

# absolute india

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## El Nino may impact India adversely: Experts

El Nino is the warm phase of the El Nino's Southern Oscillation and is associated with a band of warm ocean water that develops in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific, including the area off the Pacific coast of South America. La Nina refers to the periodic cooling of ocean surface temperatures in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific. It has the capacity to alter direction as well as velocity of the trade winds, which trigger the winter season in India.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

El Nino and La Nina are climate patterns in the Pacific Ocean that can affect weather worldwide. According to meteorologists, El Nino weather patterns this year may lead to deficit monsoon rainfall. For the third month running, the US government weather agencies on Thursday reiterated the possibility of El Nino conditions developing in late summer this year, which could be an adverse signal for monsoon in India this year. According to meteorologists, the anomaly in temperature and rainfall is the result of alterations in the weather patterns. The intensity as well as frequency of western disturbances was on the lower side this winter season. Climate experts said that anomalies of cool temperature in the Pacific waters are likely to dissolve that will further impact the Indian monsoon adversely. Western disturbance is known to drive weather activities and bring winter to Northwest India and the adjoining areas of Central India. Although January saw a good number of active western disturbances, they could not have any impact on the weather across the Indo-Gangetic plains. An IMD official said that the ongoing trend of above normal maximum temperature can be attributed to the country's deficit rainfall that has been recorded for four consecutive months. Winter rains have been largely evading Northwest, Central, East and Northeast India. The South Peninsula has been recording some rains on account of few low-pressure areas and depressions forming in the South Bay of Bengal, but their impact was confined to the southern parts only. "La Nina is a climate pattern marked by colder-than-normal sea surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean that tend to suppress global temperatures. However, global warming and changing climatic conditions tend to play a major role, which can be temporarily governed by these ENSO conditions but cannot completely outplay the effects of climate change," said G.P. Sharma, President, Meteorology and Climate Change, Skymet Weather.

3,038 LAB CONFIRMED H3N2 INFLUENZA CASES IN INDIA, TWO DEATHS

## AIR BORNE DISEASES

Seasonal influenza is an acute respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses which circulate in all parts of the world, and the cases are seen to increase during certain months globally. India every year witnesses two peaks of seasonal influenza: one from January to March and the other in the post monsoon season.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After the outbreak of the seasonal H3N2 influenza across the country, two deaths have been reported from Karnataka and Haryana. So far, 3,038 laboratory confirmed H3N2 influenza cases have been reported from across the country.

"Young children and old persons with co-morbidities are the most vulnerable groups for seasonal influenza. So far, Karnataka and Haryana have confirmed one death each from H3N2 influenza", the health ministry said on Friday. Such cases are expected to decline from March end. State surveillance officers are fully geared to meet this public health challenge, the ministry said.

Further, the IDSP-IHIP data from health facilities indicate that during the month of January 2023, a total of 397,814 cases of Acute Respiratory Illness/Influenza Like Illness (ARI/ILI) were reported from the country that increased slightly to 436,523 during February, 2023. In the first 9 days of March 2023, this number stands at 133,412 cases.

The corresponding data for admitted cases of severe acute respiratory illness is 7041 cases in January 2023, 6919 during February 2023 and 1866 during the first 9 days of March 2023.

As per the health ministry, a total of 955 H1N1 cases have been reported in February this year. The majority of the H1N1 cases have been reported from Tamil Nadu (545), Maharashtra (170), Gujarat (74), Kerala (42) and Punjab (28).



### BENGAL ACCOUNTS FOR 38% OF ADENOVIRUS CASES IN COUNTRY

Kolkata: West Bengal accounts for 38 per cent of the swab samples that have been tested adenovirus-positive throughout the country, according to a recent survey conducted by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases (NICED).

NICED sources said that in the survey, which was conducted on the 1,708 samples in the different viral research diagnostic laboratories throughout the country from January 1 to March 9, 650 samples were tested adenovirus-positive.

As per the finding, West Bengal accounts for 38 per cent of the 650 samples that have been tested positive, the highest among all Indian states. Tamil Nadu comes in the distant second position with 19 per cent,

Kerala at 13 per cent, Delhi at 11 per cent and Maharashtra at five per cent are in the third, fourth and fifth positions respectively.

The common symptoms of adenovirus are flu-like, cold, fever, breathing problems, sore throat, pneumonia and acute bronchitis. The children of two-years of age and below are most vulnerable to being affected by the virus.

The virus can spread through skin contacts, by air through coughing and sneezing and through an infected person's stool. So far, there have not been any approved medicines or any specific treatment-line to treat the virus. In wake of the alarming situation, the Health Department has cancelled all the leaves of staff for an indefinite period.

### MEASLES OUTBREAK IN J'KHAND: GOVT TO RUN CAMPAIGN TO VACCINATE 46 LAKH CHILDREN

Ranchi: Concerned over the increasing cases of measles in nine districts of the state, the Jharkhand government has decided to run a special measles-rubella campaign in these districts for five weeks from April 15.

According to a WHO report, the maximum measles patients have been reported in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Haryana.

Under the campaign, 45,62,492 children in the age group of 9 months to 15 years will be administered the vaccine. The state's Additional Chief Secretary Arun Kumar Singh has directed the Deputy Commissioners, Civil Surgeons and officers of the nine districts to make the campaign a success.

The districts where the campaign will be carried out are Dumka, Pakur, Sahibganj, Godda, Jamtara, Deoghar, Dhanbad, Koderma and Giridih.

Children who have been vaccinated before will be re-vaccinated.

Dr Jitendra Kumar of CCL Hospital, Gandhinagar, explained that measles is an infectious disease spread through a virus and has the most effect on children. He added that symptoms include body rash, fever, runny nose, red eyes and cough. Apart from coming in direct contact with an infected person, it spreads through the air.

### MAHARASHTRA SHOCKER

## WOMAN RAPED, STARVED, MENSTRUAL BLOOD SOLD AT RS 50K FOR BLACK MAGIC RITUALS



Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

In another diabolical incident, a 27-year-old married woman from Saundana village in Beed, Maharashtra, was brutally raped, starved and her menstrual blood was sold for Rs 50,000 for some witchcraft rituals, officials said here on Friday.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MLC Manisha Kayande raised the issue in the Maharashtra Legislative Council and demanded strict punishment for the perpetrators of the crime, which ironically came to light on the eve of International Women's Day on Tuesday.

She said that following the intervention of the woman's maternal family, the Vishrantwadi police station in Pune has lodged an FIR against even accused persons, including the vic-

tim's husband and his parents. The woman added that since her love marriage around 2019, her husband and in-laws had been torturing her on various grounds though the exact reasons - whether dowry demands or others - were not available.

She said that recently her in-laws had tied her up during her monthly periods, collected her menstrual blood using cotton swabs and sold it for Rs 50,000 to some person who indulges in practicing witchcraft.

The Pune police have booked all the accused under the stringent Maharashtra Black Magic Act and other laws and further probe is on.

BJP's Pune Guardian Minister Chandrakant Patil expressed shock over the incident and directed the police to invoke the strictest

laws against all the accused persons. This is the second such shocker emanating from Pune in the past two months. In January, a 28-year-old woman was forcibly made to undergo bizarre rituals in a crematorium. The victim had informed the Sinhgad Police that she was made to take bath in the crematorium and then compelled to drink a liquid laced with powdered human bones and ashes as part of certain rites allegedly intended to enable her conception.

The Sinhgad police had swooped in to nab the woman's husband, his parents, his brother and three others for the heinous crime, while the President of Maharashtra State Commission for Women, Rupali Chakankar, had sought a probe report from the police.

### K'TAKA HIGH COURT CANCELS BOARD EXAMS FOR 5TH, 8TH STANDARDS

Bengaluru: The Karnataka High Court on Friday cancelled the board examinations for the fifth and eighth standards from this academic year. The ministry of education was all set to hold the board exams from this academic year.

The bench headed by Justice Pradeep Singh Yerur opined that as per rules, the board exams for fifth and eighth classes could be held from the next year.

The petition was submitted before a single bench seeking a stay on the order. The appeal was filed before the division bench later.

The division bench headed by Chief Justice P.B. Varale and Justice Ashok S. Kinagi has also opined against conducting public exams. The single bench order has been given following the direction of the division bench.

The board exams for the fifth and eighth standards had faced stiff resistance. Parents had questioned the necessity of board exams for these classes, when the CBSE does not hold exams for them. It was alleged that the education department is encouraging the tuition mafia.

## Sisodia was part of money laundering nexus: ED

New Delhi | Agencies

Delhi court on Friday sent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and former deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia to Enforcement Directorate (ED)'s custody till March 17 in connection with the now-scrapped excise policy case.

After the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on February 26 arrested him, the ED, on Thursday also arrested Sisodia in the same case.

Earlier in the day, the court deferred hearing in Sisodia's bail application for March 21, in the same case being probed by the CBI.

Special CBI Judge M.K. Nagpal of the Rouse Avenue Courts has ordered Sisodia to be produced before court on March 17 at 2 p.m.

During the hearing, the ED sought his 10-day custody saying that they need to unearth the modus operandi, the entire scam and confront Sisodia with some other people.

ED's counsel Zoheb Hossain, while claiming that Sisodia was part of the "money laundering nexus" said that the movement of tainted money through



hawala channels was also being probed.

Hossain submitted that the policy was formulated to ensure that certain private entities get huge benefits and that one of the biggest cartels was made to operate 30 per cent of liquor business in Delhi.

Referring to the meetings between restaurants association and Sisodia, the ED alleged that relaxations were afforded to the restaurants in excise policy like reducing the legal age of drinking and other things.

The central agency argued that Sisodia had destroyed the evidence.

## VIDEO SURFACES SHOWING JAPANESE WOMAN GROPED, HARASSED ON HOLI

NEW DELHI | Agencies

A video has gone viral on social media showing a Japanese woman being groped and harassed by a group of youth, presumably in Delhi's Paharganj area, on Holi.

In the video, the youth could be seen grabbing the woman and smearing colours on her amid chants of 'Holi Hai'. A boy could also be seen smashing an egg on her head, even as the woman shouted 'bye bye' just to escape from the spot.

A senior police officer said that a tweet has come to their notice which contains a video of Holi where in few people are seen applying colour on a foreign national.

"The woman seems to be uncomfortable with the actions of the youth. The video attached with the said



tweet has been posted on several digital platforms. We have taken cognisance of the video. The video is being analysed to ascertain the requisite details," the officer said.

"Prima-facie, on the basis of the landmarks seen in the video, it seems that it pertains to Paharganj. However,

it is being verified whether any such incident took place in that area or the video is an old one," the officer added.

However, no complaint or call relating to any kind of misbehaviour with any foreigner has been received at the Paharganj police station, he said.

### CENTRE ANNOUNCES 10% RESERVATION FOR EX-AGNIVEERS IN BSF RECRUITMENT

New Delhi: The Centre has announced 10 per cent reservation for ex-Agniveers in vacancies within the Border Security Force (BSF). For this, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has amended the Border Security Force, General Duty Cadre (Non-Gazetted) Recruitment Rules, 2015, which has come into effect from Thursday. The notification issued by the MHA on March 6, added that the upper age limit will be relaxed by five years for the candidates of the first batch of ex-Agniveers in the recruitment of constables. It added that the subsequent batch will get age relaxation up to three years. As per the notification, ex-Agniveers will also be exempted from the Physical Efficiency Test.





# 'AFTER SISODIA, KEJRIWAL IS NEXT': CONMAN SUKESH CHANDRASHEKHAR

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Following the arrest of former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Sisodia in the 2021-22 excise policy case, jailed conman Suresh Chandrashekhara said on Friday that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will be arrested next.

Chandrashekhara's comment came after he was produced before the Patiala House Court on Friday where his judicial custody was extended till March 18 in a money laundering case.

While coming out of the court, Chandrashekhara told reporters that truth has prevailed, and it is Kejriwal's turn next.

"I have given it in writing how close I have been to them and I am going to expose each one of them. Arvind Kejriwal is the kingpin. He is the 'Wazir' and he will be taken to task very soon," Chandrashekhara said.

"I was involved with them in four different matters, but not liquor scam," he added.

In a recent letter to Lieutenant



Governor of Delhi, V.K. Saxena, Chandrashekhara had made levelled allegations against Kejriwal, Sisodia and jailed AAP leader Satyendar Jain.

Chandrashekhara, who is lodged in the Mandoli jail, had alleged in the five-page letter that Sisodia's arrest by the CBI is just the beginning and that he has "looted commissions" in every department that he was heading as Deputy

CM. "All that matters to them (AAP leaders Kejriwal, Sisodia and Jain) is commission," he wrote. Referring to a 'tablet scam', Chandrashekhara alleged that he had bought tablets (for distribution to children) from a Chinese company, but the Kejriwal government decided to hand over the tender to someone else in exchange of 20 per cent extra commission.

## BJP STAGES PROTEST OUTSIDE AAP OFFICE IN DELHI

New Delhi: Under the leadership of Delhi BJP Working President Virendra Sachdeva on Friday, the saffron party staged a massive protest outside the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) headquarters demanding resignation of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

A model of Tihar jail was placed at the protest site, inside which former Delhi ministers Satyendar Jain and Manish Sisodia were shown locked, became a special attraction among the protesters and passers-by. State BJP Working President said, "The saffron party workers first fought for the resignation of Sisodia and today the results are in front of everyone. Now the next number is of Arvind Kejriwal because Kejriwal himself is the kingpin and mastermind of this entire liquor scam." Sachdeva added: "Kejriwal was saying that he would not celebrate Holi. How could Kejriwal apply the colour of Holi on the face which he hides behind the black money of liquor?" He added: "There was talk of free education and health but Kejriwal gave 'buy one get one free liquor bottle scheme' to the people of Delhi. A conspiracy was hatched to make the youth intoxicated."

# Prime Minister Modi to hold roadshow, inaugurate IIT in K'taka on March 12

Bengaluru | Agencies

The BJP government is set to organise a two-km road show of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 12 in Mandya to strengthen the vote bank for the saffron party in south Karnataka.

He will also witness the performances by the various artist groups.

The party is also roping in 1.5 lakh people for the public rally organised after dedicating the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway to the people. The roadshow has been organised from IB Circle of Mandya to Nanda Circle and nearly 30,000 to 40,000 people are expected to take part in the event.

Mysuru-Kodagu MP Pratap Simha said on Friday that Modi will meet people and watch the performances by 500 cultural teams.

The Prime Minister will also visit Dharwad on the same day and inaugurate an IIT, Jal Jeevan Mission and Jayadeva hospital, said



Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai.

Bommai told the media in Hubballi on Friday that whenever Modi visited the state, he had been releasing funds for the much-needed basic infrastructure projects because of which many projects are ready for the people.

In the last few years, Modi has made a big contribution to the state and inter-state infrastructure facilities and released maximum funds for national highways, railways, ports and other institutions, which have been dedicated

to the people, the Chief Minister added.

This is possible due to the support received by the state from the Central government in the last five years, he said.

The Chief Minister said that funds had been released in a phased manner to IIT-Dharwad, which is a prestigious institution and plans are being made to make it the country's best institution. Dharwad is the city of goddess Saraswati and the establishment of the IIT is most appropriate.

# Pak national inadvertently enters India, handed over to Pakistan Rangers

Chandigarh | Agencies

The Border Security Force (BSF) on Friday arrested a Pakistani national while he inadvertently entered India in Punjab's Ferozepur sector, officials said. Later, he was handed over to Pakistan Rangers on humanitarian grounds.

"The Forward deployed BSF troops apprehended one Pakistani national ahead of the border fence, while he crossed the International Border and entered into Indian territory in the area falling near Dona Tenu Mal village in Ferozepur district," a BSF statement said.

During questioning, it came to notice that the apprehended Pakistani



national had crossed over to Indian territory inadvertently. Nothing objectionable, except personal belongings, an identity card and Pakistani currency amounting to Rs 10 were recovered from him.

The BSF approached Pakistan Rangers and lodged a protest on the matter, it said. Thereafter, the apprehended Pakistani national,

since he had inadvertently crossed the border, was handed over to Pakistan Rangers on humanitarian grounds, added the statement.

A day earlier, the BSF nabbed a Bangladeshi national from the Amritsar sector and another Pakistani national from the Gurdaspur sector while they were trying to enter India.

# ONLY BJP CAN PROVIDE GOOD GOVERNANCE IN TN: NADDA

Chennai | Agencies

BJP National President J.P. Nadda on Friday said that only the BJP can give good governance in Tamil Nadu and added that the party will strengthen its position in the state.

He was speaking at a public function in Krishnagiri after inaugurating the new party office. Following this, he inaugurated nine other party district committee offices virtually.

The BJP National President added that Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has appointed his son Udayanidhi Stalin as a minister and said that Udayanidhi may become the next Tamil Nadu Chief Minister.

Comparing Tamil Nadu with states like Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Telangana, Maharashtra, Nadda said that succession politics was becoming the norm in Tamil Nadu as well.

The BJP and AIADMK, which are allies in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Tamil Nadu, are not on good terms after several BJP leaders in the state quit the party and joined the AIADMK. There was war of words between the



Tamil Nadu BJP president, K. Annamalai and the AIADMK leadership, including former Minister and party's organising secretary, D. Jayakumar. Tamil Nadu BJP IT Cell President, C.T.R. Nirmal Kumar and State BJP IT Cell Secretary, Dilip Kannan, and several other district-wise leaders had resigned from the saffron party and joined the AIADMK.

They have openly blamed Annamalai's style of functioning for their exit from the saffron party.

The State BJP President had hit out at the AIADMK and the AIADMK interim general secretary and former Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami (EPS).

The BJP national leadership is expecting a few seats from Tamil Nadu in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and it can get these seats only through piggy-riding on the AIADMK. BJP has a potent ally in Tamil Nadu with AIADMK aligning with it during the last Assembly elections, and the national leadership does not want to break the alliance it has with the powerful Dravidian party.

The BJP national leadership is also unhappy with Annamalai acting against the AIADMK as in 2024 Lok Sabha elections, BJP wants to improve its position in the state. However, after Annamalai lashing out against the state AIADMK leadership, the BJP national leadership is afraid of the political alliance going awry which the saffron party cannot afford to.

Sources in the BJP said that Nadda will likely conduct a meeting with EPS to iron out the differences between the two parties and to gain political ally from Tamil Nadu.

# Land for job scam: ED conducts raids at Tejashwi Yadav's Delhi residence

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted raids at more than 15 places including RJD leader and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav's residence in the national capital, in connection with the land for job scam issue.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has recently grilled former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi and Lalu Prasad, the former Railway Minister on the same matter.

The ED has also conducted raids in Bihar in the IRCTC scam. The ED's case is on the basis of CBI's FIR.

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



their name or in the name of close relatives of Lalu's family.

The CBI registered a case against Lalu Prasad, 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 Yadav 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' Post 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 situated at Patna in favour of the family members of Lalu Prasad, and a private company controlled by him and his family. It has been alleged that they were also involved in the transfer of immovable properties.

## OYO FOUNDER RITESH AGARWAL'S FATHER FALLS TO DEATH FROM GURUGRAM HIGH-RISE

Gurugram: Ramesh Prasad Agarwal, the father of Ritesh Agarwal, Founder and Group CEO of OYO, died on Friday after falling from a 20th floor balcony of a high-rise in Gurugram.

The incident took place at a gated apartment complex located in DLF Phase-5 in Sector 54. According to the police, at around 1 p.m. they received information from the DLF security that a person has fallen from the 20th floor of Tower of The Crest Society in Sector 54, who has been taken to the Paras Hospital. Virender Vij, DCP (East), said in a statement that Agarwal was declared brought dead at the hospital, adding that the body has been handed over to the family after conducting a post-mortem. "The body had multiple fractures. It appears that the victim died after falling from the high-rise," said Sudhir Chaudhary, who conducted the autopsy. Preliminary investigation suggests that it appears to be a case of accidental death, but the actual cause will be known after a detailed investigation, Vij said.

# Arms supplier lands in police net in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Special Cell of Delhi Police has arrested a 35-year-old man involved in supplying illegal weapons to gangsters in Delhi, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, an official said, adding that eight high-quality semi-automatic pistols, seven single shot pistols and eight bullets have been recovered from his possession. The accused has been identified as Daud, a resident of Dewas, Madhya Pradesh.

The official said that the weapon supplying nexus was being run by notorious arms supplier Malkhan Singh, who is running a pan-India network and is linked to gangsters operating across India. Daud was one of the key members of this nexus.

"It came to our notice that Daud was supplying illegal firearms and ammunition to local gangs in Delhi-NCR. On the

intervening night of March 6-7, specific inputs were received that Daud would come to the Dhansa-Najafgarh Road to deliver a large cache of firearms and ammunition to Rakesh, a member of the Nandu-Jyoti gang," said Ingit Pratap Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell).

A trap was laid by the police which led to Daud's arrest. On questioning, Daud revealed that three-four years back, when he was in jail in a case of scuffle, he came in contact with Malkhan, who gave him the offer to join his gang of arms trafficking. "Daud had procured illegal firearms on five to six occasions from Malkhan and supplied them to his associates in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi-NCR. He used to procure one semi-automatic pistol from Malkhan for Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000 and one single shot pistol for Rs 3,500," the DCP said.

# Coimbatore car blast: Five accused sent to NIA custody till March 16

Chennai | Agencies

The National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is probing the Coimbatore car blast, has got the custody of five accused for further questioning.

An NIA court in Chennai sent the accused -- Mohammed Azharudhin (23), Feroze Khan (29), Firoz Ismail (27), Umar Faruq (39) and Mohammed Nawaz Ismail (25) -- to NIA custody till March 16.

The five accused, according to sources in the NIA, will be taken to various places for getting further information on whether there are other people behind the crime.

On October 23, 2022, Islamic State suspect Jameesha Mubin was charged to death in a car blast in Coimbatore. The Islamic State of Khorasan Province had in a recent issue of its propaganda magazine, Voice of Khorasan stated that it had a role in the Coimbatore car blasts of October 23, 2022,



and the pressure cooker blast in an autorickshaw on November 19, 2022.

A paragraph in the Voice of Khurasan in an article titled, 'A message to the inhabitants in the land occupied by cow and mice worshipping filths' said, "Know that the spark of war has already been lit. Do you not consider our attacks in Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu) and Karnataka (Bangalore), where our brothers who took revenge for the honour of our religion and terrorized kufar and its followers? Thus we promise that this is just the beginning."

Even as the write-up has mentioned the second place as Bangalore in Karnataka, the central agencies infer that Mangaluru was misquoted as Bangalore.

The article has also mentioned that Kashmir and the Gujrat riots and Babri Masjid demolition have not been forgotten.

The NIA will be conducting a thorough interrogation of those in custody and will try to ascertain whether those in custody have any connection with the article that has come out in Voice of Khurasan.

# YOUTH ATTEMPTS SUICIDE IN JAMMU AFTER KILLING GIRLFRIEND

Jammu | Agencies

A youth in Jammu city has allegedly stabbed his girlfriend to death following which he attempted to commit suicide, the police said on Friday.

According to reports, the man stabbed his girlfriend a doctor by profession, with a kitchen knife in the heat of rage following an argument. The slain doctor has been identified as Smedha Sharma of Talab Tillo in Jammu, and the accused, Johar Ganai, of Janipur, in Jammu.

He tried to end his life with the same knife. The incident took place in the Janipur area of Jammu city. The youth is undergoing treatment in the government medical college hospital in Jammu, a source said.

Sources said that the incident came to light after a relative of the accused informed the police that Johar had posted on Facebook that he was going to end his life due to some personal issues.

"After receiving information, the police went to Johar's house. The gate of the house was locked. Police broke into the house and found the body of Smedha lying in a pool of blood. The accused had injuries in his abdomen," a source said.

Both were immediately rushed to



the hospital by the police. Smedha, however, succumbed to critical injuries. The police have registered a case under section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and have started further investigation in this regard. The accused and the victim were in

a relationship and they did a Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) course at a dental college in Jammu. Smedha later moved out of Jammu to get a masters' degree in dental surgery. "She had come home on March 7

for Holi and was at her boyfriend's house where they allegedly fought, following which the accused stabbed her. The body of the victim has been handed over to her family after completion of medico-legal formalities," a source said.





## SHIVPURI WILL GET GLOBAL RECOGNITION WITH THE ARRIVAL OF TIGERS IN THE NATIONAL PARK: CM CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Shivpuri is an ancient and tourist city. With the release of two tigers in the National Park today, Shivpuri will now be recognised on the international map. For environmental protection and promotion, the conservation of tigers is must. He said that due to the arrival of tigers in Shivpuri, employment opportunities will increase at the local level and the economy of the district will boost with the arrival of domestic and foreign tourists. Chief Minister Chouhan and Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia today released a pair of tiger at Madhav National Park in Shivpuri.



Conversing with Bagh Mitras, Chief Minister Chouhan said that while a tigress has been brought from Bandhavgarh National Park and the tiger is brought from Satpura National Park to Shivpuri. Three more tigers will be brought soon. Chief Minister told the Bagh Mitras that for the protection of tigers and wild animals, we have to make people aware that wild animals are our friends and we have to protect them.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that along with conservation and promotion of tigers, infrastructure works will also be carried out in the Tiger Project. Along with this, training will also be given to guides, hotel and taxi operators. Home-stays will also be promoted, so that tourists coming from outside will get an opportunity to see tigers and wildlife in a natural and open environment. With this, local products will also be promoted along with generation of employment at the local level. Chief Minister said that it is a matter of great happiness for the state that the Prime Minister of the country, Narendra Modi had released leopards in the

Kuno National Park. Today two tigers have been released in Shivpuri National Park. Union Civil Aviation Minister Scindia said that after 27 years, tourists will get an opportunity to see tigers besides hearing their roar in Madhav National Park. He said that today is a historic day for the region including Shivpuri and it is also a matter of pride for the region. He said that due to the efforts of the Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, tigers have been relocated in the Madhav National Park on the birth anniversary of his revered father Late Madhavrao Scindia. Will train tourist guides from self-help groups Forest Minister Dr. Kunwar Vijay Shah said that 4 taxis will be made available to the local people through self-help groups, which will take the tourists on a National Park tour. Also, local people will be trained as tourist guides. This will also provide employment opportunities at the local level. He said that with the arrival of tourists, employment will increase in local hotels as well as home-stays.

## Governor Mangubhai Patel honours the officers

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel felicitated at Raj Bhavan today 6 officers who made outstanding contribution in the Limca Book of Records 2022-23 for the record of Largest Collective Reading-Single Theme-Multiple Venue. The Governor presented the officers with a certificate of appreciation and a copy of the certificate issued by the Limca Book of Records. The officers who were honoured included Additional Chief Secretary Higher Education KC Gupta, Principal Secretary School Education Rashmi Arun Shami, the then Secretary to the Governor Manohar Dubey, Press Officer to the Governor Ajay Verma and Librarian of Raj Bhavan Amit Dixit. Abhay Verma, Additional Secretary to the then Governor, was not personally present in the programme as he was out of the headquarters.



Governor Mangubhai Patel said that efforts are necessary to stop social pollution. In this direction, reading of Gandhi literature by the future generation and youths on the 150th anniversary of Gandhi Jayanti was a commendable timely initiative. Remembering the then Governor of Madhya Pradesh Late Lalji Tandon, he said that his soul must have got satisfaction when his initiative became a record. By studying Gandhian literature, stu-

dents must have been familiar with and inspired by the ideals and practical utility of Gandhian thinking. He said that setting of a record of the initiative to disseminate Gandhiji's thoughts to the new generation is an achievement of the efforts made by the officers with determination, coordination and dedication.

It is notable that in Limca Book of Records-2022, in the context of 150 years of Gandhi Jayanti in the year 2019, under the direction of the then Governor Lalji Tandon, 5 lakh 48 thousand students of 51 districts of the state read Mahatma Gandhi's books "Hind Swaraj" and "My Experiments with Truth" in the period from September 25 to October 2 and it has been registered in the record for the largest number of group readings on a single topic at many places.

## Case Against Principal For Teaching Bible, Taking Students To Church

Team Absolute | Mandla

The principal of a school in Mandla in Madhya Pradesh was charged and its hostel superintendent arrested for allegedly teaching students the Bible and taking them to church, a police official said on Friday.



The case was registered on the basis of a report of Bal Kalyan Samiti (Child Welfare Committee) functionary Yogesh Parashar after its team visited St Joseph School in Ghoreghat Panchayat area under Mavai police station limits, the official said.

The accused have been identified as school principal Father GB Sebastian and hostel superintendent Kunwar Singh, he said. "Singh was arrested on Thursday, while Sebastian is absconding. We have filed an application for Singh's remand but the court is yet to give an order," Mavai police station in charge Santosh Sisodia said. The Bal Kalyan Samiti's members Omkar Singh and Anurag Pandey had conducted a surprise

visit of the school's hostel on March 4 and allegedly found children getting Bible lessons and being taken to church, he said.

Singh and Pandey reported the matter to the 'Kishore Nyay Board' (Juvenile Justice Board) after which an FIR was registered against Sebastian and Singh under relevant sections of Child Labour (Prevention and Regulation) Act, Indian Penal Code, Juvenile Justice Act, Religious Freedom Act and SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Sisodia said.

## UNTIMELY RAIN CAUSES MASSIVE CROP DAMAGE IN STATE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Heavy rain and hailstorm damaged crops in 18 districts of central and western Madhya Pradesh this week. Unseasonal rain, accompanied by strong winds, hit the state on Monday and is predicted over the next few days too.



Farmers lost around 10-40 per cent of the standing and newly harvested winter crops, said government sources.

The state government has directed the district administration to assess the extent of damages to provide relief to the affected farmers. "Our 12 months' efforts have gone down the drain. I don't know what to do now. All that we spent on seeds, urea, tractor diesel, our labour - everything is wasted," said Nirakh Singh, a farmer who lives in Neelbad near Bhopal.

Half of his wheat crop on eight acres of land was damaged due to the rain. Jagannath Singh Thakur, another

farmer, couldn't control his tears as he saw crops destroyed on vast swathes of his land in Vidisha district. Vidisha and Rajgarh are the two

central districts worst hit by the unseasonal rain that destroyed Rabi crops like wheat, gram, and pulses. The extent of the damage could be as high as 40 per cent in these two dis-

tricts, said officials.

In Mandsaur and Neemuch in western Madhya Pradesh, the extent of damage was around 20-30 per cent. In Bhopal, Ujjain, Ratlam and Raisen, the damage could range between 15 and 20 per cent while it could be around 10-15 per cent in Shajapur, Sehore, Narmadapuram, Agar-Malwa, Barwani and Guna.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has assured compensation to the affected farmers.

"Our teams are on the field. A survey is on. The farmer need not worry. My government is with you. Based on the survey, the farmers will be given compensation for their crop loss," he said.

But worries remain since the weather department has forecast heavy rain over the next few days in the region. The farmers are worried since moisture worsens the quality of wheat, which fetches them lower prices.

## CM Chouhan pays tribute to Late Madhavrao Scindia & Savitri Bai Phule



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid tributes to popular public leader and former Union Minister Late Madhavrao Scindia on his birth anniversary. Chief Minister Chouhan garlanded the portrait of Late Scindia at the auditorium in his residence office. He also recalled the contribution made by Late Scindia in the



progress, development and rebuilding of the state.

Scindia was born on March 10, 1945 in Mumbai. He received education at Scindia School Gwalior and Oxford University. Apart from being a Member of Parliament in the Lok Sabha, he was also the President of the Board of Control for Cricket in India from 1990 to 1993. Scindia died in a plane crash on 30 September 2001.

### CM CHOUHAN PAID TRIBUTE TO SAVITRI BAI PHULE ON HER DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid tribute to great social reformer Late Savitri Bai Phule, the symbol of women empowerment on her death anniversary. Chief Minister Chouhan garlanded her portrait in the auditorium located at the residence office and paid floral tributes. Phule was born on 3 January 1831. She was the first principal of India's first girls' school and the founder of the first farmer's school. She lived her life as a mission for widow remarriage, eradicating untouchability, emancipation of women and educating Dalit women. On 3 January 1848, Phule, along with her husband, established a girls' school in Pune with 9 girl students from different castes. She passed away on 10 March 1897.

## MP High Court dismisses PIL seeking directions to authorities against farmers of Tikamgarh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has dismissed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) that was seeking direction to the respondent authority for stopping the enquiry that was initiated against the petitioner as well as the farmers belonging to Tehsil-Palera, District - Tikamgarh. The PIL has been filed by one Mahadev Singh.

The entire case of the petitioner is that respondents may initiate proceedings and may dispossess the petitioner from the land in question and also initiate an enquiry against him for various offences. Therefore, the instant prayer to direct them to stop the enquiry.

On hearing learned counsels, the Division Bench of Chief Justice Ravi Malimath and Justice Vishal Mishra did not find any ground to interfere in this petition. The entire plea of the petitioner is based on apprehension. Even assuming an enquiry is in progress, the authorities will have to conduct the enquiry in



accordance with law. If the petitioner is required for any purpose, the respondents are always entitled to question him or to proceed in accordance with law. There cannot be a writ of mandamus to

direct them not to initiate or to stop an enquiry. The same is impermissible, the Bench observed. Hence, the High Court found no good ground to entertain this in a Public Interest Litigation.

## Casual leaves increase for female govt employees



Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has increased casual leaves for women employees working at public sector offices. Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led MP government has added seven more days of casual leave. Earlier, the women were entitled to 13 casual leaves.

"Women are contributing equally in every field, but they also have the responsibility of motherhood and care of home. So, we have decided to give additional seven days' CL to all women employees," he tweeted.

Now, the women government staff will be entitled to 20 casual leaves. This is on par with Punjab, Haryana, and Andhra Pradesh.

Further, CM Chouhan announced that girl students who pass the Class 10 exam will be given financial literacy lessons.

## Firm cuts 257 more trees than needed for Rs 57 crore Indore flyover

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Indore Development Authority in Madhya Pradesh has pulled up a private firm for allegedly cutting 257 more trees than what was mandated to build a Rs 57 crore flyover in the state's commercial capital, also the country's cleanest city for several years in a row. While 1,320 trees were to be relocated 15 kilometres away to build the flyover at Khajrana Square and 2,640 saplings were to be planted as compensation, the private firm has gone ahead and cut and reduced to stumps 257 trees apart from the marked



ones, IDA chairperson Jaypal Singh Chawda said after inspecting the site on Friday. "It has come to our notice

the private firm has cut down 257 more trees than what was needed. IDA will not pay money to the private

firm for translocation of these stumps. We had asked them to follow a scientific way of cutting and relocating 10 trees at a time," Chawda said.

The removal of trees has made the heat unbearable at Khajrana Square, with several labourers at the site ruing the lack of shade. "We are unable to find shade in this area, especially now when it is so hot and humid," Rama Bai, a labourer, said.

MP Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had laid the foundation stone of the flyover in November last year and work is scheduled to be completed in 18 months, an IDA official informed.

## Property dealer shot dead, accused on the run



Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Nishatpura police have registered a case against a man and three of his accomplices for shooting a man in Nishatpura on Thursday late night, the police said on Friday. The police added that the victim who sustained bullet wounds died while undergoing treatment on Friday morning.

Nishatpura police station house officer Rupesh Dubey said that the man who lost life had been identified as Syed Shoaib Ali (28), a property dealer. The police learnt that one of Ali's friends, iden-

tified as Faisal Abbas, had an altercation with another man named Salman, following which Salman thrashed Abbas.

When Abbas narrated his ordeal to Ali on Thursday late night, Ali and his friends went to Salman's place to avenge Abbas' physical assault. Salman and his accomplices Irshad, Danish and Dilshad surrounded Ali and shot at him. Ali sustained bullet wounds and was rushed to the hospital while the accused fled. In his statements given to police, Ali named all the accused and narrated the incident.

## MASSIVE FIRE BREAKS AT TYRE GODOWN IN INDORE

Indore: A massive fire broke out at a tyre godown at Bhawarkua area in Indore. The flames are visible far behind the Apple hospital and petrol pump. Initially, locals complained that the fire brigade's phone was going unreachable, as black smoke continued to rise high. However after multiple calls, they were able to connect to fire station and the brigade soon rushed to the spot.





EDITOR'S SPECS

MISSION SOUTH IN K'TAKA FOR BJP TURNS MORE CHALLENGING

The ambition of the ruling BJP party in Karnataka to strengthen roots in southern regions of the state to return to power has hit a roadblock with prominent sitting ministers from the region all set to change of guard, sources have said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah are making special efforts to garner support for the BJP in these regions considered as bastions of JD(S) and Congress parties so far. Senior Lingayat leader, Minister for Housing V. Somanna, who represents Govindaraj Nagar constituency in Bengaluru and Minister for Sports and Youth Services Dr. K.C. Narayana Gowda from the K.R. Pet constituencies of Mandya district are miffed with the developments in the BJP and are all set to join Congress party, according to sources. On the other hand, the only BJP legislator from Mandya district Dr. M.C. Narayana Gowda, whose victory was celebrated as the BJP's entry into the Vokkaliga heartland and JD(S) power center is also not keen on participating in the Vijay Sankalp Yatra. Sources close to him said that he is all set to announce his joining of Congress party after Prime Minister Modi's visit to Mandya district to dedicate the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway on March 12. The local Congress leaders have opposed his entry into the Congress party and already staged a protest. Congress sources said that state President D.K. Shivakumar has reined in the situation and stage is all set for Narayana Gowda to join the Congress. Yediyurappa has stated that he would talk to Ministers Somanna and Narayana Gowda and no one will quit the party. He also stated further that the party would send those who want to quit the party respectfully and welcome leaders who want to join the BJP.

NORTH-SOUTH IS ONE INDUSTRY; THE MEDIA IS NOT ONE!



Vinod Mirani

With the super success of a few South Indian films throughout the Hindi-speaking areas, the South is extending its reach and trying to involve the media from the North, which limited its scope to covering only Hindi films. They want to keep the people of Hindi-speaking regions aware of South Indian films all the way while a film is in production and not later when it is a hit in the South and plans are afoot to dub it and take it to the audience in the rest of the country. Hindi filmmakers who depend heavily on the South for content, buying the Hindi remake rights of many South hits, have not always been welcoming of the South-dubbed films, breaking records in the Hindi market. Hindi filmmakers and stars did not take kindly to the fact that South Indian films had invaded the Hindi market and were also creating records at the box office. Some even had Twitter spats with their southern counterparts. It was more upsetting for Hindi filmmakers because, while the South films were excelling at the box office, Hindi films of even top stars were failing on a regular basis. The Hindi side did not have much ground to stand on because almost all makers were remaking South Indian films! It is also a fact that Hindi films alone can't feed the cinemas for all 52 weeks of the year.

Multiplexes with five or more screens have multiple shows each day that need more supply. Regional films, be it Bhojpuri, Gujarati, Punjabi or Marathi, are not doing all that well, either! All they have is Hindi and the Hollywood films and, if the South films were an added alternative, so much the better. So, to keep the audience informed about their films, the filmmakers in the South have taken to inviting the media from Mumbai, Delhi, and other North Indian centres to cover their events. South Indian filmmakers inviting the media from the North used to be a routine practice when they made Hindi films. Now, it happens even for an event of a South Indian film because, at the back of their mind, the makers are envisioning the Hindi belt business. However, just when the respective industries were coming to terms that what mattered was the Indian film industry, the North South divide was refreshed by the media in Bengaluru. It was an event where the media from the North was invited to cover a promo launch of the Kannada film, 'Martin', starring Dhruv Sarja, in Bengaluru last week. The local media was reluctant to share their events with their counterparts from the North. In a surprising move, the local media blocked the media from the North from entering the event! They probably don't believe in the philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava (Guest is God), which is ingrained in our culture. When, finally, the organisers convinced the local media to let the event proceed, they grudgingly allowed the guest media to be accommodated in the front seats of the hall where the promo was to be screened! What the Bengaluru media did to their brethren from the North was the result of the North-South divide set off by the then Kannada superstar, Dr Rajkumar. Kannada was not much of a film industry. There were no remakes in Hindi. The circuit, known as the Mysore circuit, was not worth more than Rs 50,000 to 60,000 for the rights of a Hindi film, which did business only in Bengaluru.

Dr Rajkumar was a demigod and, during what was termed as the Gokak Movement, he ordained that Hindi films should not be released in Karnataka! This was not all. Dr Rajkumar went ahead and enforced a ban on the use of any languages except Kannada in the state! Cabbies and shopkeepers refused to converse in any language other than Kannada. The trade magazine I worked for at that time reported and criticised what Dr Rajkumar was up to and, as a result, the magazine was also banned in Karnataka! That was around the early 1980s and I visited Bengaluru to promote an event. I made a call to the offices of 'The Indian Express'. Guess what? The telephone operator would respond only in Kannada to whatever I asked. I was left with no option but to ask, 'Why the heck do you publish an English daily if you don't answer a caller in English?' Thankfully, my hotel staff was not following the diktat. Sad, but Dr Rajkumar legacy still prevails. Don't they understand that it was one of their Kannada-language film producers who needed the North media and not the other way round? Petty, isn't it? A Tax Free Film? Pay More! Now, there is an excellent query raised by the Telangana High Court. The entertainment tax (ET) levied on cinema tickets was a state subject before the GST regime was introduced and, because these tax slabs were very high, filmmakers sought tax exemption from various states. The idea was to make admission rates cheaper, more affordable to help draw more footfalls. The idea behind exempting films from ET was to encourage good cinema. This noble idea soon turned into a quid pro quo between filmmakers and politicians. The merit of a film was no more the criteria, greasing palms became the norm. The politicians loved to have film stars grace their events and birthdays. The ex-UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, for instance, was on an exemption spree and exempted films on a regular basis. To

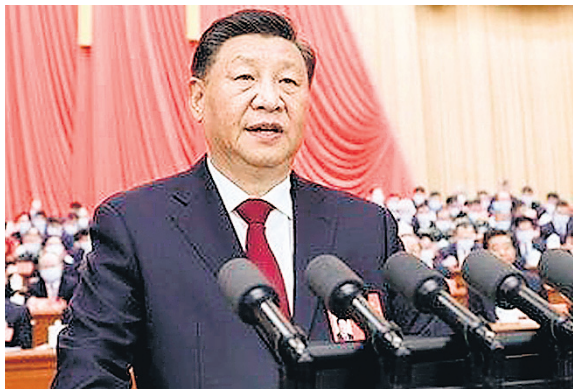
a great extent, this practice was at work in various states. As a rule, the benefits of the tax rebate were passed on to the viewers. But no more. The new age management grads came up with a new ecosystem: gobble up that exemption. Without breaking the law, the cinemas increased the admission rates to an extent that would offset the exemption amount! Ek haath se de, ek haath se wapas le! Take for example the film 'Mary Kom'. A friend went to watch it in an early show when the admission rate was Rs 120. The film was exempted from ET, so he expected the ticket to cost him Rs 90. But he ended up paying Rs 140 instead! What was the explanation? The cinema in question had changed the Rs 120 slot to Rs 140! Claimed they were legally allowed to do that. The common people either don't know about the film's exemption status or do not care. But, in 2017, a cinema viewers' group, Cine Prekshakula Viniyoga Darula Sangham, filed a PIL in the Telangana High Court stating that the benefit of the films exempted from entertainment tax were never passed on to the viewers by the cinemas. The HC in 2019 held that the government order had become pointless with the passage of time! The matter went to the Supreme Court, which held the Telangana HC order was incorrect, and remitted the matter back to the HC, ordering it to dispose of the matter within three months. Seeking ET exemption was a routine matter earlier, now, in the GST regime, not many filmmakers seek this favour. Because, unlike earlier, when the ET slabs varied from 50 per cent to 80 per cent or more of the admission rate, depending on the state, now the total tax on a ticket is 18 per cent -- 9 per cent for the state and 9 per cent for the Centre. An 18 per cent rebate on a cinema ticket may not seem like much, but cinemas gobble up even that!

international

Xi Jinping begins historic 3rd term as Chinese President

Beijing | Agencies

Xi Jinping has started a historic third term as the Chinese President after he was unanimously elected to the top post at the ongoing session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) on Friday. He was also elected as chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), reports Xinhua news agency. Nearly 3,000 members of the (NPC) voted unanimously at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing for Xi to be President in an election where there was no other candidate. Since Mao Zedong, leaders in China had been limited to two terms in office. When Xi had this restriction changed in 2018, it transformed him into a figure with a reach not seen since Chairman Mao, reports the BBC.



The vote on Friday was largely ceremonial as he had already locked in a historic third term as head of the Chinese Communist Party at a major party congress last October. Changes to the country's leadership take place every five years and usually closely mirror the reshuffle announced at the party congress. Meanwhile, naming of a

new premier and various ministers in the coming days is considered more important, reports the BBC. The new appointees are all expected to be Xi loyalists, including Li Qiang, who is tipped to serve as the President's number two. Xi has solidified his rule as China reopens from his bruising zero-Covid policy that has fuelled anti-government protests.

RUSSIA BANS 144 CITIZENS OF BALTIC STATES FROM ENTRY

Moscow | Agencies

Moscow: The Russian Foreign Ministry announced that 144 citizens of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia have been barred from entering Moscow. The newly blacklisted are Ministers, parliament members, public figures and journalists of the three countries, Xinhua news agency quoted the Ministry as saying in a statement. The names of the targeted citizens were however not revealed. Moscow imposed the travel ban in response to "the active lobbying by the Baltic states of sanctions and other measures against Russia, interference in its internal affairs, and inciting Russophobic sentiments", the Ministry statement added.

Trump may be charged in connection with hush money paid to adult film star

New York | Agencies

Throwing a huge question mark over the 2024 election, former President Donald Trump may be criminally charged in connection with hush money he allegedly paid to silence Stormy Daniels, an adult film star, who said she had an affair with him, according to news reports. A city prosecutor has "signalled" Trump's lawyers that he could face criminal charges in the 2016 incident, The New York Times reported on Thursday evening citing unnamed sources. NBC news also reported quoting his lawyers that Trump had been asked to appear before a grand jury investigating the case, which is usually an indication that an indictment or framing of charges was likely. But he is not obligated to appear before the grand jury. Trump reacted with a



post on his social media platform, Truth Social, calling it a witch hunt and denying the affair with the porn star. "I did absolutely nothing wrong, I never had an affair with Stormy Daniels, nor would I have wanted to have an affair with Stormy Daniels," whom he described as "horse face", he said. "This is a political Witch-Hunt, trying to take down the leading candidate, by

ing with the 2020 elections by allegedly trying to pressure state officials to "find" more votes for him. Bragg had convened a grand jury -- a citizens' panel -- to investigate the allegations against Trump and decide if charges should be filed. Under the legal system in the US, that is the first step in criminal cases and it is followed by the trial where a jury, also made up of citizens, hears the case under a judge and gives a verdict unless the accused asks to dispense with the jury and have the judge decide. Being charged, standing trial or even convicted would not disqualify Trump from running for President under the US Constitution. But the filing of charges and an eventual trial could come in the way of him getting the Republican Party's nomination to run for president.

WhatsApp says will leave UK market if forced to stop end-to-end protection

London | Agencies

Meta-owned WhatsApp has said it will leave the UK market if forced to weaken its end-to-end encryption for users under the upcoming Online Safety Bill. In a briefing with reporters, WhatsApp Head Will Cathcart slammed the legislation as the most concerning set of online regulations in the western world, reports Wired. "We've recently been blocked in Iran, for example. But we've never seen a liberal democracy do that," Cathcart was quoted as saying in reports. "Ninety-eight per cent of our users are outside the UK. It would be an odd choice for us to choose to lower the security of the product in a way that would affect those 98 per cent of users," he categorically said.



Cathcart says he is concerned that the bill could make it harder for WhatsApp and other messaging platforms to provide end-to-end encryption. "It's hard to imagine we're having this

conversation about a liberal democracy that might go around people's ability to communicate privately," he told reporters. A provision in the Online Safety Bill requires tech companies to use "accredited technology" to scan users' messages for child sexual abuse material or CSAM. According to security researchers, it is impossible to introduce such a measure without breaking end-to-end encryption. In 2021, Apple introduced plans to scan users' messages for CSAM but shelved those after facing criticism from the security researchers. The Online Safety Bill also puts the onus on Big Tech and firms that fail to comply with the new rules could face fines of up to 18 million pounds, or 10 per cent of their annual global turnover,

whichever is highest. New measures in the law include tougher and quicker criminal sanctions for tech bosses and new criminal offences for falsifying and destroying data. The Online Safety Bill will require social media platforms, search engines and other apps and websites allowing people to post their own content to protect children, tackle illegal activity and uphold their stated terms and conditions. "The Bill will strengthen people's rights to express themselves freely online and ensure social media companies are not removing legal free speech. For the first time, users will have the right to appeal if they feel their post has been taken down unfairly," former Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries had said last year.

7 dead in Germany church shooting

Hamburg | Agencies

At least seven people were killed and eight others injured during a shooting at a Jehovah's Witness church in the German city of Hamburg, local media reported on Friday. Earlier media reports said the shooting, which occurred around 9 p.m. on Thursday night, killed six people. But one more body was found on the upper part of the building later, Xinhua news agency reported citing the German newspaper Bild as saying. Police have said that a gunman is believed to be dead, but it remains unclear if the attacker is among seven fatalities, the newspaper added. There was also no evidence of a fleeing perpetrator, according to the police. Hamburg's Mayor Peter Tschentscher expressed his condolences to the victims' families. Police were working flat out to pursue the perpetrators and clarify the background, he said on Twitter. Meanwhile, the city's Interior Minister Andy Grote said on Twitter that police



special forces and a large number of officers had been deployed to the scene. The church is located in the city's Gross Borstel district, about 289 km from Berlin. A motive for the shooting is yet to be established and police have appealed to the public not to share assumptions or to spread rumours, the BBC reported. Jehovah's Witnesses are members of a Christian-based religious movement. The denomination was founded in the US towards the end of the 19th century, under the leadership of Charles Taze Russell. The headquarters of the movement is in New York.





# MAHARASHTRA TO CELEBRATE 350TH ANNIVERSARY OF CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ'S CORONATION IN JUNE

The Maharashtra government will celebrate the upcoming 350th anniversary of the Coronation of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in a big way with an outlay of Rs 350 crore, besides setting up a museum dedicated to him in Pune.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced the plans during his budget 2023-2024 speech, for the weeklong 'Shiv Rajyabhishek Mahotsav' celebrations starting from June 2.

The founder of Hindavi Swarajya, the Maratha warrior ascended the throne at Raigad Fort on June 6, 1674, and became known as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Shivneri Fort, where he was born, will get a museum on the life and times of the Chhatrapati and an amount of Rs 300 crore will be spent to revamp and con-

serve the major forts of his glorious era. The government will spend Rs 50 crore to set up a 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Theme Park' at Ambegaon, Pune, said Fadnavis.

Public parks with audio-visual media facilities shall be developed in Mumbai, Amravati, Nashik, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and Nagpur to tell the story of the life of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at a cost of Rs 250 crore.

As part of the initiative, a leopard safari will be started in Pune while a Rs 270 crore plan has been approved for Swarajya Rakshak Dharmaveer Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Balidaan Sthal in Tuljapur and at

Shirur in Pune.

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders of Congress-Nationalist Congress Party-Shiv Sena (UBT) have slammed the government asking the budget has made no mention or allocation for the much-anticipated grand memorial of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in the Arabian Sea off Mumbai coast.

They pointed out that way back on December 24, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had sailed in a boat to perform the 'ajal puja' at the prospective spot where the memorial is planned in the sea off Raj Bhavan, but after that there's no movement on the project, expected to cost around Rs 3,600 crore.



# Shocker: Maha admits 10-yr-old dead tribal girl was a 'bonded labour'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a shocking admission, Maharashtra Tribal Development Minister Vijaykumar Gavit informed the state legislature on Friday that a minor tribal girl - who died in September 2022 - worked as a 'bonded labour', a practice abolished 47 years ago.

Gavit's statement came in the Legislative Council and attracted strong criticism of the Opposition MLCs during a question on the issue of the Ashram Shalals in the state.

As Gavit replied to a query on the Ashram Shalals (schools) run for tribal kids, he was also asked to respond on the death of a 10-year-old tribal girl of Nashik six months ago.

The Minister said that the girl had been taken to work in the adjoining Parner tehsil of Ahmednagar district but since she was not in good health, the family which employed her had dumped the girl outside her parents' home.

She was found with injury marks on her body and passed away during her treatment later, he said.

The enraged Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) demanded to know whether she had been 'sold', resulting in embarrassment for the ruling Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party alliance government. The MVA



members like Ambadas Danve, Eknath Khadse and Shashikant Shinde urged the minister to make a statement on her death, and Gavit said she was not 'sold' but was employed as a 'bonded labourer'.

Janata Dal's Kapil Patil pointed out that 'bonded labour' is banned under a law enacted in Maharashtra, and "it is shameful that the Minister openly admits to the prevalence of such a practice in the state."

He demanded an explanation from the Minister as to how the victim ended up working as a 'bonded labour', when this practice was abolished (in 1976).

Terming it as a 'reflection' of the government's inefficiency, Khadse said that the sale or bonded labour involving children is 'unpardonable' and demanded that the state government should take it very seriously.

# Fire breaks out on sets of 'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyar Mein', no casualties

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A fire broke out on the sets of a Hindi tele-series being shot at the Dadasaheb Phalke Film City in Goregaon on Friday, the BMC Disaster Control said.

The blaze was reported from the sets of the serial 'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyar Mein', which was said to be confined to the 2,000 sq ft ground floor of the studio.

Five fire engines, two big hose lines, nine pumps and other equipment were deployed to fight the conflagration. Senior officials were present on the spot to guide the operations. It was not immediately known whether the serial crew and actors were present on the sets at the time of the incident. Further details are awaited. The show 'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyar



Mein' keeps the audience hooked because of the love triangle between Sai, played by Ayesha Singh, Virat, portrayed by Neil Bhatt, and Paakhi, played by Aishwarya Sharma.

# Samajwadi Party MLA challenges Maha govt order tracking inter-community marriages

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Samajwadi Party MLA has filed a writ petition in the Bombay High Court challenging the Maharashtra government's order setting up a Family Coordination Committee (FCC) to monitor inter-faith and inter-caste marriages in the state, here on Friday.

MLA Rais K. Shaikh has said that the Government Resolution (GR) to the effect is discriminatory against a particular religion and violates Article 14 (Right to Equality) and Article 15 (Right to Life which includes Right to Privacy) and Article 25 (Right to Freedom of Religion) and other articles as enshrined in the Constitution.

The GR of December 13, 2022 came in the wake of the grisly killing of a Palghar girl, Shraddha Walkar in Delhi, allegedly by her inter-faith boyfriend, Shaikh said in the plea filed through lawyer Jeet Gandhi.

"That the assumption that adult women who choose and consent to marry someone from another faith need to be 'saved' is misplaced and goes against the spirit of the Constitution," Shaikh said in his plea.

He claimed that it is the government's attempt to discourage and/or prohibit interfaith marriages and is a precursor to the



laws related to purported 'love jihad' marriages that have been stayed in numerous states in the country.

The government's FCC is ostensibly intended to provide a platform to 'counsel, communicate and resolve' differences between such couples and their estranged families.

Shaikh said that the FCC can intervene at the behest of any person which is a breach of the couple's privacy, especially when two consenting adults are married to each other.

He pointed out that the discourse around marriage in India

fails to place adult individuals at the centre with the family, campaigning vigilante groups and societal forces playing the role to control the lives and determine the future of the young people who have chosen their own partner. The plea argued that the GR seeks to create a regressive and false narrative that "it is only in inter-faith or inter-caste marriages that a girl is at risk from her partner".

Besides, Shaikh said that the GR discriminates against a particular religion and encourages a divide among people instead of harmony, co-existence, assimilation and peace.

The FCC is authorised to seek information of both registered and unregistered marriages, which the petition warns could violate several rights of couples who have eloped to marry.

He contended that the GR is ultra vires the Constitution as it was issued unilaterally, in extreme haste, under suspicious circumstances without following due procedures, particularly since distressed women have recourse to other laws like Indian Penal Code and Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. Shaikh said that the GR doesn't cover those who plan to wed under personal laws and/or in their own religion, and sought that it should be scrapped, and the petition is likely to come up for hearing in due course.

# WOMAN DEAD, 4 INJURED AFTER FIRE AT CHEMICAL UNIT

Palghar: An 85-year-old woman was killed and four others injured in a major fire and explosions at a small chemical unit in Vasai taluka of Maharashtra's Palghar district, officials said.

The incident occurred at Sativali village on Thursday afternoon, they said.

The woman had given the ground floor space of her residence to the chemical plant to run its operations, while she herself lived on the mezzanine floor there, a fire brigade official said.

"A drum filled with thinner, an inflammable substance, was kept at the unit. While the liquid was being transferred, it resulted in a fire that triggered explosions around 4 pm," he said.

After the blaze, the elderly woman's daughter ran out to safety. However, the woman got trapped inside and died on the spot, the official said.

"Four persons working at the unit sustained burn injuries and were admitted to a hospital. They are currently undergoing treatment," he said, adding that the fire brigade personnel put out the fire by around 9 pm. An offence under Indian Penal Code (IPC) section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) was registered against the owner of the chemical plant, but no arrest has been made so far, police said.

# Mumbai couple mysteriously found dead in their bathroom after holi party



Team Absolute | Mumbai

A couple was found dead under mysterious circumstances inside the bathroom of their residence in Mumbai's Ghatkopar area on Wednesday, the police said on Thursday.

The couple used to stay in the Kukreja building in the

Ghatkopar area. The cause of death is yet to be known.

Their maid saw the bodies and called in the relatives immediately.

The maid had the duplicate keys to the building, and informed their relatives, who in turn, called up the police.

Officials said that the couple used to stay on the fifth

floor of the building. Some of their relatives stay in nearby buildings.

"The Pant Nagar police have registered a case of accidental death, and the bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination," DCP (Zone-7) Purushottam Karad said.

# CONFUSION AS ED REFUTES KIRIT SOMAIYA'S 'ARREST' CLAIM OF SADANAND KADAM

Mumbai: Confusion prevailed over the purported claim of "arrest" of businessman Sadanand Kadam, made by BJP ex-MP Kirit Somaiya, with Enforcement Directorate (ED) circles denying the developments, here on Friday.

Shortly after Somaiya's contention that the ED had "arrested" Kadam, the agency sources indicated that the businessman was only called for "questioning" and not nabbed.

Somaiya's statement on the alleged "arrest" was met with a volley of reactions from political leaders of different parties. The ED is probing Kadam in the illegal Sai Resorts case with a money laundering angle in Dapoli, Ratnagiri.

Kadam is the brother of ruling Shiv Sena former minister Ramdas Kadam and a former partner of the Opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) ex-minister Anil Parab, who has already been grilled earlier in the same case. Ruling alliance Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party leaders welcomed Kadam's arrest while Sena (UBT) leaders slammed the move terming it as selective targeting of Opposition politicians.

# ED nabs businessman Sadanand Kadam in Sai Resorts case



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested businessman Sadanand Kadam in the illegal Sai Resorts construction case in Dapoli, Ratnagiri, on Friday.

Kadam is the brother of ruling Shiv Sena former minister Ramdas Kadam and a former partner of the Opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) ex-minister Anil Parab.

An ED team has left from Ratnagiri for Mumbai with

Kadam for further investigations into the unauthorised resorts case in which Parab had been earlier grilled. Though the ED has not commented, Bharatiya Janata Party ex-MP and crusader Kirit Somaiya tweeted the development and even hinted at more to follow. Ruling alliance Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party leaders welcomed Sadanand Kadam's arrest while Sena (UBT) leaders slammed the move terming it as selective targeting of Opposition politicians.

# Child brides from Maharashtra were sold in Gujarat, Rajasthan: Devendra Fadnavis

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday said that child brides from the state were sold in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Fadnavis made the comments during a written answer to a question on child brides and women trafficking raised by Legislative Council member Mahadev Jankar.

A child bride is a girl under the age of 18 who is married off to an adult man. This practice is a crime in India.

Fadnavis said, "As many as 24 criminal cases have been filed for the alleged kidnapping of women and child brides on the pretext of marriage in January this year. In 2021 calendar year, 448



accused persons were arrested." The deputy CM said that poor women and child brides from the state were sold in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

# "GAJAR HALWA": TEAM UDDHAV ON E SHINDE GOVERNMENT'S MAIDEN BUDGET

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Shiv Sena faction headed by Uddhav Thackeray on Friday dubbed the Maharashtra government's Budget 2023-24 as 'gajar halwa', and accused the Eknath Shinde-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) dispensation of peddling false dreams in election year by showering sops on people.

In its mouthpiece 'Saamana', the party said Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who presented the budget in the state Assembly on Thursday, showered assurances but did not show generosity in announcing compensation to farmers who suffered losses due to unseasonal rains earlier this week.

Fadnavis, who is also the state Finance Minister, presented the Shinde government's maiden budget, in which it proposed Rs 6,000 assistance to farmers and Re 1 crop insurance scheme while also offering relief in professional tax to working women, 50 per cent discount on ticket fares in state-run buses to women and a new scheme for the girl child.

Elections are due in various civic bodies in the state, including the cash-rich



Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). The state Assembly elections would be due in October 2024.

Referring to the announcement of paying Rs 6,000 to farmers under the 'Namo Shetkari Mahasnanman Nidhi' to supplement the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Samman Nidhi

Yojana, the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) said the budget did not speak about the compensation to farmers who lost their crop to hailstorm and unseasonal rains.

Large parts of the state witnessed unseasonal rains resulting in damage to standing crops.

"The budget is a 'gajar halwa' (sweet dish made of carrots) of announcements that is aimed at misleading people," the party said.

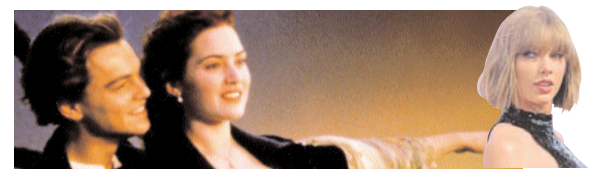
Fadnavis had said in the Assembly that the budget was based on five major goals or 'Panchamrut' - sustainable farming-prosperous farmers; inclusive development of all sections of society, including women, tribals, backward classes and OBCs; development of infrastructure with substantial capital investment; employment generation for competent, skilled and employable youth as well as environment-friendly development.

Taking a dig at the deputy CM, the Sena (UBT) said the intensity of Fadnavis' assurances was more than the unseasonal rain and hailstorm that hit the majority of the state two days back.

"Why didn't the finance minister show generosity in giving compensation for the crops damaged due to unseasonal rains?" the party asked in the editorial, adding that the only solution to the farm produce is to give it a price based on cost of production.

"This year's budget shows that the state government's policy is to peddle false dreams to farmers and people by showering sops on them," it alleged.





## TAYLOR SWIFT TO HAVE US CITY RENAMED IN HER HONOUR

Los Angeles | Agencies

Officials in Glendale, Arizona have confirmed that they will rename the city in singer Taylor Swift's honour to celebrate the singer kicking off her US tour there later this month. The city of Glendale, Arizona will be renamed in Taylor Swift's honour to celebrate the launch of her US tour, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

The singer is kicking off 'The Eras' tour at Glendale's State Farm Stadium with a pair of shows on March 17 and March 18 before heading to Las Vegas on March 24 and officials have decided to celebrate Taylor by temporarily changing the city's name.

A statement from city officials namechecked a number of the pop star's songs in a statement which read: "There is no need to calm down, we're fearless and doing something highly unusual to celebrate the fact that Taylor's concerts start right here!"

"We know all too well that she's one of the most influential artists of her generation and we are writing our own love story for her and greeting every Swiftie in style!"

Glendale Mayor Jerry Weiers is expected to announce the city's new name on March 13 and it will remain in effect across March 17 and 18 - the days Taylor is performing in Glendale.

Reports suggest the city's Westgate Entertainment District shopping centre will also display welcome messages to the singer and restaurants around town will change their menus to

offer meals inspired by Taylor.



## Jennifer Lawrence hired to date a 19-year-old in 'No Hard Feelings' trailer

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Jennifer Lawrence stars in a raunchy comedy 'No Hard Feelings' whose trailer highlights her character's attempt to seduce a 19-year-old boy. In the movie, Lawrence stars as Maddie, a down on her luck Uber driver in need of some quick cash to save her childhood home after an ex-boyfriend / tow truck driver, Gary, (Ebon Moss-Bachrach) repossesses her car. A now-out-of-work Uber driver, Maddie stumbles upon an interesting offer from two rich parents, who are looking for someone to "date" their socially awkward teenage son, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Matthew Broderick and Laura Benanti play the wealthy parents, who are trying to get their college-bound son Percy (Andrew Barth Feldman) "out of the shell" before he goes to Princeton. In an exchange for a new car, Maddie agrees to "date" the teenager.

The video goes on to show Maddie's failed attempts to sleep with Gary and the hilarity that ensues. In one scene, Maddie approaches Gary at an animal shelter and asks him, "Mind if I touch your wiener?" before making it clear that she's referring to a Dachshund wiener dog that he's holding. Maddie then offers to drive Gary home in a van, but she ends up getting pepper sprayed in the face as he thinks she's trying to kidnap him. She takes him on a dinner date and to a party, goes skinny dipping with him and dances seductively in front of him. From director Gene Stupnitsky 'Good Boys', who co-wrote 'Bad Teacher', 'No Hard Feelings' is described as a laugh-out-loud, edgy comedy.



## Kardashian-Jenners may not be invited to 2023 Met Gala

Los Angeles | Agencies

The upcoming Met Gala may be Kardashian-Jenners free. According to a new report, Vogue head Anna Wintour is repressing the guest list at the annual fashion event, which is set to take place on May 1 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A source revealed to Page Six that the famous family doesn't make the cut. While Vogue refuses to comment on the report, an insider familiar with 'The Kardashians' stars shut

down the rumours, insisting it's not true that the first family of reality TV isn't invited to the big ball. The whole family of reality stars attended the gala for the first time in 2013. While Kim Kardashian attended her first Met Gala in 2013, her sisters Khloe Kardashian and Kourtney Kardashian made their Met Gala debut last year. The 2022 event also marked the first time the whole family was on the red carpet together, including their mom Kris Jenner, Kylie Jenner and Kendall Jenner.

Prior to this, Khloe addressed reports that she'd been snubbed in the past. The Good American founder revealed in an

episode of "The Kardashians" that she'd actually turned down past Met Gala invites, explaining, "I'm not big on red carpets. I think I've made that very clear."

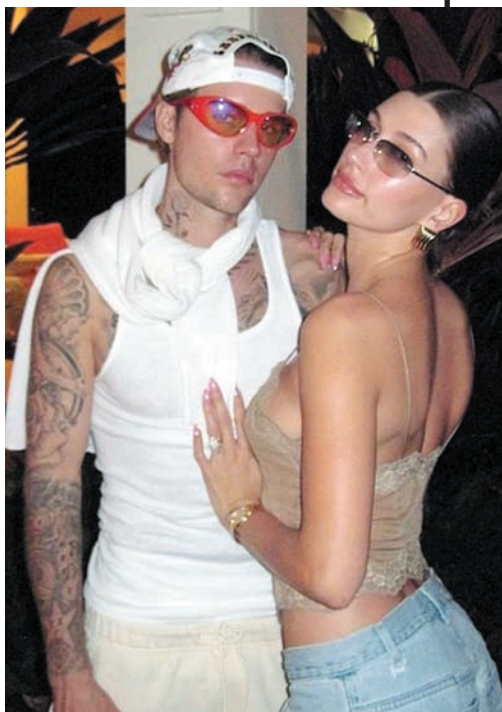
Kim, meanwhile, made headlines with her outfit choice at the 2022 Met Gala. The SKIMS founder stunned people as she arrived in Marilyn Monroe's "Happy Birthday" dress that she specifically borrowed for the event. The reality TV star only wore the original dress for a matter of minutes as she changed into a replica later in the night. "I'm extremely respectful to the dress and what it means to American history."

## Hailey denies celebrating pregnancy with Bieber on a yacht in Bahamas

Los Angeles | Agencies

Model Hailey Bieber responded to rumours that she's pregnant with her first child with pop star husband Justin Bieber. In a screenshot of Instagram DM, the 26-year-old star reacted to a TikToker who claimed that the couple is currently in the Bahamas to celebrate their pregnancy. "very much not pregnant lmao," so Hailey clarified, reports aceshowbiz.com.

The pregnancy rumours emerged earlier this month after @kelseyandcali on TikTok shared a video in which she said: "You heard it first. I have proof, I can't share it yet. Hailey and Justin Bieber are on a yacht in Bakers Bay in the Bahamas, celebrating their pregnancy." The post, however, has been removed from the TikToker's page. "Yes, I took my post down. No, I was never trying to sell anything. But I was asked by my friend to remove the post as it was very disrespectful to a lot of people's privacy," she explained, seemingly referring to allegations that she tried to sell a video to TMZ.



Zendaya tops list of Black women who were most Googled in 2022

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Zendaya Coleman has topped the list of most Googled Black women in 2022.

The 26-year-old actress led the ranking released by lifestyle website ThatSister far ahead of other Top 10 female stars in the list with 2.71 million monthly average Google searches in 2022, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Her film 'Spider-Man: No Way Home', which was released at the end of 2021, became the highest-grossing film of the year and the sixth-highest-grossing film of all time.

Zendaya's role in 'Euphoria' has also earned her multiple gongs and nominations, including her first Primetime Emmy Award in 2020. She won her second Emmy for the same role in 2022 and recently won her first Golden Globe Award for her portrayal of Rue Bennett on the HBO series.

In her personal life, her off-screen

romance with her "Spider-Man" co-star Tom Holland has also kept her fans on their toes. Though they're not the most avid users of social media, both actors have occasionally given shout-outs to each other on Instagram.

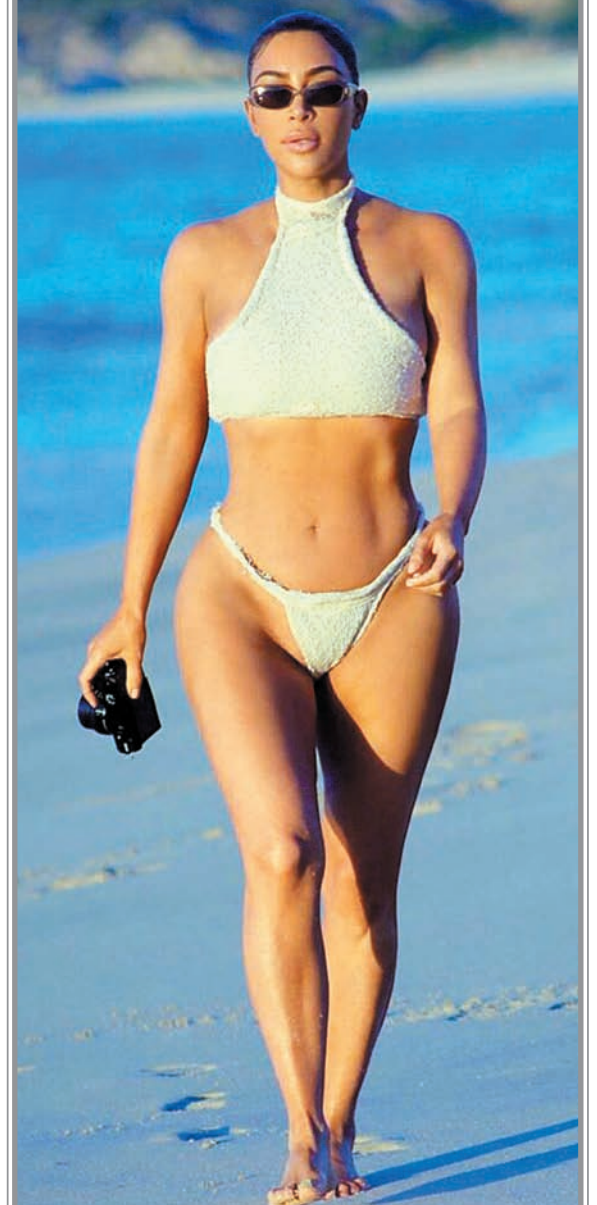
Next in the ranking is Serena Williams with 1.65 million searches. The former tennis ace announced her retirement in August 2022, and has since been keeping her fans curious about her plans next after her tennis career.

Serena's best friend Meghan Markle lands on the third place, largely due to her tell-all documentary on Netflix, 'Harry & Meghan'. Since they exited as senior royal family members, they have been making headlines with their bombshell revelations about their lives within the British royal family.

Beyonce Knowles and Michelle Obama follow next with a little over 1 million searches. Meanwhile, Jada Pinkett Smith, Oprah Winfrey, rappers Nicki Minaj and Cardi B, as well as Whoopi Goldberg round out the top 10.

ThatSister conducted the study by looking at Google search data for over 100 of the most influential Afro-American ethnic women since January 1, 2022.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Melissa Barrera





## 4th Test, Day 2

# INDIA TRAIL AUSTRALIA BY 444 RUNS, ASHWIN'S 6/91 BOWLS OUT VISITORS

Ahmedabad | Agencies

India opens Shubman Gill and Rohit Sharma saw off the tricky 10 overs with relative ease to be unbeaten on 18 and 17 respectively as the hosts were 36/0, trailing Australia by 444 runs at stumps on second day of the fourth Test, here on Friday.

With the pitch still in favour of stroke play at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Rohit was pristine in his timing, flicking and cutting off Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon with relative ease. On the other hand, Gill sweetly played a short-arm jab on a short ball from Cameron Green, before dancing down the pitch to smash a six off Lyon at the stroke of stumps.

Earlier, ace India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin picked a six-wicket haul (6/91) in a magical display of skill and control to bowl out Australia for 480. With pitch not showing much signs of sharp turn, Ashwin single-handedly got India back in the match.

After picking three wickets in the



second session, Ashwin took three more to get his six-fer and wrap Australia's innings at 167.2 overs. For the visitors, posting a big total on a nice batting pitch was possible thanks

to left-handed opener Usman Khawaja's marathon 180, and Cameron Green smashing his first Test century through an entertaining 114, apart from Nathan Lyon and

Todd Murphy sharing a 70-run stand for the ninth wicket.

The final session began with instant success for India as Usman Khawaja missed a straighter ball from Axar Patel and was struck plumb in front of stumps. With the pitch still being good to bat, Lyon and Murphy were able to get ten boundaries collectively off Axar, Ravichandran Ashwin and Mohammed Shami.

Ashwin finally gave India success when he beat Murphy on the inside edge with an arm ball to trap him lbw and in his next over, the ace off-spinner drew an outside edge off Lyon, which was caught by slip after ricocheting off the wicketkeeper's pad, ending Australia's innings at 167.2 overs.

### Brief scores

Australia 480 in 167.2 overs (Usman Khawaja 180, Cameron Green 114; Ravichandran Ashwin 6/91, Mohammed Shami 2/134) lead India 36/0 in 10 overs (Shubman Gill 18 not out, Rohit Sharma 17 not out) by 444 runs

## Olympic Games

# 3.25 million tickets sold in first sales phase for Paris 2024

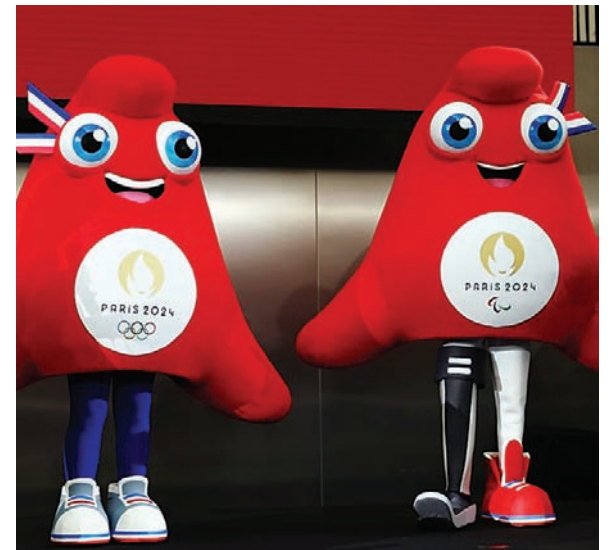
Paris (France) | Agencies

A total of 3.25 million tickets have been sold for next year's Paris Olympic Games in the first sales phase, the organisers have informed.

For the first time in the history of the Olympic Games, tickets were made available worldwide from a single platform with tickets sold in packs over three weeks in the first phase, which saw fans from 158 countries and regions register for the sale.

"The public response to the first phase of Games ticket sales was truly phenomenal. With over 3.2 million tickets sold in less than three weeks, take-up exceeded all expectations, for which we are very grateful," Paris 2024 president Tony Estanguet said on Thursday.

The French public made up two-thirds of ticket purchasers, with 45 per cent of all buyers being women, a



relatively high proportion in Olympic history -- with Paris 2024 set to be the first ever Olympic Games with equal participation by male and female athletes, reports news agency Xinhua.

Tickets for climbing and BMX freestyle sold out on the first day, while those for

fencing, judo, breaking and track cycling were all snapped up in just a few days. For the Olympic Games, a total of around 10 million tickets will be put on sale, and 80 per cent of these will be made directly available to the public via the official ticketing platform.

# WPL 2023: Saika Ishaque has been a real find for this tournament, says Kate Cross

Mumbai | Agencies

England pacer Kate Cross said she was left incredibly impressed with left-arm spinner Saika Ishaque's emergence in the ongoing Women's Premier League (WPL), terming her as the real find of the tournament.

With the WPL giving a platform to uncapped talented Indian players, Saika has made the most of the opportunity, picking nine wickets to be the leading wicket-taker of the competition.

On Thursday, she took off Shafali Verma, Meg Lanning and Jemimah Rodrigues in a game-changing spell to set the base for an eight-wicket victory for Mumbai Indians.

Kate also felt that Mumbai, the only undefeated side in the competition, are a firm contender for the title now.



# EUROPA LEAGUE DIFFICULT NIGHT FOR SPANISH SIDES AS BETIS, REAL SOCIEDAD LOSE

Madrid (Spain) | Agencies

Sevilla look as if they could be the only Spanish side in the quarterfinals of the Europa League after the first leg of the round of 16 on Thursday night. The La Liga strugglers gave a boost to under-pressure coach Jorge Sampaoli with a 2-0 home win over Turkey's Fenerbahce.

An even game tilted Sevilla's way in the 56th minute thanks to an excellent shot from Joan Jordan, who had come into the game as a second-half substitute, according to news agency Xinhua.

Betis lost 4-1 at a snowy Old Trafford where they matched Manchester United for the first half but were totally outplayed after the break. Marcus Rashford put United ahead with a powerful finish in the sixth minute,



but Ayoze Perez levelled with an angled drive in the 32nd minute. Antony's shot into the corner put United back in front in the 52nd minute and Bruno Fernandes' powerful header from a corner made it 3-1 seven minutes later before Wout Weghorst's 82nd close-range finish sealed the win.

Real Sociedad's dreadful record of going out of the

tournament in the first knockout round is in danger of continuing for another year after they lost 2-0 away to Roma.

In the Conference League, Villarreal tied 1-1 with Belgian side Anderlecht. Manu Trigueros' first-half goal put Villarreal ahead, but Anders Dreyer levelled in the 57th minute.

# UNION BERLIN CLINCH LATE DRAW WITH SAINT-GILLOISE

Berlin (Germany): Sven Michel's last-gasp equaliser gifted Union Berlin a 3-3 draw with Union Saint-Gilloise in the first leg of the UEFA Europa League last 16 here on Thursday. The Eisernen took the reins from the kick-off on home soil as Sheraldo Becker tested Saint-Gilloise goalkeeper Anthony Morris twice in the early stages. Union controlled possession and should have opened the scoring with 16 minutes gone but Kevin Behrens couldn't beat Morris from close range, reports Xinhua. Union assumed control after the restart, but Yorbe Vertessen clinically finished off a counterattack, giving Saint-Gilloise a 2-1 lead in the 58th minute.

It was a short-lived joy for the hosts though, as Vertessen raced through Union's territory before squaring into the path of Boniface, who made it 3-2 with 72 minutes played.

Union threw all men up front and were rewarded in the dying minutes when Michel tapped home the equalizer.

Elsewhere, Bayer Leverkusen eased past Ferencvaros 2-0 thanks to goals from Kerem Demirbay and Edmond Tapsoba.



## NZ v SL, 1st Test

# SRI LANKA ON TOP AFTER BLACK CAPS SLUMP TO 162/5

Christchurch (New Zealand) | Agencies

New Zealand skipper Tim Southee completed a five-wicket haul to dismiss Sri Lanka for 355 while Tom Latham struck a half-century but the visitors were in the driver's seat after reducing the hosts to 162/5 at the end of Day 2 in the first Test at the Hagley Oval here on Friday.

Southee claimed 5-64 off 26.4 overs as Sri Lanka started on the overnight score of 305/6 as the visitors were bundled out for 355 all out in 92.4 overs.

Sri Lanka, who were propped up by an 87 by Kusal Mendis and 50 by skipper Dimuth Karunaratne while Angelo Mathews (47) and Dhananjaya de Silva (46) made vital contributions. While Southee claimed 5-64, fellow pacer Matt Henry finished with 4-80.

New Zealand got off to a good start in their first innings as Tom Latham (67) and Devon Conway (30) raised 67 runs for the opening wicket. However, they lost three wickets for nine runs on Friday and were reduced to 162-5 at the stumps.

New Zealand trail by 193 runs in the first innings and have a mountain to climb on the third on Saturday to fight their way back into the match.

At the close of play on Day 2, Daryl Mitchell was



unbeaten on 40 with the in-form Tom Blundell falling 20 minutes before stumps for seven.

After New Zealand slumped to 76-3, Sri Lanka put an exclamation point on a successful day, taking the big wicket of Tom Latham for 67, who fell to a yorker from Asitha Fernando.

After Asitha Fernando made the breakthrough for Sri Lanka by trapping Conway before the wicket, New Zealand lost former skipper Kane Williamson (1) and Nehru Nicholls (2) in quick succession to slump to 76/3.

Then came the big wicket of Latham that put them in an advantageous position. Latham was castled by Fernando with a ripping yorker that crashed into the stumps. The 30-year-old left-hander, who struck seven boundaries during his patient 144-ball knock, had raised a fifty-run partnership with Daryll Mitchell before he was out.

Pressure is now on the New Zealand tail to add as many runs as possible to take their team as close to Sri Lanka's first-innings score and maintain their hopes in this match.

### Brief scores

Sri Lanka 355 all out in 92.4 overs (Kusal Mendis 87, Dimuth Karunaratne 50, Angelo Mathews 47; Tim Southee 5-64, Matt Henry 4-80) lead New Zealand 162/5 in 63 overs (Tom Latham 67, Daryl Mitchell 40 not out; Lahiru Kumara 2-34, Asitha Fernando 2-42).

## Indian Wells

# Emma Raducanu eases to first-round win over Danka Kovinic

Indian Wells (USA) | Agencies

Emma Raducanu, who hasn't had much luck this season as far as results are concerned, got off to a flying start at this year's Indian Wells Masters with a straightforward 6-2, 6-3 win over Danka Kovinic of Montenegro. Despite media reports circulating ahead of the match that the wrist issue that ended Raducanu's 2022 season early recurred ahead of Indian Wells, the Brit seemed to have recovered well enough to post a 1-hour, 21-minute victory in the opener on Thursday.

She had strapped on both of her wrists during a practice session on Wednesday.

Raducanu trailed 2-0 in both sets, but ultimately



exact comprehensive revenge on Kovinic, having lost to her in their last meeting in the second round of the 2022 Australian Open. The 20-year-old Brit won six straight games to take the first set and won six of the last seven in set two -- including four in a row from 2-0. Serving in the sixth game, Raducanu saved three break points that would've seen Kovinic draw level at 3-3

and later won the last eight points of the match.

After suffering a left ankle injury at the ASB Classic that hampered her preparations for the Australian Open, where she lost in the second round to Coco Gauff, Raducanu's planned return was even further pushed back after a bout of tonsillitis.

She was forced to withdraw from last week's inaugural ATP Open in Austin due to illness and also pulled out of the Tie Break Tens charity exhibition event held Tuesday at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden.

Raducanu reached the third round of Indian Wells a year ago. To match that feat in 2023, she'll need to beat Australian Open semifinalist and No.20 seed Magda Linette of Poland.

## WPL 2023

# We need to bounce back quickly: Meg Lanning

Mumbai | Agencies

The Delhi Capitals faced their first loss in the ongoing Women's Premier League 2023 after they went down by eight wickets against Mumbai Indians and captain Meg Lanning feels her side needs to bounce back quickly in the tournament.

On Thursday night at the Dr DY Patil Sports Academy, the Delhi Capitals were all out for 105 before the Mumbai Indians chased down their target in 15 overs with two wickets in hand.



"We were in a decent position at one point of our batting innings, but we lost wickets at crucial times. We didn't get enough runs for our bowlers to defend. But that's the way the game goes. You win some and you lose some. We need to bounce back quickly," said Lanning.

# SNEHA KEEPS 2-SHOT LEAD IN 5TH LEG OF WPGT WITH GAURIKA, JASMINE IN CLOSE CHASE

Gurugram | Agencies

Sneha Singh finished her round with a bogey for the second straight day, but still kept her nose ahead by two shots in the fifth leg of the Hero Womens Pro Golf Tour at the Golden Greens Golf Club here on Friday.

Sneha, who turned in even par and had two early birdies on the back nine, was bogey-free for the stretch till she dropped a shot on the Par-5 18th and finished with 1-under 71. This alongside her first-round 68 put her at 5-under 139 for 36 holes.

Gaurika Bishnoi, who had four birdies, also suffered back-to-back bogeys on the sixth and seventh and carded 71, one of the four players to get that score on the second day. Gaurika had 70 on the first day and is now 3



under 141. Lying third also with a 71 was Jasmine Shekar, who has been coming close to the leaders often enough. She had two birdies and one bogey. In the first round, she shot 72

and is now 1-under 143.

Sneha opened the day with a birdie but dropped two bogeys in succession on the third and fourth and then birdied the seventh and ninth with a bogey in between on the

eighth. On the back nine, she birdied the 10th and 11th but dropped a shot on the 18th.

Sneha already has a win this season in the third leg and is looking to be the first multiple-winner in 2023. Jasmine Shekar was second to Sneha in the third leg and is looking for her maiden win, while Gaurika won the 13th leg in 2022. Khushi Khanijau (73-73) was fourth while Tvesa Malik, trying to play herself back into form after a long break, had four birdies against three bogeys and a double bogey in her 73 and was tied fifth with Rhea Iha. The fourth player to card 71 was Ananya Datar, who after 83 on the first day improved by 12 shots to shoot 1-under 71 and was lying 12th. With just three players under par, a tense tussle is on the cards between the top three Sneha, Gaurika and Jasmine.





# DEEPIKA PADUKONE OFF TO LA TO PRESENT OSCAR 2023

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone, who will be among the celebrity presenters at the Oscars this year, has jetted off to the US for the prestigious event.

Deepika was photographed at the airport leaving for the Oscars 2023 awards. Her husband and actor Ranveer Singh was seen dropping her at the airport.

A video shared by celebrity paparazzi Viral Bhayani showed Deepika getting off from her car dressed in a black blazer paired with denims. Ranveer was seen inside the car as he dropped her off at the airport.

The actress will join global stars like Emily Blunt, Samuel Jackson and Dwayne Johnson in Los Angeles on March 12 for the Oscars ceremony.

Deepika announced her name on the presenters list through Instagram. She shared a list of presenters at the 95th Oscars which includes her name alongside stars like Samuel Jackson, Zoe Saldana, Dwayne Johnson and Riz Ahmed.



# Taking over the skies

## Hrithik Roshan announces the Hyderabad schedule wrap of his next upcoming with the film crew

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Racing to emerge amongst the most anticipated and awaited upcoming films, Hrithik Roshan's *Fighter* has been grabbing eyeballs ever since its inception. Adding to the ongoing excitement, the Superstar announced the wrap of Hyderabad schedule for India's first aerial action film with a swagger video mid-air.

Trust Hrithik Roshan to make heads turn and jaws drop with his every move. Soaring the excitement of the audience, Hrithik Roshan announced the third schedule wrap of *Fighter* with the whole aircraft roaring in sync to

cheer for *Fighter*, including the entire crew of the film. Earlier, the Sidharth Anand directorial has shot at the Tezpur Air base in Assam, Pahalgam in Kashmir and now concluded the third schedule at the Dundigal Air Force Academy in Hyderabad.

Mounted on a lavish scale, the ambitious passion project of director Sidharth Anand, who also launches his production house 'Marflix Pictures' with *Fighter*, features Hrithik Roshan as a fighter jet pilot for the first time on screen, tracing his journey from a young cadet in training to India's best fighter pilot. Known for his commitment to characters, Hrithik Roshan has

undergone a physical transformation to fit the bill of an Air Force officer across the different phases of his life.

Earlier on Sunday, Hrithik Roshan also shared a post commemorating his experience of working on *Fighter*. With a picture of scale model *Fighter* jets, the actor shared, "Fighter. Airborne. The re learning and the unlearning. The actor, the human. The process. Exhilarating."

Presented by Viacom18 studios in association with Sidharth Anand's Marflix Pictures, *Fighter* stars Hrithik Roshan, Deepika Padukone and Anil Kapoor. The film is set to release on January 25th 2024.

## IIFA TECHNICAL AWARDS

# 'Gangubai Kathiawadi', 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2' top winners

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The International Indian Film Academy and Awards (IIFA) has announced its technical winners from 2022. There are total nine categories of technical awards which include cinematography, screenplay, dialogue, choreography, sound design, editing, special effects (visuals), background score and sound design.

Of these, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 'Gangubai Kathiawadi' leads the pack as it bagged 3 awards - Best Cinematography was won by DOP Sudeep Chatterjee, Best Screenplay went to Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Utkarshini Vashishtha, and Best Dialogues was conferred upon Utkarshini Vashishtha and Prakash Kapadia.

The Kartik Aaryan and Kiara Advani-starrer horror comedy, 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2' won Best Choreography for title track by choreographer duo, Bosco-Caesar, and Best Sound Design by Mandar Kulkarni.

Bollywood superstar Ajay Devgn's crime thriller 'Drishyam 2' won the award for Best Editing by Sandeep Francis. Similarly, the Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt-starrer action adventure, 'Brahmastra: Part One-Shiva' took home the trophy for another post-production work - Best Special Effects (Visual) by DNEG, Redefine.

While Hrithik Roshan and Saif Ali Khan's 'Vikram Vedha' was awarded the Best Background Score designed by Sam CS, the Rajkumar Rao, Huma Qureshi and Radhika Apte-starrer streaming film 'Monica O My Darling' bagged the Best Sound Mixing (Gunjan A. Sah,



Boloy Kumar Doloi and Rahul Karpe).

The 23rd edition of IIFA is set to be held at Yas Viceroy Hotel, Abu Dhabi from May 26 through May 27. IIFA Rocks will be hosted by Karan Johar and Farah Khan with live performances by Amit Trivedi, Badshah, Sunidhi Chauhan, Nucleya, Mika Singh, and Sukhbir.

The global IIFA Awards will be hosted by Vicky Kaushal and Abhishek Bachchan. The IIFA magic will escalate with live performances by Bollywood A-listers like Salman Khan, Varun Dhawan, Jacqueline Fernandez, Rakul Preet Singh and Nora Fatehi.



## NTR Jr says his 'legs still hurt' from shooting 'Naatu Naatu'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Superstar NTR Jr says that the steps from his iconic number 'Naatu Naatu' from the film 'RRR' were not tough, but it was the "sync" which was tougher. He adds that his "legs still hurt" from shooting the song, for which he and his co-star Ram Charan practiced over three hours everyday.

In an interview to Entertainment Tonight, NTR Jr, was asked if there was a moment that this film is crossing all global lines and everyone is loving it?

The Indian actor replied: "We had no idea. The experience of shooting that song, I have been telling this... My legs still hurt."

"The steps were not hard but what was harder was the sync. We were practicing it everyday for three hours. We were rehearsing it while we were shooting that song... we rehearsed a week before we shot for that song and we were rehearsing on set as well. It was only for synchronisation."

How does it feel to add Academy award-nominee to his list of accolades?

NTR Jr replied with a smile: "What else could an actor ask for, what else would a filmmaker ask for to be a part of the biggest celebration of cinema globally, the Oscars."

He added on the big day, he would not be walking the red carpet as an actor but as an Indian.

## DISHA PATANI THANKS DALLAS FOR THE GOOD SHOW

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Disha Patani's dazzling performances in The Entertainers Tour, alongside Akshay Kumar, Nora Fatehi, Mouni Roy, and others, are currently spreading her charm all over the world. Taking ahead of her journey from Atlanta, she has reached Dallas, Texas, and is making everyone fall for her with her performances on the stage.

Disha took to social media to share snippets of her performance from The Entertainers Tour in Dallas. As we saw her win and her electrifying performance on stage, she is even more grateful to have performed in front of such a lovely audience. She scribbled a grateful caption - "Grateful to be able to do what i love thank you Dallas for this beautiful show #theentertainers"



## SRK's action sequence from upcoming leaked, fans call it 'Pathaan ka baap'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's action sequence reportedly from the upcoming film 'Jawan' has been leaked online and has created a tizzy on social media.

The short clip of about five to six seconds shows, the 'Pathaan' star short hair and light beard fighting with goons with a belt while holding a cigar in his mouth. The video is in slow-motion.

The clip is currently being removed for violating Red Chillies copyright. However, the hashtag #Jawan is trending on Twitter with many still posting the video.

Fans can't keep calm as they are seen tweeting about the clip. One wrote: "Current situation in twitter... after clip hype of #Jawan is unpredictable. Just imagine when teaser or trailer will come." Another commented: #Pathaan to sirf trailer tha #Jawan full monster hai #Atlee Anna mass SRK+Ciggy+short hair+mid beard+belt fight + #Anirudh bgm =Goosebumps Tsunami aane wali hai Theatre me fir se ?? #ShahRukhKhan?? Blue Shirt Pant me jach rhe ho aaye."

"One leaked video and social media got shaken. Hype is real," said another. "#Jawan Action Leaks Bhai Yeh Toh #Pathaan Ka Baap Nikla #Atlee Anna Thank You For Making This MasterPiece This IS CALL PURE MASS Movie," wrote another. Directed by Atlee, 'Jawan', an action thriller, also stars Nayanthara and Vijay Sethupathi.



Sonnalli Seygal