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INDIA OVERTAKES CHINA TO BECOME MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY: UN REPORT

▶ ACCORDING TO THE UNFPA'S THE STATE OF WORLD POPULATION REPORT, 2023, INDIA'S POPULATION HAS REACHED 1,428.6 MILLION WHILE CHINA'S STANDS AT 1,425.7 MILLION -- A DIFFERENCE OF 2.9 MILLION.

▶ THE UN'S WORLD POPULATION PROSPECTS 2022 HAD ALSO PROJECTED INDIA TO SURPASS CHINA AS THE WORLD'S MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY DURING 2023.

▶ FURTHER, THE LATEST UNFPA REPORT STATED THAT IN INDIA 25 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION CONSTITUTES CHILDREN AGED 0-14, 18 PER CENT ARE THOSE AGED 10-19 YEARS, 26 PER CENT BELONG TO THE 10-24 AGE GROUP, ABOUT 68 PER CENT ARE IN THE 15-64 AGE CATEGORY, WHILE THOSE ABOVE 65 ARE JUST 7 PER CENT.

▶ ON THE OTHER HAND, CHINA HAS ABOUT 17 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION UNDER 14 YEARS OF AGE, 12 PER CENT IN THE 10-19 AGE GROUP, 18 PER CENT IN THE 10-24 AGE GROUP.

▶ WHILE 69 PER CENT ARE IN THE 15-64 AGE CATEGORY, ABOUT 14 PER CENT OR NEARLY 200 MILLION PEOPLE ARE ABOVE THE AGE OF 65.

▶ HOWEVER, CHINA IS DOING BETTER THAN INDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF LIFE EXPECTANCY, WHICH IN THE CASE OF WOMEN IS 82 AND 76 THAT OF MEN. THE FIGURES FOR INDIA ARE 74 AND 71, ACCORDING TO THE REPORT.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

India has overtaken China to become the most populous country in the world, suggests data from a newly released United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) report on Wednesday.

"The Indian survey findings suggest that population anxieties have seeped into large portions of the general public," Andrea Wojnar, Representative for UNFPA India, said in a statement. "Yet, population numbers should not trigger anxiety or create alarm. Instead, they should be seen as a symbol of progress, development, and aspirations if individual rights and choices are being upheld," she said.

Meanwhile, the report also highlighted the issues of women's decreased right to bodily autonomy.

The SWOP report noted that 44 per cent of partnered women and girls in

68 reporting countries do not have the right to make informed decisions about their bodies on matters of sex, contraception and seeking health care. Close to 257 million women worldwide have an unmet need for safe, reliable contraception.

"So many women lack control over their bodies, including the right to have children - to decide when they want to have them and how many," said Poonam Mutreja, Executive Director at Population Foundation of India, in a statement.

According to the fifth round of the National Family Health Survey (2019-21), India's unmet need for contraception is 9.4 per cent, indicating that even when couples want to adopt a contraceptive method, it is not available to them.

Moreover, early and forced marriages continue to happen - with nearly one out of every four women in

India married before they turn 18. A Family and social norms have been pushing women into marriage and motherhood - leaving them without a choice. "Even as India becomes the most populous country in the world, the programmatic discourse should focus on ensuring that comprehensive and equitable services are available to people regardless of where they live or which strata of society they belong to. At the same time, we need to make sure that girls and women are not pushed into early marriages and pregnancies, which limit their aspirations," Mutreja added. The UNFPA report recommends that governments must create policies with "gender equality and rights at their heart, such as parental leave programmes, child tax credits, policies that promote gender equality in the workplace, and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights."

No data from government to indicate it is 'urban-elitist concept', SC on same-sex marriages

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said there is no data to show same-sex marriages is an elitist concept, while picking holes in Centre's contention that petitioners seeking same-sex marriage rights is "a mere urban elitist views for the purpose of social acceptance".

It stressed that the state cannot discriminate against an individual on the basis of a characteristic over which the person has no control, and something which is innate cannot have a class bias.

The top court further added that incidentally, even if a couple is in a gay relationship or lesbian relationship, one of them can still adopt.

Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing some of the petitioners, submitted before a five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud that a person's sexual orientation is intrinsic, it is connected with their individuality and identity, and a classification which discriminates persons on their innate nature would be violative of their fundamental rights and cannot withstand the test of constitutional morality.



At this juncture, the Chief Justice said: "The state cannot discriminate against an individual on the basis of a characteristic over which the person has no control." Singhvi agreed and added, this is very simply put and that is also the essence of it.

The Chief Justice further added: "When you say it's an innate characteristic, it's also an answer to argument in response to the contention that it is elitist or urban or it has a certain class bias. Something which is innate cannot have a class bias... it may be more urban in its manifestations because more people in urban areas are coming out of the closet."

He stressed that there is no data coming out of the government to indicate this is urban, no data at all. Singhvi replied that every averment in the Centre's counter-affidavit is without single survey, single data, or single test.

Senior advocate K.V. Viswanathan contended that his client is a transgender woman who was disowned by her family and later she rose to a prominent position in a multinational company, and for her to be branded as an urban elitist shows lack of grace.

The Centre, in its application, has told the Supreme Court that demand for same-sex marriage is a "mere urban elitist views for the purpose of social acceptance", and recognising the right of same sex marriage would mean a virtual judicial rewriting of an entire branch of law. The central government had stressed that petitions which "merely reflect urban elitist views" cannot be compared with the appropriate legislature which reflects the views and voices of a far wider spectrum and expands across the country.

The hearing in the matter will continue on Thursday.

Will tender unconditional apology to former TERI chief, Arnab to Delhi HC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former NDTV promoter Prannoy Roy's lawyer said that he will take instructions while Republic TV Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami's counsel apprised the Delhi High Court that he will tender an unconditional apology in a contempt case filed by late environmentalist and former The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) chief R.K. Pachauri.

Pachauri had filed a contempt of court petition in February 2016, alleging several media houses for deliberately and contemptuously not following the court's orders restricting them from publishing sexual harassment claims against him.

"The counsel for the respondent No. 5 (Arnab Goswami) states that she as well will file an affidavit tendering unconditional apology within a period of one (1) week. It is ordered accordingly," Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora recorded in his order.

The Economic Times and its Senior Assistant Editor Raghav Ohri have already tendered an unconditional apology in the



matter. "The learned counsel for the Respondent Nos. 2 (Economic Times) and 3 (Ohri) states that he has filed an affidavit on behalf of Respondent Nos. 2 and 3, tendering their unconditional apology. Let the same be brought on record within a period of three (3) days," Justice Arora ordered.

Pachauri had said that he was being subjected to a media trial and that the reports carried by the publications were defamatory and prejudiced his case.

Pachauri, who passed away in 2020, was accused of sexually harassing a colleague while he led the TERI.

MUMBAI COPS 'NIGHT OUT' LEADS TO MANY CRIMES DETECTED, OFFENDERS CAUGHT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Mumbai: In a three-hour-long 'All Out Operation' conducted in the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, top officers and men of the Mumbai Police detected a large number of criminal activities and nabbed offenders of various crimes, officials said.

The operation was implemented from 11 p.m. on Tuesday to 2 a.m. on Wednesday with the heads of the five police regions, the Special Branch, security, 13 zones, 31 ACP divisions, and Senior Police Inspectors of Police of all police stations participating. Guided by Mumbai Commissioner of Police Vivek Phansalkar, Special CoP Deven Bharti, and Joint CoP Satyanarayan Choudhary, the AOO comprised visits to police stations, special roadblocks and simultaneous 130 combing operations.

The outcome was impressive - of the 960 wanted/absconding criminals, the police nabbed 30, 81 were slapped with non-bailable warrants and arrested, and 135 drug peddlers were nabbed.

The police also registered 23 cases of illegal arms possession comprising knives, swords, etc, raided 51 illicit liquor and gambling dens with 62 offenders arrested, and took action against 32 who were externed from Mumbai.

Covid threat: PMO reviews situation, calls for readiness of hospitals

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid rising cases of coronavirus across the country, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, P.K. Mishra, on Wednesday undertook a review meeting to oversee the level of preparedness and public health response to it.

According to sources in the know of things, Mishra advised officials to ensure operational readiness of hospital infrastructure till the sub-district level.

He also highlighted the need to examine the Covid-19 situation regularly and update advisories to guide the states.

Mishra also exhorted upon continuation of the ongoing time-tested strategy of Test-Track-Treat-Vaccination and adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour among the people.



A presentation was made by Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan during the meeting, where he provided an overview of the global Covid-19 situation.

He highlighted that India has been witnessing a rapid increase

in the number of Covid-19 cases with the majority of cases being reported in eight states, namely Kerala, Delhi, Maharashtra, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Rajasthan.

INDIAN ARMY PERSONNEL TO LEARN CHINESE



Aizawl: Indian Army personnel will now learn Chinese language at the Tezpur University in Assam for which an MoU was signed on Wednesday, defence sources said.

Defence spokesman Lt. Col. Mahendra Rawat said that a course in Chinese language will improve the in-house Mandarin expertise and empower the army personnel to engage with their Chinese counterparts as and when the situation demands. He said that with improved Chinese language skills, the army men will be better positioned to convey their points in a much more cogent manner.

It will also help in better exchange of viewpoints and understanding of the Chinese People Liberation Army's (PLA) version of their activities during various interactions, including commander-level talks, flag meetings, joint exercises and border personnel meetings.

Plastic not fully biodegradable, claiming so may lead to misleading ads: BIS



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on Wednesday said that it has advised the Environment Ministry not to certify biodegradability of plastics, since it has not been established and it could be an ideal case of "misleading advertising" if it is claimed by any manufacturer that plastic goods are completely biodegradable.

Addressing a press conference on "Green Standards", BIS Chairman Pramod Kumar Tiwari said that research in India

and abroad is still going on to establish whether plastic is completely biodegradable.

He added that though there are some mechanisms, they don't confirm that plastic is biodegradable, and this was conveyed to the Environment Ministry during a recent interaction. The BIS has urged upon the ministry not to certify claims by certain manufacturers that their plastic products are biodegradable, as it is yet to be proven.

The ministry has agreed to the request, Tiwari told reporters.

WORST APRIL HEATWAVE IN ASIAN HISTORY

Bangkok | Agencies

A severe heatwave has swept across much of Asia, causing deaths and school closures in India and record-breaking temperatures in China, media reports said on Tuesday.

Maximiliano Herrera, a climatologist and weather historian, described the unusually high temperatures as the "worst April heatwave in Asian history", The Guardian reported. In China, local media reported that record temperatures for April had been observed in many locations, including Chengdu, Zhejiang, Nanjing, Hangzhou and other areas of the Yangtze River delta region. Unusually hot temperatures have also been reported in south-east Asia, including in Luang Prabang, Laos, which recorded 42.7 degrees Celsius this week, the highest reliable temperature in its history, according to Herrera.

In Thailand, the meteorological department said temperatures reached 44.6 degrees in Tak province on Sunday - matching the previous record reached in Mae Hong Son on April 28, 2016. It is predicted that temperatures could reach 45 degrees this week, The Guardian reported.



In Bangladesh, a country at the forefront of the climate crisis, temperatures soared above 40 degrees in the capital, Dhaka, on Saturday, the hottest day in 58 years, causing road surfaces to melt. An official from the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and

Climate Change said that if the heat did not abate, they would declare a temperature emergency in certain areas.

In recent years, India has become particularly vulnerable to extreme heat and experts fear this year could be even worse. The April heatwave has battered north and east Indian states, with this week, the meteorological department issuing an orange warning of a severe heatwave in parts of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, The Guardian reported.

VICTIM OF SEXUAL OFFENCE HAS RIGHT TO BE HEARD AT EVERY STAGE: DELHI HC

New Delhi: The

Delhi High Court on Wednesday held that as per the law, a victim of sexual offence is not required to be

impleaded as a party to any criminal proceedings instituted by the state or the accused.

"There is no requirement in law to implead the victim, that is to say, to make the victim a party to any criminal proceedings, whether instituted by the state or by the accused," the court noted.

Referring to a recent Supreme Court judgement (Jagjeet Singh & Others vs Ashish Mishra @ Monu & Anr), Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani said that even though a victim now has an "unbridled participatory rights" in all criminal proceedings, there is no reason to implead the victim as a party in the case, unless otherwise specifically provided in the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

Talking about bail-related proceedings, the court noted that Section 439(1A) of CrPC mandates that a victim be heard without requiring to be impleaded as a party to bail petitions. Justice Bhambhani was hearing a bail plea move by an accused, who is in custody after an FIR was registered against him under Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 4 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO) Act.



PM MODI DISCUSSES INDIA'S TECH-POWERED TRANSFORMATIONS WITH APPLE CEO

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Apple CEO Tim Cook on Wednesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and stressed that he is committed to growing and investing across the country, as they discussed with him tech-driven transformations happening in the country.

Cook, who is in India to launch the company's flagship retail stores in Mumbai and Delhi, thanked PM Modi for the warm welcome he received.

"Thank you Prime Minister @narendramodi for the warm welcome. We share your vision of the positive impact technology can make on India's future - from education and developers to manufacturing and



the environment," Cook said in a tweet, posting a picture with PM Modi.

"We are committed to growing and investing across the country," Cook added.

PM Modi replied: "An absolute delight to meet you, @tim_cook! Glad to exchange views on diverse topics and highlight the tech-powered transformations taking place in India".

Apple is ramping up its manufacturing in India,

along with growing its retail presence.

Apple began manufacturing iPhone in India in 2017, and since then, the company has worked with suppliers to assemble new iPhone models and produce a growing number of components.

Amid the local manufacturing push and an upcoming widespread retail store strategy, Apple shipped \$7.5 billion worth iPhones and iPads in India in FY22-23, according to CMR data accessed by reporter.

In FY23, Apple shipped more than 7 million iPhones and half a million iPads in the country, registering a 28 per cent growth for iPhone shipments, according to initial estimates provided by market intelligence firm CMR.

Those acting against party will face disciplinary action, says Rajasthan Congress in-charge

Jaipur | Agencies

After skipping the one-on-one feedback session organised recently for Rajasthan Congress MLAs in Jaipur, former Deputy CM Sachin Pilot on Wednesday did not turn up at the Congress Sammelan held at Birla Auditorium, which did raise many eyebrows.

However, his nameplate was there on the table. Speaking on the occasion, Rajasthan Congress in-charge Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa said, "I am against those who are against the party."

At this moment, state Congress President Govind Singh Dotasra stood up and said that whatever the party in-charge is saying is 100 per cent true.

"We should all stand up and support him," Dotasra said, as all the party leaders and workers present in the auditorium raised their hand in support.

Dotasra then made a statement similar to that of Pilot who had said "Mein jab virodh karta hoon to dhuwan nikal deta hoon (When I oppose someone, I take the wind out of their sails)". Dotasra said that every Congress worker sitting in this auditorium



has the power to take the wind out of the opposition's sails.

"Party in-charge Randhawa has brought strength from Delhi. Election tickets will be distributed on the basis of the good work done by the party leaders. The party is looking closely at the work everyone is doing. Our schemes, which are being dis-

cussed across the country, have to be taken to the masses," Dotasra said.

Randhawa said, "I have told the Chief Minister (Ashok Gehlot) to act tough. I would recommend disciplinary action against anyone working against the Congress, no matter how big a name he is. I have come to ensure that Congress retains power in Rajasthan." Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said that there is a wonderful atmosphere in Rajasthan because of the good work done by his government.

"We have got a survey done, which shows Congress will win the Assembly elections (scheduled later this year). Now you just have to take the benefits of our schemes to the public," he said.

"We have to repeat the government. We have presented a wonderful budget. The inflation relief camps will prove to be a game-changer. We have to connect every needy person with the inflation relief camps. Congress leaders and workers should not get into the trap of negative politics. Put all your focus in connecting the needy with the schemes of the government," the Chief Minister added.

Assam: Over 50 children fall ill at shelter home

Guwahati | Agencies

More than 50 children at a temporary shelter home in Assam's Nagaon district suddenly fell ill on Wednesday for unknown reasons, an official said on Wednesday.

The incident took place in the Doboka area.

As per the district authorities, the kids who reside in the shelter house suddenly became ill. Among individuals who reported being ill, nausea, diarrhoea, headaches, and vomiting were common symptoms.

All of the sick kids are aged between 1.5 to 6 years. The moment the symptoms started to appear, emergency services were contacted, an official said.

Four ambulances arrived



at the shelter home quickly and took the kids to a nearby hospital.

Superintendent of Police Saurabh Gupta told reporter: "I have received information

about children being hospitalised. However, the exact cause behind their illness is still uncertain. I am keeping a watch on the development."

Jamtara-based fraud syndicate busted by Delhi Police, 21,000 SIM cards seized

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A syndicate, based in Jharkhand's Jamtara, defrauding gullible bank customers by pretending to be staff of a prominent bank has been busted by the Delhi Police with the arrest of six of its members and nearly 22,000 SIM cards recovered, a police official said on Wednesday.

The accused were identified as Nizamuddin Ansari alias Nizam, 23, Afroz Alam, 23, Md Amir Ansari, 22, Sarfaraz Ansari, 22, Afroz Ansari, 22, all residents of Jamtara, and Nasim Malitya (31), a resident of West Bengal's Murshidabad.

The action came following a complaint by a man from whose account Rs 10 lakh was fraudulently withdrawn.

According to police, the complainant, presently residing at Dubai, has come to Delhi to visit his daughter studying in the Delhi



Technological University and wanted to get her bank passbook updated. For this, he searched for customer care number online.

During investigation, the call

details record of the phone numbers sought, money trail was probed and details from SBI and Billdesk payment gateway taken on record.

Based on surveillance and techni-

cal leads, the Delhi Police team on April 11 conducted a raid at a village Nawadih in Jamtara along with a team of Jharkhand Police.

During investigation, it was revealed that SIM cards were supplied to cyber crooks after activation from Murshidabad and in one single mobile phone, more than 300 SIMs were activated in a day.

Explaining the modus operandi of the syndicate, the DCP said that these cyber criminals were operating in a very clandestine manner under a criminal conspiracy under a deadly combination of preactivated SIM card supplier from Regi Nagar in Murshidabad to go undetected by agencies during the cyber trail as the SIM subscriber never knows that it is being used by the cyber crooks in Jamtara. The official said that a total of 21,761 used and unused SIM cards were recovered from the possession of the accused.

Claims about me calling Amit Shah over party status totally false, says Mamata

Kolkata | Agencies

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday emphatically denied the claims by Leader of Opposition in Assembly Suwendu Adhikari that she called up Union Home Minister Amit Shah and requested him to do something on the Election Commission withdrawing her Trinamool Congress' national party status.

However, Banerjee did not name Adhikari even once.

"I heard that on Tuesday one upstart individual claimed at a public meeting that I had called up their supreme leader Amit Shah four times after the EC withdrew Trinamool Congress's national party status. If they can prove this I will resign as the Chief Minister. But



if they cannot prove these allegations, will they rub their noses on the ground?" she said while interacting with media persons at the state Secretariat.

She raised a subtle question that

whether this "wrong message" was a deliberate one because of her demand for Amit Shah's resignation as Home Minister for the latter's comments that if BJP bags 35 out of 42 seats from West Bengal in 2024

Lok Sabha elections, then the current state government will collapse even before 2025.

"It is true that I demanded his resignation because his behaviour was not appropriate with his post as the Union Home Minister. His comments were contrary to the federal democratic system of the country. Hence, I demanded his resignation. The BJP always sends wrong messages to people about Trinamool Congress," Banerjee said.

On Tuesday while addressing a rally at Singur in Hooghly district, Adhikari claimed that immediately after EC's announcement withdrawing national party status for Trinamool, Banerjee called up Amit Shah with the plea for retaining the national party status till the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

'Don't want rejected leaders': Suwendu Adhikari on Mukul Roy's desire to rejoin BJP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Reacting to Trinamool Congress leader Mukul Roy's wish to return to the BJP, Leader of the Opposition in West Bengal Assembly Suwendu Adhikari on Wednesday said the party is not interested in inducting rejected leaders.

Talking to reporter, Adhikari said: "We are working on strengthening the party on booth level. Party is working to bring the non-BJP voters to its fold. We don't need to induct any leaders, especially those who have been rejected."

He said those, who left the BJP after May 2021 when the party workers were being "tortured" in the state, cannot be a BJP man.

While talking to a Bengali channel on Tuesday, Roy had



said: "I am a BJP legislator. I want to be with the BJP. I want to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah and speak to BJP National President J.P. Nadda."

Earlier, Mukul Roy's son Subhrangshu Roy had claimed that his father was

missing since late Monday evening.

Roy left the Trinamool Congress in 2017 and joined the BJP. He won as a saffron party candidate in the 2021 state Assembly elections, but later, he rejoined the TMC.

ATIQ-ASHRAF KILLING: FIVE POLICEMEN SUSPENDED FOR NEGLIGENCE OF DUTY



Prayagraj: Five policemen were suspended in Prayagraj in connection with the killings of gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmad and his brother Ashraf, a police officer said on Wednesday.

The suspended police officers include Shahganj SHO Ashwani Kumar Singh, a sub-inspector and three constables.

The SIT probe into the incident has revealed negligence of duty on the part of the policemen.

On April 16, Atiq and Ashraf were shot dead by three youth in police custody when they were being taken to a hospital for a medical check-up. A court in Prayagraj on Wednesday sent the three accused to four-day police custody.

CABINET GIVES NOD TO CINEMATOGRAPH (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government on Wednesday gave its clearance to the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2023, which proposes to introduce more categories for film certification and also brings in stricter penal provisions to prevent film piracy.

It is likely to be presented during the Monsoon session of Parliament, sources in the know of things said.

The proposed bill suggests imprisonment ranging from three months to three years, and a fine of at least Rs 3,00,000 which may extend to a sum of up to 5 per cent of the audited gross production cost of the film, to prevent film piracy.

According to sources aware of the developments, the Union cabinet, which met earlier on Wednesday, is learnt to have okayed the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2021, under which, the new film certification categories will include "U" or universal, U/A 7+, U/A 13+, and U/A 16+, besides an A rating for content restricted to adults.

Currently, under the Indian Cinematograph Act, three categories of film certification exist -- unrestricted public exhibition or U, parental guidance required for children under 12 or "U/A", and adult films or "A".

Information and broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur told mediapersons after the cabinet meeting that wide ranging consultations were held before bringing the bill to cabinet.

He, however, did not reveal much details



about the other provisions of the bill.

The proposed amendments allowing sub-categorisation for film certification purpose, appear to be in line with the age-based restrictions recently implemented for over-the-top (OTT) content providers under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines & Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (Intermediary Rules).

On June 18, 2021, the government had issued a notification seeking public comments to the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2021, proposing two further amend-

ments to the Cinematograph Act than those already proposed in 2019.

These were introduction of age-based categories for film certification and penal provisions imposed for film piracy.

Government had earlier in February 2019, introduced the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2019 in Rajya Sabha, with the aim of penalising rampant film piracy.

The 2019 legislation proposed prohibiting a person from using a recording device to make a copy or transmit a film, without writ-

ten authorisation of the copyright owner of the film.

It aimed to tackle film piracy by including the penal provisions for unauthorised recording and duplication of films in an exhibition facility.

However, after the Parliamentary committee on IT had made a slew of amendments in the 2019 bill, the government brought its 2021 version, which has now been cleared by the Union cabinet.

In the 2021 bill though, the penal provisions have been amended slightly and the penalties for an offence of film piracy are -- imprisonment ranging from three months to three years and a fine of at least Rs 3,00,000 which may extend to a sum of up to 5 per cent of the audited gross production cost of the film.

The Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2021 had earlier caused a lot of controversy, when the government had sought comments on it from stakeholders in June 2021, as the Indian film industry had felt that it threatens the autonomy of the CBFC and film makers. They were of the opinion that by giving revisionary powers to the Centre (one of the amendments proposed in it), they will be left powerless and will be exposed to vandalism, harassment as well as mob-censorship.

They had even alleged that it was curtailment of freedom of expression.

It remains to be seen whether the bill cleared by the Union Cabinet on Wednesday, contains the controversial clause or not.

70-YEAR-OLD BUILDING IN CHENNAI COLLAPSES; 2 INJURED, 4 FEARED TRAPPED

Chennai: A 70-year-old building in Chennai, which was under renovation, collapsed on Wednesday, leading to the injuries of two people, while four others were feared trapped in the debris.

According to witnesses, the two injured persons were standing near the building in Parry's Corner when it collapsed. They have been admitted to the Government Stanley Medical College.

Sources in the Chennai Police told reporter that earth movers have brought in to clear the debris and rescue the four people trapped inside.

Chennai Deputy Mayor Magesh Kumar told reporter that 10 people were working inside the building and six had come out before the collapse.

The Deputy Mayor said that stability of other old buildings in the vicinity is also being audited.



48 HRS AFTER SHIV SENA (UBT)'S PLEA, MAHA GOVT BANS OPEN-AIR RALLIES

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a major decision, the Maharashtra government has banned all open-air public meetings/rallies between 12 noon to 5 p.m., state Tourism Minister Mangal Prabha Lodha said here on Wednesday.

The move came three days after the deaths of 14 people, 'Shrisadasyas', who died hours after Union Home Minister Amit Shah conferred the 'Maharashtra Bhushan Award' 2022 on social reformer Dattatreya Narayan Dharmadhikari, revered as Appasaheb, at an open-air event which attracted an estimated 20 lakh followers. The development also came 48 hours after Shiv Sena (UBT) Kishore Tiwari made a strong plea to the Centre and state governments to come out with a set of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for all such mega-events and prevent recurrence of such calamities with loss of precious human lives. (IANS report dated April 17).

Lodha said that the decision has been taken after the "unfortunate disaster in Navi Mumbai and to avoid similar tragedies in future".

State Congress President Nana Patole said on Wednesday that given new social media photos/videos, the government must clarify whether the deaths took place due to a stampede at the award venue.

"What is the truth, and what is the government



suppressing? Both the Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra

Fadnavis must resign. I am appealing to Governor Ramesh Bais to sack this regime," Patole said sternly.

On Tuesday, Nationalist Congress Party's Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar had demanded a judicial probe by a retired judge into the tragedy, and lodging culpable homicide cases against all those found guilty for the shortcomings.

Pointing out that the state government had squandered Rs 13 crore for the Rs 25-Lakh Maharashtra Bhushan Award, Tiwari asked Shinde-Fadnavis to give compensation of at least Rs 1 crore to the kin of each deceased who hailed from very poor families.

Senior leaders of other political parties including Atul Londe, Clyce Crasto, Dr. Raghunath Kuchik, Trade Unions Joint Action Committee state convener Vishwas Utagi, NGOs and social activists have slammed the state government for the lapses leading to the tragedy.

Moved by the tragedy, Shah expressed his condolences to the families of those who lost their lives after he gave away the Maharashtra Bhushan Award to Appasaheb Dharmadhikari on Sunday.

"My heart is heavy with the passing of the 'Shrisadasyas' who lost their lives due to heatstroke while attending the Maharashtra Bhushan Award ceremony held yesterday. I pray for the speedy recovery of those who are undergoing treatment," said Shah.

BJP to plummet by 100 seats in 2024 Lok Sabha polls: Sanjay Raut



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP and chief spokesperson Sanjay Raut on Wednesday claimed that the ruling BJP at the Centre would fall by 100-110 seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

"There is a strong anti-BJP sentiment. In the next Parliament elections, BJP will forfeit 100-110 seats. This means, there will be a 100 per cent change in power at the Centre," Raut

told mediapersons here. He said that along with the BJP, all the central probe agencies like the ED and CBI which are being misused to pressurise all opposition parties like Congress, Nationalist Congress Party or Shiv Sena (UBT), will also go out.

Raut said that in Maharashtra, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) will fight the 2024 Assembly elections unitedly to bag between 180-185 (out of 288) seats, and of the 48 Lok Sabha seats, the MVA alliance will win 40.

When asked who will be the "Prime Ministerial face of the Opposition", he said that "it could be anybody, but the country will see a change of power at the Centre in 2024, there's no doubt on this".

Referring to certain surveys pointing at huge reversals for the BJP in the state, Raut said "we don't need to depend on surveys" as the ground realities are very clearly pointing to a power-change.

On the deaths of at least 13 devotees after the 'Maharashtra Bhushan Award' 2022 event in Navi Mumbai on April 16, Raut said that it was the direct responsibility of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and he must quit.

"Let Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis demand his resignation. He is the home Minister," said the Sena (UBT) leader, on the disaster that has snowballed into a major political fracas in the state.

Tips on tweet leads to seizure of 3 tonnes of banned Thai Catfish in Thane

Team Absolute | Thane

The Maharashtra Fisheries Department swooped on an illegal fish breeding farm and seized 3,000 kgs of the banned Thai Catfish (Magur), after a tip-off received on Twitter, officials said here on Wednesday.

The development followed a series of tweets by a social activist Binu Varghese to the Thane Collector Ashok Shingare highlighting the racket perpetrated openly. Taking strong cognisance of Varghese's tweets, the Collector immediately directed the Assistant Commissioner of Fisheries, Bhiwandi, Dinesh H. Patil to check and do the needful in the matter. Patil told IANS that their investigations revealed around 28 farm ponds in Padgha were taken on rent from tribals by one Salauddin Mondal of West Bengal who was unauthorisedly breeding the banned fish species in three large ponds sprawled over three acres.



After proper verification of all details, the Fisheries Department team led by Patil, along with a police escort cracked down on the breeding farms and removed a huge quantity of Thai Catfish from the three ponds on April 15.

Following due protocols for its disposal, they deployed JCBs for digging up a huge trench nearby and buried the Thai Catfish to prevent its stench or other ill-effects in the vicinity of the other fish-ponds. Padgha Police Inspector Sanjay S. Sable said that they have registered a FIR and nabbed three

persons - Alamgir Mondal, Abdul Qayum, Yunusali Gazi - while the further investigations are handed over to head constable Pramod G. Konje. The National Green Tribunal has banned the breeding of Thai Catfish - which can grow upto 3-5 feet long - in the country since 2000. Studies have shown that consumption of Thai Catfish - which survives on land, in swamps and underwater - raises the risk of developing cancer and besides the carcinogenic traits, it also carries fish lice (Argulosis) that is harmful to other marine life.

SC sets aside Bombay HC order acquitting G.N. Saibaba in Maoist links case

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

The Supreme Court on Wednesday set aside a Bombay High Court judgment which acquitted former Delhi University professor G.N. Saibaba in an alleged Maoist links case.

A bench headed by Justice M.R. Shah remanded the matter back to the high court for fresh consideration and also kept the question of law (including sanction) open.

The apex court suggested that the case should be heard by a different bench, and not by the same one which passed the order, as the previous bench had already formed an opinion on the question of sanction.

The top court asked the high court to dispose of the appeals expeditiously, preferably within four months.

The top court's order came on



the Maharashtra government plea against the high court judgment passed in October 2022, which allowed an appeal filed by Saibaba challenging a 2017 trial court decision convicting and sentencing him to life imprisonment.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, represented Maharashtra government along with advocates

Siddharth Dharmadhikari, Aaditya Pande and Abhikalp Pratap Singh. On October 15, 2022, the Supreme Court suspended the October 14 order of the Bombay High Court discharging Saibaba and five others in the Maoist links case.

The top court had noted then that the high court had not consid-

ered the matter on merits, and rather took a shortcut to decide the matter.

It added that the high court discharged the accused only on the ground that sanction was invalid and it was pointed out that there was irregularity in granting sanction by concerned authority.

The Maharashtra government had moved the apex court questioning the validity of the Bombay High Court's judgment discharging Saibaba and the five others in the case of having links with banned Maoists organisations due to absence of sanction.

"The High Court has erred in not considering the fact that the point of sanction was neither raised nor argued before the trial court and yet the trial court had rightly concluded the said point against the accused holding that there was no substantial failure of justice," the state government said in its appeal.

E Shinde's Party's warning 'If Ajit Pawar joins BJP with group of MLAs'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena spokesperson Sanjay Shirsat has warned that if NCP leader Ajit Pawar joins BJP with a group of party leaders, then the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena will not be part of the government in Maharashtra.

Talking to reporters in Mumbai on Tuesday, Shirsat, whose party shares power with the Bharatiya Janata Party in Maharashtra, said he thinks the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) will not go with the BJP directly.

"Our policy is clear about it. The NCP is a party which betrays. We will not be with the NCP even in power. If the BJP takes NCP with them, Maharashtra will not like it. We decided to move out (of the earlier undivided Shiv Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray) because people didn't like us going with the Congress and NCP,"



he said. Shirsat said Ajit Pawar has not said anything which means he doesn't want to be in the NCP.

"We left the Congress-NCP (which were part of the previous Maha Vikas

Aghadi government) because we didn't want to be with them. Ajit Pawar doesn't have a free hand there. Therefore, if he leaves the NCP, we will welcome him. If he comes along

with along with a group of NCP (leaders), we will not be in the government," the Shiv Sena leader said.

He said Ajit Pawar's displeasure is because his son Parth Pawar lost election earlier. His displeasure has no connection with the case of a plea seeking disqualification of 16 Shiv Sena MLAs pending before the Supreme Court.

Shirsat was recently appointed spokesperson of the Shiv Sena-led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. Parth Pawar was defeated in the 2019 Lok Sabha poll from Maval constituency in Maharashtra.

"Ajit Pawar not being reachable is not a new thing. But his displeasure, which is being shown by the media, and our case (pending before the Supreme Court) has no relation. Ajit Pawar is disgruntled since his son Parth Pawar had lost the election," Shirsat said.

Apple Mumbai store sees huge response as Tim Cook gears up for Delhi opening

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The first Apple retail store in India witnessed a massive crowd on Day 1 and industry experts said on Wednesday that the Mumbai store, combined with the Delhi one which opens for the public on Thursday, is a big first step for Apple to woo in hundreds of millions of potential users in coming years.

There were at least 6,000-7,000 Apple fans and customers, cheering amid the beats of Nashik dhol, as Apple CEO Tim Cook inaugurated Apple BKC, located at Mumbai's bustling Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) financial, arts, and entertainment district, at the



Jio World Drive Mall. Neil Shah, Vice President of Research, Counterpoint Research, told IANS that the response was expected to be big and thousands of fans, enthusiasts make the retail store a sort of place of pilgrimage.

"Cook's presence and direct interaction was icing on the cake showcasing what India means for Apple and the crowd showed what Apple means for them," said Shah.

Despite starting from a smaller base of Apple users in India vs Android, the brand following and latent demand for Apple offerings and experiencing the brand first hand is significant.

21 injured as bus collides with truck in Palghar

Palghar: At least 21 people were injured when a state transport bus in which they were travelling collided head-on with a trailer-truck in Maharashtra's Palghar district on Wednesday, police said.

The condition of five of the injured persons was serious and they were shifted to the Civil Hospital in neighbouring Thane, an official from Wada police station said.

The accident took place in Varle village between Wada and Manor at around 8.45 am, he said.

The bus of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) was going from Wada to Manor when it collided with the truck, the police said.

113-year-old Mumbai bridge stones resurrected as August Kranti Maidan gates

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

In a unique conservation achievement by the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation, the discarded stones of a 113-year-old demolished road over bridge have found a new permanent place as the striking new "entrance columns" of the front and back of the 80-year-old historic August Kranti Maidan.

The Reay Road ROB was razed last year (October 2022) as part of the BMC's policy to bring down all retired bridges, those more than a century old or are in a precarious condition, and replace them with new modern structures.

"While demolishing the Reay Road ROB, we noticed some very beautiful, crafted or semi-crafted stones of various shapes and sizes making up around 8-10 main pillars, 20-feet tall, that would have been lost forever... We decided to 'recycle' them for an alternative use," said a senior officer of the BMC's Heritage Conservation Department, preferring anonymity.

Around that time the BMC had taken up restoration of the historic August Kranti Maidan - where Mahatma Gandhi and



other top leaders of the Congress had given the clarion call to the British to 'Quit India' 80 years ago on August 9, 1942. The renovation work was taken up by

the Savani Heritage Conservation Pvt. Ltd. (SHCPL), guided by its consultant architect Pankaj Joshi of Urban Centre Mumbai (UCM).

Based on UCM's guidance, SHCPL Project Coordinator Jitesh Patel and his team visited the site, and checked the heap of black-grey 'precious stones' lying

there and got working on it. "The stones of the erstwhile ROB pillars were carefully numbered, separated with cranes, then loaded onto trucks and transported for their rebirth, or a 'new avatar' as the entrance-exit gates of the 5-acre ground which is part of India's Independence history," Patel told correspondents.

The work was massive, and the teams relocated 54 huge crafted stones of the ROB pier caps each 5 feet by 10 feet, and column bottoms of 4 feet by 8 feet, each weighing between 800-1,000 kg, without damaging them in transit.

For the main entrance and back exit gates, a total of 54 crafted stones have been used and 448 semi-crafted stones of the column base, now erected on a sturdy new RCC raft of 60 square feet.

"The entire work was done under the supervision of BMC Commissioner I. S. Chahal, Additional Commissioner Ashwini Bhide and other officials of the Heritage Conservation Department, as part of the Rs 16-crore AKM redevelopment and beautification project," said the civic official.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Congress, BJP and Christian community

The Congress in Kerala is feeling the heat as the state unit of the BJP has commenced an aggressive outreach for the Christian community. The Congress, which has lost two consecutive Assembly elections in Kerala to the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front has to somehow maintain its vote bank. With the major Christian political party of Kerala, the Kerala Congress (Mani) already in the Left Front, the Congress is feeling the heat. With the Congress' repeated failure in the state and Centre, the party knows that political parties with community leanings would join the forces that are in power. The BJP has already commenced reaching out to the Christian community and on Easter day, the senior leaders of the party met Cardinal George Alenchery, Bishop Joseph Pamplani, Bishop Thomas Netto and other senior Christian clergy members. While the BJP said that it was only a friendly reach out to the Christian community, Congress has felt the heat and senior leaders of the party, including KPCC president, K. Sudhakaran and Opposition leader, V.D. Satheeshan has brought to notice the earlier "deeds of the Sangh parivar forces that were against the Christian community". The killing of Graham Stanes, the death of Catholic priest Stan Swamy in prison and many attacks against churches across the country were highlighted by the Congress party. The Congress state president, K. Sudhakaran met the Bishop of Thalassery, Joseph Pamplani in a bid to defuse the situation that the Bishop was leaning towards the BJP. The state Congress is conducting a high-level meeting on Thursday (April 20), and the church leaning towards the BJP would be a major subject of discussion.

I&B wants Amazon to promote Indian content

Vinod Mirani

The Government of India now wants to be a part of the OTT revolution. That is, the I&B Ministry, on behalf of the Government of India, has joined hands with Amazon Prime to promote the cultural and creative talent and content at its command.

India has used various bodies set up by the government over a period of time to promote Indian films and culture in different ways -- films through the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) and culture through programmes made by or for the Films Division (FD).

In most cases, whatever content such bodies produced or promoted remained within India. It was all half-hearted, not well thought-out. Most of it ended up being promotional content for the ruling regime. And these institutions were not set up to monetise their content.

Besides the FD and NFDC, the regimes also promoted, and continue to do so now, the International Film Festival of India (IFFI). The idea is to both expose foreign delegates to Indian films and the Indian audience to films from around the world.

But now the government believes it can monetise Indian content while also promoting Indian talent. Towards this end, I&B Minister Anurag Singh Thakur has announced a tie-up with Amazon Prime and the Internet Movie Database (IMDb).

The I&B Ministry and Amazon along with IMDb have struck an understanding across seven points and the drafting of the announcement sounds very corporate -- it says a lot but means nothing.

Take for instance the first point: Amazon and I&B Ministry will collaborate to promote creative talent, commence capacity-building measures and showcase Made in India creative content globally.

It did not mean anything to me and I am not an MBA! What made sense to me was the part about Promote Made in India Creative Content. Isn't the content we make creative? What is creative content? As for 'promote talent', it promotes itself. What are 'capacity building' measures? Some kind of aphrodisiac?

Then, it says, enable 'discovery of Indian talent' through IMDb! If one is familiar with IMDb, one knows it is a listing portal. It rates films and is not known for hunting, identifying or discovering talent.

The next proposal is: Prime Video and



miniTV will work towards creating internships and scholarship opportunities for FTII and SRFTII students and curate masterclasses for students as well as '75 Creative Minds of Tomorrow'.

FTII stands for the Film & Television Institute of India and SRFTII, similarly, is the acronym for the Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute. Internships and scholarships are fine, but doesn't the ministry trust its own FTII and SRFTII that it needs further endorsement by IMDb? That is the Raj mentality. Seeking endorsements from the goras and not trusting our own institutions.

Rest of the proposals agreed to not amount to much. One says: Iconic content from NFDC, Doordarshan and IFFI to be showcased on Prime Video and miniTV to commemorate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. Almost all the content that the Ministry calls iconic is available on various online portals such as YouTube and, what is more, the NFDC is not known to properly preserve the film negatives in its possession.

A couple of filmmakers who made films with NFDC finance did ask the corporation to sell their negatives and film rights to them, but were refused.

One does not expect much to come out of this deal between the I&B Ministry and Amazon and IMDb.

As the world accepts yoga to be beneficial and many outside India also follow the Bhagavad Gita, it would be best for the I&B Ministry to choose specific subjects to promote through OTT platforms. Except for the monuments in the North and, to an extent in

Rajasthan, the ones in the rest of India have not been exposed to the western world.

As for Indian classical music, many artistes have earned renown and a big following abroad on their own. That is also one faculty that needs to be zeroed in on for promotion not only in the West, but also in India, where interest in classical music seems to be waning.

It would be proper to promote India thematically: temples, music, monuments, fashion and so on.

SO WHAT IF HE'S 58!

Salman Khan has come out in favour of clean content on OTT platforms and the rest of the media. Others on Twitter have pounced on him as if Salman Khan always indulged in such stuff and is now trying to be Mr Clean! Salman tweeted:

"I just think that there should be a censor on OTT and this vulgar nudity, gali galoch should stop ASAP. 15-16-year-olds are watching such content on their phone."

The media has accused Salman of the things he has done in his films, but those on Twitter have reacted with abuses and insults. Social media such as Twitter is the abode of cowards who gather the courage to call names to others behind the safety of their handles.

Don't be surprised if you find them catching the first day, first show of the next Salman Khan film!

Twitter is the place to vent frustration and the handles are not expected to offer any con-

structive criticism. But, the media?

Some have attributed motives to Salman's attempts to build a good image. They have mentioned how he started appearing topless in his movies, thereby compelling Aamir Khan and Shah Rukh Khan to also flaunt their muscles! If one follows Indian mythology, all gods and other characters went topless.

A media commentator even said that the 'Bollywood mafia (?)' is jealous of OTT, which is why Salman made such a comment. What do you think feeds OTT if not the films?

A watchable OTT serial comes once in a while. Films ensure their survival, at least in India. None of media people picking on Salman misses out on mentioning his age: 58. Don't know what is wrong about being 58 and yet so fit and commanding a mass following as well!

To cite instances of Salman baring his body, or kissing on screen, or using lewd gestures or abusive language is not true. Of course, he is known to make unacceptable gestures in real life, even to women journalists. As for using dialogues with double meaning, the practice has been a part of Indian films from time immemorial.

If one dwells deeper, the lyrics of almost every second song have double meanings. Take for example the song from 'Murder', 'Bheeg honth tere', or 'Balam pichkari...' from 'Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani'. Just search on the Net and you will find a long list of songs with double meaning.

international

MUSLIM PUPILS TELL HINDU CLASSMATES IN UK TO CONVERT: REPORT

London | Agencies

Hindu students in the UK are targets of bullying and racial discrimination in classrooms with Muslim pupils telling them to change their religion to make their lives easier, according to a London-based think tank.

The Telegraph reported quoting a study by the Henry Jackson Society that Muslim pupils called for Hindus to convert or face "threats of hell for disbelievers" using terms such as "kaffir".

Half of Hindu parents surveyed reported that their child had experienced anti-Hindu hate in schools, while less than 1 per cent of schools surveyed reported any anti-Hindu related incidents in the last five years.

The survey, covering 988 Hindu parents and more than 1,000 schools around the country, found that there were "numerous instances of derogatory references made towards Hindus, such as mocking their vegetarianism and belittling their deities, which were also made by Islamist extremists rallying



against the Hindu community in Leicester.

"In one instance, a female Hindu pupil had beef thrown at her, and a male student was reported to have to change East London schools three times on account of anti-Hindu bullying. Eight physical assaults were detailed," the study said.

In one example a child "was harassed and told that if they convert to Islam, their life will become so much easier" and another was told: "You aren't going to survive very long... If you want to go to paradise, you'll have to come to

Islam... Hindus are the herbivores at the bottom of the food chain, we will eat you up." Another parent said children were told to watch videos of an Islamic preacher and to "convert because Hinduism makes no sense", The Telegraph reported.

According to the think tank, religious education was "fostering discrimination" against Hindus with inappropriate references to the Indian caste system and misconceptions over the worship of deities which students felt made "a mockery of them".

It was found that only 15 per cent of parents surveyed believed schools adequately address anti-Hindu related incidents.

Ben Everitt, Conservative MP for Milton Keynes, told The Telegraph that the findings were "damning" and called for urgent improvements to religious education.

"The findings in this report are damning and shed light on the varying themes and forms which anti-Hindu discrimination materialises in the classroom," he said.

Indonesia's Mt. Semeru erupts, spews hot ash



Jakarta: Mount Semeru in Indonesia's East Java province erupted 16 times on Wednesday, spewing hot ash as far as 2 km from the crater to the southeast, authorities said. The first eruption started at 7.10 a.m. and the second at 8.40 a.m., with a duration of 82 to 110 seconds, said Semeru Volcano Monitoring Post Officer Sigit Rian Alfian. The mountain, as high as 3,676 metres above sea level, is in the third danger level, reports Xinhua news agency. The authorities have asked people to remain vigilant, and in particular avoid its southeastern sector of 13 km and a 5 km radius around the summit to avoid eruption. The eruption of Mount Semeru in December 2021 caused tens of thousands of people to flee home and claimed more than 50 lives.

Thousands of US airline flights delayed following glitch

Washington | Agencies

Thousands of flights of Southwest Airlines were delayed across the US following a technical glitch that forced the temporary grounding of all its planes.

According to aviation tracking company Flight Aware, more than 5,400 flights were delayed into or out of the US on Tuesday, while over 100 were cancelled, reports the BBC.

Confirming the development, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said that "Southwest Airlines experienced a technical issue with one of their internal systems", adding that all departures had been paused at the airline's request while the Dallas-based carrier addressed the issue.

Southwest Airlines has been under fire after "staff



"The pause has been lifted and their service has resumed," the FAA said. As services resumed later Tuesday, the low-cost carrier said on social media: "We work to restore operations and accommodate disrupted customers as quickly as possible."

Southwest Airlines has been under fire after "staff

shortages" during last year's Christmas holiday season led to 16,700 flight cancellations and disrupted travel plans for two million customers.

At the time, the US Department of Transportation said it would investigate whether customers were subject to "unfair and deceptive" practices.

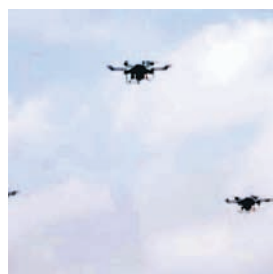
IRAN UNVEILS NEW RADAR SYSTEM FOR DETECTING LOW-ALTITUDE DRONES

Tehran | Agencies

Iran has reportedly unveiled a homegrown radar system capable of detecting low-altitude micro aerial vehicles (MAVs).

The radar system, named Shahid (Martyr) Jallilvand, was unveiled during a ceremony that also featured parades by the ground force, navy, air force, and air defence divisions to mark National Army Day, which is celebrated annually on April 18, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the semi-official Fars news agency.

The radar system also boasts features such as 3D target detection, tactical capability for rapid reaction operations, long endurance, and utilisation of modern techniques for precise angle measurement and anti-electronic warfare equipment.



The medium-range phased array radar system enhances the detection capabilities of the Iranian Army's air defense systems, enabling them to identify low-altitude MAVs, Fars reported.

During the parade, the Iranian Army also showcased other advanced equipment and armaments, including homegrown missiles, tanks, armored vehicles, drones, radar systems, and air defense missile systems, as reported by Iran's IRIB news agency.

29 DEAD IN BEIJING HOSPITAL FIRE

Beijing | Agencies

At least 29 people were killed due to a fire at a hospital in Beijing, authorities said on Wednesday. The fire, which broke out at Beijing Changfeng Hospital Tuesday, has been extinguished, reports Xinhua news agency. The fire service had received a report of the blaze at an inpatient department building of the hospital at 12.57 p.m. on Tuesday. More than 70 people had been evacuated. An investigation into the cause of the incident is underway.

225 people arrested in Brazil in operations against school violence

Brasilia | Agencies

At least 225 people were arrested in Brazil and 756 social media profiles were deactivated in the past 10 days in operations against school violence, Minister of Justice and Public Security Flavio Dino announced.

In a report on Tuesday, the Minister also said that 694 adolescents and adults were also summoned to testify, while 1,595 police complaints were registered and 1,224 cases were under investigation, reports Xinhua news agency.

Dino presented the report during a meeting headed by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who called on Ministers, Governors and legislators to create a council to deal with this and other issues at the national level.

The President warned about social media responsibility and called on families to get involved in the fight against violence.

"These so-called platforms and the so-



called big companies that make money by spreading violence are getting rich. Some are the richest on planet Earth and they keep spreading lies. They have no criteria," he said.

Measures to prevent violence in

schools were initiated after an attack on a kindergarten on April 5, which left four children dead and five others injured, and after a teacher was stabbed and killed by a student in a Sao Paulo public school on March 27.

Nepal President airlifted to India for treatment

Kathmandu | Agencies

Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel was on Wednesday airlifted to India for treatment, his Office said.

According to the Office, the 78-year-old President who took office on March 13 will undergo treatment at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi. On Tuesday, he was admitted to the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu after complaining of shortness of breath. This is the second time this month that Paudel has been hospitalised.

Last week, he was admitted in a hospital after experiencing gastritis problems.



THOUGHTS OF BHARAT RATNA DR. AMBEDKAR MADE PEOPLE EMPOWERED AND AWARE: CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN

Chief Minister participated in the unveiling ceremony of the Dr. Ambedkar's statue, the program took place in the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly premises

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the statues of great men guide and guide us. The statue of Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar will remind us that as a result of the provisions of the constitution made by him, we are fulfilling the responsibility of legislator and minister as the representative of the people. Babasaheb's declaration "Be educated-Stay organized-Sangharsh Karo" enabled us to be aware of our rights. Baba Saheb is the center of reverence not only for some people but also for all the countrymen.

Chouhan was addressing the unveiling ceremony of the statue of Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar in Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha premises. Chief Minister unveiled the statue of Dr. Ambedkar and paid homage.



Assembly Speaker Mr. Girish Gautam, Home and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr. Narottam Mishra, Leader of Opposition Dr. Govind Singh and Chairman of the Scheduled Caste-Tribe Welfare Committee of the Assembly Engineer Pradeep Laria were specially present.

Chief Minister said that it is necessary to imbibe the thoughts of respected Baba Saheb Dr. Ambedkar, who is the pioneer of social justice and who paved the way for Dalits, exploited and victims to get their rights. To make their

dreams come true, we have to take a pledge to work daily in that direction and make positive efforts to build an egalitarian society. Chief Minister Chouhan said that the state is fortunate that Dr. Ambedkar was born in Mhow, which has been named after him. Dr. Ambedkar's memorial was built in Mhow by the state government. Now, after getting the land from the army, necessary arrangements will be made for the stay of the devotees coming to Mhow. Assembly Speaker Girish Gautam said that Babasaheb Ambedkar gave consciousness to the society. As a result, every section of the society is striving to be educated. It is also the constant effort of the state government that no section of the society should be deprived of education. The efforts being made by Chief Minister Chouhan in this direction are commendable. Leader of Opposition Dr. Govind Singh also addressed the program.

"Bigotry Won't Be Tolerated": Madhya Pradesh to review Madrasas

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The BJP government in Madhya Pradesh today ordered a review of illegal madrasas and institutions where "fanaticism in taught", stressing that "bigotry will not be tolerated".

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan tweeted after a meeting at his residence to review the state's law and order situation. The meeting was also attended by state Home Minister Narottam Mishra and senior officials.

"Illegal madrasas and institutions in Madhya Pradesh where fanaticism is taught will be reviewed. Bigotry and extremism will not be tolerated," the Chief Minister tweeted.

Last year too, the state government had said it would conduct a survey of madrasas in the state to check whether students are being radicalised at these centres.

This had come after the National Commission for



Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) received complaints that objectionable religious content was being taught at some madrasas in at least two districts -- Vidisha and Datia. The commission had also taken note of reports that Hindu children from underprivileged families had ended up at the madrasas.

At the review meeting, Chief Minister Chouhan also flagged online gam-

bling as a major problem. "The present Gambling Act in Madhya Pradesh is of 1876, it does not have any provisions against online gambling. We have decided to enact the Madhya Pradesh Gambling Act, 2023, to replace the existing Act," he told reporters.

The state police has the potential to make Madhya Pradesh the number one state in the country in law and order, Chouhan said.

Two freight trains collide in Shahdol, 1 loco pilot dies

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A loco pilot died while at least three more railways employees were injured as two freight trains collided in Shahdol district of Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday morning.

Impact of the collision was so strong that several bogies of the trains overturned and one of the engines caught fire. The injured have been rushed to a nearby hospital, and the fire was doused. Railways officials swung into action to clear the track.

As per reports, the incident occurred due to signal overshoot. While one of the trains was stopped on the track, the other one coming from the opposite direction



rammed into it. The incident occurred near Singhpur railway station in Shahdol district, which falls under South-East Central Railway division. Due to the incident, the movement of several other

trains got disrupted. Railway officials said the tracks are being cleared which will take some time. The cause of the accident would be ascertained only after a detailed investigation, they added.

Two training institutes of Madhya Pradesh Police got Union Home Minister Trophy

Chief Minister congratulated, will be awarded by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Police Academy Bhori and Police Training School Pachmarhi have been the winners of the Union Home Minister Trophy for the year 2021-22, given annually to the best police training institutes. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has congratulated both the police training institutes for this achievement. Along with the trophy and certificate, the training institutes awarded with the Union Home Minister trophy will also be given a cash amount of Rs 2 lakh. The investiture ceremony will be done by the Union Home Ministry in New Delhi. In this, on behalf of Police Training School, Pachmarhi, Nimisha Pandey and M.P. Malay Jain will receive this honor on behalf of Police Academy Bhori Bhopal.

Best training center for Constables for West Zone, Police Training School, Pachmarhi and Best



Training Academy for Deputy Superintendents of

Police, M.P. Police Academy Bhauri has been selected. In giving the benefit of training to the police participants of the country by including innovation and modern technology in the training, MP. The police have been in the lead. MoUs have been signed with universities and research institutes of India and abroad for connecting training experts. And the exchange of expertise yielded excellent results.

Excellent training in the police training institutes of the country is assessed on the standards set by the Bureau of Police Research and Development. In this, keeping the training institutes of constables in one category and the training institutes of sub-inspectors and deputy superintendents of police in different categories, better training methods, proper maintenance of resources and excellent training capacity throughout the year on the prescribed criteria. The selection is done by a committee constituted at the national level.

AYUSH CURE APP FOR ONLINE CONSULTATION WITH AYUSH DOCTORS

More than 60 thousand people downloaded the app

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Ayush Cure App Vaidya Aapke Dwar is being used to make Ayush medical methods available online in the state. The services of subject experts are being made available to the patients through this app.

This app of Ayush Department has been uploaded by 60 thousand people. So far, online medical consultation has also been given to about 30 thousand patients. Medicinal plants are also being distributed by the Department of AYUSH in the Amrit Mahotsav of Independence. Medicinal plants have been distributed to about 75 thousand families in the districts with the help of Horticulture Department.

Yoga wellness program Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had launched the Yoga Se Nirog program on 23 April



2021 during the Covid transition period. This program is being jointly conducted by AYUSH, Department of School Education and Indian Yoga Association. In order to maintain the physical and mental health of the person, online yoga exercises are also being made available to the beneficiaries.

Operation of unit of Yoga Research Council The Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy Wellness Center is being run in the Government Homeopathy College located in the Ayush campus of Bhopal. This center is being run with 100% financial assistance from the Central Government. The center offers intensive treatment for chronic and holistic lifestyle diseases. Modern facilities related to naturopathy, acupressure yoga therapy and diet therapy are available in this center. Free medical facilities are being provided to the patients reaching here.

UNESCO's Ms. Junhi Hon planted saplings with Chief Minister Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Along with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, UNESCO's Program Specialist and Head of Culture Section, Zunhi Hon planted saplings. Chief Minister Chouhan planted saplings of Amla, Jamun, Saptaparni and Karanj in the garden located at Shyamala Hills. Vaibhav Sahu, Dupendra Jharwade and Honey Sharma planted saplings on their birthdays. Sandeep Sharma and Shubhi Sharma planted saplings on their marriage anniversary. Naveen Bodke, Deepesh Sahu, Mahadev Pudel,



Priyanka Parkhe and Priya Deshmukh of Nyashis Social

Welfare Committee Bhopal also planted saplings.

Temperature crossed 44 degrees in Khajuraho; Thunderstorm and rain in Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Two colors of weather were seen in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday. It rained in Bhopal, Chhindwara, while Budelkhand-Baghelkhand remained warm. Khajuraho recorded a temperature record of 44.5 degree Celsius. For the first time in the season, the temperature raised so much. Apart from this, the temperature in Naugaon, Sidhi, Satna, Damoh, Ratlam, Narsinghpur and Khargone remained between 40-42 degrees. The temperature was recorded 40 degrees or more in 17 cities of the state.

Due to the scorching heat, the timings of schools have been changed in the districts of Jabalpur, Gwalior, Chhindwara, Damoh, Narmadapuram, Chhatrapur, Ujjain and Shahdol etc. Somewhere the timing has been done from 7 to 12 in the morning and somewhere from 7:30 to 12:30. Timings can also change in the capital Bhopal. DEO Nitin Saxena has sent the file to Collector Ashish Singh to reduce the timing.

Earlier, at 3 am on Wednesday, strong water fell in Bhopal with thunder and lightning for half an hour. Even at 7 in the morning, there was light drizzle with strong winds. In Chhindwara too, late night on Tuesday, water fell along with the storm. Drizzle occurred in Sehore and Shajapur as well. Bhopal received 1.2 mm of rain in 24 hours, while adjoining Raisen district recorded 1.4 mm of rain. The weather will remain like this for the next 3 days. Light drizzle will continue on 20 and 21 April as well.

Light drizzle occurred in Bhopal at 7 am on



Wednesday. There are clouds in the sky. There are still chances of rain. There may also be a storm. The weather will remain changeable on 20, 21 and 22 April.

Tuesday night was hottest in Damoh in Madhya Pradesh. Here the mercury was recorded 26.2 degrees. Narmadapuram recorded 26.1, Sidhi recorded a minimum temperature of 26.0 degrees Celsius. Barring Rewa (19.2 degrees) and Pachmarhi (19.5 degrees), rest of the districts recorded minimum mercury above 20 degrees.

Earlier on Tuesday, the heat showed sharp attitude. Khajuraho and Damoh as if the sun spewed fire. Here the mercury crossed 43 degrees. The temperature was 43.5 degrees in Khajuraho and 43.2 degrees in Damoh. For the second consecutive day, mercury was recorded at 40.9 degrees in Bhopal. There was no increase in mercury due to cloud cover. Whereas, it was 41.6 in Gwalior, 38.3 in Indore and 40.8 in Jabalpur. The mercury remained above 40 degrees in more than 23 cities of the state.

2 Muslims, worked at Maa Sharda Temple since 1988, will be fired now

Team Absolute | Maihar

Maihar in Madhya Pradesh is a town known for the Maa Sharda temple and for the Maihar gharana founded by sarod legend Baba Alauddin Khan.

With a long, syncretic history, Maihar now stares at a different future.

The state government has directed that Muslim employees can no longer work in the management committee of the temple. A letter signed by Pushpa Kalesh, deputy secretary of the state Ministry of Religious Trust and Endowments, has asked the temple committee to comply with the directive issued on January 17 and submit a report.

Two Muslim employees, working at the Maa Sharda temple since 1988, are set to lose their jobs. This, even though state government rules say no employee can be removed on religious grounds.

An order has also been issued to ban meat and liquor sales in Maihar. Both orders were issued allegedly after supporters of the rightwing Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and



Bajrang Dal approached Usha Singh Thakur, the Minister for culture, religious trust and endowment, in January. District collector Anurag Verma, who also heads the temple management committee, has told the media that action will be taken according to rules. The Minister could not be reached for a comment.

On the surface, the order may seem to impact only two employees. But a recap of Maihar's history shows how deep the damage will be. Maihar was home to Baba

Alauddin Khan, legendary musician and founder of Maihar gharana that produced some of the biggest names in Indian classical music. Khan's renowned disciples include Pandit Ravi Shankar, Pandit Nikhil Banerjee, and his daughter Annapurna Devi and son Ustad Ali Akbar Khan.

A musician in the court of the Maharaja of Maihar, Khan is credited with composing several classical ragas. It is said that Khan would climb the 1,063 stairs leading to the Maa Sharda temple daily and play

before the goddess. In his interviews, Pandit Ravi Shankar would recount how his mentor's home in Maihar was full of photographs of Goddess Kali, Lord Krishna and Jesus Christ. That house still stands in Maihar, unchanged, even though the world outside is changing.

Khan's legacy is not limited to his contribution to music. After an epidemic left behind many children orphaned, the legendary musician took them under his wing and a group, named Maihar Band, was formed. Maihar Band continues to this day and is in its fifth generation.

The Maa Sharda temple in Maihar, where Khan would pray and perform for the goddess, is a Shakti Peeth, one of the 51 most prominent shrines for followers of the Shakti tradition. The name of the temple town comes from the belief that when Lord Shiva performed the Tandava with Sati's body, her necklace fell on Trikoot hill, giving the temple and the town the name Maihar (meaning mother's necklace). The temple is believed to have been built in 502 AD and draws pilgrims from across the country.



'I ONLY SLEPT WITH HIM ONCE'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Real Housewives Of Beverly Hills' alum Teddi Mellencamp has claimed that she had a one-night stand with Hollywood star Matt Damon 20 years ago after she used fake ID to sneak into a nightclub and met the actor there.

Appearing on SiriusXM, Mellencamp said: "I was 20. I had a fake ID to get into the club. He was probably 30, 10 years older. I only slept with him once. It was a one-night stand."

"He didn't get my number."

Mellencamp initially didn't want to reveal the identity of her high-profile hook up, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She said: "All I can tell you is he has a very famous best friend as well. That's all I'm saying."

But her 'Two Ts in a Pod' co-host teased: "His first name starts with an M and his last name starts with a D."

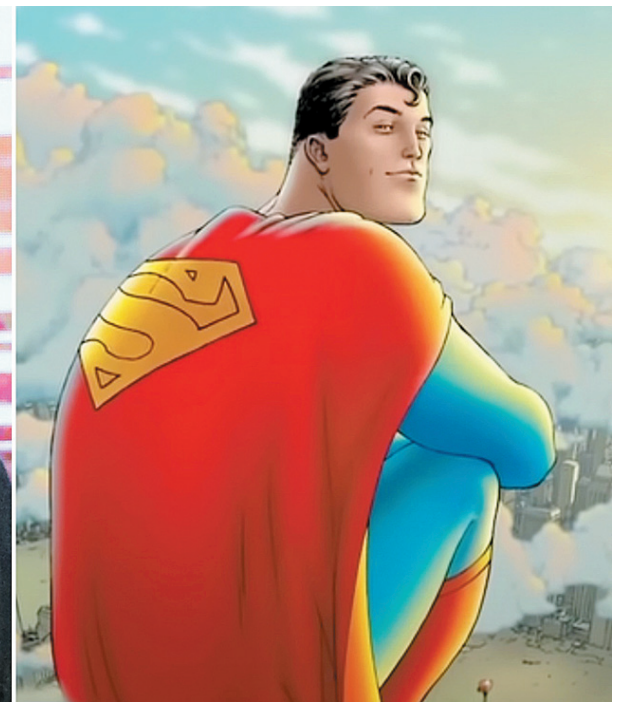
'Jeff Lewis Live' producer Jamison Scala then correctly guessed the identity of the 'Bourne Identity' star.

Damon, who previously dated the likes of Winona Ryder and Minnie Driver before marrying Luciana Barroso in 2005, has said before that he couldn't see himself settling down when he was in his early 30s.

Speaking to The Hollywood Reporter in 2015, he said: "I remember thinking, in my early 30s, that I wouldn't (get married), you know? I didn't think it was going to happen for me. My brother found his soulmate very young - he'd just turned 26 when they were married."

"He'd been married for 10 years by the time I even met my wife, and I looked at this really happy, wonderful marriage and kind of went, 'I guess that's not going to happen for me.' And then it did."

'RHOBH'
alum
Teddi Mellencamp teases a past one-night stand with **Matt Damon**



James Gunn posts pic of 'Superman: Legacy' script as pre-production begins

Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker James Gunn has announced that pre-production on 'Superman: Legacy' has officially begun. Sharing the news via his social media pages, the filmmaker posted a picture of the script which he wrote, but it only showed the cover page.

"I'm honoured to be a part of the legacy. And what better day than Superman Anniversary Day to dive fully into early pre-production on Superman Legacy?" he wrote in the caption, adding, "Costumes, production design, and more now up and running."

On Twitter, Gunn also engaged in a conversation with fans who wondered who gave him notes on the script if he, at the same time, is the co-head of DC Studios. "Listening to constructive criticism is the lifeblood for any writer," he responded to the question, reports aceshowbiz.com.

"So as the head of DC Studios, I give the script to people I trust (like my exec Chantal Nong or DC comics writer TomKingTK) and get their thoughts about what works well and what could work better so I can improve the script," he explained. "I've always tried to take the notes that will actually make the film better and I argue about the ones I think

won't work."

Gunn went on: "This process has worked for me because I have been blessed in the partners I've chosen to work with - we are all moving towards one thing: making the movie better. And I can put my ego aside and be open when I need to be and convincing when I need to be."

"I KNOW this is not the case for everyone (and it wasn't always the case for me as a writer)," the 56-year-old noted.

"Again, I'm blessed in this way. But that's how notes work, and I'm not going to suddenly stop taking them because I'm the head of a studio. Writing Superman Legacy."

EWAN MCGREGOR TO STAR IN DRAMA SERIES 'LODI'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Ewan McGregor is set to star in a drama series currently in development at Amazon Prime Video. Currently titled 'Lodi', the series is inspired by a true story as told in an Alta online article by Andrew Dubbins, reports 'Variety'.

The official description of the series states, "In 1977, a car salesman, Lou (McGregor), goes from ordinary small-town citizen to FBI informant infiltrating the mafia when a key member of organised crime offers to buy his Cadillac dealership."

"Over the next three years, Lou finds his quest for glory tested when he becomes embroiled in the inner workings of the crime family - from fronting a multimillion-dollar operation, to becoming a surrogate son before procuring the first-ever conviction of an infamous crime boss."

Timothy Greenberg ('The Daily Show', 'Living with Yourself') is attached as showrunner and executive producer. McGregor will executive produce in addition to starring. Allie Goss and Jon Liebman of Brillstein Creative Partners will executive produce, with Kaleb Tuttle of Brillstein co-executive producing. Entertainment One (eOne) is the lead studio with Amazon Studios.

McGregor is currently in production on the Showtime/Paramount+ series adaptation of 'A Gentleman in Moscow', based on the Amor Towles' novel of the same name. He will both star in and produce that series.

He also recently reprised the role of Obi-Wan Kenobi in a Disney+ limited series based around the iconic 'Star Wars' character, with McGregor also producing.



Los Angeles | Agencies

As their movie 'Evil Dead Rises' is all set to release, actors Alyssa Sutherland and Lily Sullivan spoke about the deep connection they built during making of the film.

Warner Bros Pictures is all set to return to the iconic horror franchise, 'Evil Dead Rise', written and directed by Lee Cronin. The movie stars Lily Sullivan and Alyssa Sutherland.

Talking about their bond and playing sisters on screen, Sullivan commented: "Alyssa and I both met, we went deep. Lee, Alyssa and I wanted to really anchor our characters before chucking them in the blender. We explored and we gave backstory that is sort of private to us. Both Beth and Ellie are total batters-there's this real survivor streak to them. They're this rough, not needy, kind

of fiercely independent duo."

"Working with Alyssa was easy from day one," added Sullivan. "One night I had my mother visiting from Australia, and we all went out to dinner, and the waiter was like, 'Are you two sisters? Is this your mother?' So, it's interesting that we had this natural affinity and had created a depth. I fell in love working with her, because I think we laughed for hours straight. It was so much of sisterhood."

Sutherland concurred: "Working with Lily was the best! We developed a dynamic between us really quickly. Ellie and Beth's relationship is sweet."

"Lee, Lily and I talked at length about it in prep and I think they're as close as sisters can get while being physically distanced. We talked about the fact that Ellie had stepped in and taken care of Beth when their mother was unable to. So, I think there's a maternal aspect there as well."

'Evil Dead Rise' will be distributed worldwide by Warner Bros. Pictures and is set to open in cinemas in India on April 21.

Alyssa Sutherland, Lily Sullivan built a connection during 'Evil Dead Rise'

'A CLASSIC HORROR MOVIE'

'THE BOOGEYMAN' TRAILER PROMISES TASTEFUL HORROR BASED ON STEPHEN KING'S TALE

Los Angeles | Agencies

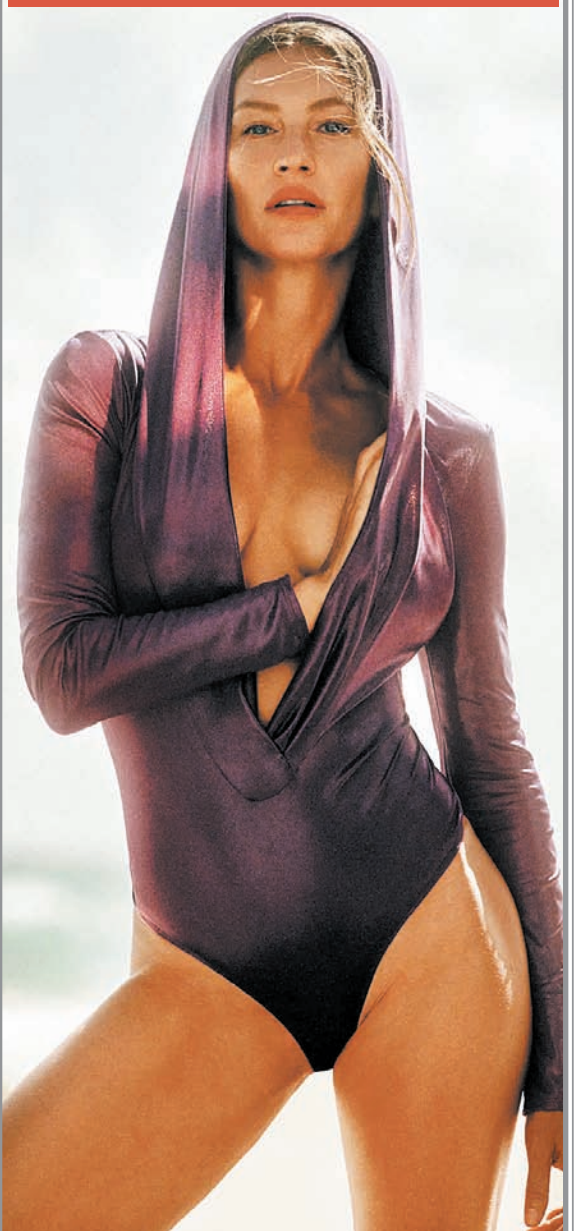
The new trailer and a new poster for 'The Boogeyman' have been unveiled. The film is a horror-thriller based on a short story by author Stephen King.

The film has been directed by Rob Savage with a screenplay by Scott Beck & Bryan Woods and Mark Heyman and a screen story by Scott Beck & Bryan Woods. Talking about the film, the director said: "'The Boogeyman' is a classic horror movie in the mold of 'Poltergeist' that has scares and heart in equal measure. I vividly remember the terror I felt reading King's short story as a kid, and it's this feeling of childhood fear that I wanted to inspire in cinema audiences around the world."

He further mentioned: "This film was made in collaboration with an incredibly talented team of creatives, and is anchored by wonderful, soulful performances from our incredible cast - I'm in awe of them, truly. We're incredibly proud of this movie and can't wait to give you all a reason to fear the dark again on June 2." The film stars Sophie Thatcher, Chris Messina, Vivien Lyra Blair, Marin Ireland, Madison Hu, LisaGay Hamilton, and David Dastmalchian. The producers are Shawn Levy, Dan Levine, and Dan Cohen, with John H. Starke, Emily Morris, Scott Beck, Bryan Woods, Ryan Cunningham, Adam Kolbrenner and Robyn Meisinger serve as executive producers. 20th Century Studios India is set to release 'The Boogeyman' on June 2, 2023 in cinemas.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Gisele Bündchen



IPL 2023: AVESH, STONIS STAR AS LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS BEAT RAJASTHAN ROYALS BY 10 RUNS

Jaipur | Agencies

Rajasthan Royals had an 87-run opening partnership between Yashasvi Jaiswal and Jos Buttler but impressive performances by Lucknow Super Giants bowlers, led by Avesh Khans 3/25 and Marcus Stoinis 2/28 helped their team win by ten runs in an IPL 2023 match at the Saiwaj Mansingh Stadium, here on Wednesday.



At the mid-stage of the game, Rajasthan keeping Lucknow to 154/7 in 20 overs looked like a below-par total on a two-paced pitch. Till the 11th over, Rajasthan didn't lose any wicket and seemed to be cruising towards the target.

But Stoinis taking out both openers got the match in Lucknow's favour and from there, the boundaries began to dry up as required run-rate climbed up, resulting in Rajasthan making 144/6 in their 20 overs.

Chasing 155, Jaiswal looked good after surviving an lbw decision via review on the very first ball off Naveen-ul-Haq. He drove Yudhvir Singh through cover for four and then quickly picked the short ball to pull

for six.

On the other hand, Buttler, after his initial struggles, found his range by swatting Yudhvir for a 112-m massive six over deep mid-wicket. Jaiswal slashed hard at a length ball from Avesh in the final over of power-play, and the edge flew towards ul-Haq at short third man, who dropped the catch and conceded a four.

Jaiswal also hammered a drive for four, followed by Buttler pulling in the gap through the leg-side to hit the

third boundary of the over. Post power-play, Rajasthan got their fifty and Buttler punched Ravi Bishnoi through the off-side on a no-ball.

After Buttler took two boundaries on reverse-sweeps off impact player Amit Mishra, Jaiswal easily dispatched Stoinis for a six over deep mid-wicket fence. But two balls later, Stoinis had the last laugh as Jaiswal hit straight to short third man for a low catch. With the required run rate going upwards of eight, Rajasthan lost

captain Sanju Samson as his desperate late dive post a mix-up left him a yard short of reaching the crease at the striker's end.

Brief scores

Lucknow Super Giants 154/7 in 20 overs (Kyle Mayers 51, KL Rahul 39; Ravichandran Ashwin 2/23, Trent Boult 1/16) beat Rajasthan Royals 144/6 in 20 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 44, Jos Buttler 40; Avesh Khan 3/25, Marcus Stoinis 2/28) by 10 runs.

Sudirman Cup 2023

Prannoy, Sindhu to lead Indian team; Lakshya Sen in reserves

Team Absolute | New Delhi

World No. 9 HS Prannoy and two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu will lead the team while Lakshya Sen has been included as a reserve as India on Wednesday announced their squad for the Sudirman Cup 2023, scheduled to take place from May 14 to 21 in Suzhou, China.

The return of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, who missed the Asian Mixed Team event due to injury, will bolster the men's doubles squads, which also have the likes of Dhruv Kapila & MR Arjun. On the other hand, the experienced Ashwini Ponnappa and new partner Tanisha Castro will provide back up to the All England semi-finalists Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly in the women's doubles.

After Prannoy and Sindhu, experienced Kidambi Srikanth and reigning senior national women's singles champion Anupama Upadhyaya will be the other singles players in the squad while Aakarshi Kashyap is the second reserve after Lakshya.

The likes of Sai Pratheek and Tanisha Crasto have been named as the mixed doubles pair in the squad.

India has been grouped in Group C along with Malaysia, Chinese Taipei and Australia and their first task will be to make it to the



knock-out stage from a potentially tricky group. "Sudirman Cup is a prestigious tournament and the selectors have picked the best squad after studying the domestic and international results. We are confident that this team will challenge for a medal this year," said Badminton Association of India (BAI) secretary Sanjay Mishra, in a media release.

Indian squad: Men's singles: HS Prannoy, Kidambi Srikanth (Reserve: Lakshya Sen) Women's singles: PV Sindhu, Anupama Upadhyaya (Reserve: Aakarshi Kashyap) Men's doubles: Satwiksairaj Rankireddy/Chirag Shetty, MR Arjun/Dhruv Kapila Women's doubles: Gayatri Gopichand/Treesa Jolly, Ashwini Ponnappa/Tanisha Crasto Mixed doubles: Tanisha Crasto/Sai Pratheek

Para-Badminton Rankings

Pramod-Sukant become world No 1 in men's doubles category

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As India para-shuttlers Pramod Bhagat and Sukant Kadam, who won the gold medal at the recently concluded Brazil Para-Badminton International 2023, became the world No 1 in the men's doubles category in the latest Badminton World Federation (BWF) ranking released on Wednesday.

The duo of Pramod and Sukant, who has been playing together for the past eight months in the men's doubles SL 3- SL 4 category, has won the gold medal in the last three tournaments.

They secured gold medals in Brazil Para-Badminton International 2023, Spanish Para-Badminton International 2023 and also the Thailand Para Badminton Tournament 2022.

"I am really happy to be World No 1 again with Sukant Kadam. Both me and Sukant have put in a lot of effort and have been working hard to reach where we have reached. This is just the start, and we are looking to build upon what we have achieved and reach for more glory and



medals for India," said Padma Shri Awardee Pramod, in a media release. "The hard work has paid off and this is just the beginning. We plan to continue our great form into the upcoming tournaments. Becoming World, No 1 will motivate us to work harder and double our efforts in practice. There are a few more areas where we need to work, and the focus will be on those," said Sukant. The duo will be now preparing for upcoming tournaments like Thailand Para-Badminton International 2023 and Bahrain Para-Badminton International 2023 to name a few.

Champions League

AC MILAN ENTER SEMIFINALS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 16 YEARS

Naples | Agencies

Seven-time winners AC Milan are back in the last four of the UEFA Champions League for the first time since 2007 after a 1-1 draw with Napoli secured their progress.

After a narrow win in the first leg, a battling 1-1 draw in Naples saw Milan making the final four of Europe's elite competition for the first time in 16 years. They joined Juventus as the Italian team with most number of appearances at this stage of the competition (seven)

The match got underway with Napoli piling on the pressure and AC Milan looking to counter on the break. They threatened through Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (9') and Politano's two attempts from the edge of the area.

The best chance to break the deadlock came from the spot as Mario Rui brought down Rafa Leao in the box



after good link-up play with Theo Hernandez, but Olivier Giroud found the gloves of Meret, who guessed the right way to save after 23 minutes.

Five minutes later, the French striker had another glorious chance, after being set up by Sandro Tonali,

but his left-footed shot on target was again kept out by Meret.

A deserved lead for the Lian did eventually come, though, after 43 minutes when Leao accelerated away and got past three defenders before squaring to Olivier who slotted home

into an open net to make it 1-0. Napoli gave AC Milan backline a slight scare in the 58th and 60th minute, first through Kvaratskhelia, whose attempt was off target, and Lozano, who shot over the bar with his left.

Changes from both sides didn't alter the pattern, with AC Milan only conceding long-range efforts to the hosts. After 81 minutes, Napoli earned a penalty from Tomori's handball, but Mike Maignan got the better of Kvaratskhelia and made a super diving save to maintain the AC Milan's one-goal advantage.

Napoli did find an equaliser deep into stoppage-time through Osimhen's header, after Raspadori's cross in, but AC Milan held on to go through to the semifinals.

The focus will now turn to the semifinals, where AC Milan will face either Inter or Benfica.

Australia name squad for World Test Championship final, Ashes

Melbourne | Agencies

David Warner has been included in Australia's 17-player touring party for the ICC World Test Championship final against India at The Oval and the opening two Ashes Tests.

Warner remains in the frame to be selected for the World Test Championship final that starts on June 7 after recovering from an elbow injury sustained during the Test series in India in February.

Pat Cummins will return to captain the squad after leaving the tour of India early and sitting out the third and fourth Tests to be with his sick mother in Australia, reports ICC

The 17 players selected in the tour-



ing party will be available for selection in the WTC final against India and the opening two Ashes Tests at

Edgbaston and Lord's. Selectors will evaluate the makeup of the squad after the second Ashes

Test with the option to make changes for the remaining matches against England at Headingley, Old Trafford and The Oval. A 15-player squad for the ICC World Test Championship final will be named on May 28.

Australia plays India in the World Test Championship final at the Oval from June 7-11 before moving to the first Ashes Test against England at Edgbaston from June 16-20.

Australia touring party: Pat Cummins (captain), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Marcus Harris, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Todd Murphy, Matthew Renshaw, Steve Smith (vice-captain), Mitchell Starc, David Warner.

ICC Men's Test bowler rankings

Prabath Jayasuriya rises to career-best 19th place

Dubai | Agencies

Sri Lankan left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya leaped 13 slots to his career-best 19th in the latest ICC Men's Test Bowler Rankings released on Wednesday following his 10-wicket haul against Ireland earlier this week.

Jayasuriya has now jumped his way from 32nd place in the rankings to his personal best 19th place and rating points of 869. In the Ravichandran Ashwin-led bowling list, Ramesh Mendis rose three spaces to 32nd, while Vishwa Fernando gained four places to 59th position. In the Men's T20I bowlers' rankings, ten wickets in three T20Is has seen Haris Rauf catapult Shadab Khan to become the top-ranked Pakistan bowler at 11th place. He also achieved career-high ratings of 657 points in the process and could potentially



enter the top 10 by the end of the five-match T20I series against New Zealand.

Golf

Shamim Khan is early pacesetter at Ahmedabad Open

Ahmedabad | Agencies

Shamim Khan of Delhi struck a five-under 31 to be the early pacesetter at the Ahmedabad Open 2023, a Rs. 1 crore event, being played at the Glade One Golf Resort & Club, here on Wednesday.

Sri Lankan Mithun Perera, Bangladesh's Jamal Hossain, Delhi's Kshitij Naveed Kaul, Faridabad's Abhinav Lohan and Greater Noida's Arjun Bhati, were bunched in tied second place with scores of three-under 33 at the tournament presented by Glade One.

The first two rounds of the event comprise nine holes each. After 18 holes the cut will be applied. The third and fourth rounds will then comprise 18 holes each. The tournament will be played over a



total of 54 holes. The par for the course in the first two rounds is 36.

Shamim, a two-time PGTI Order of Merit champion, carried forward his good form from the last two events where he finished inside the top-20. The 44-year-old, who has had a victory-drought since 2019, was quick off the

blocks on Wednesday with birdies on the second and third. Khan then made three birdie conversions from a range of 10 to 30 feet to end the day in a commanding position. Shravan Desai (35) occupying tied 17th position was the highest-placed among the Ahmedabad-based golfers.

Stuttgart Open

Ostapenko overpowers Raducanu in opener, to face Ons Jabeur next

Stuttgart (Germany) | Agencies

Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia, who won the French Open back in 2017, secured a dominant 6-2 6-1 victory over former US Open champion Emma Raducanu in the opening round of the Stuttgart Open, which kicked off the European clay-court swing this week.

Ostapenko needed only 58 minutes to overpower Raducanu, who made the quarterfinals in Stuttgart last year. Behind 19 forehand winners, Ostapenko dominated play from the baseline to give Raducanu no inroads in the match.

Ostapenko will next face World No.4 and Charleston champion Ons Jabeur on Wednesday.

As the Latvian eyes her first tour-level match on clay against



Jabeur, Ostapenko should like her chances. The two have split their two recent meetings, with Jabeur winning on the indoor hard

courts of Ostrava and Ostapenko winning their last match on grass in Eastbourne.

In 2017, Ostapenko came to Paris as a 19-year-old big-hitting talent and went on to celebrate her 20th birthday by defeating Simona Halep in the final to win Roland Garros.

At the time, Ostapenko was the youngest French Open champion in 20 years and the lowest-ranked Slam champion since the introduction of computer rankings.

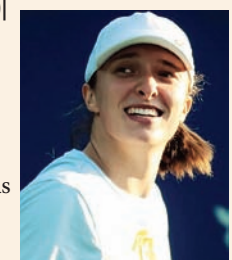
In other action, Paula Badosa scored her first Top 10 win in 12 months after defeating Daria Kasatkina 6-1, 6-1 in just 70 minutes in the first round.

She will next face qualifier Cristina Bucsa in an all-Spanish encounter as she bids to return to the quarterfinals for a second straight year.

I'M NOT INJURED ANYMORE: SWIATEK READY FOR TITLE DEFENSE

Stuttgart (Germany) World No.1 Iga Swiatek has assured that she is "not injured anymore" and is ready for her title defense at the Stuttgart Open.

In March, Swiatek was forced to withdraw ahead of the Miami Open and Billie Jean King Cup Qualifiers with a rib injury sustained during her run to the Indian Wells semifinals. "I'm not injured anymore, so that's the most important thing for me. I feel like I used that time in Warsaw well to rest a little bit and to not think about tennis," Swiatek told reporters in Stuttgart. "I have still been working out physically a little bit and obviously coming back to practicing step by step. Here I am, and I think I'm ready," she added.





I MAKE SURE I DELIVER MORE THAN WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME: SAIF ALI KHAN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan, who has started working on the pan-India film tentatively titled 'NTR 30', has shared that the director of the film, Koratala Siva gave a three-hour narration to him for the film. Saif, who is known for blending into his characters, be it 'Langda' Tyagi from 'Omkaara', Daniyal Khan from 'Phantom' or Sartaj Singh from 'Sacred Games', recollected the time when Koratala Siva narrated him the story which sees him serving as

the antagonistic force.

Saif Ali Khan told reporter: "It's a very cool role and I'm working hard to make sure I deliver more than what is expected of me."

My director Koratala Siva is a passionate artist with infectious energy and a great vision. He narrated to me for three hours and I was spellbound, emotionally involved all the way." The Bollywood star also mentioned that NTR Jr "is very friendly and charming and

super-passionate." Saif admires the ambition of making a pan-India film and is hyped to start working on the "exciting plan" of NTR Jr. He said: "We are too used to thinking and working in terms of region and language."

On the technicians of the film, Saif said: "The DOP is Rathnavelu who has shot amazing movies like Robot and it's great to be lit and shot like this. It's a fantastic vision and the movie's scale is very big. I take it as a great compliment that they are interested in my services. My pleasure entirely to be here. Fingers crossed this will be rocking!"



Heavy armour, jewellery made a tough act for Vikram

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Tamil superstar Vikram, who plays the 10th-century Chola prince Aditha Karikalan in the 'Ponniyin Selvan' movies (Part 2 is releasing on April 28), recalled how it was difficult to do action scenes and ride a horse at full gallop outfitted in heavy armour made with leather and wearing period jewellery. In an interaction with the media in the Capital on Tuesday, Vikram said: "It is very rare for men to worry about hair, jewellery, ear rings and all. We will never envy the heroines again. Mani sir [the film's director, Mani Ratnam] wanted everything to look real, so we wore leather armour, which bruised us when we were doing the stunts. "And then, horse riding was tough for both Karthi and me as we have back problems. We had major issues for three months. 'Ponniyin Selvan' was not as easy as shooting for any other film." 'Ponniyin Selvan-2', which is releasing on April 28, is based on the Tamil classic, 'Ponniyin Selvan, by Kalki Krishnamurthy. The story revolves around the early life of prince Arulmozhi Varman, who went on to become the famous Rajaraja Chola I. Its principal cast includes Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Trisha, Jayam Ravi and Sobhita Dhulipala. Part 1 of Mani Ratnam's multi-award-winning period drama set a Tamil box-office record for 2022 by grossing Rs 502 crore.



Himanshi Khurana's love for styling made her design the outfits for 'Stars'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former 'Bigg Boss 13' contestant Himanshi Khurana talked about styling the whole wardrobe for her co-actors in the newly released music video 'Stars', which is sung by Nishawn Bhullar and Gur Aulka. She said that she styled not only her outfit but that of others as well.

The actress mentioned: "I love to experiment and explore each corner of fashion, which makes me feel more attached to what I wear and how I want to represent myself on any occasion, in music videos and in movies also."

Himanshi is known for her work in Punjabi films like 'Sadda Haq' and she also entered the popular reality show 'Bigg Boss 13' as a wild card contestant. Apart from Punjabi films, she has also done several music videos. She added: "My fashion sense is majorly about comfort over anything, and this love for styling made me feel compelled to style the entire couture of my recently released music video 'Stars', in which all the outfits worn by the artists are exclusively done by me."

Himanshi further said that she has to think a lot before styling the outfit for everyone as it has to complement the lyrics of the song.

"I have roasted my mind a lot for outfits that should complement the lyrics of the songs and also match the vibe of all the people in them," she concluded.



'Marriages are truly made in heaven'

Kangana Ranaut says her parents' love story is her 'most favourite'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Kangana Ranaut spoke about how her parent's got married against everyone's wishes and said that she wants them as her parents again if she had a rebirth.

Kangana on her on parents' wedding anniversary took to Instagram Stories to wish them. She shared a slew of throwback photographs.

Sharing a collage of her mother Asha and father Amardeep from their younger days, Kangana wrote: "Thank you papa for falling in love with mumma and going against everyone, including nanu, to marry her on this day. Your love story is my most favourite."

Sharing a photograph, Kangana wrote: "Happy anniversary to you both... like mumma says 'If I have seven lives, I want you papa as my husband in every lifetime'. The same way, if I have more lives, I want you both as my mummy and papa, always."

"Happy anniversary chacha Jagdeep Ranaut and chachi Sharmila. They had an arranged marriage, but later they found out their pet names were Babloo and Babil. Haha, marriages are truly made in heaven," she added.

Along with another picture of the couple, Kangana wrote: "My mumma never owned even a lipstick. Joy of growing up in a joint family was that as a child, I spent all my time on my chachi's dresser, messing her eye shadows, lipsticks and breaking her nail paint (bottles). She is the most patient, kind and gentle woman ever. Love you chachi."

I THOROUGHLY ENJOY THE PROCESS OF CREATING NEW MUSIC: AYUSHMANN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Ayushmann Khurrana, who is also known for his vocal prowess, has collaborated again with his 'Paani Da Rang' creative partner and friend, music composer Rochak Kohli for the upcoming romantic single, 'Raatan Kaaliyan'. The two have earlier worked together on tracks like 'Mitti Di Khushboo', 'Yahi Hoon Main', 'Chan Kitthan'. Ayushmann instantly fell in love with Rochak's rendition for 'Raatan Kaaliyan' penned by Gurpreet Saini and Gautam G. Sharma.

Talking about the song, Ayushmann said: "I thoroughly enjoy the process of creating new music so when Rochak discussed this song with me, I was immediately on board to lend my voice for it. It also has been a while since I have created and dropped a new song and I was dying to give people something new. The lyrics are deeply reflective and have a lot of layered emotions running through it. Rochak and Gurpreet Saini are both very dear friends and I enjoy collaborating with them creatively. We are very passionate about our music."

Ayushmann is set to perform in Dubai on April 23 and he revealed that he will be surprising fans and audiences by dropping a new song at the concert.

Ayushmann shared: "I am really looking forward to share this track with my audiences at the Dubai concert on April 23. They will be the first people to hear the song and I hope they love it thoroughly. If you ask me, it has a very addictive beat and the lyrics are sure to tug at your heart."

Composer Rochak Kohli expressed his excitement as he said: "I've had a long journey with T-Series as well as Ayushmann. Without a doubt, this song is going to be a big one and I can't wait to finally put it out there for the listeners very soon." "Raatan Kaaliyan" will be released soon under Bhushan Kumar's music label T-Series.



Rakul Preet Singh