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Spate of viral infections hit India, dry cough just doesn't go away

A long-lasting dry cough that refuses to go away, repeated flu/viral infections, and low immunity amid disturbing weather patterns, Indians from Delhi-NCR to Mumbai are suffering a lot in the New Year. Health experts on Monday said that poor air quality coupled with increased susceptibility to viral infection have contributed to the current situation. Dry cough is a common complication of upper and lower respiratory viral infection and it may be present for 3 weeks to 3 months after acute phase.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

According to health experts, there has been a spate of viral infections which has been doing rounds since December 2022. Most of the infections are related to respiratory tract and are in the form of cold, cough, and fever.

"What has been a concern is the fact that most of the patients are taking about 2 to 3 weeks to get better from the post-viral cough. It is thought that the poor air quality coupled with increased susceptibility to viral infection both have contributed to the protracted convalescence," Dr Anita Mathew, Infectious Disease Specialist, Fortis Hospital, Mulund, told correspondent.

No age group is exempt and the reason is mainly attributed to post viral inflammatory cascade affecting upper or lower airway or both, added Dr Anish Gupta, lead consultant, ENT, C.K. Birla Hospital, Gurugram.

"Quality of air may also be responsible for increase in severity and duration of coughing," said the doctor. Changes in temperature can

weaken the immune system, making people more vulnerable to flu or viral infections that can cause a persistent dry cough due to inflammation and irritation of the airways or postnasal drip from congestion and sinus pressure. According to Dr Shovna Veshnavi, Consultant, Department of Internal Medicine, Jaypee Hospital, exposure to indoor or outdoor air pollution can irritate the respiratory system, causing inflammation and making it more vulnerable to infections. "Prolonged exposure can weaken the immune system, increasing the risk of infections and causing respiratory symptoms such as coughing," she told correspondent.

Individuals with a history of respiratory illness, such as asthma or COPD, are at an increased risk of contracting respiratory infections and may experience severe symptoms, including coughing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness.

They may also have weaker immune systems, making it more challenging to fight off infections.

"Flu can lead to acute bronchitis. It can cause inflammation in the bronchial tubes that carry air to the

ADENOVIRUS TAKING ALARMING SHAPE AMONG CHILDREN IN WEST BENGAL

Kolkata: In the current time of season change, Adenovirus appears to be taking an alarming shape among the children in West Bengal. Although the state health department is yet to compile the definite figure of deaths of children being affected by Adenovirus, unofficial estimates indicate that since December last year, more than ten children have died of cold and breathing problems, symptoms which are typical of being affected by the virus. The common symptoms of Adenovirus are flu-like ones, cold, fever, breathing problems, sore throat, pneumonia and acute bronchitis. The children of two-years of age and below are most vulnerable to being affected by the virus. The virus can spread through skin contacts, by air through coughing and sneezing and through an infected person's stool. So far, there have not been any approved medicines or any specific treatment-line to treat the virus.

lungs. This can result in coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath. Individuals with weakened immune systems or pre-existing respiratory conditions may be more vulnerable," said Dr Veshnavi.

Dr Mathew said that the pollution in Mumbai has been a major contributory factor for the prolonged cough. "Breathing exercises, having home-based remedies also help.

Vaccination for flu preferably in May-June of every year will also reduce the

incidence of catching infection," she told correspondent.

Drinking plenty of fluids can help to thin mucus and soothe a dry cough. Water, herbal tea, and warm broth can all help to keep you hydrated and soothe your throat.

"If the cough persists or is accompanied by other symptoms such as chest pain or difficulty breathing, it is important to seek medical attention to rule out any underlying medical conditions," said Dr Veshnavi.

Everything said won't amount to hate speech

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday observed that everything which is said could not be equated with hate speech, stressing: "We have a common enemy, that is hate. That is the only thing. Remove hate from your minds and just see the difference."

A bench of Justices K.M. Joseph and B.V. Nagarathna, hearing a batch of petitions seeking directions against hate speech, also considered a plea by Shaheen Abdullah in connection with an event organised by a body known as the Sakal Hindu Samaj in Mumbai earlier this month.

The top court had directed the Maharashtra government to record the event scheduled on February 5, and stressed that the government has to ensure that hate speeches are not made, while seeking a report on it.

Earlier, The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Delhi Police to place on record the charge sheet in a case of hate speeches made at Dharam Sansad in Govindpuri in December 2021. Additional Solicitor General (ASG) K.M. Nataraj, appearing for the Delhi Police, submitted that the probe in the matter is at an advanced stage.

Nataraj contended before a bench headed by Chief



Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud that they were expecting a forensic science laboratory (FSL) report on voice samples of the accused. He further added that the police will soon file a charge sheet in the matter.

The top court noted that the ASG has submitted that

the investigation is now at an advanced stage and the report of the voice sample is expected soon from the forensic lab.

The bench, in its order, said: "A copy of the charge sheet be placed on records. The matter is in the first week of April."

PLEA FOR UNIFORM MARRIAGE AGE REFUSED

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea seeking direction to ensure uniform age of marriage for men and women, saying it can't issue mandamus to the Parliament to legislate.

Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud also pulled up petitioner-advocate Ashwini Upadhyay, saying: "We are not here to please you or any section of the polity. Don't give me gratuitous comments. This is not a political forum..."

Upadhyay submitted that the matter involves a question connected with gender equality and the court as custodian of law must intervene to remove the anomaly to prescribe minimum age of marriage as 21 years for both men and women.

UPENDRA KUSHWAHA RESIGNS FROM JD-U, ANNOUNCES NEW PARTY

Patna: Upendra Kushwaha, who has been skirmishing with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for some time now, on Monday announced his resignation from the primary membership of Bihar's Janata Dal-United (JD-U) and the setting up of a new party. Addressing a press conference here, he said that the decision was taken after the two day meeting of his supporters in Sinha Library here. Kushwaha also said that he will soon resign from the state Legislative Council too. Kushwaha also announced the launch of a new political party, the Rashtriya Lok Janata Dal.

Sitharaman refuses to provide NPS funds for old pension scheme

Jaipur | Agencies

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday refused to give the money kept aside for the New Pension Scheme (NPS) to the state governments for the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).

"If any state takes a decision for some reason that the funds of NPS can be collected from the Centre, then it will not be available," the Finance Minister said. It needs to be mentioned here that Rajasthan recently announced the OPS for its state employees. In fact, the Congress government has also announced OPS in Himachal Pradesh.

This Old Pension Scheme will receive a setback due to the fresh announcement by the Finance Minister.

Sitharaman said that it is the employee's money and that money will come into the hands of the employee at the time of retirement or whenever it is required by



the employee.

"The collected money will not come into the hands of the state government. When the right time comes, only then will this money be given to the employee," said Sitharaman while interacting with the media after the budget discussion at a hotel here on Monday.

On the free schemes run by the Rajasthan government, Sitharaman said: "When the financial condition of the government is good, (you) run such schemes. Make provision for

them in your budget. If the financial condition of your state is not good, you are not making provision in the budget, you are taking a loan for that. It is not right. Who will give this money? That is why the Finance Secretary said that there is no free lunch." The Finance Minister further said: "To bring such schemes, the states should raise funds from their own resources and earn from taxes. For free schemes, the states are putting their burden on someone else... it is wrong."

28 houses on the verge of collapse in Karnaprayag

Karnaprayag: After Joshimath, cracks have developed in several houses in Karnaprayag in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, which are increasing rapidly now. As many as 28 houses in the area are on the verge of collapse.

Chamoli District Magistrate Himanshu Khurana, Karnaprayag SDM Himanshu Kafaltia, MLA Anil Nautiyal and disaster management officer N.K. Joshi inspected the affected areas in Bahuguna nagar, Subhash Nagar and Upper Bazar on Sunday.

The DM was stunned after witnessing the wide cracks on the walls of houses in Bahuguna Nagar. The residents requested the officials to make proper arrangements to guarantee their safety. Khurana instructed the officials to shift the affected people to safer places and install crackmeters in the affected structures to monitor the cracks. Land subsidence started in this area of the town last year during the rainy season. The residents had demanded the administration to take security measures in the disaster-prone areas, which was ignored. Khurana said that the buildings which have developed extensive cracks will be evacuated and the people living there will be shifted to safer places. The residents who choose to live in rented accommodations will be provided the rent amount for six months, said the official. Khurana also directed the SDM to get a detailed survey of the structures done.

Gujarat's Thakor community bans girls from using mobile phones



Palanpur (Gujarat) | Agencies

The Thakor Community here has prohibited the community's teenage girls from using mobile phones. The community, while unanimously passing resolutions to bring reforms in the community traditions, however, decided to stop the girls from using mobile phones.

Without referring to love affairs, friendship between girls and boys, or inter-caste marriages, the community was of the view that "because of the use of cell phones among teenage girls, a lot of wrong things are happening, and so they should be banned from using cell phones."

The resolution was passed in presence of Congress MLA Vav Geniben Thakor. The event took place on Sunday at Lunsela village in Bhabhar Taluka in Banaskantha district.

The reform step they took was to limit the number of guests allowed at engagement and marriage ceremonies. According to the resolution, only 11 people should attend an engagement or marriage ceremony, each village where the Thakor community has a good number of members should arrange mass marriages, and expenses on marriage and engagement should be controlled. No DJ sound system should be hired for marriage.

Don't fall prey to fake websites, mobile apps offering passport services: Govt

Team Absolute | New Delhi

People looking for passport related services should not fall prey to the fake websites or mobile applications targeting people online, the government warned on Monday.

It has come to the notice of the authorities that many fraudulent websites and mobile applications are collecting data from applicants and also levying additional hefty charges, a government alert said.

"It has come to the notice of the Ministry that many fraudulent websites and mobile applications are collecting data from applicants and also levying additional hefty charges for filling up the online application form and scheduling appointments for passport and related services. Some of these fake website are registered in the domain name *.org, *.in, *.com such as www.indiapassport.org, www.online-passportindia.com, www.passportindiaportal.in, www.passport-india.in, www.passport-seva.in, www.applypass-



port.org and many other similar looking websites," said the alert on fake websites related to passport services.

"It is therefore advised to all citizens applying for Indian passport and related services that they should not visit the above mentioned fraudulent websites or make payment related to passport serv-

ices. The official website of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, for Passport services is www.passportindia.gov.in," said the alert.

Alternatively, applicants may also use the official mobile app mPassport Seva which can be downloaded from Android and iOS application store, said the alert.

MP FROM WAYANAD, RAHUL GANDHI BECOMES AICC MEMBER FROM UP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi has been elected as an AICC member from Uttar Pradesh despite being an MP from Wayanad in Kerala.

Only AICC's elected members can cast vote in the Congress working committee elections. Congress sources said that the people of Amethi in Uttar Pradesh, mainly the Congress supporters, want Rahul Gandhi to again contest from Amethi, which used to be a Congress stronghold before Smriti Irani defeated the former Congress chief from there in the 2019 general elections.

Deepak Singh, a former MLC from Amethi considered close to the Gandhi family, said, "People of Amethi are waiting to make Rahul Gandhi the Prime Minister of the country."

Many party leaders said that while there is no indication from Rahul Gandhi yet, Amethi will remain a Gandhi bastion as the constituency shares decades long relationship with



the family. In 2019, Rahul Gandhi had lost from Amethi but won from Wayanad.



IndiGo flight makes emergency landing in Lucknow after bomb threat

Lucknow: Yet another aviation incident involving IndiGo airlines took place on Monday when a flight from Delhi had to make an emergency landing in Lucknow after receiving a bomb-threat call.

"Flight 6E 6191 operating from Delhi to Deogarh was diverted to Lucknow following a specific bomb threat. All necessary security protocols were followed and the aircraft was cleared for take-off later. IndiGo is following the rules of the security agencies in the probe," the airline said in a statement.



MAHA POLICE SWOOP IN HYDERABAD, NAB 2 MAOISTS ON THE RUN FOR 17 YEARS

Gadchiroli (Maharashtra) | Agencies

In a swoop in Hyderabad, the Maharashtra Police has arrested two dreaded Maoists - a husband-wife couple - who were absconding from the law for the past 17 years, an official said here on Monday.

They are Madhukar Chinanna Kodape, alias Thuge, 42, and his wife Jamani Mangalu Punam, alias Shamala, 35, said Gadchiroli Superintendent of Police Neelotpal.

Hailing from Aheri here, Thuge had joined the Sironcha dalam in 2002, and later was the commander in Jimalgata and Sironcha Local Organisation Squads (LOS).

With 25 serious cases like 9 murders, 8 encounters, 4 arsons, 2 dacoities, attempt to murder and others, Thuge went absconding around 2006 and Maharashtra government had announced a reward of Rs 8 lakh for his capture.

Belonging to Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, Shamala worked for the Aheri LOS as a member and had 9 serious offences of 1 murder, 5 encounters, arson, dacoity, etc. and carried a prize of Rs 2 lakh on her



head. As per the Maharashtra Police investigations, the fugitive Thuge-Shamala couple had reportedly quit the Maoist movement and had been moving from place to place in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to avoid detection. The Gadchiroli police

was tracking them for over a year and finally found Thuge working as a watchman and Shamala serving in a car showroom's housekeeping, under fake identities.

Zeroing on their location in Hyderabad, a Gadchiroli police team swooped on them early this morning

and arrested them. With this latest success, the Gadchiroli police said it has succeeded in arresting 64 hardcore Maoists from different parts in the past 13 months since January 2022, even as SP Neelotpal appealed to the rebels to give up arms and return to the social mainstream.

Fake currency with face value of Rs 27 lakh seized in Hyderabad, 2 held

Hyderabad | Agencies

Hyderabad police have arrested two persons, including a woman, involved in printing and circulation of fake Indian currency notes in Telangana and other states and seized counterfeit money with face value of Rs 27 lakh.

The arrests were made in a joint operation by Commissioner's Task Force, South Zone Team and Chandrayangutta police.

Deputy Commissioner of Police, Crime P. Shabarish told media persons that fake Indian currency notes with face value of Rs 27 lakh and other materials were seized at the instance of accused.

Hassan Bin Hamood, an autorickshaw driver and resident of Falaknuma, Hyderabad and Rameshwari, resident of Kosgi in Narayanpet district have been arrested.

Main accused Kasturi Ramesh Babu of Narayanpet district is absconding.

According to police, Ramesh Babu, 35, working as a car mechanic, faced finan-



cial problems due to lockdown and he hatched a plan to earn easy money through illegal means. Gaining knowledge in printing and circulation of fake Indian currency, he procured all materials and printed Indian fake currency and kept in market for circulation. He was arrested by Gopalapuram Police Station in September 2022 and was sent to jail. While he was in jail, Ramesh Babu met Hamood who was in jail in a murder case and they became close friends. They hatched a plan to circulate fake currency on commission basis. After release from jail, Ramesh Babu and his family shifted to Tandur. Later, he procured raw material for further preparation of fake cur-

rency notes along with his sister Rameshwari.

The police officer said Ramesh Babu started printing fake currency denomination of Rs 500 notes and circulated the same in Gujarat. Last month, he was arrested by Gujarat Police in fake Indian currency circulation case and sent to judicial custody. Later, Rameshwari contacted Hamood and shifted all the materials including FICN to Chandrayangutta, Hyderabad for further circulation.

Basing on credible information, the Commissioner's Task Force, South Zone Team, Hyderabad along with Chandrayangutta police apprehended the accused persons and seized fake Indian currency notes.

CBI's fresh summon asks Sisodia to join probe on Feb 26

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has been summoned again to join the probe in Delhi excise policy scam on February 26.

Sisodia was earlier asked to appear before the CBI on February 19, but he expressed inability to join the probe and sought one week time. He told the CBI that he was busy in giving final touch to Delhi's budget which would be sent to Centre for approval.

The CBI allowed his request and now has issued him a second notice. Sisodia has alleged that it



is BJP who is behind the scene. He alleged that he was busy in giving the final touch to Delhi budget when he was called to join the investigation. "I am a finance minister too. I have to prepare Delhi Budget. It will be sent to Centre for the approval. BJP is using CBI to stop us in doing development. I have sought time," Sisodia had said while requesting for more time.

20 VEHICLES COLLIDE ON LUCKNOW-DELHI HIGHWAY DUE TO FOG

Lucknow: About 20 vehicles collided in an accident on the Delhi-Lucknow highway due to dense fog on Monday.

According to reports, the visibility was poor and many car drivers jumped onto the wrong side and ended up colliding with other vehicles.

The injured have been admitted to the hospital.

It may be recalled that on Sunday, about 15 vehicles collided on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway in Masuri area of Ghaziabad due to dense fog and poor visibility. Five people received minor injuries and one truck driver was seriously injured.

K'taka woman officers spat turns ugly as IPS officer questions IAS officer over 'nude pics'

Bengaluru | Agencies

In spite of the warnings of the Karnataka Chief Minister and Home Minister, a senior woman IAS officer and a senior woman IPS officer continued their public spat.

Retaliating to IAS officer Rohini Sindhuri and her husband's comments that she is "mentally ill", IPS officer D. Roopa Moudgil, sharing a screenshot allegedly from Sindhuri's number, asked the IAS officer if she will talk about "her nude pictures".

Sindhuri, the Commissioner, State Hindu Religious and Endowments Department, asked Moudgil to "get well soon". Her remarks came right after husband Sudheer Reddy branding the IPS officer as "mentally ill".

IGP Moudgil, currently the MD, Karnataka Handicrafts Development Corporation and recipient of the President's Gold Medal, said: "Rohini Sindhuri has told me to get well soon through the media. Will she talk about her deleted nude pic-



tures? This number is hers, right? Can an IAS officer send her nude pictures?"

The screen shot shows 10 deleted messages, while the reply says, "So madly, madly beautiful."

The development has taken the incident of social media war between two senior civil servants to a

new level. Sindhuri has stated that she had lodged a three-page complaint against Moudgil for making personal allegations with Chief Secretary Vandita Sharma and sought action. In turn, Moudgil, who also lodged a complaint with the Chief Secretary maintained that she is lodging complaints of corruption against Sindhuri. The IPS officer contended that nothing is personal about her allegations. "I had brought the matter to the notice of the government 25 days ago," she said.

Regarding posting of photos she said it is not a personal matter. Law Minister J.C. Madhuswamy has stated that the government will initiate action against the sparring officers. He maintained that they were quiet so far, thinking that the matter was personal. But, both officers engaging in conflict of words in the public and the government can't tolerate this, he added. Earlier, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and Home Minister Araga Jnenendra had given warning to both officers and directed issue of notice to both officers.

Godhra train burning case: Gujarat govt seeks death penalty for 11 in SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Gujarat government on Monday told the Supreme Court that it will press for the death penalty to 11 convicts in the 2002 Godhra train burning case, as it was a "rarest of the rare and grave offence." The death penalty of these 11 convicts was commuted to life imprisonment by the Gujarat High Court.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Gujarat government, submitted before a bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud that state is seriously pressing for death penalty for the convicts, which the Gujarat High Court commuted to life imprison-



ment. Mehta said, "This is the rarest of rare cases where 59 people, including women and children, were burnt alive," and added that it is consistent everywhere that the bogey was locked from outside and 59 died.

In February 2002, 59 people were killed when a coach of the train was burnt at Gujarat's Godhra, triggering riots in the state.

The top court asked counsel for both sides to submit a consolidated chart giving details such as actual sentences awarded to the convicts and the period spent in jail till now.

After hearing arguments, the bench fixed the bail pleas of several accused in the case for hearing after three weeks.

Carrying passengers on 2-wheelers to attract fine upto 10,000 in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Carrying passengers on two-wheeler bike taxis bearing Private registration number has been made a punishable offence and may attract fine upto Rs 10,000 here.

A circular issued by Transport department of Delhi government reads, "It has been brought to the notice that two-wheelers having Non-Transport (Private) registration mark/number are being used to carry passengers on hire or reward which is purely commercial operation and in violation of Motor Vehicle Act, 1988 and rules made thereunder".

It further reads, "The



above said violation is a contravention of the registration condition of the vehicle which is punishable under Section 192 of Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 having punishment for the first offence up to Rs 5000/-, and for a second or subsequent offence with imprisonment which may extend to one year with fine up to Rs

10,000/- beside impounding of the vehicle".

In addition to the above punishment, the driving license of the driver will also be suspended for a minimum period of three months under the direction of the Supreme Court committee.

Some digital platforms are facilitating such operations by offering booking through an app thereby engaging themselves as an aggregator in contravention of the provision of Section 93, and shall be punishable with a fine up to one lakh rupees.

The transport department through the notice has directed the digital platform to immediately stop such kind of activities to avoid prosecution and penalty.

'Season is changing', Cong 'warns' ED on raids in Chhattisgarh



Team Absolute | New Delhi

After the raids on Congress leaders in Chhattisgarh on Monday, the party reacted sharply and warned the ED that the "decency of Congress should not be considered as weakness".

Addressing a press conference Monday along with Jai Ram Ramesh, Congress Media department chairman Pawan Kherra said, "We also have governments in some states, some of the governments are going to be formed in states and the season is changing... 2024 is also approaching." "I want to give one suggestion to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) officers, who have become tools in the hands of the government, that time changes fast."

Warning the officials and

the BJP, Kherra said, "We have governments in states... we can also do something, but our decency should be considered as ornaments not weakness."

Congress General Secretary Jai Ram Ramesh said that the party will not be cowed down by these tactics and the plan will go on as per schedule.

Three days ahead of the Congress plenary session in Raipur, the ED on Monday was conducting raids at multiple locations across Chhattisgarh in connection with the coal mining case.

A source said that all the locations belong to the various Congress leaders.

"Premises belonging to state party treasurers Ram Gopal Aggarwal, state PRO R.P. Singh, labour committee President Sushil Sunny Aggarwal are being raided," the source said.

MMRDA erects MTHL's steel girder span linking Eastern Freeway

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a milestone, the MMRDA installed the first 40-metre-long composite steel girder span to connect the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) with the Eastern Freeway at two levels, officials said here on Monday.

The girder, weighing 130 tonnes, was erected on the Sewri Interchange side, and is a segmental box girder, cast in situ concrete decks of around 40 metre length spans in all the zones, barring a steel composite span across the Eastern Freeway.

The 10.38 kms of the MTHL Package 1 is divided into 3 zones - Marine around 5.75 km, Intertidal around 4.13 km, and Land or the Sewri Interchange.

There are 8 ramps on the Land zone linking the MTHL main bridge with the Eastern Freeway (4 ramps), the Sewri-Worli Elevated Bridge, and Mumbai Port Trust road underneath with 2 ramps each.

The MTHL is a 6-lane road



bridge plus 2 emergency lanes, spanning the harbour between Sewri on the Mumbai side and Chirle in Navi Mumbai on the mainland, and would be longest sea bridge in India after completion, said Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority Metropolitan Commissioner S.V.R. Srinivas.

Expected to be ready by

December 2023, the MTHL will be 22-km-long comprising 5.5 km viaducts on land on both sides and the 16.5 km bridge running over the sea, with 70,000 vehicles likely to zoom across it daily in both directions.

Estimated to cost around Rs 18,000 crore, the project is being implemented on a Design-Build basis with a loan

from the Japan International Cooperation Agency. "The MMRDA is working towards changing the face of the city and surroundings by integrating its existing road-based transport network with other infra projects. The MTHL will be the engineering marvel that will decongest Mumbai and connect it to the mainland," Srinivas said.

Assam woman kills husband & mother-in-law, stores body parts in freezer



Guwahati | Agencies

A woman in Guwahati allegedly killed her husband and mother-in-law, stored their body parts in a freezer for a few days and later disposed it in a river, police sources said.

The incident took place in the city's Noonmati area seven months ago but came to light only on Monday after the accused reportedly confessed to the crime.

According to a senior police officer, the accused Bandana Kalita confessed that she killed her husband Amarjyoti Dey and mother-in-law Shankari Dey with the help of two of her friends on August 17, 2022.

Following the murders,

Kalita stored the victims' body parts in a refrigerator and left the house. She returned four days later, on August 21, and disposed of the body pieces into Meghalaya's Dawki River, which is at a distance of at least 200 km from Guwahati," the officer added.

As per the police sources, Kalita's neighbours confirmed that they saw her burning furniture on the terrace of her house.

Kalita's two friends, Arup Deka and Dhanjit Deka, have been arrested for allegedly being involved in the murder.

The police are interrogating them. The police are yet to issue an official statement on the incident.



ARMED WITH NAME-SYMBOL, CM SHINDE GROUP TAKES CONTROL OF PARTY OFFICE IN LEGISLATURE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Four days after being declared as the real Shiv Sena and given its 'Bow-and-Arrow' symbol, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led entity's leaders moved into the party office in the Maharashtra Legislature. Led by the Chief Whip



Bharat Gogawale, the MLAs entered the Shiv Sena office premises for a special meeting ahead of the upcoming Budget Session starting here next week.

The Shinde group MLAs had met Speaker Rahul Narwekar and exchanged communication in the matter, seeking the allotment of the office. The party is also eyeing the party office in Nagpur Vidhan Bhavan, the party head office Shivalaya in Mumbai, over 200-plus 'Shakhas' (branches) in Mumbai and rest of the state, the Shiv Sena offices in various civic bodies and other assets set up by the party in the past 56 years. However, as per current indi-

cations, the Shinde group may not covet the iconic Shiv Sena Bhavan in Dadar, which continues to remain in the control of former CM Uddhav Thackeray. Several of the legislators hailed the Election Commission of India (ECI) for its verdict of Friday February 17 recognising it as the 'real' Shiv Sena against the claims of the Shiv Sena (UBT) led by Thackeray.

The Thackeray group has Monday challenged the ECI ruling in the Supreme Court and sought a stay on its implementation till the pending case of MLAs disqualification is decided by the apex court, and the matter is likely to be heard on Tuesday.

Thackeray faction moves SC challenging EC decision on Shiv Sena name, symbol

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Uddhav Thackeray faction has moved the Supreme Court against the Election

Commission of India (ECI) decision recognising the Eknath Shinde faction as the official Shiv Sena.

Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi mentioned the plea challenging the ECI decision before a bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud.

Singhvi requested for the listing of the matter along with the ongoing cases before the constitution bench on Tuesday. However, the Chief Justice did not allow Singhvi's mentioning, as the matter was not included in the mentioning list. The Chief Justice asked Singhvi to mention the matter Tuesday.

Last week, the Election Commission allotted the Shiv Sena party name and the bow & arrow symbol to the faction led by Eknath Shinde.

Maharashtra CM and rival faction leader Eknath Shinde had moved the apex court in anticipation, filing a caveat notifying the court that Thackeray faction may challenge



the ECI decision.

A constitution bench of the Supreme Court is currently considering the issues relating to the Shiv Sena rift.

On February 17, the Supreme Court declined to make immediate reference to a seven-judge bench the reconsideration of its 2016 Nabam Rebia judgement, which restricted the power of the Speaker to examine disqualification petitions against MLAs if a resolution

for his removal is pending.

A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India said the issue of reference will be decided only with the merits of the case and fixed the matter for hearing on merits on February 21.

The bench observed that the question of reference to 2016 Nabam Rebia judgement to a larger bench can't be decided in "abstract manner, isolated and divorced from facts of the case".

Disband Election Commission of India, demands Thackeray

Mumbai: In a stunning statement, former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) President Uddhav Thackeray said the party name-symbol verdict of Election Commission of India (ECI) was "unacceptable", and demanded that the ECI must be 'disbanded', here on Monday.

Thackeray's shocker came at a media conference when he termed the ECI ruling of last Friday as "incorrect" and said his party has challenged it in the Supreme Court Monday.

"Such undemocratic decisions cannot be made on the basis of money-power... It's an unconstitutional verdict. We demand that the ECI should be dissolved, an impartial EC should be appointed and till then its work should be handled by the Supreme Court," roared Thackeray.

He termed the latest political developments as the Bharatiya Janata Party's strategy to systematically destroy the Shiv Sena for which it had contracted (Chief Minister) Eknath Shinde.

CHAIN SNATCHER HELD IN THANE, 10 CASES SOLVED

Mumbai: Police have arrested a 26-year-old man for allegedly snatching gold chains and claimed to have solved 10 cases including one of theft of a motorbike in Maharashtra's Thane district.

Gold jewellery weighing 135 grams and a motorbike collectively valued at Rs 6.75 lakh were recovered from the accused, Mohammad Karibshah Sayyed, who was nabbed from Kalyan area on Saturday, a police spokesperson said on Monday.

A woman had complained to police that on February 11, when she went out to make some purchases, the accused snatched her 'mangalsutra' (sacred chain worn by married women) worth Rs 75,000.

A police probe team worked on various leads, including the intelligence and technical inputs, and arrested the accused, the spokesperson said.

During the interrogation of the accused, it came to light that he was involved in nine more crimes including the theft of a motorbike from Rabale being used to move while snatching chains, he said.

With this, chain snatching cases in Bhiwandi taluka, Padgha, Shahapur and Rabale police stations have been detected, the official said.

Shah's 'licking soles' remark kicks up fresh political row

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A comment by Union Home Minister Amit Shah targeting bete-noire, the Shiv Sena (UBT) President, Uddhav Thackeray has kicked up an unholy fracas, plummeting political discourse to another depth in Maharashtra, on Monday.

Speaking at a function to mark the 393rd birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Pune on Sunday, Shah slammed Thackeray for the umpteenth time on the alleged backstabbing after the 2019 Assembly elections.

"First, he fought the elections with (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi's photos on posters and banners, and jointly with Devendra Fadnavis. After the elections, in the greed for power, he licked the soles of people with opposing ideology..." thundered Shah, without naming Congress-Nationalist Congress Party.

Referring to the Election Commission of India (ECI)'s deci-



sion declaring the group led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde as the 'real' Shiv Sena, Shah said that "now they (Thackeray group) have been shown their true place".

Smarting under Shah's 'sucker-kick' remark, Sena (UBT) Chief Spokesperson and MP Sanjay Raut hit back: "What is Shinde doing now... Who is he sucking up to now...? They are traitors and thieves. Deals worth over Rs 2,000

crore have taken place for grabbing the 'Shiv Sena' name and 'Bow-and-Arrow' symbol..."

As Raut apparently suffered a momentary slip of tongue, a furious Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) Spokesperson Sandip Deshpande blurted out before the media: "How can he (Raut) speak such foul language... If I was around, I would have given him a tight slap..."

'JAWAB DO' - CPI TO PROTEST ON 8TH ANNIVERSARY OF GOVIND PANSARE'S KILLING

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Marking the 8th year of the killing of Communist leader Govind Pansare, the CPI Maharashtra will hold a 'Jawab Do' protest march in Mumbai, Kolhapur and other places, party leaders said here on Monday.

The rallies will also raise the questions of the pending outcome of other prominent personalities like Dr. Narendra Dabholkar, Gauri Lankesh, and Prof. M. M. Kalburgi, said CPI Maharashtra Secretary-General Prakash Reddy.

"The Sanatan ideology that killed Dr. Dabholkar, Pansare, Lankesh and Kalburgi is still terrorising the society. The 'Jawab Do' (Give Answer) march will seek answers from the government as to why those responsible for these murders are still not caught," said Reddy.

The Mumbai procession -- in which other like-minded organisations are likely to partici-



pate -- will start at 2 p.m. and terminate at the Mumbai Suburban District Collectorate in Bandra east, informed CPI Mumbai Secretary Milind Ranade.

Senior CPI leaders like Ashwini Ranade, Shradha Mehta, Anuradha Roy and others have issued an appeal to the common citizens to join the procession.

It may be recalled that on February 16, 2015, Pansare was fired upon while on a morning walk in Kolhapur and succumbed to the bullet injuries on February 20, 2015 in a Mumbai hospital.

Tata Motors to induct 25K EVs into Uber's premium service in India

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Tata Motors on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with ride-hailing platform Uber to induct 25,000 XPRES-T electric vehicles into its premium category service in India.

The collaboration represents the largest EV partnership yet between an automaker and a ridesharing platform in the country.

In July 2021, Tata Motors launched the 'XPRES' brand exclusively for fleet customers, and the XPRES-T EV is the first vehicle under this



brand. Tata Motors will help Uber electrify its services across Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai,

Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Ahmedabad. The company will begin the deliveries of the cars to Uber fleet partners in a

phased manner, starting this month."The XPRES-T EV is a very attractive option both for customers and operators. While enhanced safety, silent and premium in cabin experience provides the customers with a relaxed ride, the fast charging solution, driving comfort and the cost effectiveness of the EV makes it an attractive business proposition for our fleet partners," said Shailesh Chandra, MD, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles and Tata Passenger Electric Mobility. The new XPRES-T electric sedan comes with 2 range options - 315 km and 277 km.

'Politics on Jyotirlinga cost Uddhav party symbol': Assam CM

Guwahati | Agencies

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday took a jibe at Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena faction while reacting to a controversy that erupted after the state government published an ad inviting devotees to the Dakini Hill in Kamrup district to celebrate Mahashivratri.

Sarma said that Uddhav Thackeray might have lost the party symbol for bringing God into a political controversy.

Earlier, the Assam government claimed that the Dakini Hill is the site of the sixth Jyotirlinga, which irked the Maharashtra Opposition, including Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena and other parties.

The Opposition said that the pilgrimage fell in Maharashtra's Pune, and they accused the Assam government of 'stealing God'.



While attending a Mahashivratri function, Sarma said on Sunday that the Shiv Puran had mentioned that Bhimshaknar Jyotirlinga was placed in Kamrup's Dakini Hill. The Puran has a full description of it.

He then went on to say, "I have not written the Shiv Puran. Had I written it, you could have attacked me."

"I do not have scientific evidence, but I can say from my sense that when they (Shiv Sena) brought God into political controversy, they had to face backlash by losing the party symbol," he said.

As per Hindu beliefs, the places from where Lord Shiva emerged are known as Jyotirlingas, and there are 12 such Jyotirlingas across the country.

After the Assam government's ad was published in leading newspapers across the country five days ago, Aditya Thackeray and other leaders quickly jumped to criticise Himanta Biswa Sarma.

MAN ON DEATH ROW FOR KILLING MOTHER ALLOWED TO ATTEND DAUGHTER'S WEDDING

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Monday permitted a man sentenced to death for killing and eviscerating his mother in an inebriated state with an intention to eat her to attend his daughter's wedding for three days.

A division bench of Justices A S Gadkari and P D Naik directed the authorities at Kolhapur jail, where the man is lodged, to take him to his house from 9 am to 6 pm on three days - February 23 to February 25.

The convict, Sunil Kuchkoravi, pronounced guilty by a Kolhapur sessions court in the 2021 murder case with his death sentence awaiting confirmation, had sought temporary bail for one week from the HC to attend the wedding.

The court said while in capital punishment cases, the convicts are not entitled to temporary bail or other reliefs like parole or furlough, it was inclined to allow the convict in the present matter to be taken to his house for three days as his daughter was getting married.

When the court queried as to why death sentence was imposed in the murder case and if it was a brutal killing, Kuchkoravi's lawyer Yug Chaudhari said the convict had in an inebriated state killed his mother and removed her organs and kept them on a table.

When the court sought to know the motive behind the crime, Chaudhari said it was not clear.

"We don't know the motive. Even his family is shocked. He was a wonderful man they all say. Unblemished record. He used to



have frequent headaches so he used to consume liquor," Chaudhari told the bench.

The prosecution case was that Kuchkoravi killed his mother and then eviscerated her with an intention to eat her organs.

Chaudhari on Monday pointed out that the convict comes from poor financial background and hence can not afford to pay escort charges incurred on police personnel taking him to the wedding venue.

The HC then exempted the convict from paying escort charges, and directed the competent authority of the Maharashtra government to make the necessary payments to policemen who will escort him.

"We are allowing him to be taken out of prison for three days only because it is his daughter's wedding," the court observed.

A sessions judge in Kolhapur in south Maharashtra had convicted and sentenced Kuchkoravi to death for offence of murder in July 2021.

The sessions judge had then remarked the case falls in the category of "rarest of rare" as it shook the conscience of society.

The state government had filed a sentence confirmation plea before the HC in 2021 itself. The confirmation plea was yet to be heard.

"DISAPPEARED LIKE 'MR INDIA": BJP ON UDDHAV THACKERAY'S "MOGAMBO" DIC

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A day after Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray dubbed Union Minister Amit Shah as "Mogambo", an iconic villain from the 1980s blockbuster film 'Mr India', the Bharatiya Janata Party on Monday centred its retort around the film's lead character's ability to disappear. The EC had, on February 17, recognised the faction led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde as the real Shiv Sena and had allotted it the 'bow and arrow' symbol, prompting

Shah to claim Thackeray would now know on which side the truth was. Hitting back at Shah welcoming the

EC decision, Thackeray, had, on Sunday, sarcastically said 'Mogambo khush hua', a line the villain in the film often repeats when a plan succeeds. "Uddhav Thackeray is rushing to label the BJP leadership as Mogambo. What he fails to understand is with such idiotic commentary, he himself is becoming Mr India. You have almost disappeared from Maharashtra politics. You must stay at home," BJP MLA from Mumbai Atul Bhatkalkar said. Meanwhile, Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi chief Prakash Ambedkar, when asked about such remarks by the media in Akola, said one should happily accept such metaphors in politics.



EDITOR'S SPECS

The Mankurad Mango

Goa's Mankurad mango, awaiting for Geographical Indication (GI) tag, has arrived in the main markets of the coastal state and it is costing Rs 6,000 per dozen. The Mankurad is one of the most sought-after mango varieties in Goa during summer and having a Mankurad tree in the yard is regarded as a matter of pride for the homeowner. For many mango farmers, Mankurad is the source of income during this season. A mango wholesaler from Margao in South Goa, said that as the harvest is less, the prices have gone up. "The rate is considered as per size of the mango. Presently the big size Mankurad is costing around Rs 6,000 per dozen and the smaller size goes for Rs 4800." He said that vendors from across the state visit the Margao market to purchase at wholesale rate and then sell in their areas. According to him, this market opens at 3 a.m. in the morning and closes soon after the vendor leaves the place. "Presently the harvesting of Mankurad mango is less, but by April we may get in large quantities," he said, adding that mango farmers from many areas of state come to sell their produce in Margao. Last year, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant had taken a dig at the summer pride of Maharashtra, the Alphonso mango, by insisting that the Mankurad mango, a native Goan variety, tastes better than its counterpart. "We all say that the Alphonso mango is popular, but I can say for sure that the Mankurad mango is tastier. I can say it with a lot of pride," Sawant said. For the past two years, Goa has been awaiting the GI tag for Mankurad mango after the proposal was submitted in 2020.

EXPLOITING TECHNOLOGY TO UNDERMINE DEMOCRACY

Asad Mirza

A recent disconcerting report based on an investigation carried by 30 global media outlets, including the Guardian and DeSpiegel, claims to have exposed a team of freelance units based in Israel, which disrupt elections and manipulate public opinion using disinformation campaigns. Undercover reporters recorded a group of covert cyber influence specialists as they pitched their services for seeking fresh business, which involve using disinformation campaigns, false intelligence, hacks and blackmail to promote their clients' interests. The group, which calls itself 'Team Jorge', claims to have worked on dozens of presidential elections around the world and charges multimillion-dollar fees. Undercover journalists who carried out the investigation included Gur Meggido (The Marker), Frederic Metzereau (Radio France), and Omer Benjakob (Haaretz). The journalists were part of a collaborative investigation called 'Story Killers', which was coordinated by 'Forbidden Stories' -- an international consortium of investigative journalists that pursue the work of journalists who have been killed or work under threat. As reported, the covert units or contractors, used the pseudonym 'Team Jorge' headed by Tal Hanan, who previously worked as an Israeli special forces operative, and was apparently caught in an undercover sting operation by the journalists posing as potential clients. However, Tal Hanan denies any wrongdoing. But he allegedly told the reporters that his unit's services were available to intelligence agencies, political campaigns, and private companies, and that many European, African, Americans well



as Central and South American clients had already used them around the globe. Their modus operandi is said to involve creating thousands of fake social media profiles on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Telegram, Gmail, Instagram, and YouTube. These fake accounts, which allegedly used profile pictures from real social media accounts, were also linked to credit cards and could be used to create thousands of bots that sent mass messages. In one secretly filmed meeting quoted by the Guardian, Hanan is seen boasting that at present his team is now involved in one election in Africa, besides two other teams in Greece and the UAE. Boasting further, he said that his team has so far delivered 33 presidential-level campaigns globally, 27 of which were successful. Hanan also reportedly boasted to the undercover reporters that he could hack the email and messenger services of election campaigners, and send messages to their contacts designed to damage their campaign. The investigators found that Team Jorge's tech toolbox included "a platform of influence" called Advanced Impact Media Solutions or AIMS, which Hanan claims to have sold to the intelligence services of more than 10 countries. The AIMS software is designed to create convincing avatars for social media campaigns. The avatars, or bots, use stolen photos of real people, operate on any social media platform, and can be connected to functioning Amazon and Bitcoin accounts. They also appear to have a long-standing presence online, including Gmail accounts and trite comments on celebrity YouTube videos, to give investigators the impression they are real people. In this regard Hanan told reporters that they relied successfully on imitating human behaviour. Though nowadays most online accounts require phone number and email address verification to keep out bots like those deployed by AIMS. But to overcome that there are websites available, which have been set up specifically to allow one-off SMS-verification services, for 50 cents or less. Many accounts such as Gmail and WhatsApp --- can be registered with "verified" phone numbers. Apparently Team Jorge used a service called SMSpva.com for phone number verifications. Keeping abreast of social media

platforms checks, AIMS relied on residential proxies to reroute internet traffic from bots through people's homes so it appeared authentic, in order to avoid detection and shut-downs by social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. This made it difficult for social media platforms to identify a coordinated disinformation campaign. Verification and analysis of the recorded conversations by reporting partners Le Monde and the Guardian identified clusters of avatars, including those seen in Hanan's pitch presentations, that appeared to have been used for coordinated Twitter campaigns. Reporters found over 1,700 Twitter accounts connected to 21 AIMS-related campaigns, whose networks had produced tens of thousands of tweets. In December last, during an in-person meeting with undercover reporters, Team Jorge showed off a new capability of AIMS: Artificial intelligence tools to generate fake news using specified key words, tone and topic. The identities of Team Jorge members were shrouded in secrecy but reporters managed to piece together some background information on some members of the clandestine group. Some of it lines up with claims Team Jorge made about team members in calls with journalists. One team member described his other colleagues as former senior information officers, former senior financial information and warfare experts, and psychological warfare specialists, all with intelligence services background. Hanan indicated that he had orchestrated lobbying operations in the US despite not registering as a "foreign agent", as required by law. He

said he worked via consultants and companies that are already registered, and told reporters he had recently set up a public relations firm called Axiomatics to promote Team Jorge with "existing lobby groups". During calls with undercover reporters, Team Jorge went into specifics about the technology they say the group uses to swing elections. They added that they have six offices and employ at least 100 people, emphasising that they draw on the backgrounds of colleagues with experience in the intelligence services. This pushes Team Jorge's activities far beyond the realm of public relations strategies that are commonly deployed in elections. As far as the financial pickings are concerned, Team Jorge told the reporters they would accept payments in a variety of currencies, including crypto currencies such as Bitcoin, or cash. He said he would charge between 6 million euros and 15 million euros for interference in elections. The information gleaned by the investigative reporters points to one rather disconcerting fact, that there are people out there and they would be there in future too, who would always be ready to interfere in other country's internal affairs and ready to subvert the democratic institutions. But the bigger question is shall we just ignore them calling it scaling another frontier in the technology advancement or shall we start a campaign to ban such illegal and undesirable activities which may one day be able to destabilise the whole global democratic system? (Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi)

international

As Biden visits Ukraine, China's top diplomat heads to Russia

Hong Kong | Agencies As US President Joe Biden touched down in Ukraine to meet with his counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday, China's top diplomat was travelling in the opposite direction, on his way to Russia, according to a media report. Wang Yi - who was promoted as Chinese leader Xi Jinping's top foreign policy advisor last month - is due to arrive in Moscow this week as part of his eight-day Europe tour, a trip that brings into focus China's attempted diplomatic balancing act since Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine a year ago, CNN reported. The optics of the two trips - taking place just days before the one-year anniversary of the brutal war on Friday - underscores the sharpening of geopolitical fault lines between the world's two superpowers, CNN reported.



While relations between the US and China continue to plummet - most recently due to the fallout from a suspected Chinese spy balloon that entered US airspace - China and Russia are as close as ever since their leaders declared a 'no limits friendship' a year ago - partly driven by their shared animosity towards the United States. And as the US and its allies reaffirm their support for Ukraine and step up military aid, Beijing's deepening partnership with Moscow has raised alarms in Western capitals - despite China's public charm offensive in Europe to present itself as a negotiator of peace, CNN reported. At the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, Wang had addressed a room of European officials as "dear friends" and touted China's commitment to peace, while apparently attempting to drive a wedge between Europe and the US.

N.Korea fires 2 short-range ballistic missiles

Seoul | Agencies North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) toward the East Sea on Monday, a day after South Korea and the US staged joint air drills, involving B-1B bombers. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said it detected the launch from the Sukhom area in South Pyongan Province between 7 a.m. and 7:11 a.m., and that the missiles flew some 390 km and 340 km, respectively, reports Yonhap News Agency. Hours after the launch, Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported that the artillery unit of the Korean People's Army fired two shots from the 600-mm multiple rocket launcher during firing drills, and that they flew 395 km and 337 km, respectively. The weapon system is a "tactical nuclear attack means boasting of the great might powerful enough to assign only one multiple rocket launcher with four shells so as to destroy an enemy operational airfield", the KCNA said. In a ceremony to "present" the 600-mm rocket launcher at a key party meeting in late December, the country's leader Kim Jong-un called it an "offensive weapon" capable of carrying tactical nuclear warheads that could put all of South Korea within its range. Some observers here noted that given their flight distance, the rockets fired Monday can reach a South Korean air base in Cheongju known to be home to the South's F-35A stealth fighters. Cheongju is located 112 km south of Seoul.

Taliban shuts down main border point with Pakistan

Kabul | Agencies The Taliban-led government in Afghanistan has ordered the shut down of one of the country's main trading and border crossing points with Pakistan, accusing Islamabad of reneging on its commitments. The Afghan Taliban commissioner for Torkham said the border point had been closed down for travel and transit trade, reports Dawn news. "Pakistan has not abided by its commitments and so the gateway has been shut down on the directions of (our) leadership," Taliban commissioner at Torkham Maulavi Mohammad Siddique tweeted. He advised the people of Afghanistan to avoid travelling to the border crossing in eastern Nangarhar province. However, the Taliban official did not specify the commitment Islamabad allegedly breached. Some unconfirmed media reports suggested the Taliban were irked by an unannounced ban on travel of Afghan patients



seeking treatment in Pakistan, Dawn reported. There was no immediate official word from Foreign Office in Islamabad. The Afghan Taliban appear unlikely to shift their strategic calculus on providing support to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terror group, an analysis by the US Institute for Peace (USIP) said last week. It furthered that much of the TTP's political leadership and capability was based in Afghanistan and the outlawed faction was able to fundraise through extortion inside Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan, The Express Tribune reported. It reiterated that the Afghan Taliban remain "very supportive" of the TTP and are providing the group with a permissive safe haven.

China-linked online superstore surpasses Amazon & Walmart, becomes most downloaded app in US

Hong Kong | Agencies A new online shopping platform linked to one of China's top retailers has quickly become the most downloaded app in the US, surpassing Amazon and Walmart, CNN reported. Temu, a Boston-based online retailer that shares the same owner as Chinese social commerce giant Pinduoduo, made its Super Bowl debut on Sunday. Temu, which runs an online superstore for virtually everything -- from home goods to apparel to electronics -- unveiled a commercial during the game that encouraged consumers to "shop like a billionaire". The pitch? You don't have to be one, CNN reported. The surprisingly low prices -- by Western standards, at least -- have drawn comparisons to Shein, the Chinese fast fashion upstart that also offers a wide selection of inexpensive



clothing and home goods, and has made significant inroads into markets including the United States. Shein is considered one of Temu's competitors, along with US-based discount retailer Wish and Alibaba's AliExpress, according to Coresight Research, CNN reported.

Temu, pronounced "tee-moo", was launched last year by PDD, its US-listed parent company formerly known as Pinduoduo. The company officially changed its name just this month. PDD's subsidiary Pinduoduo is one of China's most popular e-commerce platforms with approximately 900 million users. It made its name with a group-buying business model, allowing people to save money by enlisting friends to buy the same item in bulk, CNN reported. Since its rollout in September, the application has been downloaded 24 million times, racking up more than 11 million monthly active users, according to Sensor Tower. In the fourth quarter of last year, US app installations for Temu exceeded those for Amazon, Walmart and Target, according to Abe Yousef, a senior insights analyst at the analytics firm Sensor Tower, CNN reported.

19 KILLED IN BRAZIL FLOODS, LANDSLIDES

Brasilia | Agencies At least 19 people were killed due to floods and landslides caused by heavy rain along the coast of Brazil's Sao Paulo state, authorities have confirmed. Among the victims were a seven-year-old girl who died when a rock fell on top of her family's house and a woman who was killed by a falling tree, local television channel GloboNews reported. Carnival celebrations were suspended in several coastal cities in Sao Paulo, Brazil's most populous state currently bustling with tourists due to the celebrations this week, reports Xinhua news agency. "We are summoning the Armed Forces to help rescuers reach places where



there may be victims," said Sao Paulo Governor Tarcisio de Freitas, who visited the disaster zone on Sunday. The storm mainly affected the municipalities of Sao Sebastiao, Ubatuba, Bertioga, Guarujá, Ilhabela and Santos. Sao Sebastiao's local government declared a state of calamity as landslides and road damage closed highways and prevented rescue from reaching affected parts of the city. "There were many landslides that washed away houses, therefore there are many people under the rubble. The situation is chaotic

because it is not possible for rescuers to access those places," Sao Sebastiao Mayor Felipe Augusto told the daily Folha de S.Paulo. The federal government dispatched lifeguards from the national civil defence agency and Minister of Integration and Regional Development Waldez Góes is expected to visit the area on Monday, according to an official statement. Góes said the Defence Ministry will help in the rescue operations. More heavy rain is expected in the area, threatening to make conditions even worse for emergency teams. Last year, torrential rain in Brazil's south-eastern city of Petropolis killed more than 230 people.



PROJECTS WORTH RS 2,478 CR INAUGURATED IN 15 DAYS OF BJP'S 'VIKAS YATRA' IN MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the last 15 days of the BJP's 'Vikas Yatra' led by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, public welfare projects worth Rs 2,478 crore have been inaugurated across the state.

Besides this, foundation stones were laid for over 20,000 proposed projects amounting to Rs 4,024 in the same period.

The yatra kick started on the occasion of Sant Ravidas Jayanti on February 5, and since then, the entire MP BJP unit involving both Central and state ministers, have been carrying out walkathons in their respective areas.

It will conclude on February 25. "Our Vikas Yatra is continuously fulfilling the goals of public welfare, and presenting the development picture of Madhya Pradesh. So far, as many as 27,421 projects, which were completed have been inaugurated and handed over to the people. At the same time, foundation



stones of 20,676 proposed development projects were laid across Madhya Pradesh. Meanwhile, the issues of 4.84 lakh people have been

positively resolved," Chief Minister Chouhan said on Monday.

During the yatra, various initiatives were implemented by the district administrations for public welfare.

For example, a 'Home Again Centre' opened its doors in Indore in an effort to connect mentally ill women who have been neglected by their family to the society.

Similarly, in Burhanpur district, a rejuvenation campaign has been launched for better management of hostels run by Tribal Affairs Department and Backward Classes Welfare Department.

In Alirajpur district, Red Cross is helping towards conducting surveys of senior citizens with cataract and dental issues.

A special campaign is being run in Agar-Malwa district to make composite cards and remove errors.

Along with this, necessary certificates are being prepared for nomads, semi-nomads and people belonging to denotified castes.

Cong to contest MP Assembly polls on Kamal Nath's face: Digvijaya Singh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Chief Minister and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh has said that state Congress chief Kamal Nath will be the party's face in the upcoming Assembly elections due at the end of the year.

Singh said the party will contest the elections under Kamal Nath's leadership, and therefore, "he will be the face". Singh made this statement while talking to the press reporters in Bhopal on Sunday.

Importantly, Singh's statement comes days after a section of the senior party leaders of the MP Congress unit objected to posters projecting Kamal Nath as the chief ministerial face. A group of party workers, including Congress spokespersons on January 1, had put banners at several parts of the state, including in Bhopal, projecting Nath as 'future chief minister' of Madhya Pradesh.



However, some senior Congress leaders, including former Union minister Arun Yadav and former leaders of opposition Ajay Singh (Rahul) had opposed the 'posters' projecting Kamal Nath as the Chief Minister's face. "The Chief Minister's face has always been decided by the elected MLAs," they had said then. Subsequently, responding to this, Kamal Nath had also said that he was not in the

race for any post but his prime goal was to bring the Congress into power in Madhya Pradesh.

Notably, for the last few days, Digvijaya Singh has been visiting different Assembly constituencies and meeting party workers to review the preparations for the upcoming Assembly elections. On Sunday, Singh visited Rehti village under Budhni Assembly constituency in Sehore district.

Cyclists planted saplings with Chief Minister Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Banyan, Khirri and Sarika Indica in the garden located at Shyamala Hills. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Anjana Malviya of Kishore Kumar Sangeet Academy, Bhopal planted saplings on her birthday. Dr. Rajesh Kumar Malviya, Dr. Pawan, Dr. Swatantra Chaurasia, Dr. Nayan Ram, Rajanshi and child Rhythm were with him.

Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Sundaram Tiwari and Rituraj of Pratapgarh Uttar Pradesh also planted saplings. Both the youths have set out on a cycle tour from Lucknow with the aim of encouraging tree plantation. During his visit, he is motivating the students of schools, colleges and social



organizations to plant trees. About 14 thousand kilometers have been traveled by them so far. Giving best wishes to both the youths for a safe journey, Chief Minister Chouhan inspired them to

continue the pious work of planting trees. Along with Chief Minister, Rishabh Rai also planted saplings on his birthday. Omprakash Rai and Hrithik Rai were also with him.

MAN IN PAKISTAN JAIL SINCE 2019 RETURNS TO INDIA

Khandwa: A 44-year-old man who went missing from Khandwa in Madhya Pradesh five years ago and was later jailed in Pakistan after inadvertently crossing into that country has returned to India, an official said on Monday.

Raju Pindare, a resident of Indhawadi, has been handed back to Indian authorities and a four-member team comprising policemen and a medical professional has been sent to Amritsar to bring him here, additional collector Shankar Lal Singhade said.

"Information about Pindare being handed over to India was received by us through Amritsar's Red Cross Society. He will be handed over to his family after legal formalities are completed," Singhade added. Subhash Sharma, Project Manager, Red Cross Society of Amritsar, said Pindare was released by Pakistan authorities on February 14 at the international border at Wagah and handed over to Khandwa police on Monday. Khandwa's Superintendent of Police (SP) Vivek Singh said he has been in constant touch with the police headquarters regarding the man's return.

Meanwhile, Pindare's mother Basanta said he was mentally unwell and she had got information about his arrest in Pakistan through some local officials in 2019, six months after he went missing. Her son used to wander here and there but it is still not known how he managed to get to Pakistan, Basanta said.

MP INTRODUCES NEW EXCISE POLICY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has introduced a new excise policy under which consumption of alcohol at 'ahatas' will be prohibited.

Ahata is an area attached to alcohol outlets where people can sit and consume liquor.

The decision to introduce the new policy was taken during a cabinet meeting late Sunday.

Following the approval of the new excise policy, 2,580 ahatas and 31 shop bars will get closed across the state.

"It has been decided by the cabinet that henceforth all liquor vendors will only sell liquor. All ahatas and shop bars (allowing consumption of liquor within shops premises) will be closed," the state government's official spokesperson and home minister Narottam Mishra said, while briefing about the cabinet meeting's decision.

"Further, it has been decided that the distance between liquor



shops and places of worship and educational institutions, particularly girl schools, colleges and hostels, will be increased from the present 50 metres to 100 metres," Mishra added.

He further informed that the state cabinet has also approved a proposal for making stricter provisions for the suspension of driving licenses of those who get caught for drunk driving.

"Our government is committed to discouraging consumption of liquor in the state, owing to which no new liquor shop has been allowed to be opened in the state since 2010. On the contrary,

many shops have been shut down. During our Chief Minister's Narmada Seva Yatra in 2016-17, as many as 64 liquor shops were closed," Mishra added. The move comes amid senior BJP leader Uma Bharti's sustained pressure on the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led Madhya Pradesh government to have a controlled liquor policy.

Recently, she tied cows and fed them with fodder outside a liquor shop in Orchha town as part of her campaign titled 'Madhushala mein Gaushala', urging people to drink milk instead of alcohol.

Roads of urban bodies will be maintained in rejuvenation campaign: Chief Minister

Chief Minister Shri Chouhan gave approval for road upgradation works worth Rs 750 crore, released the first installment amounting to Rs 350 crore with a single click.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that for the first time in the history of the state, the state government will provide funds from its budget to the urban bodies for the maintenance of roads so that the internal roads of the state's cities are in good condition and the life of the citizens is smooth. Getting it done Maintenance of roads is the responsibility of the urban bodies. With a view to ensuring that adequate funds are available with the urban bodies for the maintenance of roads, the state government has decided to start a rejuvenation campaign and provide funds to the urban bodies. The



Chief Minister said that civic bodies will have to take initiative to develop sources of resources at their own level. In this direction, the innovation of issuing green bonds by the Indore Municipal Corporation is exemplary. Chouhan approved Rs 750 crore for the rejuvenation

campaign for the roads of 413 urban bodies of the state from the Kushabhau Thackeray Auditorium today and transferred the first installment of Rs 350 crore to the urban bodies with a single click. 413 urban bodies of the state were connected virtually with the programme. Chief Minister also interacted virtually with the office bearers of Indore, Mandsaur, Jaura, Rampur, Nekin and Dhanpuri urban bodies.

Complete the tender process in 15 to 20 days Chief Minister Chouhan said that the work of maintenance of roads should be done within the time limit. After completing the process of tender in the next 15 to 20 days, repair of all the roads should be ensured by the month of May by appointing an agency.

Action on defaulters of electricity company

FIR on 13 people and bank accounts of 52 defaulters seized

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Strict action is being taken by the Central Region Power Distribution Company against unauthorized and illegal users of electricity as well as against electricity bill defaulters. Electricity Act 2003 along with registration of FIR against 13 people in the concerned police stations under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code for unauthorized use of electricity by using restricted power

wires during checking by the company in Morena and Ambah Bills of more than one lakh 34 thousand have been issued after registering a case under section 135 of the IPC.

Similarly, information about the arrears of electricity bills has been registered in the accounts of eight consumers. Along with this, due to non-payment of electricity bill dues of more than one crore 8 lakh 64 thousand rupees by 52 consumers, their bank accounts have

been seized by contacting their banks. Transactions from the bank accounts of these consumers have been completely banned till the electricity dues are not paid.

The company has appealed to the general public and electricity consumers not to make unauthorized use of restricted power cables. Ensure timely payment of your outstanding electricity bills as well as current dues and avoid any untoward action by the company.

DR ANSHUL RAI RECEIVED "DAKHAL PRIDE AWARD"



Bhopal: Dr Anshul Rai, Additional Professor, Dentistry, AIIMS, Bhopal received Dakhal Pride Award for his work in the field of Dental surgery and for his social work. The Award given to him by Famous Bollywood Actor Ashutosh Rana, Ex minister Sanjay Pathak, Anurag Upadhaya and Shefali Gupta on 19th Feb, 2023 at Kukkut Bhawan, Bhopal. AIIMS Bhopal family and friends congratulate Dr anshul Rai for getting this prestigious award.

MP WILL GET 12 NEW CHEETAHS EVERY YEAR

Team Absolute | Bhopal

There is good news for the wildlife lovers of Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh will get 12 leopards every year. An agreement has been signed with the Government of India and the Government of South Africa in this regard. State Forest Minister Kunwar Vijay Shah has confirmed this. He said-Every year a consignment of 12 cheetahs from South Africa will come to Madhya Pradesh. They will be released in Gandisagar and Nauradehi sanctuaries.

Earlier, 8 cheetahs had come to Kuna from Namibia. It was released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. At the same time, on February 18, 12 cheetahs came from South Africa. They were released by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at Kuno Sanctuary. They have been released in the quarantine enclosure. There are now a total of 20 cheetahs in the Kuno-Palpur sanctuary. This clan of cheetahs will continue to grow in the state. After Kuna, tourists will be able to see cheetahs in other sanctuaries as well. The Forest Minister said that leopards would also be seen in Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary situated in the border areas of Neemuch-Mandsaur district and



Nauradehi Sanctuary situated in the border areas of Sagar, Damoh, Narsinghpur districts. Minister Vijay

Shah told that the government of South Africa has agreed to give 12 leopards every year.

State level employment day program on February 23 in Mahidpur

State level employment day program will be held on February 23 in Mahidpur development block of Ujjain district.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will be the chief guest of the program and will also distribute acceptance letters in various schemes to youths who start self-employment. Earlier this program was scheduled to be held on February 25 at Katni district headquarters.

Secretary MSME I P. Narhari informed that along with the state level function to be held in Ujjain, programs will also be held at all the district headquarters of the state. He informed that Chief Minister Chouhan will also hold virtual dialogue with each beneficiary of

Harda, Ashok Nagar, Katni and Niwari districts. The program will also be telecast live from all media platforms.

In the Employment Day program to be held in the district headquarters, acceptance letters will be given to the people's representatives by inviting the beneficiaries who have benefited in the district in the financial year 2022-23 under various self-employment schemes. The program will be executed after determining the outline of the event to be held in the districts under the direction of the District Collector. There will be participation of concerned departments and banks in this and public representatives will be invited.



76th BAFTA Awards

7 WINS TOPPED BY BEST PICTURE:

'All Quiet On The Western Front' creates buzz

London | Agencies

The German epic film "All Quiet on the Western Front" dominated the BAFTA Awards in London on with a record-breaking seven wins, including Best Director, Best Film and Best Film Not in the English Language.

The tally means the World War I epic now holds the record for a film not in the English language. The previous record was held by 1988 film "Cinema Paradiso", which won five BAFTAs, reports 'Variety'. Meanwhile, Colin Farrell-starrer "The Banshees Of Inisherin" won the second most awards of the night, including both supporting actor categories with wins for Barry Keoghan and Kerry Condon, who emerged as the correct winner after fellow nominee Carey Mulligan's name was initially called in error. Writer and director Martin McDonagh also won for Original Screenplay and Outstanding British Film.

Other than the unfortunate Best Supporting Actress mix-up, the ceremony ran without a hitch, featuring performances from last year's Best Supporting Actress winner Ariana DeBose and singer-songwriter Dylan.

BAFTA Chair Krishnendu Majumdar opened the ceremony by paying tribute to Elizabeth II, who died last September. Later in the ceremony, Helen Mirren -- who played the monarch in "The Queen" -- also delivered a two-minute tribute. As per 'Variety', Queen Elizabeth II's grandson Prince William and his wife, the Princess of Wales, were in the audience at the Royal Festival Hall on Sunday evening. The prince is President of BAFTA, an honorary role.

Also in the audience were nominees, presenters and guests, including Michelle Yeoh, Eddie Redmayne, Jamie Lee Curtis, Ariana DeBose and Daryl McCormack. Other attendees included Angel Basset, Jessica Henwick, Patrick Stewart, Emma Thompson and fashion designer Vera Wang.

Best Adapted Screenplay: "All Quiet On The Western Front". Best Supporting Actress: Kerry Condon for "The Banshees Of Inisherin".

Best Supporting Actor: Barry Keoghan for "The Banshees Of Inisherin".

Best Film Not In The English Language: "All Quiet On The Western Front".

Best Casting: "Elvis".

Best Editing: "Everything Everywhere All At Once".

Best Cinematography: "All Quiet On The Western Front".

Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer: Charlotte Wells for "Aftersun".

Best Animated Film: Guillermo Del Toro's "Pinocchio".

Best original Screenplay: "The Banshees Of Inisherin".

Best Special Visual Effects: "Avatar: The Way Of Water".

Best Documentary: "Navalny".

Best Original Score: "All Quiet On The Western Front".

Best Sound: "All Quiet On The Western Front".

Best Costume Design: "Elvis".

Best British Short Film: "An Irish Goodbye".

Best British Short Animation: "The Boy, The Mole, The Fox And The Horse".

Outstanding British Film: "The Banshees Of Inisherin".

Best Production Design: "Babylon".

Best Director: "All Quiet On The Western Front".

Best Make up & Hair: "Elvis".

EE Rising Star Award: Emma Mackey.

Leading Actor: Austin Butler for "Elvis".

Leading Actress: Cate Blanchett for "Tar".

Best Film: "All Quiet On The Western Front".

The BAFTA awards were held at the Royal Festival Hall in London and were streamed live on Lionsgate Play.



'Bittersweet time', says Austin Butler as he honours Lisa Marie after win

London | 'Elvis' star Austin Butler paid tribute to Lisa Marie Presley following his BAFTA win for Best Actor, reports 'Variety'. "It's been a really unimaginably tragic time, you know, and grief is a long process," Butler said in the winners' press room following his win, according to 'Variety'.

"And so my heart and my love was with [the Presley family] always. I feel honored to have been welcomed into the family. It's a bittersweet time." Butler also expressed how lucky he felt to portray the legendary singer, a thought that often crossed his mind while he was making the film.

"How lucky I was to get to have that experience," he said. "The feeling of standing on an international stage and looking out and looking down at the jumpsuit that I was wearing and realising there were certain moments where I was seeing the closest thing to what Elvis would have seen during his '68 Special or whatever that was and I miss it a lot. I miss that experience." "I don't miss the terror," he added, according to 'Variety'. "But I felt every day the elation that you feel with that. And I miss the people that I got to make the film with, they became completely like family to me. I really miss them a lot."

MEGAN FOX ADDRESSES 'BASELESS' MGK CHEATING ALLEGATIONS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Megan Fox claims no third parties were involved in her and rapper Machine Gun Kelly's alleged split.

The actress returned to Instagram to set the record straight amid various reports that her fiancé was unfaithful, reports pagesix.com.

"There has been no third party interference in this relationship of any kind. That includes, but is not limited to...actual humans, DMs, AI bots or succubus demons," the 'Jennifer's Body' star wrote in a statement via her Notes app.

"While I do hate to rob you of running random baseless news stories that would have been much more accurately written by ChatGPT, you need to let this story die and leave all these innocent people alone now." All other posts from Fox's feed have been archived after she temporarily deactivated her account last weekend. She is also currently following zero people after previously hitting the follow button on Harry Styles, Timothee Chalamet and Eminem, the latter of whom MGK notoriously feuded with over the years. As Page Six previously reported, the rumour mill went wild with theories during Super Bowl 2023 weekend when Fox shared a cryptic Instagram post, unfollowed MGK and eventually deactivated her account.



Rebel Wilson announced engagement to Ramona Agruma

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Rebel Wilson has announced that she has got engaged to her girlfriend Ramona Agruma. The 'Pitch Perfect' actress gave fans a look at their Disneyland proposal, reports aceshowbiz.com. The Australian beauty broke the exciting news on Instagram. She first shared a close-up photo that showed Ramona flaunting her engagement ring as they locked lips. Rebel followed it up with a picture of her and her now-fiance being surrounded by large bouquets of pink, white and yellow roses at Disneyland. While the 'Senior Year' leading lady and her partner were both down on one knee, the former held an engagement ring box from Tiffany's in her hand. In the caption, the comedienne exclaimed: "We said YES!"

The proposal took place just days after Rebel admitted that Ramona's family disapproves of their relationship. On the "Life Uncut" podcast, she opened up: "My whole family has just been amazing... Ramona's family hasn't been as accepting."

"And so in many respects, it has been a lot harder on her to have to make the news public. With her, she's not in the public eye, it's much harder on her," she continued. "It's so sad to see what happened with her family over it."

Hopefully, people will change their attitude about things." Rebel later confessed she felt forced to share her romance with the world before she was ready. She said: "There were a couple of hurried conversations that I would have liked to have just taken my time with. I've had instances with the Australian press being really mean towards me... It was just another thing in that line of nasty things that they've done over the years."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Maya Jama

Adele & Ed Sheeran declined to perform at King Charles' coronation concert

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singers Adele and Ed Sheeran have declined the offer to perform at King Charles' coronation concert. The 'Hello' hitmaker rejected the invitation while 'The A-Team' singer Ed found it "difficult" for him to perform at the May 7 show at Windsor Castle due to his gig in America, reports aceshowbiz.com.

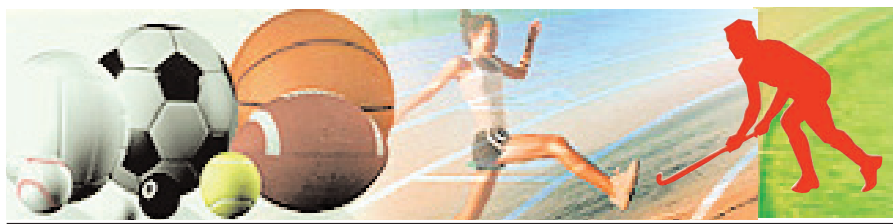
The Sun reported that Adele has nothing publicly scheduled for May 7 or after March 25 when her Las Vegas residency is set to end, but she is apparently "locked in to other commitments that will prevent her from attending."

"There is a team set up to get the talent signed up but they were unavailable, which was a massive disappointment. They are titans of the showbiz industry and are quintessentially British but also known across the globe. It's such a shame." Sheeran is scheduled to appear at a show in Texas the day before the coronation show, and insiders told the Mail that even though it would make it "difficult" for him to get to the Windsor show" he could still "make the nine-hour journey in time by private jet."

The singer closed the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pageant in June 2022 with his hit 'Perfect', chosen as a tribute to the then monarch and her late husband Prince Philip.

King Charles is said to want Harry Styles to play the show while Lionel Richie is said to be close to agreeing, as are the Spice Girls.





Women's T20 World Cup

INDIA CLINCH SEMIS SPOT BY BEATING IRELAND VIA DL METHOD

Gqeberha | Agencies

Harmanpreet Kaur's India clinched their place in the semifinals of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, beating Ireland in a must-win match by via D/L Method in a rain-interrupted match.

Having lost to England in a crucial Group B match, India had to beat Ireland on Monday to seal their place in the last four. They managed to put up a decent score of 155/6 in their 20 overs. Ireland were 54/2 in 8.2 overs when rain stopped play. India eventually won the match as Ireland fell short of the revised target by five runs. Ireland made a solid recovery after two early blows but were behind the DLS par score by five runs as rain interrupted proceedings in Gqeberha. A mix-up on the very first ball saw Hunter run at the wicket-keeper's end and Renuka Singh followed up her terrific new ball spell against England by cleaning up Prendergast to put India right



on top early on in the second innings. Earlier, Smriti Mandhana hammered a 56-ball 87 but the others failed to contribute big scores as India had to be satisfied with 155/6 in their 20 overs. Ireland could only send her back in the 19th over and soon followed it up with the wicket of Deepti Sharma on the next ball to peg India back pretty late. India opted to bat first after winning the toss and got off to a good start with Mandhana playing some crisp strokes. The openers put

on a half-century stand before Shafali Verma fell for 24 with Amy Hunter taking a good, low catch in the deep. Walking in at No.3, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur completed 3000 runs in T20Is, becoming the fourth women's cricketer to the landmark in this format. She forged a strong stand with Mandhana, who completed her half-century with a thumping six over mid-wicket. Harmanpreet fell in the 16th over, with Orla Prendergast taking a stunner

running in from the deep. Laura Delany added another wicket in the same over, sending back Richa Ghosh for a duck to complete a three-wicket haul.

Ireland, meanwhile, haven't quite been able to replicate the performance that saw them triumph against Australia in the warm-up match. They have lost all three matches so far but will hope to test the Indian lineup to notch up their first win at the Women's T20 World Cup. Harmanpreet Kaur and her team could have taken control of Group 2 and put one foot in the semi-finals with a win over England.

Brief scores

India 155/6 in 20 overs (Smriti Mandhana 87, Shafali Verma 24; Laura Delany 3-33, Orla Prendergast 2-22) beat Ireland 54/2 in 8.2 overs (Gaby Lewis 32 not out, Laura Delany 19 not out) by five runs (DL Method).

ISSF World Cup

India bags two gold medals on Day-2

Cairo | Agencies

India's 10m Air Rifle Mixed team of Narmada Nithin Raju and Rudranksh Balasaheb Patil and 10m Air Pistol Mixed team of Rhythm Sangwan and Varun Tomar clinched the gold medals in the ongoing ISSF Rifle and Pistol Shooting World Cup.

Indian rifle team trounced Hungary's Eszter Denes and Istvan Peni 16-6 in the gold medal play-off to bag the top spot on the podium.

Earlier in the 38-team qualifications round in the pistol event, India (635.8) and Hungary (631) bagged the top two spots respectively to make it to the gold medal playoff. While Germany and Switzerland were third and fourth with 629.7 and 628.9 respectively.

In the 10m Air Pistol Mixed team event, the pair of Rhythm and Varun Tomar routed Serbians Zorana Arunovic and Damir Mikec 16-10 to pocket the gold medal. Germany took third place after beating France 16-6 in the bronze medal play-off.



Rhythm and Varun have topped the qualifications with 583-17x followed by Serbia team 582-21x in second place to qualify for the gold medal match.

Another Indian team of Divya Subbaraju and Sarabjot Singh missed out on a medal round after finishing fifth

with a qualification score of 577-14x. The 19-year-old Varun also won bronze in the 10m Air Pistol Men event after beating compatriot Sarabjot in a bronze medal shoot-off. India has so far won three medals in the competition (2 golds and a bronze).

Border Gavaskar Trophy

Cummins flies back home due to family health issues, Hazelwood ruled out of Tests due to injury

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Australia captain Pat Cummins has flown back to Sydney due to a serious family illness but is expected to return for the third Test of the ongoing Border-Gavaskar series in Indore. Australia are yet to decide on whether to send David Warner home after the veteran opener was subbed out of the second Test in Delhi because of concussion.



Pacer Josh Hazlewood ruled out of the remaining two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar series against India due to his injury.

Australia coach Andrew McDonald confirmed that Hazlewood is flying home to continue his rehabilitation

from an Achilles complaint, cricket.com.au reported.

The injury which Hazlewood sustained in Sydney last month had sidelined him from the first two Tests in India. Meanwhile, visitors have better news as

Cameron Green is expected to be 100 percent fit for the third Test having come very close to playing in Delhi while Mitchell Starc is also in line to play. The third Test begins on March 1 at Holkar Stadium in Indore.

MAN UTD, TOTTENHAM BOTH WIN IN PREMIER LEAGUE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Manchester United confirmed their candidacy for the Premier League title thanks to a 3-0 home win over Leicester City.

Marcos Rashford continued his impressive run of form, with goals in the 25th and 56th minute of the game, with Jadon Sancho scoring Man Utd's third goal, although David de Gea had a good claim to be named Man of the Match after a series of impressive saves to assure a clean sheet, reports Xinhua news agency.

Emerson Royale put Tottenham ahead in the 56th minute after a measured pass from Ben Davis at the far post and Son Heung-min added a second in the 72nd minute. The South Korean had recently got into the match as a substitute and scored after an assist from Harry Kane.



Arsenal went back to the top of the Premier League with a thrilling 4-2 win away to Aston Villa, with their last two goals arriving deep into injury time.

The win lifted them back above Manchester City, who were held 1-1 away to Nottingham Forest, who were kept in the game in the first half by a series of fine saves by Forest keeper Kaylor Navas.

Bernardo Silva put City ahead in the fourth minute, but Chris Wood scored an important equalizer for the home side with six minutes left to play. Elsewhere, Seamus Coleman's cross/shot from a narrow angle gave Everton a win over Leeds United, which lifts Everton out of the bottom three and leads Leeds second from bottom.

Southampton stunned Chelsea with James Ward Prowse's free kick on the verge of halftime giving the bottom club a 1-0 win at Stamford Bridge.

La Liga

Barca remain eight clear after 2-0 win at home to Cadiz

Madrid | Agencies

Two goals in the last three minutes of the first half saw FC Barcelona win 2-0 at home over Cadiz, which keeps them eight points clear at the top of La Liga after 22 rounds.

Sergi Roberto and Robert Lewandowski scored the goals, which gave Barca, with several changes in their starting 11, three vital points, reports Xinhua news agency.

Real Madrid won 2-0 away to Osasuna thanks to late goals from Fede Valverde and Marco Asensio on Saturday night. Real Sociedad dropped two



points in a 1-1 draw at home with Celta Vigo.

Betis won a tight game 2-1 at home to an improving Valladolid thanks to a second minute goal from Juanmi and a penalty from Sergio Canales, which came after Cyle Larin's third goal in four matches, had drawn Valladolid level.

Rayo Vallecano and Sevilla shared the points after an excit-

ing draw in Vallecas after an exciting 1-1 draw.

Mallorca won 4-2 at home to Villarreal, who have now lost their last four matches and who weren't helped after Manu Trigueros was sent off just a minute after Tino Kadewere had put the home side ahead.

Jose Luis Morales drew Villarreal level in the 42nd minute, but Rodriguez put Mallorca ahead just two minutes later. Girona thrashed Almeria 6-2 with Valentin Castellano, Viktor Tsygankov, Rodrigo Riquelme, Javi Hernandez, Ivan Martin and Cristhian Stuani all scoring for the home side.

Strandja Memorial boxing INDIA'S NISHANT DEV OFF TO FLYING START

New Delhi | Agencies

Nishant Dev, the 2022 National champion, kicked off his campaign with a stellar victory at the Strandja Memorial International Boxing Tournament in Sofia.

Squaring off against Wang Peicheng of China in the 71kg bout, Nishant started by showcasing his swift movement and efficiently dodging his opponent's attacks. The southpaw smartly shifted gears as the bout progressed and utilised his attacking prowess to keep Peicheng at bay.

The Haryana-born boxer was in cruise control throughout the bout, landing powerful, accurate punches to assert dominance over his Chinese counterpart and securing a 5-0 victory by unanimous decision. He will now face the 2020 Olympic Games bronze medalist Aidan Walsh of Ireland in the Round of 16. In the other bout of the day, Sunita went down fighting against Patricio Shera Ma of the USA in the 54kg category, suffering a 0:5 defeat.



Carlos Alcaraz clinches title on season debut

Buenos Aires | Agencies

World no 2 Carlos Alcaraz, went more than three months without a competitive match due to abdominal and hamstring injuries, clinched the Argentina Open trophy on his season debut.

In his tournament debut, the Spaniard brushed aside Great Britain's Cameron Norrie 6-3, 7-5 to claim his seventh ATP Tour title and his first since last year's US Open.

Moreover, the 19-year-old became the first Spaniard to win the Buenos Aires trophy since Rafael Nadal in 2015 and tied Gustavo Kuerten as



the highest-ranked winner in tournament history at No. 2 in the ATP Rankings, according to ATP Tour.

Alcaraz started the year as the youngest ever world No. 1, but a hamstring injury forced him to miss the

Australian Open, as a result he lost the top spot to Serbian great Novak Djokovic.

With Sunday's win the Spaniard moved within 590 points of No. 1 in the ATP Live Rankings.

Serie A

Juve continue winning streak, Roma edge past Verona

Rome | Agencies

Juventus continued their upswing forms in Serie A by picking up a 2-0 away victory over Spezia, while Roma registered a slender 1-0 home win against Hellas Verona.



with a first-time volley.

The home side then put together waves of attack but Perin provided a string of saves to keep the scoreline down, while at the end Angel Di Maria came off the bench to seal the win with a missile out of the box.

With the victory, Juve climbed to seventh with 32 points but are still 12 points off fourth place AC Milan.

Elsewhere, new arrival Ola Solbakken jumped at the chance in his first start for Roma as the Norwegian slid in before the interval, earning the Giallorossi a precious victory.

Kyle Jamieson to undergo back surgery; likely to miss IPL 2023

Wellington | Agencies

New Zealand fast bowler Kyle Jamieson is set to undergo surgery for his injured back this week and will be out of action for three-to-four months, head coach Gary Stead said.

As a result of surgery and the subsequent rehabilitation, Jamieson will miss the forthcoming Indian Premier League 2023 season, set to take place from March 31 to May 28, where he was snapped up by Chennai Super Kings for INR 1 crore.

Jamieson's suspected back stress fracture is a recurrence of the injury that ruled him out of the England Test tour last June. The Kiwi paceman was on a comeback trail, as he has returned to play at the domestic circuit as well as a New Zealand XI warm-up match against



England in Hamilton.

He was named in the New Zealand squad for the ongoing home series against England. However, a suspected recurrence of the injury ruled him out of the series. New Zealand, who went into the first Test against England without the services of Matt Henry and Jamieson, suffered a heavy defeat.

Henry, who missed the first Test at Bay Oval due to the birth of his second child, will be rejoining ahead of the second Test, starting on February 24 here at the Basin Reserve.

Sr women's hockey nationals Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu win

Kakinada (AP) Hockey Punjab, Uttar Pradesh Hockey and Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu picked up three points each after victories in their respective matches as action continued in the 13th Hockey India Senior Women's National Championship 2023.

Hockey Punjab defeated Hockey Himachal 2-0 in their Pool F encounter. Shalu Mann (17', 58') led her team to victory with two goals while Sarabdeep Kaur earned the Player of the Match Award for running the show in this tightly-contested affair.

The second match in the Pool E was a rollercoaster ride with Uttar Pradesh Hockey winning against Hockey Andhra Pradesh 3-2.

Uttar Pradesh Hockey surged ahead through goals from Rakhi Rathor (16') and Vartika Rawat (33', 59') but Lolita Mary (39') and Garlanka Varahalamma (47') levelled the score for Hockey Andhra Pradesh. Hockey Andhra Pradesh conceded a penalty stroke at the end of the game, converted by Uttar Pradesh Hockey's Vartika to snatch the points back from Hockey Andhra Pradesh. Player of the Match Vinamrata Yadav was the star of the show, covering every corner of the pitch and sprinkling her magic all over. The Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu won their match against Le Puducherry Hockey in the last match of the day from Pool H by a 3-0 scoreline. The goalscorers for the Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu were Priyanga S (24'), Janani (49') and Player of the Match S Soniya (11').

Dortmund down Hertha to move second in Bundesliga

Berlin | Agencies

Borussia Dortmund scored two goals in each half to ease past struggling Hertha Berlin 4-1 at the closing of the 21st round.

The BVB needed some time to gain a foothold into the clash as Marco Reus's header marked the first chance of the game with 25 minutes played, reports Xinhua news agency.

Dortmund opened the scoring two minutes later when Karim Adeyemi benefited from a miscued shot from Reus and tapped the ball past Berlin goalkeeper Oliver Christensen.

The hosts gained momentum and made it two at the half-hour mark after Donyell Malen poked home Adeyemi's pinpoint cross to the back post from close range.

Hertha tried to pull back



but lacked in penetration as only Marc Oliver Kempf came close by header in the 34th minute.

Hertha increased the pressure but couldn't level the scores as Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel was equal to Florian Niederlechner's dangerous effort in the 51st minute.

Dortmund ceased its actions but still was able to restore its two-goal advantage after Reus curled home a free kick from 20 meters over the wall into the top right corner.



I'LL NEVER RETIRE FROM ACTING, WILL HAVE TO BE FIRED: SRK

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, whose latest release 'Pathaan' created a tizzy at the box-office, said that he will never retire from acting - he will have to be fired from it!

Shah Rukh treated his fans to a question and answer session, where one asked him about who will be the next big thing after he retires.

SRK replied: "I will never retire from acting...I will have to be fired...and maybe even then I will come back hotter!"

Talking about when he first saw himself on screen, the star said: "I get awkward seeing myself in screen."

A user asked him about his favourite car from his line-up and the one he would never sell, SRK told the user that all the news about his luxury cars is "bogus".

"Actually I don't have any cool cars...except Hyundai of course. All social media articles about luxury cars I allegedly have are bogus."

A user said that an FIR should be filed against the star for saying that he is 57-years-old. The fan also shared a picture of the actor flaunting his well-chiselled body.

To which, SRK replied: "Please mat karo yaar. Theek hai main hi maan jaata hoon I am 30 years old. There I have now told you the truth...and that's why, even my next film is called Jawan."

A fan asked him about his book, he replied: "Not yet but after I finish final shoot of Jawan and Dunki I will get back to it."

A netizen wanted the key to a happy married life from the superstar.

"Gauri has the most simple heart and mind. She has just kept us all believing in the goodness of family and love," said Shah Rukh.

One asked about what keeps him occupied when he does "absolutely nothing."

"Yes, I spend a lot of time doing nothing...it clears the mind for things that I need to do later. "Jo kuch nah karte woh kamaal karte hain."



'My biggest blessing'

Sonam Kapoor shares a heartwarming note as her son turns six months

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress and new mom Sonam Kapoor shared a heartwarming note as her son Vayu Kapoor Ahuja turns six months old. She expressed that being a mother was the best job in the world and called her son her "biggest blessing".

Sharing a photo and video of Vayu on Instagram, Sonam wrote: "6 months of my Vayu. The best job in the world... my biggest blessing... love you my dar-

ling boy...your papa and me couldn't have asked for more..."

In the photo, the mother-son duo looked adorable as she was wearing yellow pyjamas, while Vayu looked cute in a white onesie. Sonam also shared a short video of Vayu crawling, while playing with his toys.

Sonam's husband Anand Ahuja commented with heart eyes emojis and wrote: "pajama partyyyyyyy."

Sonam and Anand got married on May 8, 2018 after dating for a few years. They welcomed their son Vayu on August 20, 2022.



Ranbir says DDLJ inspired him to play charming lover boys in cinema

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Bollywood actor Ranbir Kapoor, who is back on-screen as the quintessential romantic hero in the much-awaited 'Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar', said that SRK's character Raj from 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge' (DDLJ) inspired him to play charming lover boys in cinema, having seen the iconic film at least 20 times.

"Raj was everything! You know, he could do anything! I think Aditya Chopra gave us a character that was aspirational, he was naughty, he was charming, like it shook you up! I know I saw that film probably 20 times in the theatre!" reveals Ranbir.

'DDLJ' is the longest running film in the history of Indian cinema as it still plays at Maratha Mandir in Mumbai. The actor was seen speaking about the film in Netflix's latest release 'The Romantics'.

From Aamir Khan to Salman Khan, from Shah Rukh Khan to Ranbir Kapoor, from Amitabh Bachchan to Ranveer Singh, from Rani Mukerji to Hrithik Roshan, from Katrina Kaif to Anushka Sharma, the mega-stars and icons of Hindi cinema have come together and spoken about Yash Chopra and YRF's contribution to Indian cinema in 'The Romantics'.

'The Romantics' has been directed by Oscar & Emmy-nominated film-maker Smriti Mundhra, who returns to Netflix after the phenomenal success of 'Indian Matchmaking' and the 'Never Have I Ever' franchise.



BHUVAN PRAISES SHEHNAAZ GILL AND CALLS HER THE 'TORCH BEARER' OF THE INDUSTRY

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Shehnaaz Gill made his talk show debut on Desi Vibes with Shehnaaz Gill. Bhuvan Bam, a social media star, was the next guest on her program, and the session included the duo discussing their highs and lows as well as engaging in some amusing banter. Shehnaaz questioned Bhuvan about why he came on Desi Vibes with Shehnaaz Gill as he settled into his seat. She noted how despite being one of the most popular YouTubers, he chose Desi Vibes to advertise his show. Bhuvan explained that it's all about 'vibes' with a wide smile. He stated that he had never met or spoken with Shehnaaz, but he felt a connection to her and the spirit of the program, so he said yes.

The actor-singer laughed when she said that she got the 'biggest YouTuber' on her show so that she could gain an advantage for her show, which streams on the platform. "Likes aur comments karna BBKivines ke fans," Shehnaaz said.

Shehnaaz Gill also discussed how her brother persuaded her to create a YouTube account since it allows her to earn money for the rest of her life.

"This is a man's world. I do want to help women get their rights," she said before being interrupted by Bhuvan Bam, who called her the 'torch bearer'.

Shehnaaz and Bhuvan also played a delightful game of 'This and That', in which he chose content over the controversy and YouTube over acting.



RESHAM SAHAANI PRAISES HANSAL MEHTA FOR INTRODUCING NEWCOMERS IN THE FILM

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Actress Resham Sahaani, who made her acting debut with Hansal Mehta's latest film 'Faraaz' also starring Zahan Kapoor and Aditya Rawal, shared her experience working with the filmmaker, spoke about her character.

The actress praised the director for introducing new faces in the movie. She shared: "Faraaz" by Hansal Mehta introduces two new actors coming from well-known families from the entertainment industry, Aditya Rawal (Nibras) and Zahaan Kapoor (Faraaz). But the story didn't just revolve around them. It was encouraging to see how beautifully my character or other characters were also brought to light. All the characters were important in moving the story for-

ward. In fact, Ayesha, played by me, is a character so fierce in her words and actions that she triggers the terrorists."

Talking about the idea behind the movie, she said: "Faraaz" revolves around a very sensitive terror attack. So hats off to Hansal Mehta for choosing new faces to present his film in a refreshing way. Had there been known faces, the audience would organically judge the actors and their personalities more than their characters in the film, but Faraaz as a film gives the audience an authentic perspective to relate to each character. All the new faces have outdone themselves in this film. Hansal Mehta has always managed to bring something new to the table." "It's very refreshing to see filmmakers who support and bring in newcomers. And I am really grateful and humbled for the opportunity that was presented to me," she concluded.



Riya Sharma, Ishaan Dhawan shares what makes their show intriguing

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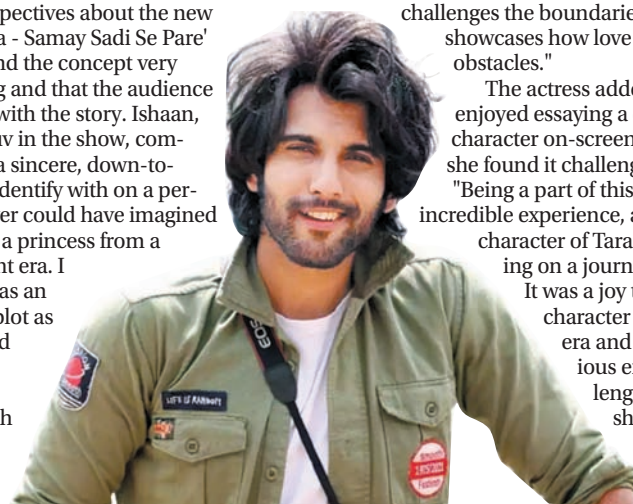
TV actors Riya Sharma and Ishaan Dhawan shared their perspectives about the new show 'Dhruv Tara - Samay Sadi Se Pare' and said that they found the concept very unique and intriguing and that the audience would also connect with the story. Ishaan, who is playing Dhruv in the show, commented: "Dhruv is a sincere, down-to-earth guy whom I identify with on a personal level. He never could have imagined falling in love with a princess from a completely different era. I believe the show has an extremely unique plot as although Dhruv and Tara's worlds differ entirely, they end up being attracted to each other."

While talking about the experience of

being part of the show and playing the role of a princess Tara, the 'Saat Phero Ki Hera Pherie' actress Riya added: "Dhruv Tara' is a timeless love story that challenges the boundaries of time and showcases how love can conquer all obstacles."

The actress added that though she enjoyed essaying a different kind of character on-screen at the same place she found it challenging also.

"Being a part of this show was an incredible experience, and playing the character of Tara was like embarking on a journey through history. It was a joy to bring to life a character from a different era and to portray the various emotions and challenges that she faces as she navigates through a new world," she added.



Sandeepa Dhar