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Connect Pinjore, Kalka, Zirakpur with Chandigarh through ...



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James Gunn all set to direct 'Superman: Legacy' ...



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Women's World Boxing C'ship: Nikhat starts with a ...



IS YOUR COUGH, FEVER DUE TO H3N2 VIRUS OR COVID?

ACCORDING TO DATA FROM THE INDIAN COUNCIL OF MEDICAL RESEARCH (ICMR), THERE HAS BEEN A COMBINATION OF RESPIRATORY VIRUSES RANGING FROM COVID-19 VIRUS, SWINE FLU (H1N1), H3N2, AND THE SEASONAL VICTORIA AND YAMAGATA LINEAGES OF INFLUENZA B VIRUSES IN CIRCULATION.

H3N2 AND H3N1 ARE BOTH TYPES OF INFLUENZA A VIRUSES, COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE FLU. SOME OF THE MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS INCLUDE PROLONGED FEVER, COUGH, RUNNING NOSE, & BODY PAIN. BUT IN SEVERE CASES, PEOPLE MAY ALSO EXPERIENCE BREATHLESSNESS AND/OR WHEEZING.

IN ADDITION, COVID IS ALSO ON THE RISE. MORE THAN 700 COVID-19 CASES WERE RECORDED IN A DAY AFTER A GAP OF OVER FOUR MONTHS, TAKING THE ACTIVE CASELOAD TO 4,623, ACCORDING TO UNION HEALTH MINISTRY DATA UPDATED ON THURSDAY.

Rachel V Thomas | New Delhi

India is currently seeing a surge in respiratory illness commonly characterised by cough, body ache, fever, and sore throat. But how to know whether it is influenza, caused by H3N2 virus, or Covid, caused by Omicron sub-variants XBB.1.16 and XBB.1.5?

Health experts note that it is very difficult to differentiate between the clinical manifestations of the three, and the differentiation is generally based on a laboratory diagnosis from a nasopharyngeal swab sample.

"The only difference is that in the present clinical scenario, Covid symptoms barely last for 2-3 days and the patient recovers soon without any hassles and any major treatment," Dr. Samrat Shah, Senior Consultant, Internal Medicine, Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital told correspondent.

"Whereas with H3N2 and H1N1 has more predilection for productive and wet coughs which lasts longer for a few weeks and has more chances of getting pneumonia or a secondary bacterial infection," Shah added.

Influenza is not fatal. But irrespective of the virus if there is a major comorbid factor there are more chances of morbidity and mortality. The risk is also high for young children, infants, adults with comorbidities, elderly people over the age of 65 years, patients who are pregnant, patients who are immunocompromised, etc.

The total number of deaths due to



H3N2 in the country has now reached nine, according to media reports. The Health Ministry, however, is yet to release the official death toll.

On the other hand, a total of 754 new Covid cases were reported in a span of 24 hours, while the death toll has increased to 5,30,790 with one fatality reported by Karnataka, as per the Health Ministry data updated at 8 a.m. on Thursday.

The doctors stated that coupled with the changing weather, pollution is also playing a pivotal role in multiplying the patient numbers impacted by viral infections.

The health experts advised people to follow Covid appropriate behaviours such as using masks, maintaining hand hygiene and avoiding crowded places. They also stressed on the need for an annual flu shot.

ICMR APPROVES NEW RT-QPCR KIT TO DETECT INFLUENZA, SARS-COV-2 & RSV

Chennai: The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on Thursday approved a novel RT-qPCR test kit by Chennai-based KRIYA Medical technologies that can detect influenza (H1N1, H3N2, Yamagata and Victoria sublineages), Covid-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

The approval of the kit marketed as KRIVIDA Trivus comes even as several parts of the country are facing a significant rise in these viruses.

The three pathogens have similar initial symptoms but differ in how the illness progresses, how easily they spread, and how they are treated.

The KRIVIDA Trivus effectively distinguishes influenza, SARS-CoV-2 and respiratory syncytial virus, within the shortest TAT (turnaround time), -- cycle time of 27 minutes, and the time taken for the result to be read can vary between 50-60 minutes. This can enable an immediate line of treatment, the company said in a statement.

The kit can also be used in all the available RT-PCR equipment.

The ICMR evaluated the kit at National Institute of Virology, Pune, using 225 known positive samples and 85 negative samples. The overall sensitivity of KRIVIDA Trivus is 99.11 per cent and specificity is 100 per cent.

CHANDRAYAAN-3 PASSES ISRO'S VIBRATION TESTS



Chennai: Indian space agency on Thursday said it had successfully completed the tests to check Chandrayaan-3 -- moon spacecraft -- to withstand the harsh vibration and acoustic environment that the spacecraft would face during its launch.

According to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the tests were conducted during the first week of March 2023 at the test facilities located at the UR Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru.

These tests are an essential part of the qualification and acceptance process for any spacecraft.

These tests were particularly challenging, considering the fact that the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft is a composite of three modules viz. Propulsion Module, Lander Module and the Rover module.

The vibration and acoustic tests carried out on the integrated spacecraft have provided sufficient confidence on the structural integrity and survivability in the launch environment, ISRO said.



Haven't spoken against India, will speak in House if allowed: Rahul

Team Absolute | New Delhi

At the centre of target of the government over his statement in London, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said that he will speak inside the House if allowed to and that he has not spoken anything which is anti-India. Gandhi was smiling when asked by the reporters in Parliament whether he will apologise for his UK speech. He said, "I haven't spoken anything anti-India," he said. Rahul Gandhi arrived in Parliament to attend the second part of the Budget Session for the first time after it started on March 13. Later in press conference, Gandhi said that he had met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday, and as four ministers have spoken against him, so he has the right to speak in the house. "I am hopeful that I will be allowed to speak at the floor of the house as an MP, I have

responsibility to the parliament," he said, but added that he doubts that he will be allowed and this is the "test of democracy". "I spoke about Adani in parliament but it was expunged... the government and Prime Minister are fearful about Adani. This is distraction as the PM wants to avoid questions on the issue," he claimed. Parliament was adjourned for the day on Thursday amid ruckus by treasury and opposition members in both Houses. As soon as the Lok Sabha convened for the day at 11 a.m., opposition members rushed towards the Speaker's podium, shouting slogans and waving placards seeking a JPC probe in the Adani matter. Treasury benches, on their part, also were seen shouting slogans, demanding Gandhi's apology for his remarks during his speech in London last week, where he had said that democratic values were under threat in India.

Army chopper crashes in Arunachal, two pilots dead

Team Absolute | Guwahati

Two pilots who were missing after an Army chopper crashed in Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday have died, an official said. "With regret we inform that the pilot and the co-pilot of the helicopter lost their lives in the accident," Army PRO Lt. Col. Mahendra Rawat told reporter.

The deceased were identified as Lt. Col. VVB Reddy and Major Jayanth A.

Five search parties of the Indian Army, SSB and ITBP were immediately launched after the news of the crash emerged.

The wreckage of the helicopter was found near Banglajaap village, near Bomdila. "A Court of Inquiry is being ordered to ascertain the cause of the accident," Rawat added. Meanwhile, army sources said that local villagers discovered that the crashed chopper caught fire and



they informed the police. The visibility in the area was very poor due to inclement weather, which may be the reason behind the crash. The Cheetah helicopter that was on an operational sortie was reported to have lost contact with the Air Traffic Control at 9.15 a.m. on Thursday morning.

LEMON PRICES SOAR TO RS 200 PER KG

Noida: With the onset of summer, the price of lemon has hiked to Rs 200 per kg. The wholesale rate of lemons has been reported as Rs 150-160 per kg.

Vegetable vendors say that the price increases at the onset of summer due to the increase in demand and decrease in supply. Mayan Rathore, a vegetable seller in Sector-12 of Noida, said that lemons dry up on trees due to the lack of proper irrigation and gradual increase in heat, which finally lead to reduction in their yield.

A hike in the prices of other vegetables is also expected.

HOW CAN COURT REINSTATE A CM WHO DIDN'T EVEN FACE FLOOR TEST AND RESIGNED: SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court, after hearing submissions for nine days, on Thursday reserved its judgment on a batch of cross-petitions of Uddhav Thackeray and Eknath Shinde groups in connection with the Maharashtra political crisis.

A five-judge constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and comprising Justices M.R. Shah, Krishna Murari, Hima Kohli and P.S. Narasimha, before reserving the verdict, shot a volley of questions at senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing the Thackeray group.

The Chief Justice asked Singhvi: "So, really the question is whether there was a valid exercise of power by the Governor to call for a trust vote? And what happens, if we come to a conclusion that there was no valid exercise of power by the Governor to call for a trust vote?"

Singhvi said everything falls. However, the bench that everything falls on would be simple but Singhvi stressed that is the core question and urged the court to allow him to present his case.

The Chief Justice further queried, "Then, according to you what, we reinstate the Uddhav Thackeray government? But you resigned."



As Singhvi said Thackeray's resignation and not facing the trust vote is irrelevant, the Chief Justice observed: "That is, the court being told to reinstate a government (which has resigned)."

The Shinde group was represented by senior advocates Neeraj Kishan Kaul, Harish Salve, Mahesh Jethmalani and advocate Abhikalp Pratap Singh. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta represented the office of the Governor in the matter. The hearing in the matter commenced on February 21.

MVA to contest all future polls unitedly, no seat-sharing formula

Mumbai: Enthused by the winning formula in last month's Kasa Peth (Pune) by-polls, the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) have agreed in principle to contest all future elections -- civic, assembly and parliament -- unitedly, party officials said here on Thursday.

The decision came after a series of meetings held among the top leaders of Congress, Nationalist Congress Party and Shiv Sena (UBT) in the past few days.

The final seal came at a meeting of the MVA top brass and their district and state leaders held here on Wednesday night, with a call to go out and work in tandem before the elections.

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गतिमान

गतिमानतेचे प्रमुख टप्पे

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- उच्च शिक्षण घेणाऱ्या अल्पसंख्यांक समुदायातील विद्यार्थ्यांस सुधारित शिष्यवृत्ती, शिष्यवृत्ती रकम ₹ ५० हजारपर्यंत
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CONNECT PINJORE, KALKA, ZIRAKPUR WITH CHANDIGARH THROUGH METRO: HARYANA CM

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday said metro connectivity should be extended to Panchkula district's Pinjore and Kalka towns from Chandigarh and Zirakpur town in Punjab under the Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP).

Chandigarh | Agencies

These routes should be included in the first phase of the metro project, he said at a meeting of the Comprehensive Mobility Plan, chaired by Punjab Governor and UT Administrator, Banwarilal Purohit, here.

Punjab Tourism Minister Anmol Gagan Mann, Chandigarh Mayor Anup Gupta, Haryana Chief Secretary Sanjeev Kaushal, along with senior officers from Chandigarh and Punjab, were present at the meeting.

A detailed presentation on the comprehensive mobility plan for the tricity which includes Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali was given by officials of the Rail India Technical and Economic Services (RITES).

Various proposals for mass rapid transport system to tackle tricity's growing traffic congestion was



discussed.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister suggested that important places like PGIMER, the Punjab and Haryana High Court and Punjab and Haryana's

joint secretariats and Vidhan Sabha should also be added in the first phase of the metro.

"Pinjore and Kalka should be connected with Chandigarh under the metro plan as it the gateway of Himachal Pradesh and movement of a large number of people takes place towards Panchkula and Chandigarh on a daily basis. This will further strengthen the Panchkula-Chandigarh connectivity, ensuring smooth flow of traffic," Khattar said.

He also suggested that the airport connectivity to Panchkula should be considered under the plan. "The metro should aim to improve and facilitate airport connectivity. A timeline in this regard should be prepared and it should be included under the mobility plan," he added.

Besides, the Chief Minister also suggested that the area of the Ghaggar river and new Panchkula extension should also be included in the expansion of the metro.

President Murmu arrives on two-day visit to Kerala



Kochi | Agencies

President Droupadi Murmu arrived in Kerala on Thursday, her maiden visit to the state after taking over the new post.

She was received by Governor Arif Mohammed

Khan, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and other top officials. Soon after her arrival, all the three left for naval air station INS Garuda.

She is slated to visit the indigenous Aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and would later award the President's

Colour to INS Dharmacharya, after which she will leave for the state capital city.

On Friday, she has multiple programmes lined up and after that she will return to Kochi and from there leave for Lakshadweep.

Bhopal, Indore Police Commissioners to swap posts

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has shifted Bhopal and Indore Police Commissioners among 12 IPS officers reshuffled on Thursday.

As per an order issued by the state Home Department, Bhopal Police Commissioner Makarand Deouskar and Indore Police Commissioner Harinarayanchari Mishra will swap their positions.

This is the first time the police commissioners of both major cities of Madhya Pradesh were transferred after the police commissionerate system was introduced in Bhopal and Indore from January 1, 2021.

According to the Home Department order, senior IPS officer Irshad Wali, who has been serving as IG, Bhopal Rural, has been made IG, Hoshangabad range, ADG Yogesh Mudgal, posted at Police Headquarters Bhopal, has been made ADG, Technical Services, and G. Akhetto Sema has been made ADG, Jails.

Deepika Suri, IG, Hoshangabad zone, has been posted as IG, Administration at the Police Headquarters, while 2001 batch IPS officer Pramod Verma has been made IG, Sagar Zone, Abhay Singh has been made IG, Bhopal Rural, and Shushant Kumar Saxena the IG, Chambal Zone.

LAND-FOR-JOB SCAM: CBI SUMMONS TEJASHWI FOR 4TH TIME ON MARCH 25

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday issued fourth summons to Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav in connection with the land-for-job scam.

He has been asked to appear before the probe agency on March 25.

Tejashwi has as of now skipped three summons. Before this, he was summoned to join the investigation on March 4, 11 and 14. Last time Tejashwi didn't join the probe after citing wife's health issues.

The probe agency had recently grilled former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi and former Union Railway Minister Lalu Prasad in the case.

The CBI has alleged that during the investigation, it was found that "the accused in conspiracy with the then GM and CPO of the Central Railways engaged persons as substitutes in lieu of land either in their name or in the name



of close relatives of the Lalu family".

The CBI had registered a case against Lalu Yadav, the then Union Railway Minister, his wife Rabri Devi, two daughters and 15 others, including unknown public servants and private persons.

"During the period 2004-2009, Lalu had obtained pecuniary advantages in the form of transfer of landed property in the name of his family members in

lieu of appointment of substitutes in Group 'D' posts in different Zones of Railways," the official said.

A number of residents of Patna themselves or through their family members sold and gifted their land in favour of the family members of Lalu Prasad and a private company controlled by him and his family.

"No advertisement or any public notice was issued for such appointment of substitutes in Zonal Railways, yet the appointees, who were residents of Patna, were appointed as substitutes in different Zonal Railways located at Mumbai, Jabalpur, Kolkata, Jaipur and Hajipur.

"In continuation of this modus operandi, about 1,05,292 Sq. feet land, immovable properties situated at Patna were acquired by Yadav and his family members through five sales deeds and two gift deeds, showing the payment made to seller in cash in most of the land transfer," the CBI had said.

CBI WON'T ARREST TEJASHWI YADAV THIS MONTH, SAYS DELHI HC

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday noted that Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will not arrest Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav this month in the alleged land-for-jobs scam case.

This development came a day after Tejashwi approached the High Court challenging the summons issued by the CBI asking him to appear for questioning in the case.

During Thursday's hearing, he told the court: "My wife is pregnant; I am a resident of Bihar, the (state) Budget Session is going on till April 5." Tejashwi's counsel contended that in 11 days his client had been summoned thrice -- February 28, March 4 and March 11. He further argued that their (CBI) endeavour is that when he comes to Delhi, they will arrest him. "They did this with another accused in the case," he argued. Representing the CBI, Advocate D.P. Singh argued that the Budget Sessions are not on Saturday and Sunday and that their charge sheet is ready to be filed this month. "I am saying on instructions, he will not be arrested, if he joins the investigation," Singh added. To this, Tejashwi's counsel told the court that he will appear after April 5. Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma noted that the petitioner is a Deputy Chief Minister with four portfolios and that the CBI will not arrest him.

Activist Sudha Verghese accused of trying to influence minor rape survivor in Bihar

Patna | Agencies

Begusarai police briefly detained Padma Shri and social worker Sudha Verghese along with her six-member team in connection with allegedly influencing minor rape survivor.

The district police also deleted the recorded statement of the victim from their mobile phones and then released them.

Sudha Verghese along with her team members and Patna High Court lawyer Ashok Kumar went to Sadar hospital and met the victim. Awanti Kumari, the SHO of women police station of Begusarai said that Sudha and her team were influencing the rape victim to give wrong statement.

"We have deployed cops for the protection of the victim. When Sudha Verghese and her team reached the Sadar hospital and started taking her statement, they were asking the victim to give a video statement according to what they were instructing her. The cops present there objected to



the act of Sudha Verghese and informed the senior officers of Sahebpur Kamal police station of the district," Kumari said.

"A team of Sahebpur Kamal police station reached there and detained them. They handed it over to us. During the detention, they were involved in creating ruckus with police officials as well as local journalists," Kumari said.

Ashok Kumar, the lawyer of Patna High Court, who was also a part of the team of Sudha Verghese, said: "The local police detained us and took our mobile phones.

ISRO'S LVM3 ROCKET TO LAUNCH ONEWEB'S 36 SATELLITES ON MARCH 26

Chennai: An Indian rocket LVM3 is scheduled to launch the 36 low earth orbit satellites of the UK-based Network Access Associated Ltd (OneWeb) on March 26 morning, the company said. The OneWeb is backed by India's telecom major Bharti Group and with the successful launch of the satellites on March 26, the company will complete the global footprint of its Gen 1 constellation.

OneWeb has 582 satellites now in orbit. On March 26 the total number is expected to go up to 618. By completing the constellation, OneWeb is taking a pivotal step forward in delivering global coverage including India, the company said.

According to OneWeb the second batch of 36 satellites will be launched by Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) rocket LVM3 at 9 a.m. Indian time on March 26.

The upcoming launch will be the 18 one for OneWeb.

The first batch of 36 satellites was launched on October 23, 2022 from Sriharikota rocket port in Andhra Pradesh with the LVM3 rocket formerly known as Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle MkIII (GSLV MkIII). ISRO's commercial arm, NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL) has signed a contract with OneWeb to launch 72 satellites in two phases for a launch fee of over Rs 1,000 crore, OneWeb Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal had said last October.



Over 20 feared buried in cold storage collapse in UP district

Sambhal | Agencies

A cold storage collapsed in Sambhal district on Thursday. More than 20 labourers are feared buried under the debris. According to reports, the incident took place in the cold storage of Mawai village in Chandausi.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed the officers to reach the spot immediately along with teams of NDRF and SDRF. Officials have been asked to ensure proper treatment to the injured persons.

The local people, meanwhile, have already reached the village and are helping in the rescue operation. Reports claim that after the collapse



of the building, an ammonia gas leak has also been reported.

The fire department team has reached inside and

plugged the leak. Seven to eight JCB machines are working to clear the debris and rescue those buried under it. Further details are awaited

'Odisha spent Rs 261.76 cr in construction of Birsra Munda Hockey Stadium'



Bhubaneswar | Agencies

The Odisha government has made an expenditure of Rs 261.76 crore for construction of the Birsra Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela, sports minister Tusharkanti Behera told the state Assembly on Thursday.

In a written statement to a question of BJP legislator Subash Panigrahi, the minister said Rs 124.94 crore from state budget and Rs 136.82 crore from District Mineral Foundation (DMF) fund has been utilised for construction of the hockey stadium.

However, the ministry of youth affairs and sports has not allocated any fund for the project, he said. Behera further informed that the

work was done by State PSU Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO) within the deadline.

Birsra Munda Hockey Stadium has created Guinness Book of World Records as it is the world's largest fully seated hockey stadium.

The stadium, which is now a benchmark in hockey infrastructure, was built in a record 15 months and has a seating capacity of 20,011 with uninterrupted viewing experience for all.

Last Men's FIH Hockey World Cup was organised in the stadium along with Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar in January this year. FIH Hockey Pro League was held in the Birsra Munda Hockey Stadium between March 10 and 15.

DELHI POLICE BUST GANG OF CYBER CHEATS, ARREST 9

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With the arrest of nine persons, Delhi Police on Thursday claimed to have busted a gang of cyber cheats who indulged in allegedly duping youths on the pretext of providing those jobs in private airlines.

The accused were identified as Manvendra Singh Rajawat, Vinit Singh Bhadauriya, Ajeet Singh Rajawat, Deepak Singh Chauhan, Surendra Pratap Singh, Rajat Sengar, Abhay Yadav, Satyam Singh and Shivam Singh Rajawat.

According to the police, a complaint from Burari resident Sumit Singh was received at the Cyber North police station via the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP) wherein.

The complainant alleged that he posted his resume on the Shine.com job portal and after a few days he received a call from a person posing to be a representative of IndiGo airlines, informing that he had been selected for a job. "Thereafter, he was made to speak with another person impersonating as an HR Manager and his tele-interview was conducted. After his interview, he was directed to deposit Rs 1,37,500 as fees for uniform, salary account activation, passport etc. Following this inducement, the complainant deposited the amount in a bank account provided by the accused," said Sagar Singh Kalsi, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (North).

After a while when the complainant persisted with the job offer, he was informed that due to some internal emergency, the company had stopped hiring and when he asked to return his money, the accused switched off his phone.

During investigation, the police team tasked with the probe zeroed in on the accused person's location at



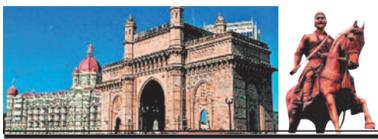
Sector 49 Noida.

"Raids were conducted but the accused had left the premises just a day before the team reached there. However, after sustained technical analysis, their location traced at a flat in Nawada, Uttam Nagar. But on reaching there, it was found that they had already moved towards the Bundelkhand area of Uttar Pradesh," said the DCP. However on March 14, the police team managed to nab all nine accused from Faridabad.

On interrogation, the accused told the police that they came to Delhi in search of jobs. "It was revealed that absconding co-accused, Amir and Shivam, were already cheating people through the same modus operandi and had been earning quick money. This sudden increase in their financial status of lured Manvendra Singh and he started doing this fraud on a large scale," said the offi-

cial.

"Therefore, he along with the other accused hatched a plan to dupe job aspirants in the same manner to earn quick money. To execute his plans, he brought together his relatives, friends and started a call centre. Fear of being caught by police or to not create any suspicion in the eyes of neighbours, the accused persons kept on changing their location. "Amir works for Shine.com and he used to provide data to the accused, who would call job aspirants for jobs in various private airlines based on their qualifications and experience. Fake tele-interviews were conducted on phones after which forged appointment letters were also transmitted to victims. Money in lieu of fee for uniform, opening of salary account, passport, security etc. were asked from victims on different pretexts in different bank accounts," the official added.



Mumbai cops detain 2 for trying to 'bribe & blackmail' Fadnavis' wife

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has claimed a political plot to frame him a day after his banker-singer wife Amruta Fadnavis, lodged a police complaint accusing a father-daughter duo of bribe-blackmail, here on Thursday.

Moving swiftly, the Malabar Hill Police Station detained the two persons -- a bookie, Anil Jaisinghani, and his daughter Aniksha, a professional designer -- from Ulhasnagar in Thane district. They have been booked under IPC Section 120(B), and Prevention of Corruption Act Section 8 and 12, and further investigations are on. Fadnavis said that his wife



Amruta came in touch with Aniksha for nearly one-and-half years. She (Aniksha) had visited the Fadnavis home and had tried to give a bribe of Rs One Crore and when they did not fall for it, resorted to threats and blackmail. Aniksha had given Amruta some designer clothes and

jewellery to be promoted at her social and public shows. Later, Fadnavis said that Aniksha allegedly tried to lure Amruta by revealing that her father was passing on information about bookies to the police, and said Fadnavis could make money by directing the police to either ignore

or act against those bookies, and they would show them more routes to rake in money. She also allegedly offered Rs 1 crore to them to help get her father off the hook in a case, and sensing a trap, Amruta had blocked her off. A couple of days later, Aniksha sent some video clips, voice and text messages to Amruta from an unknown manner. Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar, raised the issue in the assembly, after which Fadnavis said he has ordered a probe into the incident. Later, outside the legislature, Fadnavis pointed fingers at the erstwhile Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) saying a lot of sensational things, including some big names like an ex-Commissioner of Police, are likely to tumble out in this matter and he would speak after the investigations.

Two residents of same building die by suicide in Mumbai in 24 hours

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai: Two persons, including an 18-year-old boy and a 56-year-old woman, died by suicide as many incidents separated by a few hours in a building located in suburban Kandivali, police said on Wednesday.

The woman hanged herself in her flat on Tuesday as she was upset that her daughter couldn't become a mother, an official said. In another incident, an 18-year-old boy jumped from the building on Wednesday morning after his father shouted at him for not studying. His body was spotted by watchmen of the building and society members.

Police have registered cases of accidental death and further investigation is on, an official added.

Govt accepts most demands of farmers: Chief Minister Shinde

'LONG MARCH' HALTS IN THANE



Team Absolute | Mumbai

In what is perceived as a major victory for the farmers, the Maharashtra government on Thursday evening accepted almost all demands of the peasants, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said, after which the farmers' Nashik-Mumbai "long march" was halted en route at Vashind in

Thane. "We had very fruitful negotiations on all issues and most have been resolved. I shall make a statement in the legislature tomorrow morning," Shinde said, after emerging from a marathon meeting with over a dozen leaders of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS). Confirming the developments from the AIKS side, CPI-M MLA Vinod Nikole said that most pertaining to

the jurisdiction of the state have been sorted out while those in the Centre's ambit have yet to be resolved. "Accordingly, we have decided to halt the 'long march' at Vashind. The agitation is not called off till the government issues the relevant orders right up to the district level to implement our demands within the next two days," Nikole told media persons.

CBI arrests Assistant Labour Commissioner in bribe case

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday said that they have arrested an Assistant Labour Commissioner (Central) in Maharashtra's Nagpur for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 30,000 from two persons.

A senior CBI official said that a case was registered against Vijay Kumar Jaiswal, the Assistant Labour Commissioner (Central), Block-C, CGO Complex, Nagpur on complaint alleging a demand of bribe of Rs 30,000 each from two persons to issue cheques of their gratuity to them.

It was alleged that both the Complainants at the time of their retirement could not vacate the government allotted houses and the PSU referred their gratuity matter to the Office of Labour Commissioner (Central), Nagpur and deposited their gratuity amount with the said office.

"When the complainants contacted the accused to obtain their gratuity cheques, the accused allegedly demanded bribe of Rs 30,000 each from both the complainants. After



negotiation, the accused agreed to accept the reduced bribe of Rs 15,000 each," said the official. The CBI laid a trap and caught the accused while demanding and accepting the bribe money from the complainants. The official said that searches were also conducted at the office and residential premises of the accused which led to the recovery of documents related to property. The arrested accused was produced before the Special Judge, CBI Cases, Nagpur which remanded him to the CBI's custody till March 18.

Probe agency conducts search against Franklin Templeton in Mumbai, Chennai

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Enforcement Directorate is conducting searches at some places linked to asset manager Franklin Templeton and its former and current executives in Mumbai and Chennai as part of a money laundering investigation, officials said.

The federal agency is looking to gather more evidence as part of its investigation against the company and its promoters under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said. In November 2020, capital markets regulator SEBI issued a show-cause notice to the company following its April 2020 decision to wind up six debt schemes having Rs 25,000 crore of assets under management (AUM) from 3 lakh investors, citing liquidity challenges because of the pandemic.



Eventually, the company was asked to pay Rs 5 crore as penalty, return over Rs 450 crore collected as 22-month investment management and advisory fees, and was banned from launching new debt schemes for alleged irregularities in running the six debt schemes. The Chennai police economic offences wing (EOW) subsequently registered an FIR to probe these alleged irregularities. The Enforcement

Directorate case of money laundering stems from this complaint. In 2021, SEBI restricted the heads of the asset manager - Vivek Kudva and Roopa Kudva - from accessing the securities market and from buying, selling or otherwise dealing in securities, directly or indirectly, or being associated with the securities market in any manner, whatsoever, for a period of one year.

Mumbai woman murder: Police recover cutter, knife from house

Mumbai: The Mumbai police recovered cutters and a small knife from the house of the woman whose decomposed body was found in a plastic bag on Wednesday. The police said they suspect that the woman was murdered in December.

"The woman's arms and legs were chopped off after she was killed. This was done using cutters and a small knife which have been recovered from the house," an officer said.

Rimple Jain, daughter of the deceased, who was identified as Veena Prakash Jain, has been taken into custody. The sleuths said they haven't yet told her that she has been arrested in connection with the case, and she is still being questioned.

The investigators suspect that she might have committed the murder.

Earlier, on Tuesday, the police recovered the rotting body in a plastic bag kept in the cupboard in the Lalbhau area.

The police took custody of the body and sent it for post-mortem.

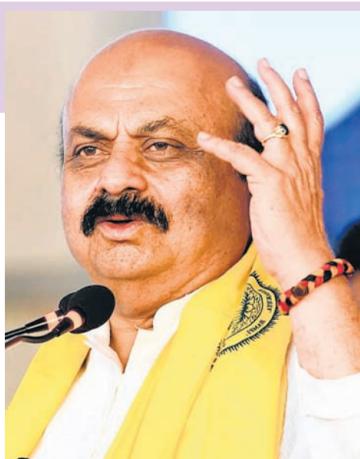
K'taka CM slams Maha govt over health cover insurance to border villages

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Thursday condemned the move of the Maharashtra government to provide health cover for people living in the Karnataka villages bordering the state of Maharashtra. Speaking to reporters, CM Bommai described the announcement of health cover insurance for people of Karnataka border areas as a big and unpardonable crime. "We can also announce such schemes. Many taluks and gram panchayats have taken a resolution that they are

getting justice under Maharashtra state and they want to join Karnataka. When the situation is like this, the government of Maharashtra should behave responsibly," he said. "When we spoke to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, it was agreed to wait till the judgment of the Supreme Court. It was also agreed not to undertake any provoking measures in this regard. Now that agreement is violated," CM Bommai stated. "The order by the Maharashtra government in this regard should be withdrawn. This matter will be brought to the notice of the Union Home

Minister," he said. Opposition leader Siddaramaiah had stated that the decision by the Maharashtra government to provide Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Health Scheme to 865 villages that are situated within borders of Karnataka is a challenge to the federal structure and sovereignty of the state. "Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde government, which is threatening federal structure, should be expelled by the central government. "I also demand that CM Bommai should resign as he completely failed to protect the interests of the state," Siddaramaiah said.



Ram Gopal Varma receives B. Tech degree 37 years after graduation

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma, who is known for films like 'Satya', 'Company', 'Shiva', 'Rangeela' and 'Sarkaar' franchise, has finally received his college degree 37 years after passing and after he changed the face of parallel Hindi cinema.

The director, who has introduced the novel concept of using cameras to tell stories through different angles, perspectives, took to

his social media to share the picture of the degree. The director wrote in the caption: "Super thrilled to receive my B tech degree today 37 years after I passed, which I never took it in 1985 since I wasn't interested in practicing civil engineering. Thank you #AcharyaNagarjunaUniversity #Mmmmmuuuaahh."

The degree is from Acharya Nagarjuna University, Andhra Pradesh and the year of passing is mentioned as 1985. The filmmaker graduated with a sec-

ond-class division. The tweet has amassed over 4,000 likes on Twitter.

Several netizens congratulated the filmmaker for receiving his degree. A user commented: "Ohhh wowww this is unbelievable and Awesome Congratulations Engineer Ramu garu. I'm feeling so nice to see this."

Another one wrote: "Civil engineering! That's the reason you used locations like - under construction buildings/structures in some of your earlier movies."

Filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri to appear before Delhi HC over tweets against judge

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri to appear before it on April 10 to tender an apology for his tweets against Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court, S. Muralidhar.

In December last year, Agnihotri had apologised to the Delhi High Court for his remarks but it had deferred the hearing after recording his submission that he will remain present personally in court for the hearing on March 16.

However, Agnihotri appeared via video conferencing on Thursday and said that he has fever. The court then listed the matter for April 10. An affidavit was filed by Agnihotri withdrawing his statement against the judge and tendering his apology. A division bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Talwant Singh had deferred the hearing last time.

"We are asking him (Agnihotri) to remain present because he is the contemnor. Does he have any difficulty if he has to express remorse in person? The remorse cannot always be expressed by way of an affidavit," the bench had said.

Agnihotri had put out tweets against Justice Muralidhar. Pursuant to the tweets, Agnihotri had put alleging bias against Justice Muralidhar.

As a result, contempt of court proceedings were initiated against the director.



Agnihotri's tweets were regarding the judge granting relief to activist Gautam Navlakha in the Bhima Koregaon case. In September 2022, the court had decided to proceed ex-parte against Agnihotri. Post which, he filed an affidavit expressing apology.

Agnihotri had mentioned in his affidavit that he himself had deleted his tweets against the judge.

However, the Amicus Curiae Senior Advocate Arvind Nigam had pointed out that it could be the social media platform which deleted the tweets and not Agnihotri himself.

SHARP BETS BIG ON 'MAKE IN INDIA' WITH EXPANDED HOME APPLIANCE PORTFOLIO

Team Absolute | Mumbai

SHARP Business Systems (India) Pvt. Ltd, a wholly owned Indian subsidiary of SHARP Corporation Japan, known worldwide for its unique technology products and solutions, today announced the launch of its new Top loading Washing Machine range, the latest addition to its expanding home appliance portfolio. Equipped with best-in-class Japanese technology to deliver hygienic and better cleaning performance, SHARP's newest offering is 'made in India' and available in three capacities starting from 7.5 kg to 11 kg with two color options including Mid black and Inox grey.

SHARP's range of Top-Loading Washing Machines features a stainless-steel drum with Waterfall Wash technology that brings new vigor to the machine-washing technique with even water spray from all sides throughout the wash cycle for far better and hygienic cleaning. In addition, the new range is outfit-

ted with Stainless steel insert pulsator that further improves the washing quality by giving more tumbleness to clothes. The pulsator's unique design ensures that clothes are thoroughly cleaned, while also being gentle on the fabric.

The SHARP Washing Machine is well-equipped to enable a clean and hygienic lifestyle. With 10 different wash programmes, it cleans both daily marks and tough stains with ease, keeping clothes fresh and like new for long cycles. It also features a unique 'Add Laundry Function' that allows users to add extra clothes to the washing lot anytime with ease. The machine automatically adjusts the time and water according to the additional

load. Besides, features like 'One Touch Start', 'Hot and Cold wash inlets', 'Soft Lid-Closure', and 'Tub clean' provide users with the flexibility and convenience to relax, unwind and enjoy life at home.

Speaking about the launch, Narita Osamu, Managing Director, SHARP Business Systems (India) Pvt. Ltd commented on the occasion, said, "SHARP is committed to 'Make in India' and we're excited about the progress we have made together with the support from our partners in India. Building on our continued legacy of quality and innovation in the home appliances market, we are very excited to launch our latest series of top load washing machines that offers best in class and hygienic cleaning experience clubbed with unique features that provides for unmatched flexibility and convenience. We're confident that this launch will mark a new milestone in our journey as we continue to invest in building

innovative products that will help expand our existing portfolio with offerings for Indian households."

Following its long-standing commitment to offer sustainable products & solutions, SHARP's washing machine comes with a 5-star energy rating offering superior efficiency that saves on time, energy and environment. The new set of washing machines are covered by the Japan Quality Seven Shield that ensures better durability and long life of the products; ensuring protection against possible harms caused by voltage fluctuations, fire, corrosion and even rodents.

SHARP's new range of top load washing machines come with a 2-year product warranty with an extended 10-year warranty on the motor, making them an exceptional investment for homeowners. Price of the new series of washing machines begins at INR 24,500 and will be available for purchase online at Amazon.in. In addition, they can also be purchased offline at authorized retail outlets limited to those located across Mumbai, Pune, and Kochi.





EDITOR'S SPECS

Drinking coffee may help you in weight loss

Drinking coffee, a rich source of caffeine, may help curb the amount of body fat and reduce the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, suggests a study. Researchers from the Imperial College London found that people who carry genetic variants associated with slower caffeine metabolism drink, on average, less coffee, yet have higher levels of caffeine in their blood than people who metabolise it quickly to reach or retain the levels required for its stimulant effects. The research published in the journal *BMJ Medicine* concluded that the speed at which coffee is metabolised by the body may impact the weight. To find out, the study looked at the role of two common genetic variants of the CYP1A2 and AHR genes in nearly 10,000 people of predominantly European ancestry. The CYP1A2 and AHR genes are associated with the speed of caffeine metabolism in the body. The results of the analysis showed that people with higher plasma caffeine levels enjoyed a lower body mass index (BMI) and body fat, alongside a lower risk of developing type two diabetes. "Ninety-five per cent of your caffeine is metabolised by an enzyme," Dipender Gill, clinical scientist at the Imperial, was quoted as saying *Independent.co.uk*. "Two genes - CYP1A2 and AHR - affect the function and level of that enzyme. Using these genetic variants, the team found that slower metabolisers have higher plasma (blood) caffeine levels, and those with higher plasma levels go on to have a lower BMI and risk of diabetes, Gill said. However, more research is needed, the team said. It is because caffeine has been associated with lower sleep quality and increased palpitations.

BARREN FIELDS, DWINDLING YIELDS: HOW BT COTTON DITCHED FARMERS OF MADHYA PRADESH

SHISHIR AGRAWAL

At a time when the much-hyped Bt cotton crop is giving heartburn to farmers, the Union Government is slowly setting the stage for the roll-out of genetically-modified (GM) mustard. Last October, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change approved the field trials of Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11 developed by former Vice Chancellor of Delhi University Deepak Pantel.

While the government argues that the GM variety will increase mustard production and reduce the country's reliance on edible oil imports, anti-GM activists are wary. They have before them the poor show put up by Bt cotton, the first genetically modified crop in the country.

They have seen how the guarantee of better yield and claims of reduced requirement of pesticides and chemical fertilisers have gone with the wind. Apparently, the few things that Bt cotton farmers ended up with were barren fields and increased input costs.

Take the case of Madhya Pradesh, which accounts for 18.69 lakh cotton bales (in 5.47 lakh hectares) of the total 352 lakh bales (in 1.18.81 lakh hectares) produced in the country. Khargone, Barwani, Khandwa and Burhanpur are the main cotton-producing districts here.

Cotton crop covers a total of 2,11,450 hectares in Khargone, according to statistics from the Farmer Welfare and Agriculture Development Department. A resident of Mogargao, Chhagan Chauhan (50) has come to Khargone's cotton market to sell 2.6 quintals of cotton. This year has proved to be better for him. "Today, I got Rs 8,500 per quintal. This price is good for me," he beams.

Last year, incessant rains and pest attacks destroyed half of his crop. "Ideally, 10 packets of Bt cotton seeds that I sprayed on the field should have got me about 40 quintals of cotton. But I harvested just 16 kg. Thankfully, pests have spared me this time," he sighs.

Temla-based Shyam (24) has been assisting his father Anil Dhangar (55) in cultivating Bt cotton on seven acres for the last two years. Ask about the challenges they face, Anil says, "Getting a good price for the yield and worm infestation are our biggest worries." He unrolls a cotton boll in his hand. "See, the pink-coloured insect (Pectinophora



gossypiella) has made a home here, damaging the seed kernel. Now, this cotton fruit will not grow into a flower to give yield. The only thing left to do is to remove it from the field as quickly as possible," he says, adding that pest attacks began late this year compared with the previous year when around 40 per cent of the crop was affected.

Bogus claims
Four types of caterpillars - Pink Bollworm, Spotted Bollworm, American Bollworm and Tobacco Cutworm - are found in cotton. Of them, Pink and American bollworm attacks are common in India. A 2018 survey conducted by the Central Institute of Cotton Research found that the incidence of pink bollworm had increased from 5.17 per cent to 73.82 per cent between 2010 and 2017 in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

The irony is that the government had permitted the commercial cultivation of the first generation Bt cotton (Bt-1 cotton) in 2002 to prevent insect attacks, while its second generation (Bt-II) was launched in 2006 by combining two Bt (Bacillus thuringiensis) proteins (Cry1Ac+Cry2Ab) with the promise to specifically target the pink bollworm.

Adoption of Bt cotton soared to 81 per cent in 2007 and 93 per cent in 2011 as farmers thought pest-resistant varieties were their best bet. Unlike other crops, new seeds have to be bought from the market each time to cultivate the GM variety. What's more, a packet of

seeds weighing 450 gm costs Rs 750!

Though things are not in their favour, a return to natural cotton varieties is near impossible for farmers as only GM varieties are available in the market. According to experts, Bt cotton has become so prevalent that they make up for 98 per cent of the cotton fields nowadays.

"All the farmers in Khargone and Burhanpur district grow Bt cotton only. Helicoverpa armigera was the first pest to attack our crops. Pink bollworms were not to be seen in the initial years," says Mahesh Patidar (52) of Temla.

Agriculture expert and senior journalist Devinder Sharma tells 101Reporters that Bt cotton's ability to resist pests has come down in just two or three years after its arrival. "This is a scientific fraud... All the claims made about Bt cotton have been proved wrong. As far as the increase in yield is concerned, if you examine the data on irrigation, it will be clear that the production has not increased solely due to the introduction of GM variety. There are other reasons too," he explains, adding that the government should withdraw it now.

Farmer leader Vijay Jawandhiya, also an anti-GM activist, reiterates this point. "Production has not increased just because of the seeds. The use of chemical fertilisers has also increased, and so has irrigation." According to a study by KR Kranthi and GD Stone, Bt cotton's contribution to increased yield is only 4 per cent. It has also been revealed in the study that after 2018, the yield decreased as compared to the initial years.

Four flowers come out of one boll of cotton. In September, pink caterpillars start appearing. Sometimes, the entire ball is covered with worms. By November, the cotton-picking season also begins. As the farmer cannot pick cotton from plants with caterpillars, he has to remove the remaining plants also by running a rotavator to use as waste.

Sandeep Yadav (35) of Behrampur Tema claims the yield has been dropping over the years. "In 2014, I could get 22 quintals of cotton from one acre of land. Today, I somehow manage to get five to six quintals from the same land." While highlighting the increased use of insecticides, he says, "Suppose I have sprinkled insecticides worth Rs 50,000 this year. Next year, their prices would be around Rs 55,000."

Like in the rest of India,

chemical fertiliser prices in Madhya Pradesh have gradually increased by 62 per cent from 2007-08 to 2014-15. According to Devinder Sharma, the cost of pesticides has increased "by 30 per cent in the last 20 years".

Soil quality
Dr GS Kulmi, senior scientist and head of Khargone's Krishi Vigyan Kendra, confirms the increased use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers over the years. "Soil microbes have reduced and so has their ability to multiply. This has affected soil quality, leading the farms to barrenness."

Take the case of Madhav Yadav (38), who has been using more chemical fertilisers and pesticides in his field in Behrampur Tema with each passing year to save his crop. He is into cotton farming for the last 20 years and has been facing pink bollworm attacks for the last three years.

"Pink bollworms damage around 30 per cent of my crop every year. As I have been spraying more pesticides and fertilisers to make up for the losses, the land has become hard. Earlier, we could easily stir the soil using a cultivator, but now it is a pain," says Madhav.

Noting that the soil's carbon content is decreasing, Jawandhiya says only a return to the traditional use of livestock manure or compost can reverse this condition. Sandeep, on the other hand, notes that farmers are opting out of livestock rearing, which naturally reduces the availability and use of natural fertilisers.

The spraying of pesticides on cotton has had a cascading effect on the other crops. "Worms can be seen in my maize and wheat crops now. There was no need to spray chemicals on them until three years ago. But now, it is needed once or twice to protect the crop," says Madhav.

Dr Kulmi thinks the changes in the environment and pesticide use are the possible reasons. "Heat has increased and the rain pattern has changed. Earlier, fall armyworm was seen in maize only in South India and not in the fields here. The more pesticides you use, the more resistant insects become. In this case, the pests have become polyphagous, which means they can attack more than one type of crop."

international

GARCETTI CONFIRMED AS US AMBASSADOR TO INDIA

Yashwant Raj | Washington

Eric Garcetti was confirmed as the next US Ambassador to India on Wednesday, ending a logjam that had left an important American mission abroad without a regular envoy for almost two years and his fate in the balance.

The US Senate confirmed him in a 52-42 vote with cross-voting from both parties, with several Democrats voting against Garcetti, a nominee of the Democratic President Joe Biden, and several Republicans siding voting for him.

Garcetti, a former Mayor of Los Angeles, was once a rising star in the Democratic party, but had had come under severe criticism lately for ignoring complaints of sexual harassment against one of senior aides. His nomination had been stalled over these allegations, which came up



during his confirmation hearing.

President Biden had first nominated him in July 2021, but it did not proceed and it was technically deemed as returned to the White House, to either be re-sent or replaced.

The Biden White House sent back the nomination this January when the new congress went into session, demonstrating the administration's unwavering backing for him, which, it

was noted, will hold him in good stead by those who may tend to consider him damaged because of the protracted fight over his confirmation.

Garcetti's re-nomination had run into fresh trouble in February when Republican Senator Marco Rubio announced a hold on it along with a bunch of others, including Rich Verma, who has been named to be a Deputy Secretary of State, and Geeta Rao Gupta as Ambassador at large for global women's issues.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 13-8 to approve his nomination last week, setting up a vote by the full 100-member senate.

With Garcetti's nomination stalled and the Biden administration refusing to name a nomination, observers of the bilateral relationship wondered if this was a manifestation of a deeper problem between India and US,

because this was possibly the longest America has not had an ambassador in New Delhi.

This prolonged period of no-ambassador also coincided with extraordinary delays in issuance of US visas in India, with the waiting period for first-time applicants for business and tourism visas reaching two years at its worst (it's been cut down considerably now).

Garcetti was once widely expected to run for White House, given his credentials: Hispanic descent, top Democratic operative, a top operative in a presidential campaign, Rhodes scholar at Oxford and alumnus of London School of Economics. Fifty one-year-old Garcetti is close to the White House and was once considered a potential member of the Biden cabinet but the same allegations that came up during his confirmation hearing had come in his way.

Marriages in S.Korea hit fresh low in 2022

Seoul | Agencies

The number of marriages in South Korea crashed to yet another record low in 2022, adding to concerns over the country's already plunging birth rate, data showed on Thursday. Around 192,000 couples tied the knot in Asia's No. 4 economy last year, slipping 0.4 per cent from 2021, according to the data from Statistics Korea.

The number is the lowest since 1970, when the statistical agency began compiling related data, and represents the 11th straight year of shrinkage, reports Yonhap News Agency.

The decrease nevertheless slowed from a 9.8 per cent on-year drop tallied in 2021, apparently as couples who had delayed their marriages during the earlier stages of the Covid-19 pandemic held weddings.

South Koreans in their 20s further distanced themselves



from getting married in 2022.

The number of marriages in the age group 25 to 29 decreased 8.4 per cent for men and 7.2 per cent for women on-year.

The average age for grooms getting married for the first time came to an all-time high of 33.7 in 2022, up 0.4 from a year earlier, and brides reached a new record of 31.3, up 0.2 over the period. The number of couples getting divorced, meanwhile, came to 93,000 in 2022, down

8.3 percent from a year earlier. Couples who have been married for four years or less accounted for 18.6 per cent.

The number of divorces marked the lowest level since 1997, when the figure came to 91,160.

The number of South Koreans marrying foreign spouses stood at 17,000 in 2022, up 27.2 per cent from the previous year.

The latest tally came amid South Korea's chronically low childbirths.

26 KILLED, 4,368 INJURED DURING FIRE FESTIVAL CELEBRATIONS IN IRAN

Tehran | Agencies

At least 26 people were killed and 4,368 others injured in Iran between February 20 and March 14 in incidents related to the celebrations of Chaharshanbe Suri, or the Fire Festival held two days back, official news agency IRNA reported.

Among the injured, 229 people were amputated for serious injuries and 1,428 others sustained eye injuries, Jafar Miadfar, head of Iran's National Medical Emergency Organization, was quoted as saying on Wednesday.

The number of casualties this year has registered a year-on-year increase of 22 per cent, according to Miadfar.

The provinces with the most casualties were Tehran, East Azarbaijan, Hamedan, West Azarbaijan, Qazvin, and Fars, said Miadfar.



Men make up 79 per cent of those injured, while 44 per cent of those injured aged between six to 18 years, he added. The Fire Festival is celebrated by Iranians on the eve of the last Wednesday before Nowruz, the Iranian new year that begins on March 21 this year. Celebrations often start days before the festival, Xinhua news agency reported.

Iranians celebrate the Fire Festival by jumping over bonfires and lighting firecrackers in public places to bid farewell to the old year and welcome the new one.

7.0-MAGNITUDE QUAKE JOLTS NZ'S UNINHABITED ISLAND

Wellington: A 7.0-magnitude earthquake jolted the uninhabited Kermadec Islands, located about 1,000 km northeast of New Zealand's North Island, on Thursday, with a depth of 10 km. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii issued a tsunami warning for coasts within 300 km of the quake epicentre in the South Pacific, Xinhua news agency reported.

"Tsunami waves reaching 0.3 m to 1 m above the tide level are possible for some coasts of Kermadec Islands," it added. There is however, no tsunami threat for New Zealand following the strong earthquake, according to the National Emergency Management Agency.

Judge ready to halt arrest attempts if Imran surrenders in court

Islamabad | Agencies

Pakistani judge on Thursday said that he would stop the Islamabad police from arresting former Prime Minister Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case if the latter surrendered in court.

Additional District and Sessions (ADSJ) Judge Zafar Iqbal made the remarks while hearing the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) reference seeking criminal proceedings against Khan for concealing details of the state gifts, Dawn reported.

The sessions court was set to indict the PTI chairman in the reference on February 28, but his lawyer had requested the judge that he be exempted from the hearing because he had to appear in several other courts.



His indictment was deferred multiple times before. The judge had subsequently issued non-bailable warrants for

Khan and instructed the police to present him in court by March 7. The former premier managed to dodge the arrest and later

approached the Islamabad High Court (IHC) for the cancellation of the warrants, Dawn reported.

The IHC, while granting some relief to the PTI chief, had told him to appear in sessions court by March 13, but the former prime minister once again skipped the hearing.

Resultantly, ADSJ Iqbal had on Monday re-issued non-bailable warrants for Khan and directed the police to bring him to court by March 18.

However, when the police reached his Zaman Park residence in Lahore to arrest him on Tuesday, they were met with resistance, leading to two-way pitched battles between PTI supporters and law enforcement agencies, Dawn reported.

The clashes ultimately subsided after the courts intervened on Wednesday.



VIOLENCE OVER TRIBAL WOMAN'S DEATH: SECTION 144 IMPOSED IN INDORE



Team Absolute | Bhopal

In a bid to normalise the situation after the suspicious death of a 23-year-old tribal woman and death of a youth in police firing during a violent protest in Indore's Mhow, the administration on Thursday imposed Section 144 in the areas falling under as many five police stations.

A decision has been taken sensing that the tension may prevail again after the death of tribal youth. Briefing the press, Indore Collector Ilayaraja T. on Thursday said adequate police personnel have been deployed in the area. Besides police, administrative officials were also deployed to monitor the situation in tensed areas.

"Section 144 has been imposed in five police stations, including Mhow. Any kind of protest, gathering of people or rally will not be allowed in prohibited areas. Decision has been taken sensing the situation following the incident. The administration stands with the families of the victims and all possible help will be provided," Ilayaraja T. said.

The boy, who died in police firing, has been identified as Bherulal, and a compensation of Rs 10 lakh has been announced by the district administration. The funeral of the deceased boy has been performed amidst tight security, Collector said.

On Wednesday, a 23-year-old tribal woman, who was preparing for competitive exams, was found dead in a rented room.

Alleging that the woman was gang-raped and murdered, the family members staged a protest while keeping the body on the road. The protesters pelted stones and damaged a local police station, and vehicles were set on fire. At least, six cops were reported injured due stone pelting. Sensing the trouble, the police used teargas and fired shots to disperse the crowd. During the firing, tribal youth - Bherulal died.

However, when asked who ordered firing on protesters, Collector Ilayaraja said the matter was under investigation. "A magisterial inquiry has been ordered to probe the entire incident. Things will be clear only after investigation. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is monitoring the situation. At present, the situation is under control," he added.

Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra said - "There are contrary in claims of two groups regarding the incidents." He added, "While the family of deceased woman claimed the death occurred due to electric current, while the others who protested and injured cops, are saying the woman was raped and murdered. Chief Minister has ordered for a magisterial inquiry in the matter and the truth will come out soon."

PEOPLE OF THE STATE SHOULD TAKE THE PLEDGE OF VACCINATION: CM CHOUHAN



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that vaccination helps us in fighting deadly and infectious diseases and also provides us protection from diseases. On National Immunization Day, Chief Minister Chouhan has appealed to the people of the state to take a pledge to get necessary vaccines for them and their family members on time.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that it is also necessary to motivate your acquaintances and relatives for vaccination. It is noteworthy that National Immunization Day is celebrated every year on March 16 with the aim of honouring and encouraging the hard work and efforts of the frontline health workers engaged in ensuring immunization.

Bulldozer targets men accused of murder in Damoh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A bulldozer was used to raze standing crops belonging to a group of men accused of murder in Madhya Pradesh. Jahar Singh, Umaid Singh, Makhhan Singh, Arjun Singh were accused of a double murder which took place two weeks ago. The men are on the run.

Two weeks ago, two elderly men, Badri Shukla, 68, and his brother Ramsevak Shukla, 65, were shot dead over a land dispute in Damoh district. The men had bought three acres of land in 2021. Since then, there was a dispute with the family of the accused.

On February 28, the Singhs wanted to take their tractor from the fields of the Shuklas, but the family refused, the police said. Shortly after, Jahar Singh, Umaid Singh, Makhhan Singh and Arjun Singh reached Shuklas' home and shot them dead.

After investigating the case, the local police brought in a bulldozer today and razed the crops on the Singhs' land. Sources said the Singhs had



apparently grabbed government land. The family had also taken possession of part of the government school building and a borewell in the village, the police said. According to Tehsildar Vikas Aggarwal, property worth over Rs 25 lakh has been seized.

District collector S Krishna Chaitnya said, "In Hinauta's double murder case, the revenue department had identified the encroachment by the accused. Two kutchha houses were demolished, they also encroached on the government for farming, so a joint team of revenue and police took action and the encroachment was removed."

Two days ago, the Brahmins held a big protest march in Damoh. The protesters had accused the administration of trying to shield the accused from the Lodhi community because of political influence.

Three persons were arrested in connection with the gang-rape of a minor. A fourth one, Kaushal Kishore Chaubey, is on the run. The police said he had illegally built a house on occupied land. The police also demolished the house.

The officer who led the bulldozer team said it was a heinous crime and the cops did a "good job". Such actions deserve such a punishment, he had said.

CM Chouhan plants peepal, guava and mulberry saplings



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of peepal, guava and mulberry along with Micro, Small and

Medium Enterprises Minister Omprakash Sakhelecha at the Smart Garden located in Shyamla Hills. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Sanjay Dongar and Prateek Kumar of TV news channel

Swaraj also planted saplings. Social worker Sargam Chouhan planted a sapling on his birthday. Mukhya Mantri Jan Seva Mitra Shri Saurabh Chouhan also participated in planting saplings.

2 women married to same man reach an "Agreement" to split days with him

Team Absolute | Gwalior

A man and two women, including his first wife, have decided to live peacefully in two separate houses by dividing three days each of a week between them and also with the liberty to the man to spend the seventh day with the woman of his choice, said a lawyer associated with the family court in Gwalior city.

However, counsellor and advocate Harish Diwan termed the "agreement" between them illegal as per Hindu law.

The story of the two women and a man, who is an engineer, came to light when the man again entered into wedlock with a female colleague in Gurugram after he left his wife in Gwalior during the COVID-19 pandemic, Harish Diwan said.

His first marriage took place in 2018 to a Gwalior-based woman and they lived together for two years. During COVID, he sent his wife to her



parents' home and went back to Gurugram, he said.

When he did not return till 2020 to take her legally wedded wife, she grew suspicious and went to his Gurugram office. She learnt that he had married a colleague and a girl was also born during the period, Harish Diwan said.

The woman fought with the man publicly and protested in the office

over his second marriage. She then approached a family court in Gwalior for justice, he said. Later, her husband was summoned to Gwalior. Despite attempts to counsel him, the man refused to leave the second woman, Harish Diwan said.

His wife as well as the second woman were counselled but they were not ready to understand, he said. Later, the trio entered into an

agreement according to which the man will spend three days of a week with his wife and another three with the woman he allegedly married, with the liberty to live with the woman of his choice on Sunday, Diwan said.

He provided a flat each to his wife as well as the other woman in Gurugram and also agreed to share his salary equally with them as per their agreement, Harish Diwan said.

When asked whether this agreement has any legal sanctity, Harish Diwan said, "This agreement was done between three of them with mutual consent. Neither the family court nor the councillor has any role in it." "In fact, the three were categorically told that they are Hindu and as per Hindu law, this agreement between them is illegal. As per the law, a Hindu man cannot marry another woman until he divorced his first wife in a legal manner, but they decided to go ahead with their pact," Harish Diwan added.

Raveena Tandon in Bhopal to celebrate birthday of her daughter Rasha

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Film actress Raveena Tandon is in the city to celebrate the birthday of her daughter Rasha Thadani. According to sources, the birthday bash will be held at Jehan Numa Retreat on Thursday evening. Around 200 people have been invited including forest minister Vijay Shah and his family etc. Rasha turned 18 this year. Raveena shared the pictures on Instagram story of cake cutting ceremony of daughter Rasha's birthday at Jehan Numa Retreat on Wednesday midnight. Raveena reached Bhopal on Wednesday along with her daughter. The sources said that Rasha is going to shoot her debut movie in the city from Friday along with nephew of film actor Ajay Devgan. This is the first visit of Tandon in Bhopal this year. In November last year, she came here to shoot. She had shared a video of her happy moments in Bhopal on Instagram. She expressed her love for Bhopal and its people. She gave glimpses of various locations in Bhopal with many people, samosas and tea.



Raveena also visited Bhojpur temple situated in Bhopal on Thursday. She shared the pictures and videos on her Instagram story in which she can be seen bowing down in front of the Shivaling. Bhojpur temple is located about 30 kilometers away from Bhopal. The temple is situated on a hill in the middle of the Vindhya ranges on the banks of Betwa

river.

Forest department has made Bollywood actor Raveena Tandon brand ambassador of the International Herbal Fair which was held at Lal Parade Ground in the city in December last year. Forest department invited the actor even after the Tiger Safari controversy.

Raveena Tandon's visit to Satpura Reserve in Last week of November last year had come under scanner after video showed her vehicle driving close to a tigress in the protected area. National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) had issued notice to Madhya Pradesh Government on December 14, 2022 over flouting rules and regulations of Tiger Safari by VVIPs after a video had gone viral in social media about Tandon.

Raveena got married to Anil Thadani in 2004. The couple has two children - Rasha, born in 2005 and Ranbir, born in 2007. Before her marriage, in 1995, Raveena had adopted two girls - Pooja and Chaya when she was just 21 years old. Both of them are married and also have children of their own now.

Datia given most priority by CM Chouhan to save his chair: Congress

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh's Leader of Opposition Govind Singh said that Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan passes every project for Datia district without any delay to "save his chair".

Speaking in the Assembly, the veteran Congress leader, who is MLA from Lahar in Bhind district, adjacent to Datia in Chambal region, noted that the government would pass every proposal for Datia, including those which are needless - at least in the present. "Datia is being given most priority, in comparison to other parts of state. Every government project are reaching Datia on a priority basis," Singh said, adding that this is happening in "to keep Chief



Minister's chair safe". "Because, CM Chouhan is in fear that one of his powerful minister may put his chair in danger. It is happening because the minister is powerful and CM want to make him happy that is why Datia's projects are being cleared in priority," he said in a clear reference to state Home Minister Narottam Mishra, who holds several key portfolios and is also considered a candidate

for the Chief Minister's post. Singh cited the establishment of a helipad in Datia and also the proposal passed for developing a large size airport in Mishra's home district. "There was no need of it, as of now... Bhopal and Gwalior airports need expansion on priority basis. That money should have been invested for some other need projects, but to keep the powerful minister happy, Datia's project were approved," Singh claimed.

Notably, a helipad was established in, close to the temple of "Maa Pitambara", a famous shrine in Datia where all top leaders visit. The development was done in a bid to provide direct air connectivity for VVIPs and top politicians during their visit to Datia to offer their prayer at the temple.

MP Assembly Budget Session Congress keeps mum over suspension of Jitu Patwari

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Yearn for a higher position in the Congress is weighing heavy on the party legislator Jitu Patwari. The party leaders have been keeping mum over his suspension from the House for the past three days.

Nevertheless, after the suspension of Patwari from the House during the Budget session, the Congress leaders made tall claims. Patwari, too, said he would observe fast in protest against his suspension.

The party also put up a no-trust motion against Speaker Girish Gautam. Former chief minister

and MP Congress Committee president Kamal Nath said the party would stand by Patwari.

The Congress, however, maintained a stoic silence over the no-trust motion when the House reassembled after the Holi vacation. Immediately after the suspension of Patwari, the Congress raised the issue only for a day.

During a discussion on the issue, Home Minister Narottam Mishra threw away the House rule book that a Congress member Sajjan Singh Verma tore away. Such issues have not been discussed after the House restarted from Monday. According to sources, it is because of the

Congress's internal politics that the party leaders are keeping quiet over Patwari's suspension.

Patwari often goes beyond the party rules to take opposition to task. This was the reason that Nath had removed him from the post of the party's media cell president. Patwari got a lot of publicity after his suspension from the House. This is the reason that the party has sidelined him. On the other hand, Verma said Patwari's suspension was not the only issue.

No-trust move against the Speaker, breach of privilege motion against Narottam Mishra and against two Congress legislators are pending, he said.

OPIUM WORTH RS 1.47 CRORE SEIZED IN NEEMUCH

Team Absolute | Neemuch

In continuation of anti-drug operations, a team of Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN) MP unit officials acting on the basis of specific intelligence intercepted a TATA truck at the Sikandara Toll on the Jaipur-Agra Highway on Tuesday and seized 128 packets of opium weighing 97.120 kilograms. As per the international market value of opium that was seized in an operation, the expected value stands around Rs 1.47 crore, sources said.

Officials informed that the truck, which had Nagaland state registration, would be carrying huge quantities of illicit opium from the Northeast to Rajasthan.

On questioning, the occupants of the vehicle revealed that opium



was concealed in specially built cavities inside the cabin and body of the truck.

The truck was carrying bamboo sticks as cover cargo. As it was not possible to search the vehicle on the highway due to safety and security issues, it was decided to bring it to the CBN office. After reaching the CBN office, the vehicle was thoroughly searched, and a total of 128 packets of opium weighing 97.120 kilograms were recovered from specially built cavities inside the cabin and the body of the truck.

The vehicle, along with the contraband drug and cover cargo, has been seized, and two persons have been arrested under the provisions of the NDPS Act, 1985. Further investigation is in progress.



REGE-JEAN PAGE

details his intimate scenes with Phoebe Dynevor in **'BRIDGERTON'**

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rege-Jean Page and Phoebe Dynevor both had "horrendous coffee breath" during their 'Bridgerton' sex scenes. The actor has revealed that he and his co-star had strict rules in place before shooting their intimate scenes, but they're also huge fans of drinking coffee early in the morning, reports [aceshowbiz.com](#).

During an appearance on 'The Late Show with Stephen Colbert', Rege-Jean explained: "What no one knows about 'Bridgerton', (was that) Phoebe and I had horrendous coffee breath the whole way

through."

The actor said that he and Phoebe struck-up an agreement before shooting their sex scenes.

He shared: "You approach your other actor and go, 'Hey, so the scenes after lunch, what are our rules? Are we no onions? Are we no garlic? Do I have to get the coffee in early?' We both are like, 'I actually really like coffee so I don't mind.'"

Meanwhile, Phoebe previously admitted that they "both drink a lot of coffee".

The actress also revealed that her co-star smells "really, really nice".

"Why have so many people asked me that? He smells really, really nice. He never, ever had bad breath, and he doesn't smoke or anything like that. We both drink a lot of coffee, so sometimes we both smell like that, which was fine. He's unscented in a good way," she said

What's more, Phoebe admitted that she loved working with Rege-Jean on the Netflix show.

She said: "I think we worked really well together, and I learned a lot from him. We have different acting styles, so we bounced off each other in that respect. We both were on the same page about the characters and what their relationship was. I loved working with him."

Troy Kotsur to receive Spotlight award at ReelAbilities Film Festival

Los Angeles | Agencies

The ReelAbilities Film Festival returns for its 15th year, as the largest film festival in the US dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation for the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with disabilities.

The festival announced Academy Award winner Troy Kotsur as the 2023 Spotlight Award recipient, as well as listed the festival's line-up, which includes 10 features and 24 shorts, from nine countries, reports [Variety](#).

Features include 'Unidentified Objects', 'Being Michelle', 'Jasmine Is a Star', 'No Ordinary Campaign', 'Pushing Boundaries', 'The Quiet Epidemic', 'Shadow', 'Straighten Up and Fly Right', 'Upside Down' and Okay! (The ASD Band Film). The 24 shorts are

divided into five categories: Out of the Box, Mental Health, Family Friendly, The Art of Living and With an Edge.

The festival will be held from April 27 to May 3 at the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan. Opening Night tickets went on sale on March 15, and festi-

March 30.

"ReelAbilities believe in highlighting impactful and creative storytelling as a powerful tool to engage and create change for both those who know nothing about the disability community and those who live it every day," said founder Isaac Zablocki.

"We are proud to feature authentic and first-person stories that bring these underserved images to the surface in the most responsible and engaging manner."

The event is sponsored by Pfizer, the Loreen Arbus Foundation, FYEye, J.E.&Z.B. Butler Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, Nielsen Foundation, Mayor's Office for Media & Entertainment, Vimeo, Amazon, AMC Networks, Warner Bros. Discovery and many more.



val tickets will go on sale on

James Gunn all set to direct 'Superman: Legacy'

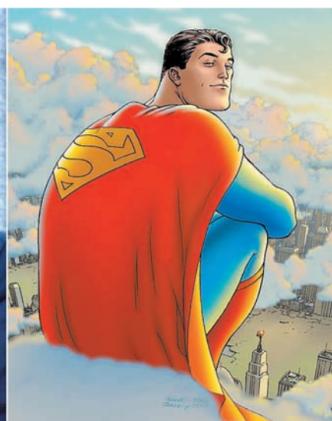
Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker James Gunn, who also serves as Chairman and CEO of DC Studios with partner Peter Safran, is set to direct 'Superman: Legacy'.

Gunn revealed on Wednesday that he will helm a previously-announced reboot of the Superman franchise. He also wrote the screenplay, and Safran will produce, reports [Variety](#). 'Superman: Legacy' also released its first plot synopsis, saying that the film "tells the story of Superman's journey to reconcile his Kryptonian heritage with his human upbringing as Clark Kent of Smallville, Kansas. He is the embodiment of truth, justice and the American way, guided by human kindness in a world that sees kindness as old-fashioned."

Gunn shared the news on Twitter, along with an emotional anecdote about his relationship to the project.

"I lost my Dad almost three years ago. He was my best



friend. He didn't understand me as a kid, but he supported my love of comics and my love of film and I wouldn't be making this movie now without him," Gunn wrote.

"It has been a long road to this point. I was offered Superman years ago - I initially said no because I didn't have a way in that felt unique and fun and emotional that gave Superman the dignity he deserved."

The director went on to say that "a bit less than a year ago I saw a way in, in many ways centering around Superman's heritage - how both his aristocratic Kryptonian parents and his Kansas farmer parents inform who he is and the choices he makes." 'Superman: Legacy' is the first in a

planned universe of cross-platform storytelling in a Phase 1 studio is calling 'Gods and Monsters'. Cast has not yet been announced, but the film is dated for a global theatrical release on July 11, 2025.

Gunn and Safran gave necessary shot in the arm the DC Universe last fall when they took control of the comic book unit, a prized intellectual property stable under Warner Bros. Discovery. In January, they pitched their new vision to the media and vowed to put quality before quantity. "People have become beholden to [release] dates, to getting movies made no matter what. I'm a writer at my heart, and we're not going to be making movies before the screenplay is finished," Gunn said at the time.

OZZY OSBOURNE IS CONSIDERING MAKING A COMEBACK ON THE STAGE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Black Sabbath frontman Ozzy Osbourne is determined to come out of retirement and get back on stage - even if that means he has to perform in a wheelchair.

Last month, the rocker was forced to cancel his UK and Europe tour after saying that he is "not physically capable" of performing any-

more amid his health woes, reports [Mirror.co.uk](#). The Black Sabbath legend recently had extensive spinal surgery following a fall at his home in 2019, which had further aggravated injuries from a near-fatal quad bike crash in 2003.

Announcing the news to fans, Ozzy said at the time that it was "probably one of the hardest things (he's) ever had to share" and that he "never would have imagined that his touring days would have ended this way."

Mirror.co.uk further states that the rock legend explained that his body is 'still physically weak' and shared his despair at 'disappointing' fans. Despite announcing his retirement last month amid his battle with Parkinson's disease, Ozzy is eager to get back on stage - one way or another. Ozzy is said to be "so upset and annoyed" at being unable to play live that he is already considering a comeback. "He is refusing to give up on his hope of getting on stage despite his statement last month," said a source close to the singer.



TOM HOLLAND, ZENDAYA GO GROCERY SHOPPING ON LONDON DATE

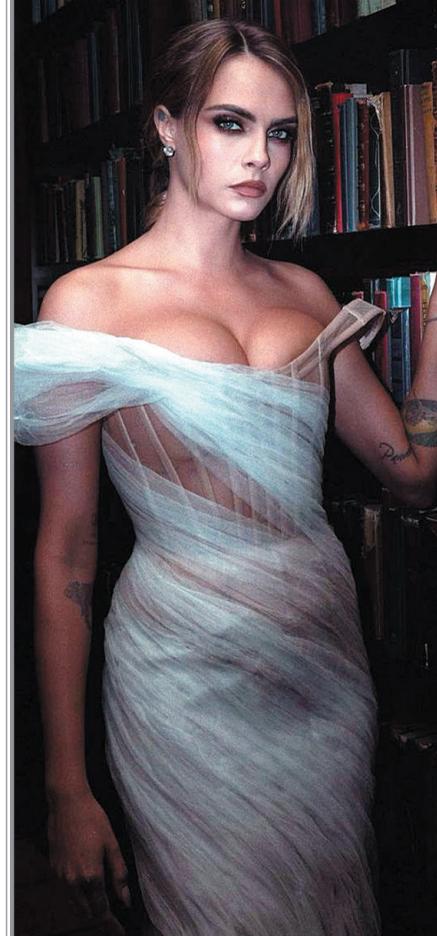
London | Agencies

Actors Tom Holland and Zendaya were spotted reuniting for a date in the UK, proving that their relationship remains strong despite their busy schedules that often keep them apart. The 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' co-stars were photographed shopping for groceries at the Waitrose supermarket in London on Wednesday morning, March 15, reports [aceshowbiz.com](#).

In pictures which have circulated online, the two-time Emmy Award winner helped her beau navigate a big shopping cart of food as he pushed the cart. The two were also seen grabbing coffee before going to shop for groceries at the high-end market. They were holding hands while having light talk during the stroll. Both stars dressed down during the outing. On Sunday, they were spotted taking a relaxing stroll with Tom's parents, Nikki and Dominic Holland, while walking their dogs.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Cara Delevingne





IND vs AUS 1st ODI

'EXPERIMENTATION' ON MENU FOR BOTH IND, AUS AS WC PREPARATIONS GATHERS PACE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In the year in which they will host the 50-overs World Cup, India restart their preparations for the mega event in the hectic year with three One-day Internationals (ODIs) against Australia, the first of which will be played at the Wankhede Stadium.

India is going into the first ODI without regular skipper Rohit Sharma, who will miss the match due to family commitments. In his absence, Vice-captain Hardik Pandya, who has led the T20 squad admirably, will discharge the duties, getting another chance to establish himself as the frontrunner to take over the reins from Rohit Sharma.

The hosts suffered a big blow as middle-order batter Shreyas Iyer was ruled out of the entire series due to a back injury he suffered during the fourth and final Test against Australia in Ahmedabad.



Though the team goes into another series without pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, the presence of Mohd Shami and Mohd Siraj, both of whom had a good Test series against Australia, along with youngster Umran Malik, Shardul Thakur, Jaydev Unadkat and skipper Hardik Pandya give the selectors test the pace department once again on the road to World Cup selection.

In the batting department, it will be a chance for K.L. Rahul to cement his claim for a place in the World Cup squad. He has lost his place in the Test

squad but a good series with the bat, and gloves if he gets the chance, will help his cause a lot ahead of the IPL. On the other hand, Shubman Gill has been in great form in the preceding ODI series against the Black Caps, hitting a double century in the first match and a century in the third. He also scored a century against Australia in the Ahmedabad Test as did Virat Kohli, who had regained his form in the shorter versions of the game before hitting a majestic 186 against Australia a few days back.

NO RUSHING BACK FOR WARNER UNLESS 100 PERCENT FIT, SAYS MARSH

Mumbai | Australia opener David Warner is still not in the clear over his fitness and could miss the first One-day International of the three-match series against India to be played at the Wankhede Stadium.

Warner had returned home after suffering a concussion and a hairline fracture in his left elbow during the Test series and despite three-week rest, has not fully recovered from the injury.

The 36-year-old left-handed opener will face a fitness test of sorts during nets on Thursday and seasoned all-rounder Mitchell Marsh said he will not be rushed unless he is 100 percent fit. Marsh said Warner will be assessed on Thursday and "hopefully he comes through".

"Consultations will be held today and there is no rushing back if he is not 100 percent fit, I know that," said Marsh during the press-match press conference here on Thursday.

The all-rounder said all the Australian players are looking forward to this series as it gives them a chance to cement their claims for the World Cup selection.



Women's World Boxing C'ship

Nikhat starts with a bang; Sakshi and Nupur also advance

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Star boxer Nikhat Zareen kickstarted the defence of her title and India's challenge with an impressive win at the IBA Women's World Boxing Championships with a dominating victory while Sakshi Chaudhary and Nupur Sheoran also made winning starts at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex here on Thursday.

The 26-year-old exuberant boxer from Telangana, who clinched 52kg gold in the last edition in Istanbul, began her title defence in style as she took just over four minutes to outclass Anakhanim Ismayilova with the Referee Stops Contest (RSC) verdict in the 50kg opening round contest. The pugilists from Azerbaijan looked clueless against Zareen's strong jabs and quick movement in a thoroughly lopsided bout. The Indian will take on top-seeded Roumaysa Boualam



of Algeria in the second round.

Zareen's dominating triumph, in the first bout of the day, provided a befitting start to the prestigious event, which is being hosted by the Boxing Federation of India for the record third time in the country.

Extending the hosts' domination further on the opening day, 2021 Asian Championships bronze medallist Chaudhary and Sheoran also registered emphatic wins with an identical 5-0 margin in their

respective matches.

Sakshi dominated Colombian Maria Jose Martinez with supreme technical ability in the 52kg Round-of-32. Sheoran (+81kg), on the other hand, proved too strong for Abiola Jackman of Guyana in the Round-of-16 bout. She will now face Kazakhstan's Urakbayeva Zhazira in the next round whereas debutant Nupur Sheoran will be up against tough Lazzat Kungeibayeva of Kazakhstan, the 2016 World Champion, in the quarterfinals.

IPL 2023

Warner to lead Delhi Capitals in Pant's absence, Axar named vice captain

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Australian batter David Warner will lead Delhi Capitals in the upcoming IPL 2023 while all-rounder Axar Patel has been named as the team's vice captain, the JSW-GMR owned franchise announced on Thursday.

The 36-year-old Warner steps in as skipper for injured Rishabh Pant, who is currently undergoing rehab and recovery after surviving a horrific car crash last year.

This will be the second time Warner will lead Capitals, having been the interim captain for a couple of matches during the last year of his first stint with the franchise between 2009 and 2013 (Delhi Daredevils back then).

"Rishabh has been a terrific leader for Delhi Capitals, and we're all going to miss having him around. I would like to thank the management for



the faith and trust they've always shown in me. This franchise has always been home for me, and I couldn't be more excited to lead such a supremely talented bunch of players. I can't wait to meet them all, and get cracking," the Australian opener said in a media release, issued by the franchise. The franchise has also appointed former India captain Sourav Ganguly as the team's Director of Cricket. Ganguly has been associated with Delhi Capitals in the past too, in the role of Mentor, during the 2019 season. "I'm

excited to be back with the Delhi Capitals. My association with the women's team, and the Pretoria Capitals over the last few months has been fantastic, and I'm looking forward to the upcoming season of the IPL," Ganguly said. "Delhi Capitals had done well as a team during my last stint with them. I've already been involved with the players this time around, and I'm keen to see them as a group. Hopefully, we will all have a great time over the next couple of months," he added.

UEFA Champions League

REAL MADRID MOVE INTO QUARTER-FINALS AFTER LIVERPOOL WIN

Madrid | Agencies

Real Madrid booked their place in the quarter-finals of the UEFA Champions League with a 1-0 win at home to Liverpool, giving them a 6-2 triumph on aggregate.

Karim Benzema scored Madrid's goal in the 79th minute after the ball fell kindly for him in Liverpool's penalty area, and his side never looked in danger of surrendering their 5-2 lead from the first leg.

Both sides had chances to score in an entertaining first half but Madrid had the best of them, and were it not for the heroics of Alisson in the Liverpool goal, the tie would have been dead and buried long before Benzema's goal, a Xinhua report said.

The Brazilian made a spectacular block from Vinicius Jr's effort as the forward arrived unmarked at the far post to meet a cross from a narrow angle, only for the keeper to stick out an arm to make a reflex save.

Alisson then tipped over Eduardo Camavinga's shot from



outside the area after it took a wicked deflection off James Milner. Luka Modric then fired just over and Alisson again denied Vinicius, although this time the flag was up for offside as Madrid threatened to overrun their rivals. At the other end, Thibaut Courtois pulled off two saves to deny Darwin Nunez and Cody Gakpo as Liverpool looked to react, although Alisson had to make another routine save from Toni Kroos before the halftime whistle. There were no changes at the break and Alisson was quick-

ly called into action to deny Federico Valverde, who was put clean through on goal after an error from Andrew Robertson.

Valverde then headed wide and Real Madrid continued to threaten, with Benzema firing over from a Vinicius pass when he would have usually at least put his effort on target.

The Frenchman made no mistake from close range shortly afterwards, when the ball fell kindly for Vinicius to play it to him from the floor to fire into an empty net.

NAPOLI BOOK HISTORIC QUARTER-FINAL BERTH

Rome | Napoli reached their first UEFA Champions League quarter-finals as they dominated Eintracht Frankfurt 3-0 in the last-16 second leg, eliminating the German side 5-0 on aggregate.

The Partenopei had one foot in the quarterfinals after winning the first leg in Germany thanks to strikes from Victor Osimhen and Giovanni Di Lorenzo, a Xinhua report said.

The Azzurri showed no mercy at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona, as they were firmly in charge and went ahead before the break when Matteo Politano floated a cross from the right and Osimhen jumped high to steer in a header.

Osimhen doubled the lead minutes after the break, when Di Lorenzo rolled across for the Nigerian to slide home.

The home side put the game to bed 10 minutes later when Piotr Zielinski was tripped down in the box for a penalty, which the Pole converted himself. Napoli joined Inter and AC Milan in the Champions League last eight, representing the first time since 2005-06 that three Serie A sides have reached the quarterfinals.



RAFAEL NADAL SIGNS UP TO PLAY IN MONTE CARLO MASTERS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The 22-time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal has prepared to return to action after recovering from a hip flexor injury as he has signed up to compete in the Monte Carlo Masters, starting from April 8, the organisers of the clay court tournament said.

Nadal has been absent from the courts since his Australian Open second round loss to American Mackenzie McDonald, where he aggravated a hip injury.

The Spaniard had also withdrawn from the Indian Wells Masters and Miami Open due to grade 2 injury in the iliopsoas muscle in his left leg.

"Rafa was the first player to sign up. He wants to play in Monaco and is giving himself every chance to be



able to participate in this tournament that he loves so much, and which he has won eleven times in singles,

including a record eight consecutive titles between 2005 and 2012," tournament Director David Massey said

in a statement.

The field, which will be led by Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic, includes the young Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz, Stefanos Tsitsipas, the Dane Casper Ruud, the American Taylor Fritz Daniil Medvedev, Andrey Rublev, Holger Rune, Felix Auger-Aliassime.

The 116th edition of the Monte Carlo Masters is the first major European tournament, which opens the clay season, on the legendary courts of the Monte-Carlo Country Club.

The main draw will be organised on April 7 in the presence of Stefanos Tsitsipas, who won his second consecutive singles title last year, while the pair Rajeev Ram/Joe Salisbury (United States/England), won the doubles.

UAE's Asif Khan slams fourth fastest hundred in Men's ODIs

Kirtipur (Nepal) | Agencies

UAE batter Asif Khan slammed the fourth-fastest century in men's ODI cricket history, scoring 101 not out off 42 against Nepal in an ICC Cricket World Cup League Two match on Thursday.

Asif brought up his century in just 41 deliveries, helping UAE to a massive total of 310/6 in 50 overs.

Walking out to bat in the 38th over, he was in full flow right from the very off. He took over the change from Vriitya Aravind, who was brilliantly anchoring UAE's innings.

Making easy work of the Nepal bowlers, Asif pummelled 11 sixes and 4 fours in his knock. Nepal who were hoping to restrict UAE to a low total had to see their disciplined bowling efforts come undone against a rampaging Asif, with the visitors setting the hosts a target of 311 in the all-important encounter.



Asif's knock was one for the record books and now ranks as the fourth fastest ton in Men's ODI cricket history, only behind AB de Villiers (31 balls), Corey Anderson (36 balls) and Shahid Afridi (37 balls).

LLC Masters

GAYLE FIFTY LEADS WORLD GIANTS TO THREE-WICKET WIN OVER INDIA MAHARAJAS

Doha (Qatar) | Agencies

Chris Gayle's commanding knock of 57 led World Giants to a three-wicket victory over India Maharajas in the fifth match of the Legends League Cricket (LLC) Masters at the Asian Town Cricket Stadium.

The West Indies' legendary hard-hitter, who has Gayle Force as one of his many nicknames, hit nine powerful boundaries and a six in this 46-ball knock. So dominating was Gayle's knock that after he fell, World Giants struggled to reach the target but, in the end, won with eight balls to spare.

The World Giants won the toss and elected to field. India Maharajas had a different set of openers as Robin Uthappa opened with Manvinder Bisla. Gautam Gambhir, who had opened with Uthappa and put on an unbeaten 159 runs match winning opening partnership against Asia Lions in the fourth match, was rested. In his absence, it was Harbhajan Singh who led the team.

Indian Maharajas could muster only 136 for 9 in the 20 overs. In the last five overs, India Maharajas could score only 32 runs and lost four wickets.

In reply, World Giants opener Gayle gave an aggressive



start by hitting Irfan Pathan's first delivery of the first over for a boundary through the covers and also hitting the third ball for another boundary over mid-off. He also cracked Harbhajan Singh's fourth and fifth delivery of the second over for boundaries -- first through the covers and next through cover point.

Gayle continued to pick boundaries with ease smashing Pathan for two boundaries to deep extra cover and another to third man. At the score of 42, Amla got out leg before to Ashok Dinda for 6. Shane Watson joined Gayle who continued to execute his powerful shots. In the sixth over, he smashed Dinda for a boundary, a six and two more consecutive boundaries to take 19 runs off the over. The powerplay yielded 72 runs.

Brief scores

India Maharajas 136 for 9 in 20 overs (Suresh Raina 49, Manvinder Bisla 36; Brett Lee 3 for 18, Chris Mpfou 2 for 22) lost to World Giants 139 for 7 in 18.4 overs (Chris Gayle 57, Shane Watson 26; Yusuf Pathan 2 for 14) by 3 wickets.



Sunny Deol & Ameesha Patel wraps up the shooting of upcoming film



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The shooting of 'Gadar 2' has been wrapped up. The film will follow the timeline from 1954 to 1971 and will carry the story forward from where the first part left.

The film, which stars Sunny Deol and Ameesha Patel in lead roles, is a sequel to the 2001 blockbuster film 'Gadar'. The film, which told the story of a truck driver, Tara Singh and his fight to get back his Pakistani wife, clashed at the box-office with the Oscar nominated film 'Lagaan'.

Actor Rohit Choudhary, who plays Pakistani Major Malik, 'Gadar 2' shared pictures from the wrap up on his Twitter. The pictures show the crew smiling for the camera after the wrap up.

He tweeted: "It's a wrap! Shoot for the most awaited film Gadar2 has been completed. feeling so special to be part of it. Can't wait for 11.08.2023 now all set."

Talking about the film, Rohit said: 'Gadar 2' will start from where 'Gadar' ended. While the first film told the story from the time of 1947 to 1954, the second installment will follow the timeline between 1954 to 1971."

He further mentioned: "The writer of the story Shaktimaan Talvar, who wrote 'Gadar' has penned the script for this one as well. After the wrap up, the film has now entered into post-production. The audience will soon get to see the film on August 11, 2023."

As per the film's synopsis on IMDb, the story is set in the 1971 war of India and Pakistan and this time Tara Singh will go to Pakistan to bring his son Charanjeet back to India.



Chitrangda finds her chemistry 'exceptional' with Sara & Vikrant

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Chitrangada Singh, who will be seen playing the role of Rukmini in the upcoming web series 'Gaslight', shared her experience working with Sara Ali Khan and Vikrant Massey in the suspense thriller.

The actress is playing the lead character Misha's (Sara Ali Khan) stepmother. While Misha is a physically challenged girl, Rukmini is a mysterious character.

While Chitrangada in the trailer of the web series apparently looks like a caring mother who welcomes her physically challenged stepdaughter, there are many secrets she seems to be hiding from Misha about her missing father. On the other hand, Vikrant Massey is seen as the king's personal assistant. Sharing her working experience with Sara and Vikrant, Chitrangada said: "It was absolutely lovely working with Sara and Vikram. The two have done an abundance of work in Bollywood and the casting of this film sets you up for interesting scenes."

The actress further shared that as a person she, Sara, and Vikrant are completely different but their on-screen chemistry looks perfect and makes the plot intriguing.

"The three of us are very distinct from one another as people and actors, but together the chemistry and suspense we were able to build and create in regard to the plot are honestly exceptional. You can only expect that we have had a great time on set," she added.



Uorfi Javed says her song will touch everyone's heart

Team Absolute | Mumbai

'Big Boss OTT' fame and social media influencer Uorfi Javed spoke about her latest track 'Dooriyan' and her working experience with producer Mohsin Khan. Uorfi, who often makes headlines for her unique dressing, and recently her song 'Haye Haye Yeh Majboori' became a hit with over 21 million views, shared her experience of being part of the song and said: "'Dooriyan' is going to touch everyone's heart, it is a beautiful song."

"I am so happy to be a part of this song. I hope people keep watching the song and keep showering love each day. The moment I heard

about the song, I knew that I would surely do it. Working with Mohsin was really smooth. The shoot took place very steadily," added Uorfi.

Mohsin, who is the producer of the song, spoke about working with Uorfi: "Uorfi is an extremely easy-going person, humble and down to earth. She gave 18 different expressions in just one minute. That was mind-blowing. My entire team calls her 'One Take Artist'."

He also praised her efforts during the shoot and added: "Uorfi is currently the most hardworking and fearless individual in the industry. During the shoot, we faced unexpected rain which led to the delay of the shoot for many hours but Uorfi never hesitated to put in extra hours just to complete the shoot on time." Mohsin expressed gratitude to Uorfi for being a part of the project and said: "She is the sensation in India now and it will definitely help boost our project."

Upendra Rao doesn't act like the superstar he is: Shriya Saran

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shriya Saran, who is known for her work in films like 'Drishyam' franchise, 'Awarapan', 'Sivaji: The Boss' and 'RRR', is awaiting the release of her next film 'Kabzaa'. She recently shared that her co-actor in the film Upendra Rao, does not act like a superstar when he is on the sets and is very humble.

Talking about the first time she shared screen space with Upendra, Shriya said: "The first time I met him, we were shoot-



ing for the song 'Namaami Namaami'. It's beautifully choreographed by Chinni sir. The crew mentioned that Upendra sir is coming on set and everyone around was talking about him. Suddenly he walked in while I was learning my dance steps."

She then spoke about how Upendra graced the set, in great detail. She told IMDb: "I turned back and saw him in his regal outfit as he is dressed as a king in the song. He was

smiling even though everyone around him was very quiet and serious. He walked in with a big smile and was full of laughter. He is a superstar but doesn't act like one. He is simply in love with his film set and is having a good time. For him it's really hard to accept appreciation but it's very easy for him to appreciate and praise others, and that speaks volumes about him."

Upendra too praised Shriya as he said: "When I heard that you are doing this movie, I thought wow! Just dreams come true. I'd approached you for two-three movies in the past, but you were so busy, acting in so many Hindi, Telugu, Malayalam, and Tamil movies."

VIKRANT MASSEY DID NOT ANTICIPATE SARA TO BE A 'RECEPTIVE' ACTOR

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Vikrant Massey, who is gearing up for the release of his upcoming streaming film 'Gaslight', shared that he had a different impression of Sara Ali Khan as an actress before they started working together on the film. He said that he thought Sara won't be a very "receptive" actress. While working on the sets, actors bond well and learn from one another. Vikrant was thoroughly impressed seeing Sara's enthusiasm and dedication towards her craft.

Elaborating on the same, Vikrant said: "I instantly learned that she (Sara Ali Khan) is hungry as a performer, she wants to know so much, she wants to better herself as an actor with every take possible. I really did not anticipate her to be so receptive as an actor."

'Gaslight' is a psychological thriller and sees Sara essaying an especially abled character. The film, produced by Ramesh Taurani, Tips Films Ltd and Akshai Puri, 12th Street Entertainment and directed by Pavan Kirpalani, also stars Chitrangda Singh, Akshay Oberoi and Rahul Dev.



Rahul Dev talked about his experience in the upcoming web series

Team Absolute | Mumbai

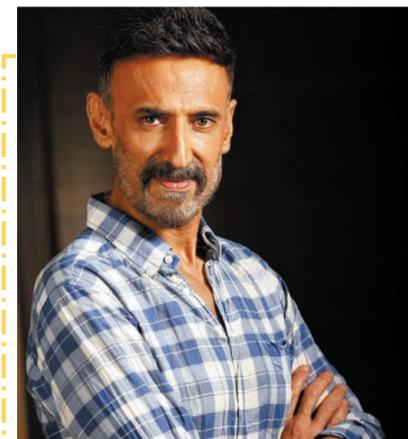
Film and TV actor Rahul Dev talked about playing a cop and his experience working with Bollywood actor Suniel Shetty in the upcoming web series 'Hunter- Tootega Nahi Todega'.

Talking about the show, Rahul said: "I am playing a Haryana cop and it is altogether an amazing experience to be a part of 'Hunter-Tootega Nahi Todega'. All the

characters are beautifully written. My character is a nimble-witted head, which has his own rule book and likes to follow it. The show has a gripping storyline, portrayed by conventional characters but with twists. Can't wait for audiences to be a part of this thrilling journey."

After working with Suniel in movies like 'Awaara Paagal Deewana', Rahul is happy to share screen space with him again in 'Hunter'. As he mentioned: "Anna and I

go back a long way. I have deep respect for him and he's close to my heart. He's a genuine well-wisher and one of the rare close associates I have in the industry. The close bond is helpful yet a bit challenging as both our characters are at log-gerheads with each other in the series. The feedback on my performance is very positive, with the highest praise coming from my director and Anna himself. So I am very glad to be a part of 'Hunter'."



Tripti Dimri