covering her bust.

Sunny, who is seen as a host on the show, says: "Uorfi your outfit is amazing and absolutely perfect as beachwear. I love your choice of outfits and this looks fab."

Uorfi replies: "I am known for my unique dress sense. You can compete with me, but you can't compete with my outfit, as it is always out of anyone's imagination." Looking at the outfit and the two swans, Arjun Bijlani just started singing 'Chalo Ishq Ladaaye'.

Moreover, in the coming episode, Uorfi will be having a huge fight with her connection Kashish Thakur.

Both will decide to part ways and are seen crying on the show.

Shweta Tripathi and Ali Fazal celebrated the web-series wrap up

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shweta Tripathi Sharma and her 'Mirzapur' co-actor Ali Fazal celebrated the wrap up of the web-series' third installment in Goa.

Shweta mentioned, "I couldn't wait to start shoot as soon as we got the episodes for season 3. When you come back to set to shoot for Mirzapur, it's a responsibility (which we are very happy to have) because of the unconditional love and unending cheer we get from the audience and we never want to let them down."

She added: "And now that we have completed shoot, I can't wait for all of you to see it, to experience what we have in store for you! It's been one hell of a challenging and a fulfilling ride. She's one of the bravest, toughest and most endearing girls I've met. And I am eagerly waiting to share our labour of love with the world. Sach kahein toh I am a Mirzapur fanatic too!"

Shweta carries a distinct naturalness and imprints it on every character that she plays. Celebrating the wrap of season 3 of 'Mirzapur', Shweta took to Instagram and shared a reel video pouring her heart out, celebrating her sweet moments with the cast and crew, capturing how much goes behind camouflaging into a character and imbibing it in spirit.



I'm not sure if it was the best year for Bollywood: Amol Parashar

Shachi Chaturvedi | Mumbai

Amol Parashar is an Indian actor best known for his work in web series and films. His most well-known part is that of Chitvan Sharma in the online series TVF Tripling, which he is now experiencing success with in season 3.

In an exclusive interview with Absolute India News, the actor discussed his sentiments, Bollywood, and much more. When asked if he has any similarities with his character Chitvan, the actor says, "I don't have a life like Chitvan. I believe it is quite difficult to live a Chitvan existence because you must abandon all materialistic pursuits and be extremely relaxed. It's not an easy place to get to. I saw certain parallels with Chitvan, such as life-changing on his own terms, is defined by his family, and so on."

Amol has been working in both films and web series at the same time, and he discusses how different or similar they are. "While acting, there is no difference. In fact, tripping might simply be adapted into a

film. I don't notice much of a change. I haven't done big and lengthy shows as of now so it might have a different experience" stated the actor.

"I'm not sure if it was the best year for Bollywood because of what others have said about movies working and not working. People are likely to visit theatres now that things have changed. Even so, it's a great thing the concepts are becoming more inventive. Viewers are no longer going to theatres as a result of the OTT phenomenon. Creators are taking chances because audiences are now telling artists that if they don't serve us properly, they won't get paid. In the end, that is a fantastic challenge for artists since consumers will not come for everything today."

"An event happened to me a few days ago when I said no to the script because I believed it wouldn't work," the actor continues. "I informed the individual in question that I would not be doing it. It's not that I can't; I can come and tell a story, but I'm not sure it'll work."



Being in love is the most beautiful feeling in the world: Vicky Kaushal

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Happily married to the dream girl of his life actor and national crush Vicky Kaushal has explained how love evolves a person into becoming better professionally and personally. He minces no words when he says being with that special one is the most beautiful feeling in the world.

Vicky married his lady love Katrina Kaif in December 2021 after dating for almost over three years. How does love evolve a person?

Lover boy Vicky told in a conversation: "I think if you're with the right person who really gives you peace and happiness in your heart and mind it just makes you the best version of yourself and

that best version of yourself is personally professionally anywhere you go it creates positive vibes and create positive energy and you give out the best that you have because you know you are with the right person and that peace of mind and happiness is here there in every cell body."

The star added: "I think definitely being with that person is the most beautiful feeling in the world and being in love is the most beautiful feeling in the world and that only can bring out the best in you." Just like any other person, Vicky too is an ardent fan of Punjabi music.

"I listen to Punjabi music a lot. Punjabi music is my go to music for working out, for happiness and sadness."

INDIA LOCKDOWN: A SINCERE ATTEMPT AT SHOWCASING THE PLIGHT OF LOCKDOWN



FILM REVIEW

BY AAKRUTI BAGLA

Directed by: - Madhur Bhandarkar
Cast: Prateik Babbar, Sai Tamhankar, Shweta Basu Prasad, Aahana Kumra, Prakash Belawadi, Saanand Verma
Runtime: - 118 minutes
Rating: - 4/5

Story: As the name suggests, the film brings to us four stories of people from different walks of life who dealt with this unprecedented crisis of Lockdown due to the Covid-19 breakdown. It sheds light, on how they struggle to survive and sail through that rough patch of the life.

Review: The flick begins with people from various backgrounds - a pilot, a sex worker, a daily-wage labourer, a house worker and a mother, among others - trying to keep up with Covid-19

lockdown updates.

Prateik Babbar and Sai Tamhankar play a migrant worker-couple, who are left jobless during the lockdown. With no means of transport, they are forced to walk back to their hometown, facing more troubles on the way. Shweta Basu Prasad plays a sex worker from Kamathipura and wonders how she will earn her next meal while practising social distancing. While Aahana Kumra plays a pilot, who distracts herself by flirting with a neighbour, Prakash Belawadi plays a father, who is stuck in a different city, during a crucial high point in his daughter's life.

Director Madhur Bhandarkar, who is known for his knack for hard-hitting subjects, delivers genuine intent in a peculiar way when it comes to India's Lockdown. Rather than focusing on one aspect, he has smartly tweaked various sub-plots that keep the narrative going.

However, the slow-paced and feeble writing makes things a little tiresome. Even the infusion of lovemaking and

molestation in such a narrative seemed not only bizarre but also ludicrous. It seemed like the makers are trying to pack in a lot of things in 2 hours.

While, the first half takes its sweet time to build up, during the second half, most of the conflicts in the film are solved by 'happy coincidences' taking away some of the steam.

Talking about the other technical aspects, while the editing is somewhere lousy, cinematography works well with the theme. Coming to film music, it does not stay with you for longer.

Speaking of performances, its Prateik Babbar and Sai Tamhankar have put their best foot forward. While Shweta Basu Prasad got into the skin of the character effortlessly but went a bit overboard. Prakash Belawadi delivered what was expected. The most disappointing and underwhelming act was by Aahana Kumra.

Overall, it is to be watched for honest attempt to bring to light the harsh reality audience may be oblivious of.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Aradhana Sharma