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We believe in Shubman Gill, that's why he's made captain, says...



21 cases of new Covid variant JN. 1 reported across country

KNOCK...KNOCK

▶ "NO INCREASE IN HOSPITALISATION RATES HAVE BEEN WITNESSED DUE TO COVID-19, THE CASES THAT ARE HOSPITALISED ARE DUE TO OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS - COVID-19 IS AN INCIDENTAL FINDING. A RISE IN DAILY POSITIVITY RATE HAS BEEN OBSERVED IN A FEW STATES LIKE KERALA, MAHARASHTRA, JHARKHAND AND KARNATAKA.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

▶ "ON THE NEW JN.1 VARIANT OF SARS-COV-2, IT WAS INFORMED THAT THE VARIANT IS CURRENTLY UNDER INTENSE SCIENTIFIC SCRUTINY, BUT NOT A CAUSE OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN. NO CLUSTERING OF CASES HAS BEEN OBSERVED IN INDIA DUE TO JN.1 AND ALL THE CASES WERE FOUND TO BE MILD AND ALL OF THEM HAVE RECOVERED WITHOUT ANY COMPLICATIONS," THE MINISTRY ADDED.

The Union Health Ministry on Wednesday said that 21 cases of the new variant JN.1 have been reported from across the country.

The source said that 19 cases of the new coronavirus variant has been reported from Goa while one each from Maharashtra and Kerala.

Earlier in the day, Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya chaired a high-level meeting to review the Covid-19 situation in India and preparedness of public health system for its surveillance, containment, and management in view of the recent spike in cases in some states.

The meeting was also attended by Union Ministers of State for Health and Family Welfare, Prof S.P. Singh Baghel and Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, and NITI Aayog's Member, Health, Dr V.K. Paul, Member, State Health Ministers were also present, among others.

During the meeting, Mandaviya underlined the challenge posed by the increasing number of Covid-19 cases in some countries across the world such as China, Brazil, Germany, and the US and noted the importance of being prepared and remaining alert against new and emerging strains of Covid-19, especially in view of the upcoming festive season. He also reiterated that Covid is not over yet, and requested states to monitor emerging evidences of

Covid-19 cases, symptoms and case severity to plan appropriate public health response.

Mandaviya also stressed the need for collective efforts between the Centre and the States to deal with the emerging situation in the spirit of "Whole of Government" approach. He directed for strengthening the surveillance system for whole genome sequencing of positive case samples to track the variants through Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) network to ensure timely detection of newer variants, circulating in the country. "This would facilitate undertaking of appropriate public health measures in a timely manner," he noted.

The Union Health Minister also urged all the states to remain alert, increase surveillance and ensure adequate stock of medicines, oxygen cylinders and concentrators, ventilators, and vaccines. Mandaviya asked officials to undertake mock drills every three months at both the Central and State levels to assess functionality of PSA plants, oxygen concentrators and cylinders, ventilators, etc., and encouraged the sharing of best practices.

He also urged states to create awareness on respiratory hygiene and ensure dissemination of factually correct information and counter fake news to manage infodemic and mitigate any panic.

The Union Health Minister urged States/UTs to share information on cases, tests, positivity etc., in real time on the Covid portal to enable timely monitoring and prompt public health measures. He assured the states of all support from the Centre.

Union Health Secretary Sudhanshu Pant briefed the meeting on the global Covid-19 situation and the domestic scenario. Pant said that while active Covid cases in India are significantly less compared to the global scenario, in the last two weeks, there has been a steep rise in active cases from 115 on December 6 to 614 on date.

It was also noted that 92.8 per cent of the cases are home isolated, indicating mild illness.

3 criminal Bills, Telecommunications Bills passed in LS

The Lok Sabha (LS) on Tuesday passed three amended criminal bills -- Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita, 2023; Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023; and Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) (BSB) 2023. The Lok Sabha also passed the Telecommunications Bill, 2023, with voice vote. The three Bills were passed after Home Minister Amit Shah spoke in the House and majority of MPs present in the Lower House voted in favour of the bills by voice vote.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The proceedings took place in the absence of 97 Opposition MPs, who have been suspended over "misconduct" and "unruly" behaviour since last week.

Referring to IPC, CrPc, Indian Evidence Act, Shah said: "New criminal law bills will free people from colonial mindset. The three laws were made during the time of British. Till the laws are not repealed, the UK laws will continue in the country. Her Majesty, London Gazette, British Crown and barrister terms continue to be used in India because of the laws."

Shah said that the bills were framed after consultations. He said he had even gone through every comma and full stop before they were tabled in the Lok Sabha.

He said that the three bills will establish a justice system based on Indian thinking. He said the existing laws reflect the colonial mindset of punishing for a crime but not doing justice.

Shah also highlighted the changes brought in the new Bills and said a provision for trial in absentia has been introduced to the criminal justice system. He further said after the bill becomes law, the case would have to be brought to trial in 120 days. "Now the accused will get seven days to file a plea for acquittal. The judge has to hold the hearing in those seven days and in a maximum time of 120 days, the case would come to trial. There was no time limit for plea bargaining earlier. Now if one accepts their crime within 30 days of the crime then the punishment will be less," he said.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita will replace the Indian Penal Code 1860, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita will replace the CrPC of 1973 and the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill will replace the Indian Evidence Act of 1872. The new laws also explain "organised crime" for the first time. "There was no special law for this. We have included cyber crimes, economic crimes, land grabbing, arms trade, dacoity, human trafficking," Shah said. Shah said the new laws are "gender-neutral", "victim-centric" and "justice-centric", rather than "punishment-centric".

"A provision for Trial in Absentia has been introduced. Many cases shook us, be it the Mumbai bomb blast or any other. Those people are hiding in other countries and trials are not underway." They don't need to come here now. If they don't appear before the court within 90 days then in their absence trial will go on. A public prosecutor will be appointed for their prosecution. They will be hanged. It will make the process to bring them back since it changes their status in the other country when they get prosecuted."

Amit Shah, Home Minister

"Today the Home Minister got the 3 draconian Criminal Justice Bills passed in the Lok Sabha without any informed dissent. Tomorrow, he will get them passed in the Rajya Sabha too without any different viewpoint expressed on them by the best legal minds. Now you know why 144 INDIA MPs were thrown out of both Houses."

Jairam Ramesh, General Secretary, Congress

ED summons Lalu, Tejashwi Yadav for questioning in alleged land for job scam



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned Bihar Deputy Chief Minister RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and his father and former railway minister Lalu Prasad Yadav for questioning in connection with the alleged land for job scam case.

Sources said that ED has asked Tejashwi to appear on December 22 while Lalu Prasad has been asked to appear on December 27. The fresh summons to the RJD leaders came almost a month after the ED arrested Amit Katyal in connection with the case on

November 11. The source said that during the questioning on Katyal, the ED got several fresh leads against the RJD leaders. The ED had registered a case of money laundering on the basis of FIR registered by CBI related to land for job scam alleging that Lalu Prasad Yadav, indulged in corruption for appointment of Group D substitutes in Indian Railways during the period 2004-2009.

The poor candidates were told to transfer land as bribe in return for jobs in Indian Railways as per FIR. The CBI has also filed charge sheet. M/s AK Infosystems Pvt. Ltd. is one of the accused.

RBI bulletin sees higher growth, lower inflation ahead for India

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The broad-based strengthening of India's economic activity that is under way will likely be sustained by easing input costs and corporate profitability while inflation is expected to ease to 4.6 per cent in the first three quarters of 2024-25, according to the monthly RBI bulletin released on Wednesday.

The pace of global growth may slow further in 2024 while disinflation at varying pace in different geographies may pave the way for interest rate reductions, according to the analysis.

It also points out that the "domestic financial markets have been lifted by the abiding strength of the real economy".

The bulletin states that the fiscal position of the Centre and states has remained resilient. Major Central direct and indirect taxes such as income tax, corporation tax and goods and services tax



(GST) recorded impressive growth in H1:2023-24.

While revenue expenditure of the Centre remained modest in line with the Budget estimates, capital expenditure witnessed a robust growth.

With strong growth in tax and non-tax revenues, the states have frontloaded their capital spending, aided by the

Centre's scheme for 'Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment'. The improved revenue mobilisation by the Centre and states has helped to contain the gross fiscal deficit of the general government within 7 per cent of GDP in Q1 and Q2 of 2023-24, it added.

TWO MORE LOK SABHA MPS SUSPENDED FOR 'GRAVE MISCONDUCT'

New Delhi: The Lok Sabha on Wednesday suspended two more MPs -- C. Thomas and A.M. Arif -- for the remainder of the Winter Session, taking the list of suspended MPs to 143 in the last one week.

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi moved the motion to suspend the two MPs.

Joshi said, "This House having taken serious note of the grave misconduct of C Thomas and A M Arif MPs in utter disregard to the House and the Chair by entering into the House with placard and entering the Well and having been named by the Chair resolve that the above mentioned be suspended from the House for the remainder of the service under Rule 374 (2)." S'rangappa Bame, who was in the Chair then passed the resolution through voice vote.

Mass burial of 87 bodies of tribals held in Manipur's Churachandpur

Imphal | Agencies

The last rites of 87 more Kuki-Zo tribals, killed in Manipur's ethnic violence nearly eight months ago, were performed following traditional rituals on Wednesday with thousands of people including women and their kin, attending the mass burial ceremony in Churachandpur district. On December 15, the last rites of 19 tribals of the community, also killed in the ethnic hostility in May, were carried out in a similar mass burial ceremony in Kangpokpi district. Police officials and the tribal organisation sources said that the bodies of 87 slain Kuki-Zo tribals, including women and children were kept in various morgues in different districts close to eight months now. The bodies include one of a month-old baby.

The tribal volunteers gave gun salutes in respect towards the slain people, whom they termed as "martyrs". Before the burial, a condolence service and mass prayers were organised at the ground in Tuibuong



in tribal dominated Churachandpur. Amid the heavy security and prohibitory orders in Churachandpur district, the mass burial took place following the customary and religious rituals and numerous performances.

No discussion taking place on suspension of 150 MPs but on mimicry row: Rahul

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday broke his silence on the mimicry row, saying he shot the video of the 150 MPs thrown out of Parliament and there is no discussion on that, including some other important issues.

Rahul Gandhi made the comments when he arrived at the party headquarters here for the meeting with the party's Odisha and West Bengal leaders to discuss poll preparedness.

Speaking to the media over the mimicry row, Rahul Gandhi said, "Who insulted whom and how? The MPs were sitting there (at

Parliament Makar Dwar), I shot their video. My video is on my phone. The media is showing it and the media is saying it and (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi is saying it."

When asked if someone spoke about caste and farmers, the Wayanad MP said, "Nobody has said anything." He added, "There are 150 MPs who have been suspended from the House but there is no discussion on that in the media. You have thrown them out of the Parliament and there is no discussion on that."

He said that on Rafale, France has said that investigation is not being allowed. "There is no discussion on unemployment. Our MPs are disheartened and sitting outside.

DELHI HC RESERVES ORDER ON INTERIM RELIEF IN MAHUA MOITRA'S DEFAMATION CASE

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday reserved its order on the interim relief sought by Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Mahua Moitra in her defamation case against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey and advocate Jai Dehadrai following what she alleged were false and defamatory accusations against her in connection with the cash-for-query row. Justice Sachin Datta asked about any quid pro quo between Moitra and businessman Darshan Hiranandani, stressing the need for clarification. Moitra, expelled as a Lok Sabha MP on December 8 by the ethics panel of Parliament, faced allegations of receiving cash in exchange for posing questions on behalf of Hiranandani. During the hearing, advocates representing Dubey and Dehadrai argued that there was a quid pro quo between Moitra and Hiranandani, citing para 68 of the Ethics Committee's report that led to Moitra's expulsion from the Lok Sabha. The court reserved the order on Moitra's interim injunction application, instructing Dubey and Dehadrai's counsels to provide the relevant portion of the Ethics Committee's report for consideration.



'DEMOCRACY STRANGULATED', SONIA SLAMS CENTRE, TARGETS PM MODI & SHAH FOR DISTORTING HISTORY TO DEFAME NEHRU

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday slammed the BJP-led government at the Centre over the suspension of 141 MPs from Parliament, saying that democracy has been strangled, and also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for distorting history.

She slammed Prime Minister Modi and the government for distorting history and twisting historical facts just to defame great patriots like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and also said that this will not intimidate or cow them down.

Addressing the party MPs at the General Body meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP), Sonia Gandhi said, "Democracy has been strangled by this government."

She said that never before have so many opposition members of Parliament been suspended from the House, and that too, simply for raising a perfectly reasonable and legitimate demand.

"All that the opposition Members of Parliament asked for was a statement to be made by the Home Minister in the Lok Sabha addressing the extraordinary events of December 13. There are no words to describe the arrogance with



which this request was treated," the Congress leader said.

Referring to the security breach in the Lok Sabha on December 13, she said, "What happened on December 13 is inexcusable and cannot be justified. It took four days for the Prime Minister to address the nation and express his views on the incident, and he did so outside of the Parliament.

"By doing so, he clearly indicated his disdain for the dignity of the House and his disregard for the people of our country. I leave it to you to imagine how the BJP would have responded had they been in opposition today," she said. Sonia Gandhi also said that this session has seen the passage of some

important Bills relating to Jammu and Kashmir.

"Those who distort history and twist historical facts just to defame great patriots like (Pandit) Jawaharlal Nehru have been running a relentless campaign. In these efforts, the Prime Minister and the Home Minister have taken the lead themselves, but we will not be intimidated or cowed down. We will persist in telling the truth.

The Congress leader said, "Our position on Jammu and Kashmir has been clear and consistent. Full statehood must be restored immediately, and elections must be held at the earliest. The aspirations of the people of Ladakh are equally important, they must be

addressed and shown the respect they deserve."

She also said that we believe that the passing of the Women's Reservation Bill with a rider - that it shall only be implemented after delimitation or a census, is an eyewash intended to mislead women and garner their votes while renegeing on that which is rightfully owed to them.

"Women's representation in Parliament is long overdue. There is no time to waste. It is our firm belief that reservation for women must be implemented immediately and it should cover women belonging to all communities, including the OBC community," she said.

She also congratulated party colleagues in Telangana for working towards the Assembly elections with dedication and determination.

"The people of Telangana have given us a clear mandate. We must strive our utmost to fulfill their trust and confidence," Sonia Gandhi said.

She also said that she was happy that the Winter Session saw the passage of the Bill to establish a Central Tribal University in Telangana. "This was a commitment enshrined in the Andhra Pradesh Re-organisation Act, 2014. It has taken a government that prides itself for its efficiency, nine long years to fulfill that promise, she said slamming the BJP government at the Centre.

Allow Christians to hold midnight mass on Christmas-eve till 1 am, Maha CM urged



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra's ruling Shiv Sena spokesperson Krishna Hegde has urged Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to relax the rules and permit the Christian community to hold the midnight mass on Christmas-eve, here on Wednesday.

In a letter to the CM, Hegde requested him to extend the timing for Christmas-eve till 1 a.m. (December 24-25) to enable the community members hold their midnight mass.

He said on account of the existing rules, since the past few years, the midnight mass is being conducted much earlier, from 7 p.m. onwards - instead of the traditional timing of midnight, marking the birth of Jesus - at hundreds of churches and public venues across the state.

"I would request you to kindly make an exception this year and grant the Christian community time till 1 a.m. on December 25 so that they can have the midnight mass as per their tradition at their respec-

tive churches and parishes," said Hegde.

He pointed out that extension of time-limits during some festivals has been permitted by the state government in the past, as he urged Shinde to consider the plea favourably this year.

Owing to the noise pollution rules and curbs on use of loudspeakers, all public events, social or religious gatherings - barring the occasional exceptions - are banned after 10 p.m. for over two decades in Maharashtra.

Three teenage students killed in Murshidabad making reels on railway tracks

Kolkata | Agencies

Three teenage school students were killed in West Bengal's Murshidabad district on Wednesday while making reels on the railway tracks over a railway bridge in the Suti police station area of the district.

Two others were severely injured in the incident, who are currently undergoing treatment at the Jangipur subdivision hospital. The deceased students have been identified as Amou Sheikh (14), Riaz Sheikh (15) and Samiul Sheikh (17), all residents of the English Sahara area under Suti police station. They were hit by a train moving towards Farakka from Jangipur, when they were making reels on the railway tracks. The speed of the train was such that the unfortunate kids did not get the time to move away from



the railway tracks. The two injured students have been identified as Akash Sheikh and Rohit Sheikh. All of them were students of a local English medium school. The bodies of the three deceased kids have been sent for post-mortem. A railway official claimed that despite repeated appeals to the guardians to refrain their kids from making reels or videos near the railway tracks, such tendencies are continu-

ing. "Reel life and real life are totally different. There have been several such accidents on the railway tracks throughout the country while making reels. It is high time that the guardians themselves become aware and make their kids aware as well of the danger of making reels and videos on railways tracks," said an official of the Eastern Railway.

Maha factory blast: Jobs, pension, Rs 25 lakh compensation for kin of deceased

Nagpur | Agencies

The Maharashtra government on Wednesday announced a series of measures for the families of the 9 workers who were blown up in the massive December 17 explosion at the Solar Industries India Ltd at Bazargaon here.

Labour Minister Suresh Khade told the legislature that the state government has announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh for the families of the nine dead. Besides, the company will also give Rs 20 lakh to each family who lost a member in the blast and efforts are being made to get help from the Centre.

Additionally, the company will give a job to one family member of each deceased worker, and eight would also be entitled to family pension, barring one who was not covered under the



scheme and will get compensation as per rules, while the government will take care of the education expenses of

the victims' children. Speaking during a discussion on the tragedy, Khade noted that the blast

occurred around 9 a.m. on Sunday when the morning shift workers were on duty, and at least 9, including six women, were killed instantly, while the Casting Process House No 2 also crashed, burying others under the debris.

Due to the intensity of the powerful blast, the bodies were badly mutilated and reduced to pieces necessitating DNA tests to identify them, and the exact number of casualties would be known only later, he said.

The state government has already ordered a thorough probe into the tragedy by the Kondhali police, Nagpur Collectorate, and the Petroleum & Explosives Safety Organisation.

The company is engaged in manufacture of industrial explosives and weapons for the Indian defence establishment and also exports its products to around 30 countries.

IAF DROPS 35 TONNES OF RELIEF MATERIAL IN TAMIL NADU: MOD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ministry of Defence on Wednesday said that the Indian Air Force (IAF) has dropped at least 35 tonnes of relief material to the flood-hit areas of Tamil Nadu.

"As on date, the IAF has flown for more than 48 hours while delivering nearly 35 tonnes of relief material since the beginning of the relief effort," the MoD said.

It said that earlier while flying for more than 25 hours, the IAF helicopters had dropped nearly 24 tonnes of relief material in the affected areas.

The Ministry of Defence said that Mi-17 V5 and four ALH Dhruv helicopters continue HADR operations in Madurai and Tuticorin.

It said that apart from the aircrew flying the helicopters, the mission also includes a team of Garud



Commandos who carry out the task of securing the survivors during operations. "Back at the launch base, a dedicated team of technicians ensures that

the helicopters are fully ready and serviceable at all times so that the

missions can go through smoothly," the MoD said.

Kejriwal leaves for Vipassana session, to skip ED summons on Thursday

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will skip the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) summons on December 21 as he left for his 10-day-long meditation session on Wednesday.

According to the AAP, Kejriwal left for the Vipassana session on Wednesday afternoon and he will be coming back to Delhi on December 30.

The Chief Minister was summoned by the ED to appear before it in connection with the alleged excise policy scam case on December 21 at its headquarters.

Earlier, Kejriwal had skipped the ED summons on November 2. The ED had already arrested former



Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Rajya Sabha MP

Sanjay Singh in connection with the case.

Only Nitish Kumar can lead INDIA bloc to victory: JD(U) leader Jama Khan



Patna | Agencies

Day after the INDIA bloc proposed the name of Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge as its prime ministerial candidate for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, JD(U) MLA and Cabinet Minister Jama Khan said that Nitish Kumar was the only person who could lead all the parties. "Nitish Kumar has all the capabilities of a prime minister. He is a pro-development man and has a great

political image. Due to his good image, many people were hoping that his name would be proposed as the prime ministerial candidate of the Opposition parties. If the INDIA bloc contests the Lok Sabha election under the leadership of Nitish Kumar, it will definitely win the election," Khan said. Reacting to the statements of BJP leaders who were saying that Nitish Kumar had been cast aside, Khan said, "BJP leaders used to give statements like this.

India saw 761 cyber threat detections per minute in 2023: Report

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India saw over 400 million cyber threats across approximately 8.5 million endpoints - averaging 761 detections per minute - in 2023 while Surat (15 per cent) and Bengaluru (14 per cent) report the highest number of detections, a report showed on Wednesday.

There were 49 million behaviour-based detections, constituting 12.5 per cent of the total detections, according to the report by the Data Security Council of India (DSCI) in collaboration with enterprise cybersecurity solutions provider Secqrite.

Over 50 per cent of detections are associated with removable media and network drives and nearly 25 per cent of attacks result from clicking on malicious links in emails



and websites. An average of three attacks per month per Android device were observed in 2023.

"Malware stands as a significant threat with cybercrime engineering becoming increasingly intricate with diverse attack methodologies. Additionally, ransomware authors continually evolve

their methodologies and employ sophisticated techniques to evade traditional signature-based detection," said Vinayak Godse, Chief Executive Officer of the Data Security Council of India.

Shockingly, fake and malicious applications hosted on the Google Play Store have been downloaded by millions

of users, including SpyLoan apps, fake apps, HidAdd apps, and more, the findings showed. Ransomware attacks evade traditional signature-based detection techniques to pose a bigger threat which is evident in the malware vs ransomware incident ratio findings, according to the report.

Cryptojacking emerged as a significant threat with over 5.28 million detections in a year. Trojans (41 per cent) and infectors (33 per cent) contribute significantly to the attack spectrum.

The automobile industry experienced the highest number of detections, followed by the government and education sector.

"Today's cyber landscape demands collaborative efforts and innovative solutions," said Vishal Salvi, CEO of Quick Heal Technologies.

Won't spare a single mosque built after destroying temple in country: K'taka BJP leader Eshwarappa

Gadag, (Karnataka) | Agencies

Senior BJP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister KS Eshwarappa has stirred a controversy by stating that not a single mosque built after destroying a temple would be spared in the country.

Speaking to the media in Gadag city, Eshwarappa, known for controversial statements, maintained that he wouldn't speak about newly-built mosques. "But those built after destroying our temples won't be spared. Not a single such mosque will stand in this country. This is my personal opinion," he underlined.

He clarified that it was not possible for the BJP to make India a Hindu nation, stating that it was not the agenda of the BJP but of the Hindus.

"I will pledge and say India will become a Hindu nation," Eshwarappa stated. Referring

to the decision to build the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, he mentioned the struggle that has been ongoing since the pre-Independence period.

Eshwarappa criticised the destruction in Mathura and Kashi by Muslims and claimed that those who raised their voices in the past are now heaving a sigh of relief in heaven. "On January 22, the whole world will look towards Ayodhya. The court proceedings on the matter of the Kashi Vishwanath temple are in favour of Hindus. The order for a survey has been granted for the Krishna temple in Mathura. Everything will happen one after the other," he explained.

Eshwarappa asserted, "We have shared the blood of freedom fighters. Tipu's (erstwhile Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan) blood won't flow in us. We will save temples at Hindu pilgrimage centres of Ayodhya, Kashi, and Mathura."



VYAPAM SCAM: TWO SENT TO 4-YEAR RIGOROUS IMPRISONMENT

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Bhopal

The Special CBI Court in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior has sentenced candidate Satendra Singh Yadav and impersonator Jitendra Kumar to four years of rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs 14,100 each in a case related to the Police Constable Recruitment-2013 Examination conducted by Vyapam.

According to a senior CBI official, the agency had registered the instant case on August 18, 2015 in compliance with the orders of the Supreme Court.

"The CBI had taken over the investigation of the case initially registered at the Police Station, Kampoo, Gwalior on February 11, 2014 against Madhuraj Singh on the allegations of impersonation in MP Police Constable Recruitment Test 2013 (2nd) conducted by Vyapam, Bhopal on September 15, 2013," said the official. It was further alleged that Madhuraj Singh (Candidate) while appearing in the Physical Proficiency Test of MP PCRT-2013 (2nd) held on February 1, 2014 at 14th Battalion, SAF Ground, Gwalior, was caught by the officials deputed there due to photo mismatch. After investigation, the state



police had filed a charge sheet against the said accused. During the CBI probe, it was found that Madhuraj Singh had not appeared in the written examination. The CBI filed the first supplementary charge sheet on April 26, 2016 against the accused. Earlier, the Special Judge, CBI (Vyapam Cases), in its judgement on

December 24, 2018, had sentenced Madhuraj Singh to undergo five years of rigorous imprisonment with fine. Further investigation was kept open against other accused/suspects. "During further investigation, it was established that another candidate Satendra Singh Yadav was impersonated by one

Jitendra Kumar (solver) in the PCRT 2013 (2nd). Hence, CBI filed 2nd supplementary charge sheet on May 10, 2018 against the said new set of accused before the Court at Gwalior," said the official. The Trial Court held the said accused (of second supplementary charge sheet) guilty and convicted them.

Narendra Singh Tomar unanimously elected Speaker of Madhya Pradesh Assembly

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Narendra Singh Tomar has been unanimously elected to the post of Speaker of Madhya Pradesh Assembly. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav proposed Tomar's name and Leader of Opposition Umang Singhar supported it.

Protem Speaker of the Assembly Gopal Bhargava, while referring to the process of election for the post of Speaker, said that seven notices of proposal for the election have been received. The members proposing these proposals will present their proposal and it will be supported. All the proposals under the same were presented and Tomar was unanimously elected as the president.

Bhargava congratulated Tomar on being elected to the post of president and invited him to sit on the chair, then Tomar reached the chair along with Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Leader of Opposition Umang Singhar, former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh



Chouhan and other leaders.

On Tomar being elected Speaker, Chief Minister Yadav said that he is the Speaker in 19th of the 16th Assembly. Tomar's personality in itself is special for all of us, especially in the politics of Madhya Pradesh, there are only a few universally accepted ones, in which Tomar's name is one, due to which no matter which party or person you belong to, your long political career. I have been in contact with you from Yuva Morcha during the past few years, personally in many cases I have also been in-charge of my own

district Ujjain. You have given the benefit of your administrative experience to all of us. Leader of Opposition Umang Singhar congratulated Tomar on being elected Speaker and said, this assembly and all of us will benefit from such a great personality and your long experience. I understand that you remain very silent, as there is a smile on your face, so the House should function with such a smile and you will give time to both our party, the ruling party and the opposition, your blessings will remain, this is my feeling.

Successful Treatment of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) at AIIMS Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Pediatric department AIIMS, Bhopal is pleased to announce the successful treatment and discharge of a 5 year old female child diagnosed with Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) after a long stay of 107 days in the ICU and ward of Department of Pediatrics!

The patient was admitted to our facility with complaints of progressive weakness and inability to move all 4 limbs and progressive difficulty in breathing. A dedicated team of consultants from departments of Pediatrics, resident doctors and nurses provided round-the-clock care and rehabilitation, ensuring the patient received the best possible treatment. The patient has shown remarkable progress and is returning home after overcoming this challenging condition and prolonged ventilation for 2 months. She is now tracheostomised and is able to maintain adequate oxygenation on room air and is also able to move her limbs. She will continue with physiotherapy and outpatient follow-up to ensure complete recovery. The combined efforts of the medical team with supporting departments like Pediatric surgery, ENT, Laboratory support and her family contributed significantly to this successful out-



come. Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director AIIMS Bhopal has congratulated the team for their dedication in serving the humanity.

What is Guillain Barre Syndrome (GBS)? It is a rare neurological disorder in which the body's immune system, which normally protects against disease, suddenly starts attacking the body itself. For this reason it is also called auto immune disorder. In simple language, a person suffering from this syndrome faces difficulty in speaking, walking, swallowing, defecating or doing common daily activities. This condition gets worse with time. Guillain Barre Syndrome is a disorder in which the patient first starts feeling shivering or pain in the body and then his muscles start becoming weak.

Investigation into chicken party of former forest minister begins in Satpura Tiger Reserve

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Investigation into the chicken party of former Forest Minister Vijay Shah has started in the core area of Satpura Tiger Reserve (STR). Satpura Tiger Reserve Deputy Director Sandeep Fellows reached Pachmarhi on Wednesday. They are interrogating the rangers, deputy rangers, vanguards and watchmen coming to the West Pachmarhi range of STR. Here Vijay Shah says that he does not eat chicken at all.

Investigation into the chicken party of former Forest Minister Vijay Shah has started in the core area of Satpura Tiger Reserve (STR). Satpura Tiger Reserve Deputy Director Sandeep Fellows reached Pachmarhi on Wednesday. They are interrogating the rangers, deputy rangers, vanguards and watchmen coming to the West Pachmarhi range of STR.

Vijay Shah says that there is a camp in Rorighat. STR staff stays here. A watch tower is being built here. I went there to see it. Because the staff who lives there cooks and eats food there. I don't eat chicken nor have it cooked.

Two videos surfaced, one made by Shah himself. Two videos of former Forest Minister Vijay Shah's chicken party were surfaced. Shah himself has made one of these videos. Wildlife activist Ajay Dubey has complained about the matter to



Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Aseem Srivastava. He has mentioned MLA Vijay Shah in his complaint. Shah has been the Forest Minister in the Shivraj government. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Field Director of STR, L. Answer was sought from Krishnamurthy.

Wildlife activist Ajay Dubey claims that in the first VIDEO, former minister Vijay Shah is saying, 'For the first time in the Satpura forest, at an alti-

tude of 4000 feet, one of the highest peaks, you are seeing this beautiful view... of wild serpentine paths. In between we are showing you the view around. There is a watch tower of the forest here.' A person is also seen in the VIDEO, who is called former minister Tejseem Bhai. This person says, 'It is a beautiful place.' Today we had an expensive lunch here. Dal Bati turned out excellent. Very good program, wonderful.

"Balrang" is a platform for introducing various cultures: Principal Secretary School Education

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Principal Secretary School Education Rashmi Arun Shami inaugurated the "National Balrang" program at the Indira Gandhi National Museum of Humanities. Shami said that this children's coloring program is not only a cultural coloring program but also a powerful medium to know and learn about each other's culture. Through this forum of Balrang, students from different states across the country get an opportunity to come closer to each other and establish friendships among them. Various literary and cultural activities help him in choosing his future career. Shami said that this year along with literary and cultural activities in Balrang, School Education Department has started Tejashwi program with Enterprise Institute, which aims to develop entrepreneurship among children. With the objective of developing entrepreneurship in children, a stall has also been set up in the children's coloring competi-



tion, in which the sale of items made by children will develop entrepreneurship skills in children. Around 430 participating students from 22 states of the country are performing folk dances of their states in the National Balrang Competition, among which the top three folk dance performances will be awarded on the occasion of the closing ceremony on December 21. Various literary and cultural competitions were held on December 19 in Balrang

at the state level. About 1 thousand participants from 9 divisions of the region participated in it. Students of various departments presented folk dances and classical dances in state level cultural competitions. In Folk Dance (Junior), Jabalpur division stood first, Sagar division second and Bhopal division third. In folk dance (senior), Gangaur dance from Indore division stood first, Bama dance from Jabalpur division stood second and Tali dance from Ujjain division stood third. In Classical Dance (Junior Category), Bhopal Division stood first, Sagar Division second and Narmadapuram Division third. In Classical Dance (Senior Category) Gwalior Division stood first, Indore division second and Bhopal Division third. Ujjain division stood first, Shahdol division second and Bhopal division stood third in junior age group easy music competition. Shahdol division won first position and Ujjain division won second position in junior age group instrument competition. Students showcased their talent in various competitions.

Rocks worshipped as 'Kuldevtas' in Dhar are Dinosaur eggs

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The residents in a Madhya Pradesh village were worshipping the stone balls they found as "Kuldevtas", only to find years later that those were fossilized dinosaur eggs.

As per a belief that the "Kuldevtas" would safeguard their farmland and livestock from difficulties and misfortunes, the villagers in Dhar's Padalya had been worshipping the stones they found while farming as "Kakad Bhairav" or Bhilat Baba. "We used to offer coconuts to Bhilat Baba and performed the puja. Villagers also used to offer goats during rain," Vesta Mandaloi, a resident of the Padly village, said. However, when a team of experts visited the village, it found that the stones were million-year-old dinosaur eggs.

"We have a dinosaur park that was built in 2011. Many times people in the villages around there find such fossils and start worshipping them," Divisional Forest Officer



(DFO) AS Solanki said. A centre of fossils collection and conservation is in the Baag area of the Dhar district. Known as the Dinosaur Fossil National Park, it stores various old-era fossils. Over 250 such dinosaur eggs have so far been found in the district. It is believed that there were a good number of dinosaurs in the Narmada Valley of Madhya Pradesh. Scientists estimate that dinosaurs roamed Earth about 175 million years ago. Thousands of these species then became extinct around 65 million years ago.

1500 ARTISTS WILL PLAY TABLA TOGETHER IN GWALIOR

Team Absolute | Gwalior

An amazing sight will be seen in the historical city of Gwalior of Madhya Pradesh on 26th December. One and a half thousand artists will play tabla simultaneously on the fort here.

Gwalior Trade Fair will start from 25th December. Along with this, 1500 tabla players will perform at Gwalior Fort on 26th December.

Collector Akshay Kumar Singh and Senior Superintendent of Police Rajesh Chandel along with departmental officials reached the fair complex and Gwalior Fort and inspected the arrangements for the event and gave necessary directions to the officials. The Collector and Superintendent of Police also saw the arrangements for the performance to be



given by 1500 tabla players at Gwalior Fort on 26th December. He said that this grand event is being organized in Gwalior this year under the Tansen Festival. It should be ensured that the artists coming to this event get a better environment to perform. Instructions were given to the Municipal Corporation officials to complete the cleanliness arrangements at the event venue in time.

The Collector and Superintendent of Police also inspected the arrange-

ments made in the Gurudwara located at Gwalior Fort to accommodate the tabla players coming from outside.

During the inspection, ADM Anju Arun Kumar and CEO District Panchayat Vivek Kumar along with Revenue, Police, Municipal Corporation officials and other officials were present.

Collector Singh directed the officials of the fair authority and the fair secretary to ensure cleanliness and timely completion of all the arrangements in the fair. Tourists coming to the fair should not face any kind of problem. Along with this, it should be ensured that better facilities are available to the traders coming from all over the country in the Gwalior Trade Fair. Traffic, security and parking should also be managed well in the fair. All arrangements for fire safety should be in place.

Tantya Mama's buried treasure looted from the British found in excavation

Team Absolute | Khandwa

Treasure from the British era has been found in Khandwa district of MP. Gold and silver coins were found in the debris of an old house in Khidgaon here.

When school children came here to play, their eyes fell on the coins. When the news of children finding coins spread in the village, a crowd of people gathered here. The villagers dug many pits here and many of them found gold and silver coins. Now a new thing has come to light about this ten day old incident. These British coins are being said to be the treasure of the popular revolutionary leader Tantya Bhil. In the area he is also fondly called Tantya Mama.

A new house is being built in place of an old house in the village. For this, excavation was done and the debris was dumped on the banks of the nearby river. On December 10, when school children came to play here, they found British era coins here. As soon as the children found the gold and silver coins, a crowd of people gathered here and



the entire village started searching for the coins. Later the police recovered these old coins from some people.

Now knowledgeable people are calling these British coins as the treasure of Tantya Bhil. According to historians and experts, Tantya Bhis used to loot from the British and distribute all the goods in the area. In those times, people used to bury the coins given by Tantya in the ground to keep them safe. People have found this buried treasure in Khidgaon. Even before this, many times people in the area have found treasure of gold and silver coins buried in the ground.

Such incidents took place at many places in Khandwa and nearby districts. Three years ago, about three hundred coins were found during excavation in Punasa of Khandwa. Seven years ago, coins were also found in Bhagwanpura of Khargone. Gold and silver coins were also found during excavation in Tanda Barud village here. The coins found at all these places were said to be the treasure of Jananayak Tantya Bhil looted from the British.



EDITOR'S SPECS

INDIA resolution raises question on EVMs

The INDIA bloc, during its fourth meeting on Tuesday, passed a resolution reiterating that doubts on the integrity of the functioning of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), demanded that instead of the VVPAT slip falling in the box, it should be handed over to the voter who shall then place it in a separate ballot box after having verified his or her choice. The resolution on EVMs read: "INDIA parties have submitted a detailed memorandum to the ECI with several specific questions on the design and operation of the EVMs. Unfortunately, the ECI has been reluctant to meet a INDIA delegation on this memorandum." It said that INDIA parties reiterate that there are many doubts on the integrity of the functioning of the EVMs. "These have been raised by many experts and professionals as well," the resolution said. "Our suggestion is simple: Instead of the VVPAT slip falling in the box, it should be handed over to the voter who shall then place it in a separate ballot box after having verified his or her choice. 100 per cent counting of VVPAT slips should then be done," it said. "This will restore full confidence of the people in free and fair elections," it added. The opposition had on many occasions questioned the EVMs and demanded for elections with ballot papers.

From Information Age to the Age of Intelligence

DC Pathak

It is not too distant in the past that the world witnessed a great transformation resulting from a combination of epoch-making developments - all occurring around the same time at the beginning of the 1990s. These literally created a 'new world order' impacting not only the economy and business but national security and international cooperation as well.

An unprecedented level of 'globalisation' was reached in terms of both economic expansion and a universally shared threat to security when the Cold War ended due to the dismemberment of the USSR and the demise of International Communism, the advent of Information Technology revolution created border fewer markets and faith-based new global terror rooted in Islamic 'radicalisation' represented by Taliban, Al Qaeda and ISIS registered a rising graph.

The upswing of Terrorism can be traced to the turbulent post-Soviet Afghanistan when Pakistan sent in the Taliban to control that country and facilitated the installation of the Kabul Emirate of Taliban in 1996.

Since Islamic radicals considered the US-led West as their first enemy - this was rooted in historical legacy, the Emirate ran into problems with the US making the latter work for its ouster. This laid the turf for 9/11 that in turn resulted in the US-sponsored 'war on terror' in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The 'war on terror' was utilised by Islamic radical forces to spread their hold in the Muslim world somewhat at the cost of the allies of the US like Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain.

The overriding impact of the new world order was in giving a boost to economic globalisation where the agenda was largely set by the US but the strategy of countering the terror of Islamic radicals also became equally important for the US.

India and the US had to be together for their mutual economic advancement but they also had to join hands, as the two largest democracies, in leading the democratic world against the peril of the faith-based terrorism that was sustained by the fundamentalist notions of supremacism and exclusivism of Islam as a faith.

The driving force behind economic globalisation - which became the prime characteristic of the post-Cold War world, was the arrival of Information Technology (IT) that enabled instant communication across geographical boundaries to set new norms of entrepreneurship and competition - permitting a 'smart' player to take on its much larger and more resourceful rivals from any part of the globe.

'Smartness' lay in producing more per unit of resource that IT helped in and businesses were compelled to study both market trends as well as use of technology to stay in competition. Intelligence by definition is the information that



enables you to see what lies ahead and since this could be gleaned out of an analysis of the enormous amount of data that was being put in the public domain regularly, corporates willingly invested in a set-up that would produce Business Intelligence for them.

Intelligence is a word normally used in the context of national security but the applied version of it is now not only a part of the business world but 'being well informed' - which was the mandate of the Age of Information - has also become a means of running personal and family life on a note of success. Ignorance cannot be defended any more and an awareness of what the socio-economic scene and even the crime situation was like, would be a factor in keeping one safe and secure.

Terrorism, Narcotics and Illicit arms have brought issues of national security closer to the citizens because they came into operation where people lived and that is another reason why citizens should keep themselves broadly informed of the social security environment around them.

It is the duty of the State to keep the citizens safe and there is a certain expectation from the people that they would contribute to this mandate, too.

Fundamental Duties defined in the Constitution have acquired a newfound importance in the context of India's internal security.

It can be said that just as the world transited from the Industrial Age to the Age of Information in the early Nineties, it is now shifting to the Age of Intelligence because for nations, organisations and even individuals, perceptions of 'what lies ahead' are becoming even more important in the light of new geopolitical developments, the eco-

nomics situation in the world and at home and the changing security scenario at the global and national levels.

The Age of Information created the 'knowledge economy', gave a new dimension to the process of making a decision and underscored the importance of Intelligence which by definition is information of special value since it gave a peek into what opportunity or risk was there on the horizon.

Knowledge is analysed information, Intelligence is futuristic information and decision-making requires information that bridges the gap between 'guesswork' and the 'reality'. A global mindset is an essential trait required for the successful handling of business today - it has always been needed in the sphere of national security - because a rival or adversary could be operating from anywhere across the geographical frontiers.

Finally, in the Age of Information, competent analysis of facts garnered from the public domain has acquired newfound importance because the enemy or the rival leaves enough footprints in the social or cyber media even while using the latter covertly. This in fact is an exercise of Intelligence generation as the analysts can possibly read the intention of the opponent for the future. The march to the Age of Intelligence is being fast-paced by the advances that Information Technology has made towards applications of Artificial Intelligence in the spheres of innovation, business and security.

Within the input-output principle that governs all transactions in the digital world, AI has emerged as the enabling instrument for the

instant processing of a billion data to produce findings that would be humanly impossible to reach. What is of concern about AI applications, however, is that apart from data processing, they enable simulation of voice, photo identity and even personal behaviour including choices exercised by the individual, to generate fake versions that could be used for 'misinformation', fraud and political purposes like image bashing and influencing the electoral process.

AI has produced the phenomena of 'Machine learning', 'Deep learning' and 'Natural language process' but it has to be remembered that the so-called 'Computer vision' is still rooted in 'pattern' reading and use of 'key' words. 'Intelligence' produced through this route is confined to a limited 'predictability' of human conduct based on analysis of personal data.

The versatility of thought that the human mind can command while examining a situation, the 'imagination' that it can invoke in seeing what lay beyond the data in front and the quality of human 'empathy' it can use in decision-making is what would distinguish Human Intelligence from Artificial Intelligence. This is not to underplay the epoch-making promise of the human good that AI as an ultimate advancement of IT, has offered.

The fact is that AI is a further milestone in the world's progress from the 'Age of Information' to the 'Age of Intelligence'. There is little doubt that the legitimate growth of AI is putting health care, education, innovation, productivity and Human Resource development on an entirely new pedestal and helping the larger good of the world.

There have been some concerns about possible job losses, particularly in the white-collar segment but what is on the anvil is that businesses are going to get more efficient, diversified and stable through AI applications without necessarily reducing their manpower.

The call for global AI regulations is already emerging as a major requirement and this matter has figured prominently at G20 and other international platforms like the APEC Summit because of the fear of misuse of weapon automation and the danger of malcontents and terrorists using technology to plan and execute operations including cyber attacks.

The use of AI by Israel to identify and locate Hamas targets in Gaza is an illustration of its application in defence. India is rightly at the forefront of efforts to put AI applications for the larger good of humanity and prevent their destructive fallout at the same time. It has just hosted an international conference in Delhi to deliberate on various aspects of AI.

(The writer is a former Director of the Intelligence Bureau. Views are personal)

international

Hamas leader Ismael Haniyeh in Cairo for ceasefire talks, hostage release

Tel Aviv | Agencies

The Hamas leader Ismael Haniyeh on Wednesday reached Cairo, Egypt for negotiations with the Israelis for a possible ceasefire and hostage release.

Haniyeh -- considered to be face of Hamas for international diplomacy will meet top officials of Egyptian government to carry forward the negotiations with Israel for a possible ceasefire and hostage release.

"Haniyeh will meet the Egyptian Intelligence Head Abbas Kamel -- who was part of last negotiations with Mossad Chief David Barnea and Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani regarding ceasefire and hostage release," Hamas in a press statement said.

It said that Haniyeh is accompanied by senior Hamas leaders and they will focus on supply of more aid material to Gaza. "Haniyeh will ask the Israel side to with-



draw the army from Gaza and to rehabilitate the displaced Palestinians within Gaza," the statement said.

During the temporary one week truce from November 24 to December 1 between Hamas and Israel, the Hamas released 105 hostages while at least 129 hostages are still in Hamas captivity.

The Israelis believe that out of remaining 129 hostages, at least 20 hostages have died. There are thousands of Palestinians in Israeli jails who have been held without any trials and access to legal counsel.

Israel launched a ground offensive inside Gaza on October 27 after Hamas attacked Israel in a surprise attack on October 7 in which 1200 Israelis were killed and over 200 were taken hostage.

Since the outbreak of hostilities between Hamas and Israel, over 19,667 Palestinians have been killed mostly being children and women.

Overnight temperature plunges to minus 50 degrees in Mongolia

Ulan Bator | Agencies

Overnight temperatures plunged to minus 50 degrees Celsius in Zuungovi soum, an administrative subdivision of the western Mongolian province of Uvs, from Tuesday to Wednesday, according to the country's weather monitoring agency.

The figure marked the coldest temperature in Mongolia this winter, the National Agency for Meteorology and Environmental Monitoring



said in a statement on Wednesday. Since the beginning of last week, a strong cold front that

originated in Siberia, Russia, has been sweeping across extensive areas of Mongolia, causing temperature drops and bringing strong winds and blizzards, reports Xinhua news agency.

The cold wave is expected to continue until Friday.

According to the weather agency, on December 26, 1966, overnight temperatures dropped to minus 55.6 degrees in the same soum, the coldest in Mongolia's history.

Trump ruled unfit to run for presidential office

Washington | Agencies

Donald Trump became the first former or incumbent American President to be struck off the re-election ballot for insurrection. In other words he is not fit to run for election.

This is yet another first for the former President who has notched up several ignoble firsts: only US President -- once in office and then out -- to be impeached twice, criminally charged with mishandling classified papers, trying to overturn an electoral outcome.

In a decision that's being historic, the Colorado Supreme Court barred Trump from running in the state's presidential primary ruling he had engaged in insurrection on January 6, 2021, when a mob of his supporters invaded the US Congress -- at this urging and direction -- to prevent lawmakers from certifying Joe Biden as the next President, which is a procedural formality of the presidential election process. He is facing upwards of 90 charges in a medley of cases brought against him by federal and state authorities.

"A majority of the court holds that President Trump is disqualified from holding the office of President under Section Three of the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution," the court ruling read.

"Because he is disqualified, it would be a wrongful act under the Election Code for the Colorado Secretary of State to list him as a candidate on the presidential primary ballot."

The ruling came under Amendment 14 of the US constitution that bars people engaging in insurrection from running for president.

"No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the US, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the US,



or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the US, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability, says Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Three of the seven members of the bench dissented and the case for disqualifying Trump on this very ground has been rejected by two states.

The Trump campaign has said it will appeal the ruling.

Bangladesh opposition vows non-cooperation in bid to halt polls

Dhaka | Agencies

After enforcing a series of blockades and strikes since October, the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Wednesday vowed "non-cooperation" with the government in a bid to halt the crucial general elections slated for January 7, 2024.

The country's largest opposition party urged people from all walks of life and the administration not to cooperate with the government and boycott the election, reports Xinhua news agency.

The BNP also urged people not to pay taxes from now on.

During a virtual press briefing on Tuesday, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said BNP acting



Chairman Tarique Rahman has announced the movement as its demand for national polls under a non-party caretaker government remains unmet.

"The ruling Bangladesh Awami League (AL) party is moving towards holding a dummy election on January 7," Rizvi said.

Bangladeshi Law Minister Anisul Huq had earlier called the BNP's demand as

"unconstitutional".

A total of 1,886 candidates are contesting in the general election for 300 constituencies.

Out of the total contesting candidates in the 12th national elections, 1,529 are candidates from 27 parties including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's AL party while 357 are independent candidates.

Since late October, the opposition movement has reportedly led to vandalism of vehicles and arson attacks, with deadly clashes between police and workers in Dhaka and elsewhere in the South Asian country almost every day.

On Tuesday, unidentified miscreants set fire to three coaches of a passenger train in Dhaka, killing four people.

China earthquake toll rises to 131, nearly 1,000 injured

Beijing | Agencies

The death toll from a powerful earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale that jolted China's Gansu and Qinghai provinces increased to 131 on Wednesday, while the number of injured persons stood at 980, authorities said.

Gansu, the worst-affected province that lies between the Tibetan and Loess plateaus and borders Mongolia, accounted for 113 deaths and 782 injuries. Xinhua news agency quoted the local authorities as saying, Meanwhile in Qinghai, at least 18 people have died, 198 injured and 16 others still remain unaccounted for. According to the China Earthquake Networks Centre, the quake struck at 11.59 p.m. Monday and had a focal depth of 10 km. The epicentre of



the quake was in Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture. This was China's deadliest earthquake in recent year. The authorities said that the death toll may further increase as rescue operations continue amid sub-zero temperatures. Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered thousands of rescue crew to the region, among the poorest and most diverse in China. The earthquake is the country's deadliest since 2014, when

more than 600 people were killed by a quake in south-western Yunnan province, reports the NNC. On Tuesday, footage shown on state TV and social media networks showed entire villages split by the quake, as well as collapsed buildings and houses. Temperatures hit -13 degrees Celsius on Tuesday. China sits in a region where a number of tectonic plates -- notably the Eurasian, Indian and Pacific plates -- meet. It is particularly prone to earthquakes. An earthquake in Yushu in Qinghai province, which is next to Gansu, claimed almost 2,700 lives in 2010. China's most devastating earthquake in recent decades was in the south-western province of Sichuan in 2008 when 87,000 people were killed.



Eknath Shinde visits RSS founder Dr. K. B. Hedgewar's memorial, Deekshabhoomi

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on visited the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) headquarters and paid homage to its founder Dr. Keshav B. Hedgewar at his memorial in Reshim Baug and later went to the historic Deekshabhoomi here.

Emerging from the memorial site, Shinde said "it infuses him with peace, energy and inspiration" whenever he visits it during the Legislature Session in Nagpur.

"Do you feel there is any politicisation of Hindutva if I come here... Our Hindutva is for development, and all are with us," said Shinde.

The Chief Minister said that his regime is the common man's government and anyone can come to meet him anytime, "and people love me as I work for them".

Targeting the erstwhile Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) regime, he said they had closed down many public schemes which were restarted by the MahaYuti government in the interest of the people.

"Maharashtra is a progressive state... People of all communities live here and we will maintain the law and order here always, and take decisions keeping in mind the peoples' sentiments," said Shinde.



Meanwhile, the ruling ally BJP leaders welcomed the Chief Minister's visit to the RSS headquarters while the Opposition MVA ally Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders slammed Shinde for the trip.

Later, the Chief Minister along with some ministers and officials, paid respects at the Deekshabhoomi -- the site of Navayana Buddhism (neo-Buddhism) -- where the Chief Architect of Indian Constitution Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, along with nearly half-a-million Dalits embraced Buddhism on October 14, 1956.

Will seek public opinion on caste census: Maha CM

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday said that the state government will seek public opinion before conducting caste census in the state.

"Maharashtra is a progressive state. Social and religious harmony prevails in the state. We maintain a good law and order situation here. Ours is peoples' government and will certainly seek opinion from people on the issue," Shinde told media persons at Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) headquarters in Reshimbaugh.

The Chief Minister said that Maharashtra's culture is altogether different and people belonging to various faiths and cultures live peacefully.

"Ours is Aam Aadmi Sarkar (peoples' government) anyone can meet me. We are firm on Hindutva and are following the legacy of late Balasaheb Thackeray," the Chief Minister said.

Interestingly, the RSS has been opposing the caste census in the country.

"Caste census will bring inequality among the society. Conducting caste census will derive no benefits for the common people," RSS Vidarbha region chief Shridhar Gadge said.

No evidence against Gautam Navlakha proving conspiracy to commit any terrorist act: Bombay High Court

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court has emphasized that there is no material on record suggesting that Gautam Navlakha conspired to commit any terrorist act. Navlakha, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case was granted bail on Tuesday.

The division bench, comprising Justices A S Gadkari and S G Dige, issued the bail order on Tuesday, and the full text of the judgment became available on Wednesday.

The High Court, after examining the available material, concluded that there is no evidence of any covert or overt terrorist act attributed to Navlakha. The judgment stated, "From the material on record, it appears to us that no covert or overt terrorist act has been attributed to the appellant (Navlakha)."

Gautam Navlakha, who was arrested in August 2018 in connection with the Elgar Parishad case, was permitted by the Supreme Court to be placed under house arrest in November 2022.



Presently residing in Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, Navlakha's bail has been a subject of legal scrutiny.

The High Court's judgment emphasized that, based on the material presented by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the accusations against Navlakha are prima facie true. The court expressed the opinion that Navlakha's intention, at most, was to commit the alleged crime and that this intention had

not transformed into preparation or an attempt to commit a terrorist act.

The court noted that the witness statements suggested Navlakha's association with the Communist Party of India (Maoist), which, if proven, would attract provisions of participating in an unlawful activity and membership of a terrorist organization under sections 13 and 38 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, respectively. These sections provide for a maximum punishment not exceeding ten years.

Mumbai Police nab man for rape-assault on 64-year-old widow

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Trombay Police have arrested a man for the rape-cum-assault on a 64-year-old widow and then leaving her to die near the Thane Creek in Maharashtra, an official said here on Wednesday.

The accused, who was arrested late last night, has been identified as Umesh Gulabrao Dhok, 38, a resident of Shantinagar in Mankhurd suburb of north-east Mumbai, said Trombay Police Station Senior Police Inspector Ravindra Ranshevra.

The accused has confessed to his crime and has been slapped with various charges under the IPC and POC SO, and a special team has been formed for further investigations, said Ranshevra.

According to the preliminary probe, the woman had gone to the local Khandoba Temple in Nehru Nagar on Monday evening and on return, the accused lured her to his room in Shantinagar on



the pretext of dropping her home.

In his home, he brutally raped the woman repeatedly during the Monday-Tuesday night, assaulted her multiple times with a stick, causing grievous injuries on the face, head, chest, limbs and private parts.

After the senior woman lost consciousness, he dumped her in a naked state near his home in the Thane Creek's salt-pan area, around 5 a.m., said the police.

The victim's daughter said that soon afterwards, a local woman saw her mother lying there without any clothes and brought a gown for her, then informed the Trombay Police which rushed a team there.

The police managed to retrieve the woman's phone and managed to contact her only daughter, while admitting the victim to the BMC's Rajawadi Hospital in Ghatkopar.

The daughter claimed that at least three persons were involved in the crime, though the police have not made any such reference in the case.

Ranshevra is guiding a team of Vijay Garud, Kiran Tambade, Sharad Nanekar, Pallavi Tayade, and others from various squads to probe the case further and track any others who may be involved in the heinous incident.

The widow lives with her daughter and her grand-daughter, and the trio make a living selling fish and brooms in the local markets.

Pune man arrested for harassing Korean vlogger after video goes viral

Team Absolute | Pune

The man who harassed a South Korean vlogger in Pune has been arrested, police said. The incident dates back to Diwali in November when a South Korean vlogger named Kelly faced harassment while recording a video in the Ravet area of Pune's Pimpri Chinchwad.

The accused's actions were captured on camera and later went viral on social media, sparking public outrage. Pune's Pimpri Chinchwad Police swiftly took action, leading to his arrest.

According to ACP Satish Mane, the arrest was made following the widespread circulation of the video on social media platforms. In the disturbing footage, a man can be seen putting his hand around Kelly's neck and behaving inappropriately while she attempts to engage with locals at a market.

The crime branch of Pimpri Chinchwad Police tracked down the suspect in the Ravet area and arrested him on Tuesday.

The video shows Kelly conversing with



shopkeepers and customers at a local shop while sipping coconut water. Suddenly, a man intrudes and grabs her, placing his hand around her neck.

A second man joins in, and the first one instructs him to stay closer, exacerbating the distressing situation. Despite Kelly's attempts to distance herself, the harasser persists, making her visibly uncomfortable. In the clip, she expresses her need to leave the area, stating, "I have to run from here," and adds, "They really like to hug."

In a similar incident, two men were arrested last year for harassing another South Korean vlogger in Mumbai.

Mumbai biz couple invests Rs 1,100 cr in SpiceJet for 19% stake

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

In a strategic move to bolster SpiceJet's financial position and spur growth, Mumbai-based businessman Harihara Mahapatra and his wife Preeti have announced a substantial investment of Rs 1,100 crore in the airline. The acquisition secures the couple a 19 per cent stake in SpiceJet, as revealed in a stock exchange filing by the airline.

The investment plan includes participation from Aries Opportunities Fund, holding three per cent, and Elara Capital, securing an eight per cent stake through the conversion of warrants.

Earlier, the Board of Directors of SpiceJet unanimously approved the infusion of fresh capital exceeding Rs 2,250 crore.

This move involves issuing equity shares to financial institutions, foreign institutional investors (FIIs), high net worth individuals (HNIs), and private investors.

An official from SpiceJet said, "The Board's unanimous decision reflects our commitment to strengthening the airline's financial foundation and propelling its growth trajectory. The issuance of equity shares and warrants under private placement is subject to necessary approvals from share-



holders and regulatory bodies."

The proposed preferential issues encompass a diverse group of investors, including Elara India Opportunities Fund, Aries Opportunities Fund, Mahapatra Universal Limited, Nexus Global Fund, Prabudas Lilladher, Resonance Opportunities Fund, among others, aiming to raise funds aggregating over Rs 2,250 Crore.

The Board of Directors, in a meeting held on December 12 gave the green light for issuing up to 31,83,00,000 equity shares of face value Rs10 each ("Tranche I Issue") and up to 13,00,00,000 warrants, convertible to equity shares ("Tranche II Issue"), on a preferential basis.

The funds from the Tranche I and Tranche II issues, totaling Rs 15,91,50,00,000 and Rs

6,50,00,00,000, respectively, are earmarked for addressing statutory obligations, settling past dues with creditors, uplifting and ungrounding the fleet, acquiring new aircraft, meeting ATF expenses, employee-related expenses, and general corporate purposes.

Approximately 25 per cent of the funds from each preferential issue will be allocated to these purposes.

If approved by shareholders, the investment will result in a reduction of airline promoter Ajay Singh's current shareholding from 56.49 per cent to at least 38.55 per cent. Presently, 37.9 per cent of Singh's stake is pledged with various banks, marking a significant development in SpiceJet's ownership structure.

Meanwhile, the stock exchange filing announced the Annual general meeting of the members on December 30.

"This is to inform you that the 39th Annual General Meeting of the members of SpiceJet Limited will be held on Wednesday, the 10th day of January, 2024 at 3:30 p.m. through video conference and other audio visual means to transact business as per attached Notice of Annual General Meeting," the airline said in the notice.

Maharashtra reported 23 infant deaths a day between April and October: Govt

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Health Minister Tanaji Sawant on Wednesday told the state legislative assembly the state reported 4,872 infant deaths during April and October this year at a daily average of 23 deaths.

He said 795 (16 per cent) of 4,872 infants have died of breathing-related ailments. Maximum deaths have been reported in Mumbai, Thane, Solapur, Akola and Nandurbar, the minister stated in a written reply to a query by MLA Sachin Kalyanshetti during question hour.

"4,872 infants have died in Maharashtra during April to October this year. The age of the infants who died was between zero to 28 days.



Going by the death figures, daily 23 infants have died on an average," the minister stated. He said 52 special neonatal care rooms are functional in Maharashtra.

"All the ailing infants receive medication, tests and transportation at free of cost in government hospitals," the minister added.

On December 12, leaders from the opposition parties

in Maharashtra state assembly, belonging to the Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance, staged a protest accusing the state government of the critical condition of health services.

The leaders, including those from Shiv Sena (UBT), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and Congress, gathered outside the Vidhan Bhavan to voice their concerns.

MPs' stance on Parliament security 'valid': Prakash Ambedkar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The stance of MPs demanding a statement from the government on the breach of security in the Parliament complex on December 13 was valid and justified, Prakash Ambedkar, President, Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA), said here on Wednesday.

Ambedkar said that after 1996, the erstwhile Watch & Ward security setup for the Parliament, which was under the Lok Sabha Speaker, was diluted with Delhi Police getting more powers for the security aspects.

"Now, Parliament security comes under the purview of Delhi Police, which comes under the Union Home Minister and the Prime Minister. The MPs were correct in raising concerns over their safety and seeking an explanation from the government," said Ambedkar, the grandson of the Chief Architect of Indian Constitution, B.R. Ambedkar.

On the suspension of 143 MPs in the past few days, the VBA chief said that Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar has the powers to ask the government to give an explanation on the security matter.

"Why didn't the RS Chairman exercise his powers and instead treated the Parliament protests as a law-and-order situation," asked Ambedkar.

Meanwhile, the VBA will organise its annual Women's Liberation Day conference in Nagpur on December 25, during which Ambedkar will unveil a



comprehensive plan for an inclusive social system in the country.

Flanked by party leaders Rekha Thakur and Siddharth Mokale, Ambedkar also slammed the BJP and the RSS, accusing them of sowing divisive ideas and breaking up the society.

Giving a background, he said that on December 25 1927, his grandfather B.R. Ambedkar had rejected the unequal and divisive system by burning the Manusmriti, which is now organised as a

'Manusmriti Dahan Day', with a Bharatiya Stree Mukti Din Parishad organised across the state for the past 27 years. Ambedkar said that through the Constitution, creating an inclusive and egalitarian social system propounded by saints like Charvaka, Gautam Buddha, Lord Mahavir, Guru Nanak, Sant Kabir, Guru Ravidas, Sant Eknath, Sant Janabai, Sant Tukaram and Sant Namdeo, is the duty and responsibility of all political, social and religious organisations.

Police arrest four persons for killing truck driver in Nagpur

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Police in Maharashtra's Nagpur has arrested four persons for allegedly killing a 29-year-old truck driver near Kalmna market area. Two others were seriously injured in the incident on Tuesday morning, an official said, adding that the clash was a fallout of an altercation between two groups of truck drivers and cleaners.

Shivraj alias Amit Azgar Shrichand Kumar and two others were attacked with iron rods, resulting in the death of Kumar, a newswire reported quoting an official said.

An FIR was registered for murder and four suspects were nabbed, he said, adding that further investigation is underway.

Meanwhile, in a concerning trend, recent data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has revealed an increase in cases of crimes against women and children in Maharashtra. The statistics, from the 70th edition of the NCRB's annual report, highlight a worrisome surge in criminal incidents during 2022.

The report was released earlier this month. Mumbai witnessed a rise in cases of crimes



against women, with a total of 6,176 cases registered in 2022 compared to 2021's 5,543 cases. The rate of total crime against women stood at 72.5 per cent.

The majority of these cases were filed under 'Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives,' constituting 32.6 per cent of the reported incidents. Although the city has 78.6 percent chargesheet rate, concerns linger over the safety of women in the metropolises.



'Barbie' director Greta Gerwig, Noah Baumbach marry after 12 yrs of dating

Los Angeles | Agencies

After a terrific run at the global box-office with her directorial 'Barbie', Greta Gerwig has now turned a leaf on the new chapter in her life.

Greta and her longtime partner, Noah Baumbach are married, reports. A source said that the two got married in New York City Hall.

The couple first met while filming the 2010 movie 'Greenberg' and began their romantic relationship in 2011.

The news comes after a busy year for the couple who co-wrote the 'Barbie' screenplay and announced that they quietly welcomed a second son in an interview with Elle UK published in July.

"The little guy is sleeping through the night. But I'm still doing that thing where I wake up, every hour to 90 minutes, and just hover. You just keep wanting to look at that baby. So I'm slightly in a twilight state," the director told the outlet.

As per People, the new addition joined the couple's first baby together, son Harold Ralph Gerwig Baumbach, whom they welcomed in March 2019.

That December, Noah, 54, spoke to Vogue about why he enjoys working alongside his now wife.

"I think the pleasure of writing for us is that it seeps into everything. I'd show her a cut of my movie, and then a few months later, I'm watching her movie. I don't want to sound sickeningly happy, but it's a truly great thing to watch someone you love make something and love the thing they make. I don't know how else to say it without saying great a lot," he told the outlet.

In 2020, the two had the honour of being nominated for Oscars in the same year.

While Noah was nominated for Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay for 'Marriage Story', Greta was nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay for 'Little Women'.



Florence Pugh shares what she loves about bedroom scenes

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Florence Pugh, who has had intimate clinches on camera with Harry Styles and Cillian Murphy, has shared what she loves the most about the bedroom scenes.

Apparently, it doesn't include getting comfortable with a co-star or practising the lines or the scene but it's all about a good nap for her when the crew around her is preparing the scene, reports.

The Oscar nominated star, who plays Harry's wife in 'Don't Worry Darling' and has a raunchy scene with Cillian Murphy in 'Oppenheimer', said that she adores having a nap while lighting and camera technicians tinker around her.

She said, "I love a crew because I love lots of people around. I actually will sleep best in a room full of people that are setting up for the next shot. I could go back to my trailer and have a 10-minute kip."

She further mentioned, quoted by 'Mirror.co.uk', "I love bed scenes... because you need to lie in the bed as they set up and see what you're going to do in the bed. Then they say,

"Florence, do you want to go back to your trailer?". I always say 'no', and I stay there like a good little bean, because then they don't need anyone to come in and help light. I just lie there and I have a full-on kip. And that's when I sleep my best, because everybody's just pottering about."

It sometimes helps her portray a realistic awakening, as she did in the movie 'Lady Macbeth'. Florence tells the Dish podcast:

"They'd done all the lighting and they were ready to shoot and I was still in sleeping mode, obviously. Close my eyes, fall asleep, they're filming, and then eventually part of my brain is like, 'Oh sh**, oh sh**', and I wake up in a startle."

"He calls cut and he comes over and he's like, 'Yeah, yeah, good. So I think next time we'll just shorten the sleeping bit,'" she added.



Vanilla Ice recalls partying with Pablo Escobar

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rapper Vanilla Ice recently said he once palled around with drug lord Pablo Escobar, but didn't know he was a major drug kingpin.

The rapper made the revelation in a VladTV interview, saying he used to party with the Colombian gangster during his heyday in the 1990s but insists he didn't even realise how big a deal Escobar was back then.

Vanilla Ice, whose real name is Rob Van Winkle, says he hosted Pablo sever-

al times at his Florida home at the time. On Tuesday he joined 'TMZ Live' to elaborate on what exactly they had in common as buddies, reports.

He says they shared love of speed boats actually drew them together at first, and he even gives credit to Pablo for fueling innovations in boat racing.

As for when/how he came

to learn that Pablo wasn't actually a great guy and might've been mixed up in drug business, Vanilla Ice says it dawned on him when the FBI questioned him.

Vanilla Ice noted that this was before Google, so lots of people were in the dark about Pablo's activities. Pablo was tracked down in Colombia in 1993, where he was killed on a rooftop while being pursued by the authorities.

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Drew Barrymore and Jason Momoa have pitched the sequel for 2004 film '50 First Dates'.

Jason asked her if she has a favourite comedy she's ever starred in, reports.

Drew replied, "Well, I was thinking particularly '50 First Dates'."

The actress then asked Jason if he'd ever venture into the world of romantic comedies.

"If you were to do a romantic comedy, is there a film -- let's just play a game -- is there a rom-com you would ever remake?"

Jason said: "Yeah, maybe '50 More Dates'."

Jason's response led the host to bashfully drop her jaw and flip her hair, with Jason mimicking her. He was on the The Drew Barrymore Show.

Jason added, "You need to come back to the islands and meet a Hawaiian man."

"I would do that. Of course, are you kidding?" she said.

Drew asked: "Is there, like, a woman in history, someone out there, you're producing a rom-com you're going to do it, who would you ever cast?"

Jason said: "Well, aside from the movie we were just talking about?"

Drew then explained she was asking because it's her "favourite genre" and she thinks Jason needs to be a part of it.

"Well, there's someone out there," he said.

"I don't know if I want to say it but there's someone out there." Drew then shared her excitement and hopes that Jason's dream rom-com pairing will come true.

The prospect of the pair's possible rom-com sequel would follow the actress' 2004 movie, '50 First Dates', with Adam Sandler.

The movie follows Sandler's character Henry, who meets and falls in love with Lucy (Drew Barrymore), only to discover she can't remember anything that happened the day before.

Henry embarks on wooing Lucy every single morning in a taped video he makes her to remind her of who he is and what they are to each other.

Jason Momoa, Drew pitch '50 First Dates' sequel where she 'meets a Hawaiian man'



REBEL WILSON HITS BEACH IN NEON ORANGE SWIMSUIT DURING VACATION

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Rebel Wilson shared a new Instagram post from her vacation showing off her electric swimsuit as she soaked up the Fiji sun.

Wilson posed in a neon, orange long-sleeve swimsuit with a plunging deep v-neckline, reports 'She paired the bright look with a pair of gold reflective aviator sunglasses. The 'Senior Year' star wrapped a sand-coloured towel around her waist and rocked a wet hairdo. "Find me in Fiji," she simply captioned the vacation photo.

Wilson's stylist, Elizabeth Stewart, commented on the actress' sunny selfie as she wrote, "Best trip ever". The 'Isn't it Romantic' actress previously shared two photos from the vacation on Instagram Saturday. She shared shots of herself riding a jet ski in the crystal clear island waters. "I love coming to Fiji so so much!" she wrote.

As per 'People', in the post, she's seen wearing a black swimsuit top and shorts with sunglasses and a pink New York Yankees hat as she posed on the black-and-yellow jet ski.

Wilson and Agruma also brought their 1-year-old daughter, Royce Lillian, along with them for their island getaway.

Agruma shared a sweet photo of the toddler posing in a pink shirt and matching pink sunglasses, which she tagged with the location as Fiji. "Modeling", she captioned the shot of her daughter.





5 NATIONS TOURNAMENT: INDIAN MEN'S HOCKEY BEAT FRANCE 5-4 IN A THRILLER

Valencia | Agencies

The Indian Men's Hockey Team on Wednesday defeated France 5-4 in their fourth and final match of the 5 Nations Tournament. The match that went back and forth throughout its duration saw Jugraj Singh (20', 60') and Harmanpreet Singh (25', 56') scoring a brace each while Vivek Sagar Prasad (16') contributed one goal for India.

The first quarter saw France take the lead by means of a penalty corner conversion from Lucas Montecot (11'). India quickly equalized early in the second quarter after a field goal from Vivek Sagar Prasad (16'). Jugraj Singh (20') then put India in the lead after converting a penalty corner before Captain Harmanpreet Singh (25') doubled the lead through another penalty corner.

France was soon awarded a penalty stroke and Etienne Tynevez (28') scored to make full use of it as the score read 3-2 in favour of India at halftime.

France equalized late in the third quarter with a field goal from



Gaspard Baumgarten (43'). With the score reading 3-3, both the teams tried to break through each other's defence in the final quarter. France stole the lead through

another penalty corner conversion by Etienne Tynevez (53') but their joy was short-lived, as Harmanpreet Singh (56') scored through a penalty corner to bring up his second goal.

Jugraj Singh (60') returned to score his second goal through yet another penalty corner as India went on to win 5-4 and end their tournament on a high.

Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy to be awarded Arjuna Award

Bengaluru | Agencies

The Sports ministry on Wednesday announced the National Sports Awards 2023 as a visually impaired cricketer and captain of Indian Men's Cricket Team Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy has been named for the prestigious Arjuna Award.

Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy (Blind Cricket) is among the 26 sportspersons selected for the Arjuna Awards for outstanding performance in Sports and Games 2023, who will be awarded by the President of India at a specially organized function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on January 9, 2024.

"Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports announced the National Sports Awards 2023 today. The awardees will receive their awards from the President of India at a specially organized function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 09th



January, 2024 (Tuesday) at 1100 hours," the Sports Ministry said in an official statement.

Illuri Ajay Reddy, who is currently working in SBI regional office in Bangalore described it as the "best moment" of his life.

"It is the best moment of my life. Cricket has given me this opportunity and I feel blessed right now. I want to dedicate the Arjuna Award to my parents for their sacrifices, support and to all my fellow teammates, who played under the guidance of the Cricket Association for the Blind in India (CABI). I feel this is the best recognition which will help Cricket

for the Blind to be promoted," Ajay Reddy said in a statement.

The chairman of the Cricket Association for the Blind in India (CABI) Dr Mahantesh G Kivadasannavar said that the recognition will help in the promotion of visually impaired cricket in India.

"This is the best day for Cricket for the Blind in India. After many years, we are being recognised for this award. This award not only recognises Ajay Reddy but also the entire visually impaired community. This will go on a long way to promote cricket for blind across the country and more and more people will get inspired to take up the cricket as the sport," said Mahantesh G Kivadasannavar.

Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy is a B2 category player, who is representing India since 2010.

Man City reach Club World Cup final with 3-0 win over Urawa Reds

Jeddah | Agencies

Manchester City strolled into the final of the FIFA Club World Cup with a 3-0 victory over Japanese side Urawa Red Diamonds here at the King Abdullah Sports City.

In a highly entertaining semifinal on Tuesday night, an own goal from Marius Hoibraten and fine strikes from Mateo Kovacic and Bernardo Silva secured City's safe passage through to the final in our first ever appearance at the tournament.

The victory sets up a global showpiece final against Brazilian side Fluminense on Friday, with City on the brink of creating more history after last season's Treble success and subsequent UEFA Super Cup victory.

Should City win on Friday, they would become the first English team in history to hold the Premier League, FA Cup, UEFA Champions League, Super Cup and the FIFA Club World Cup simultaneously.

Meanwhile, Pep Guardiola can become the first manager to win the Club World Cup four times, and Kovacic can be the first player to



win it with three different clubs, after his successes with Real Madrid and Chelsea.

'Amazing moment', says wife Alyssa Healy about Mitchell Starc going for Rs 24.75 cr in IPL Auction

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Australia Women team captain Alyssa Healy on Wednesday described husband Mitchell Starc's groundbreaking deal in the 2024 Indian Premier League (IPL) Auction as an "incredible moment" and a "fantastic day."

Healy said Starc becoming the most expensive player in the history of the cash-rich league at Rs 24.75 crore was justified due to the hard work he has put in and for giving preference to the country over IPL money.

Starc was picked by Kolkata Knight Riders for a record-breaking bid of Rs 24.75 crore on Tuesday. He broke the record set a few minutes before by his World Cup-winning captain Pat Cummins, who became the first player to breach the Rs 20 crore mark when he was picked by Sunrisers Hyderabad for Rs 20.50 crore.



Healy, who is in India leading the Women's team in a multi-format series against Harmanpreet Kaur's Indian team, faced questions on the

IPL auction in her pre-match press conference ahead of the only Test against India starting at the Wankhede on Thursday.

The 33-year-old Healy, who jokingly said she would not answer any questions related to IPL, described it as "it is as it is".

"All right. We'll get the IPL out of the way, will we? Look, it is what it is. It's an amazing moment for Mitch," said Healy. She said the massive interest that Starc generated was justified because of the hard work he has put in and the sacrifice he has made by missing the IPL for eight years.

"I think it's a great justification for the hard work that he's put in and probably some of the choices that he's made over the last eight years -- to put his country first. So, yeah, a cool day," Healy added.

The Australian women's team captain, who comes from a cricketers family as her uncle Ian Healy played for Australia, said she was not partying during the auction but was rather working in the gym ahead of the series against India.

Ramita makes it two out of two in national rifle/pistol trials



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Asian Games bronze medalist in the event Ramita Jindal, took both the women's 10m air rifle national trials titles, winning trial 2 on Wednesday, day three of the ongoing national rifle/pistol selection trials at the Karni Singh Shooting range.

The Haryana shooter had earlier on Tuesday, won trial 1 as well. She shot 252.0 in the final to finish on top of the eight-finalists field, with Tamil Nadu's R.Narmada Nithin taking second place, 0.9 behind. Ramita's state-mate Nancy, who had taken second place in trial 1, settled for third place on the day.

Maharashtra's Sonam Uttam Maskar, has earlier set the lanes

ablaze with a table-topping 634.5 in qualification. Nancy was 0.5 behind in second while Ramita was third with 631.8.

Paris quota winner Akhil Sheoran won the men's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) trial 2 with a finals score of 465.2. Trial 1 winner Swapnil Kusale of the Railways, also a Paris quota winner, was second while the seasoned Chain Singh of the Army was third. Akhil also topped qualifications with a score of 592.

In the women's 25m pistol trial 1, Rhythm Sangwan made it a second consecutive day of two titles of Haryana, defeating Olympian Manu Bhaker by a narrow 38-37 in the final. Manu was a class apart in qualifications, posting 589 to top the field. Rhythm shot 580 to qualify in third place.

2023 National Billiards & Snooker: Double for Natasha; Shruthi win Junior girls' crown

Chennai | Agencies

Karnataka's Natasha Chethan bagged the Sub-junior girls' snooker title on Wednesday to record a double in the ongoing 90th National Billiards & Snooker Championships at the Nehru Indoor Stadium here.

The Bengaluru teenager rallied to beat Gujarat's Aanya Patel 3-1 (35-57, 57-43, 55-42, 41-29) in the snooker final after defeating her for the Sub-junior girls' billiards crown last week.

"It feels amazing to win against a skilled opponent. It's my first twin title, looking forward to a few more," said Natasha, who was a semifinalist at the IBSF women's under-21 world snooker championships in Riyadh in July.



It was the day's second defeat in the final for Aanya, who lost to Tamil Nadu's L Shruthi in the Junior girls' billiards.

After her 179-93 final victo-

ry, Shruthi said, "It feels special to win at home. I'm grateful for all the support from my parents, coach and the Tamil Nadu billiards & snooker community."

We believe in Shubman Gill, that's why he's made captain, says Ashish Nehra

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Gujarat Titans head coach Ashish Nehra said the franchise believes in the leadership qualities of Shubman Gill, which is why the opener will now be the side's skipper ahead of IPL 2024 season.

Gill was made GT's skipper after Hardik Pandya, who won them IPL 2022, was traded back to Mumbai Indians and is now their captain.

"See, IPL is a fast game and it throws challenges for everyone, including for the ones who are proven captains. We have seen how Shubman Gill has been playing for three-four years and

how he has shaped up. He is 24-25 but he has a good head on his shoulders. We are there to support him."

"We believe in him, there's no doubt about it and that's why we have made him the captain. I am not someone who will always go by results. There are so many other things too. Yes, everyone strives and looks for results. But when it comes to captaincy, you must see different things. We are very confident that Shubman Gill is the right guy (to captain Gujarat)," said Nehra in a virtual press conference after the players auction in Dubai.

GT were also in the battle with Kolkata Knight Riders to acquire

the services of Australia left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc. But KKR won the bid for Starc at a whopping INR 24.75 crore, while Gujarat later on got his country-mate and fellow left-arm pacer Spencer Johnson.

"There is nothing like being over priced in the IPL. Everybody knows what Starc can do. He is a proven player. We needed a fast bowler and when you have funds, every team will have different strategies. But good luck to KKR and we were satisfied with other bowler. We have to be satisfied with what we have, which is also the same for the other nine teams. For a bowler like Starc, I don't think that is a surprise."

"Spencer Johnson went for INR 10 crore and it's not something which hasn't previously happened in the IPL. Every team has an option of 'if not this, then that', and it goes on. At times, you may have five options, but even that you won't get between the ten teams. I think we have covered all bases and are pretty much very happy," added Nehra.

One of GT's big buys was Tamil Nadu's big-hitting all-rounder Shahruxh Khan for INR 7.4 crore. Nehra refuted the claims that he was being seen as a replacement for Pandya in the side.

"I don't think so you can find a replacement for someone like

Hardik Pandya that easily. Here, you are talking about all-rounder and Shahruxh Khan is a pure batsman. We needed one more batsman for backup. One thing which shouldn't be forgotten is - this is a squad of 25, not of 15 or 18, which is also different. When you are making a squad of 25, then you have the options." "You have the luxury to look for backups and IPL is also far away, like who and when will play. Again, we bought Shahruxh Khan because we trusted him, we believed in him and we have seen what he could do. There are 10 teams and you can't get what you exactly want or what is your first choice."





Rohit Shetty says actors today are insecure, need social media validation

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Filmmaker Rohit Shetty has spoken about how the new generation of actors need social media validation. In the upcoming episode of 'Koffee with Karan', powerhouse duo, Ajay Devgn and Rohit will be seen getting candid on the couch.

Talking about why young actors take so much time to accept a role, Rohit and Ajay remember their times when the leading stars would work on their instincts and didn't rely on social media for validation.

Talking about the same, Karan Johar asked: "What do you think about the newer generation of actors? Do you think they have that fighting spirit?"

Rohit replied: "I think too much insecurity or too much validation they need from social media, from people they don't know. I think they are very insecure, I mean I don't know why, but maybe they have their own thing because they are born in this generation."

Karan added: "I love that when you go to Ajay or Shah Rukh, Salman and Akshay, after a point, I mean I am not saying that this is sacrosanct, I think they go on their instinct, they will say mujhe 20 minutes mein kahaani bata do and after 20 minutes they understand the world of the film because they have an understanding, today you go to these younger actors.

"I am not saying they are wrong, but they want to ghuso into every scene, dialogue, they want a detailed narration and then they take too long to get back to you and you are waiting. With the older generation of actors you get that response immediately."



Pankaj Tripathi: I can write a book on Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Pankaj Tripathi, who's all set to be seen playing the role of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the biopic 'Main Atal Hoon', says that he has read so much about the former prime minister that he can now write a book on him.

He was speaking to the media in Mumbai at the trailer launch of the film, which is scheduled for release on January 19, 2024.

Talking about his role, Tripathi said, "We have tried to showcase those moments of his life in the film which are not known to the public and which are not available on any public platform. I have read so much about him that I can write a book on him and it will be bigger than this film. I have seen all his interviews, read so much about him that I have understood his persona."

On the use of prosthetics to get his look right, Tripathi said, "It used to take two hours daily. We shot this film in May and June when it was scorching hot. And it was really difficult to shoot after donning that look. I have literally shed my blood and sweat for this film."

Directed by Ravi Jadhav, 'Main Atal Hoon' captures the multifaceted personality of the country's 10th prime minister, who was widely hailed as a poet, a gentleman and a statesman.

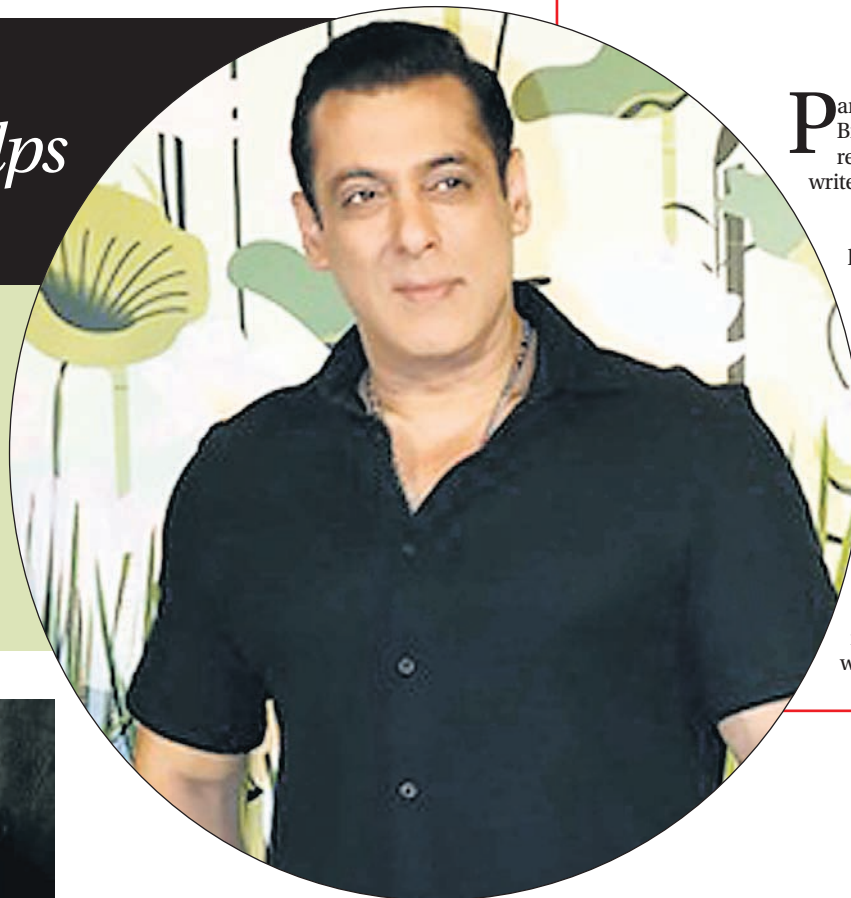
Salman requests paps to maintain distance as he helps mother get down stairs

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan was seen helping his mother Salma Khan getting down the stairs after attending his brother Sohail Khan's birthday party. In a clip shared by celebrity paparazzi Viral Bhayani, Salman, who was dressed in a plain black T-shirt and pants, was also seen requesting the cameramen to move away from her car and looked visibly upset.

In the video, Salman was seen holding his mother's hand as they both got down the stairs. The actor then made his mother comfortably sit in the car and then he took his seat. After sitting in the car, he was seen waving to the shutterbugs.

Apart from Salman and Salma, the star's father Salim Khan, his second wife Helen, brother Arbaaz Khan and sister Arpita Khan with husband Ayush Sharma were also seen reaching the venue.



KAILASH KHER'S 'BHARAT KA AMRIT KALASH' BRING INDIA'S FOLK HERITAGE TO THE AUDIENCE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer Kailash Kher is set to bring the music reality show 'Bharat Ka Amrit Kalash' which gives a platform to the rich folk heritage of India. The show promises to be a journey through the distinct musical tapestries of the 28 states and eight union territories, showcasing the unparalleled depth and diversity of the country's cultural heritage. The panel of judges includes Sneha Khanwalkar, Debojit Saha, and Gayatri Asokan. Kailash Kher will be the Mahaguru of the show, and will guide and mentor the contestants. "As we embark on this musical odyssey with 'Bharat Ka Amrit Kalash', I am honoured to be a part of a pioneering initiative that transcends the boundaries of conventional music reality shows. This collaboration with Doodarshan is not just a venture; it is a heartfelt commitment to revive the forgotten melodies embedded in the tapestry of our diverse heritage," Kailash Kher said. Kailash Kher also announced the song 'O Dil Jaani' which is a blend of the singer's distinctive vocals and the soulful compositions.

Kailash Kher said, "O Dil Jaani" is a heartfelt journey back to the essence of love. After a long time, the Kailasa Band and I are returning to the musical embrace of our fans, and this time, it's about rediscovering the profound glory of love."



Sudhaa Chandran shares her love for six yards of Banarasi silk

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On the occasion of World Saree Day on Thursday, actress Sudhaa Chandran has talked about her love for Banarasi silk and shared that what she truly loves about sarees is their universal appeal, embracing women of all sizes. Sudhaa said: "Firstly I would like to thank our audience for the love and support they are giving to Doree, it means a lot to me. Secondly, as Kailashi Devi says and the tagline of the show goes 'Aadmi ki pehchaan uski gaadi se hoti hai aur ek aurat ki pehchaan uski saree se' and 'Saree sirf ek pehnaava nahi meri pehchaan bhi hai.'" The actress

completely agrees with this and is glad that through her show 'Doree' her tryst with sarees continues.

"What I truly love about sarees is their universal appeal, embracing women of all sizes. It's a wonderful part of our culture, that has made India proud in the world of fashion. It makes me very happy to see women owning this timeless garment." On the occasion of World Saree Day, Sudhaa got herself a specially woven saree with intricate details.

The actress added: "The moment I saw it, I couldn't resist buying it. I'm waiting to wear it for a special occasion. I hope we continue to cherish the significance of the six-yard saree."



RAM CHARAN VISITS MAHALAXMI TEMPLE IN MUMBAI WITH WIFE & DAUGHTER

Mumbai: 'RRR' star Ram Charan, who will be soon seen in the upcoming film 'Game Changer' visited the Mahalaxmi temple in Mumbai along with his wife Upasana and their daughter Klin Kaara on Wednesday.

The actor sported a crisp white shirt and grey pants, and looked dapper.

Upasana, who was dressed in a floral outfit, was seen carrying Klin Kaara in her arms as they arrived at the temple.

This significant visit was to celebrate Klin Kaara's six-month birthday, a milestone cherished by the entire family. They visited the Mahalaxmi temple for their first family outing in Mumbai, as they seek blessings for the little Laxmi of their house, Klin Kaara.

The actor greeted people on his way back from the temple and requested the paparazzi stationed at the venue to allow them some space.

The actor sat in his car along with his wife and daughter and drove away.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Noorin Shereef