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LS EXPELS MAHUA FOR 'UNETHICAL CONDUCT' IN CASH FOR PARL QUERY CHARGE

UNETHICAL ETHICS

Initiating the discussion on the Ethics Committee report against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday said that the Indian parliamentary democracy has set high standards in the last 75 years but if some strict decisions have to be taken, they have to be taken to uphold the dignity of House. While, Mahua was not permitted to speak in the house.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Lok Sabha on Friday expelled Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra as Member of Parliament for 'unethical conduct' in 'cash for Parliament Questions'.

Meanwhile, before announcing the expulsion of Moitra, the Speaker requested every member that they need to prepare the question themselves.

"No one can put the question on behalf of the MP, I am speaking on



Mahua's expulsion proves BJP's political bankruptcy: Mamata Banerjee

Kolkata: "I am shocked hearing what happened at the Lok Sabha today. Mahua was not even given a chance to place her point of argument. The Lok Sabha members from the I.N.D.I.A. bloc sought some time to go through the 495-page report of the Ethics Committee of the Parliament. The discussion was completed within just half an hour," the chief minister said while speaking to the media persons at Kurseong in north Bengal on Friday afternoon. The chief minister claimed that the development proves the political bankruptcy of BJP.

record. I am the Speaker and it is my responsibility to maintain the dignity of the House," he said.

Soon after the House assembled at 2 p.m. Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi moved the motion in Lok Sabha for discussion on panel report seeking expulsion of Trinamool Congress member Moitra. Initiating the discussion on the

ETHICS COMMITTEE HAS NO POWER TO EXPEL, THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF BJP'S END: MOITRA

New Delhi: After her expulsion as Member of Parliament for "unethical conduct", Trinamool Congress' Mahua Moitra on Friday lashed out at the government, saying that the Ethics Committee has no power to expel and this is the beginning of the BJP's end.

Addressing the media, Moitra said: "There is no evidence or any cash, any gifts anywhere. Expulsion is based on the ground that I have shared my Lok Sabha portal login. There are no rules to govern the share of the login. As the hearing of the Ethics Committee demonstrates, all of us MPs are conveyor belts to get questions from the public, from citizens to voice that in Parliament. I am 49 years old and I will fight you for next 30 years inside and outside Parliament. The Ethics Committee has no power to expel. If the Modi government hopes that by shutting me up it can forget the Adani issue, then it is mistaken. This is the beginning of your (BJP) end. We are going to come back and we are going to see the end of yours (BJP)," Moitra said.

Ethics Committee report against Moitra over the alleged charges of 'cash for Parliament queries', the Lok Sabha Speaker said that the subject on which discussion will be held today was "painful" for all of us.

Birla asserted that the people, who elected us, look up to us that we will work for them, their development and progress, and discuss their issues in

the House. He also said that the parliamentary democracy of India has an identity in the world.

Moitra was expelled following the Ethics Committee report recommendations accepted on voice vote.

However, Opposition members walk out of Lok Sabha as House votes to expel TMC MP Mahua Moitra for 'unethical conduct'.

SPEAKER BIRLA, CONGRESS'S MANISH TEWARI SPAR IN LS

New Delhi: A war of words erupted in Lok Sabha on Friday between Speaker Om Birla and Congress member Manish Tewari after the latter said that all the members are sitting as a judge and a jury to decide the fate of a colleague. Speaking in favour of Moitra, Tewari said: "It's been 31 years since the time I started practicing law. But for the first time, I am standing to debate without going through the documents. It is shocking that at 12 noon we got the report and then we start discussing the same at 2 p.m."

Tewari also said that he studied the rule 316 (D) and it says that the recommendations of the committee shall be presented in the form of a report.

"I want to ask a fundamental question, there is a difference in conviction and sentencing. The committee can recommend if one is guilty or innocent, but it cannot recommend that what punishment should be given. That power lies with the House," he noted.

"Today this house is sitting as a judge and a jury. In an impeachment proceedings, or when you are considering the report of the Privileges Committee or Ethics Committee, can a party direct to vote in a particular way, can a whip be issued. This is like directing a judge to decide a matter in particular manner," he pointed out. Birla said that there is a difference between the House and judiciary. "Here I am not taking the decision as the decision is being taken by the members of the House. Don't give the wrong impression. I am Speaker not a judge; these things go in the report," he remarked. He also said that here the house is deciding and not him.

WHY DIDN'T SHIVRAJ GO TO DELHI?

Shivraj Singh Chouhan has not yet gone to Delhi and what message he wants to give through this, he wants to stay here and do this work through diplomacy. He knows that there is no point in making a claim in BJP. What is to happen is what Prime Minister Narendra Modi has in mind. At present it seems to be the same but they cannot speak openly. He knows that after this massive victory, the party will not want to take the risk of marginalizing Shivraj. But, He is not openly challenging the high command. He know that if they step back at this time, they will be marginalized. Therefore, to express his views, Shivraj is doing his own style of politics. It remains to be seen what effect this politics has?

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After the election results, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is instead of going to Delhi and focusing on the seats lost in the assembly elections. By organizing the Ladi Brahmin Conference here, the sisters are being given credit for the victory. In Sheopur, he also tried to confuse the central leadership by reciting Atal ji's poem 'Haar Nahi Manunga, Rar Nai Thanunga...' among the workers.

The question is that why did Shivraj not go to Delhi? Are you not challenging the high command from here? It is natural to raise the question whether Shivraj is making any deep moves on the political chessboard?

Actually, Shivraj is positioning himself by touring the lost seats. They are also expressing that their plans have played an important role in this victory. Atal ji had said that I will not accept defeat, I will not give up... I write on the skull of death, I erase it... I sing a new song, I sing a new song... Now the new song is - We may not win in the assembly from Sheopur district, but we will make the party win in the Lok Sabha with a huge majority from both the assembly constituencies. (Shivraj had said this in the context of the lost seats of Sheopur.)

Every resolution of BJP will be fulfilled - first Rs 1000, then Rs 1250 will be credited to the accounts of the dear sisters and now this

amount will be increased to Rs 3000 in a phased manner. Now there is a resolve to make sisters millionaires. Every resolution of BJP will be fulfilled. BJP will fulfill all its guarantees.

Shivraj made it clear that he has started preparing for the Lok Sabha. They know that the central leadership has only Lok Sabha elections in mind. Political experts say that Shivraj does not want to reach Delhi and stake his claim for the post of CM. They know that the central leadership's biggest focus is on winning the Lok Sabha elections. In such a situation, they have started the next mission. With this they want to show Delhi that I have started working on your agenda.

Govt bans onion exports to keep prices in check

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government has banned exports of onion till March next year in order to increase domestic availability so that prices do not spin out of control.

"The export policy for onions is amended from free to prohibited till March 31, 2024," the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said in a notification.

The DGFT, however, said that the exports of onion will be allowed on the basis of permission granted by the government to other countries based on their request.

It added that shipments of onion, whose loading had commenced before this notification, are allowed to be exported.

Further, in cases where shipping bill is filed and vessels have already berthed and anchored in Indian ports for loading of onion and their rotation number has been allocated before this notification, that shipment is also allowed for exports.

The government had earlier imposed a minimum export price of \$800 per metric tonne, until December 31, 2023, to discourage exports, in an effort to curb spiraling prices.

KCR undergoes hip replacement surgery

Hyderabad | Agencies



BSR supreme and former Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Naidu on Friday successfully underwent hip replacement surgery after suffering a fracture due to a fall at his farmhouse at Erravalli late on Thursday night.

The surgery was done at the Yashoda Hospital at Somajiguda in Hyderabad.

According to a health bulletin on Friday night, KCR had undergone the operation of left total hip replacement.

"The surgery was performed by our team of senior orthopaedic surgeons, anaesthesiologists, and nurses. He has tolerated the surgery

well and was stable hemodynamically throughout the procedure," it said.

After successfully completing the surgery, KCR was shifted to the room, where he is recuperating. He is receiving routine post-operative care including IV fluids, prophylactic antibiotics and pain medication.

"Plan for ambulation, physiotherapy and nutrition will be designed based on assessment tomorrow," the doctors said.

KCR had a slip and fall in his bathroom at his residence and was brought to Yashoda Hospital.

Earlier, on the direction of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, the Secretary, Health, Medical, and Family Welfare had visited the hospital to enquire about KCR's health.

Muslim woman marries Bajrang Dal activist in K'taka



Dakshina Kannada | Agencies

Hindutva activists in Karnataka's Dakshina Kannada district on Friday celebrated the marriage of a Muslim woman to a Bajrang Dal activist.

The Hindutva activists from Surathkal town in Dakshina Kannada posted messages on social media claiming that "Ayesha has become Akshatha".

They also shared a photograph of the couple on social media, in which they could be seen dressed in traditional Hindu attire.

This incident is likely to stir a controversy in the communal-sensitive region. The couple is expected to appear before the Surathkal police station on Friday evening.

As per reports, Prashanth Bhandari, a Bajrang Dal activist, has married Ayesha, a local girl. Both live in the same locality and were in a relationship for the past three years.

On November 30, Prashanth had sought permission from Ayesha's mother to marry her daughter, to which she had insisted that she would take a decision after consulting her family members. The same evening, the couple had disappeared following which Ayesha's parents had filed a police complaint. Prashanth is reportedly a history-sheeter who had earlier been booked at the Surathkal police station.

Mumbai 'Peace Meeting' flays Israel for 'bombardment and massacre' in Gaza Strip

Team Absolute | Mumbai

'Peace Meeting' flays Israel for 'bombardment and massacre' in Gaza Strip (Anchor)

Mumbai: Thousands of people converged at the Azad Maidan to flay Israel and express support to Palestine as the war rages in the Gaza strip with huge atrocities on the Palestinians trapped there, here on Friday.

The gathering, 'Shanti Sabha' (Peace Meeting) was organised by the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi in which representatives of different religions joined and declared solidarity with the Palestinians while slamming Israel for the continued attacks in Gaza Strip.

Speakers at the Peace Meeting, including VBA President Prakash Ambedkar, adopted a resolution, signed by various religious delegates expressing deep concerns and alarm over the



ongoing genocide in Gaza Strip. It gave a call to the Central government to

immediately condemn the attacks by Israel, show unconditional solidarity with Palestinians,

a stop to the collective punishment on the civilians, and a permanent ceasefire there.

The meeting noted that the bombardment by Israel on Gaza Strip for the past 50 days has killed more than 15,000 people including 10,000 women and children, making the ongoing 'massacre the deadliest phase endured by the people of Palestine living in Gaza Strip'.

"Thousands have been displaced by the indiscriminate bombardment, water, food, medicine, fuel and electricity supplies have been restricted. There can be no justification for this massacre, which is a collective punishment," said the resolution.

The Peace Meeting also frowned at India's decision to abstain from the October 26 United Nations General Assembly resolution - calling for truce in Gaza - as 'unprincipled' especially since this country has a long tradition of supporting the Palestinian cause.





SC questions CBI over Chanda Kochhar's interim bail continuing for 11 months

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday raised eyebrows over continuation of interim bail for 11 months granted to former ICICI Bank CEO and MD Chanda Kochhar in the alleged Videocon loan fraud case.

At the outset, an adjournment request was made on Kochhar's behalf before a bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and SC Sharma.

"Is interim bail still continuing? Why are you not objecting?" Justice Trivedi asked Additional Solicitor General (ASG) SV Raju, who appeared on behalf of central investigative agency.

At this, ASG Raju said that the CBI has been objecting and will file an application before Bombay High Court for vacating the interim order.

He added that the basis of grant of interim bail given by the High Court is itself erroneous and therefore, being challenged by CBI before the apex court.



Giving a last opportunity, the apex court said that it will take up the matter for hearing on December 11.

In a special leave petition before the apex court, the CBI has challenged the Bombay HC decision directing release of Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar from judicial custody on the ground that

the arrest made was not in accordance with the law.

Pertinently, the High Court order of January 9, granting interim bail for two weeks only, is still continuing.

Chanda Kochhar and her family is alleged to have received kickbacks over her tenure in lieu of loans provided to the Videocon group.

DELHI CABINET REJIG: ATISHI GETS LAW AND JUSTICE, GEHLOT GIVEN WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

New Delhi: Delhi Minister Atishi has been given the additional charge of the Law Department while Minister Kailash Gehlot has been allocated the Women and Child Development Department in addition to the portfolios they are presently holding.

In a gazette notification, the Delhi government said: "In exercise of powers conferred under Rule 3 of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Allocation of Business) Rules 1993, the Lieutenant Governor, in consultation with the Chief Minister, is pleased to allocate portfolio of Women and Child Development to Kailash Gehlot, Minister, in addition to the portfolios he is presently holding and the portfolio of Law, Justice, and Legislative Affairs is allocated to Atishi Marlena, Minister, in addition to the portfolios she is presently holding."

Following this, Atishi now has 14 portfolios, including the Law and Justice, which is highest among Kejriwal government ministers. Earlier in October, she was given the charge of Water Department.

CJI Chandrachud confers Jamnalal Bajaj Awards on 3 eminent Indians, 1 Bangladeshi

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud conferred the prestigious 45th Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation Awards-2023 on four eminent personalities for excellence in different fields, here on Friday.

The recipients were Dr Regi George and Dr Lalitha Regi, Trustees of Tribal Health Initiative, Tamil Nadu, for constructive work; Dr Ramalakshmi Datta, Joint Director of Vivekananda Institute of Biotechnology, West Bengal, for application of science and technology for rural development; and Sudha Varghese, Secretary, Nari Gunjan, Bihar, for development and welfare of women and children.

Raha Naba Kumar, Director & CEO of Gandhi Ashram Trust, Bangladesh, was honoured with the International Award for Promoting Gandhian Values Outside India.

Each awardee were given a cash prize of Rs 20 lakh - doubled



from the earlier Rs 10 lakh as a tribute to the birth centennial of Ramkrishna Bajaj, the founder of JBF - a citation and a trophy.

Present on the occasion were JBF Chairman and industrialist Shekhar Bajaj, Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi, R.A. Mashelkar and other dignitaries.

Jamnalal Bajaj (1889-1942), also known as the 'Merchant Prince', was a renowned industrialist of the pre-Independence era, a freedom fighter and philan-

thropist who was adopted by Mahatma Gandhi as his fifth son. Later Bajaj was the 'alter-ego' of Gandhiji during the Gandhian Constructive Movement.

Subsequently, Jamnalal Bajaj's second son, Ramkrishna Bajaj (1923-1994), also embraced Gandhian philosophy and dedicated his life in the service of the nation in many different ways. He set up the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation in the memory of his father.

Thieves set ATM on fire after robbing Rs 20 lakh from it in Gurugram

Team Absolute | Gurugram

Two unidentified thieves cut open a bank ATM in Gurugram's Kherki Daula area, stole Rs 20 lakh from it, and then set a fire on Friday morning, police said.

Police said the thieves set the ATM on fire allegedly to remove any forensic evidence.

As per the CCTV footage, two men came in a car to the ATM at around 5.45 am and opened the ATM with a gas cutter. After dismantling it and stealing the cash, the thieves set the machine on fire.

The two miscreants then kept the cash in the car's boot and fled towards Delhi.

The bank officials told the police that at the time of the



theft, the machine had approx Rs 20 lakh in it and the thieves stole all of it. Gurugram police spokesman Subhash Boken said: "Police are yet to find any clue. No accused persons have been identified."

A case was registered against unidentified thieves under Sections 380 (theft in

dwelling house etc), 457 (lurking house-trespass or house-breaking by night to commit an offence punishable with imprisonment) and 436 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house etc) of the Indian Penal Code at Kherki Daula police station, police said.

'Will take our own call if...': Ex-K'taka unit JD-S chief on differences with Deve Gowda over alliance with BJP

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

Former Karnataka unit Janata Dal-Secular (JD-S) chief C.M. Ibrahim has said that if JD-S national president and ex-Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda does not lend an ear to the issues raised by him over the alliance with the BJP, he and his supporters would take their own call.

Speaking to reporters, Ibrahim said that he would embark on a statewide tour on December 11.

"There are ample opportunities to grow as a third force in the state. I will reiterate to former PM Deve Gowda that if he does not listen to us, we will decide. I also felt sad about the statement by former CM H.D.



Kumaraswamy in this regard. Kumaraswamy should first take care of his health. Deve Gowda is also under stress. He

did not decide to ally with the BJP on his own. "All legislators of JD-S have won under secular ideologies.

Five JD-S MLAs are in touch with us. This development should affect the health of Deve Gowda or Kumaraswamy. In this backdrop, I am trying to subtly convey the message to them," Ibrahim said.

Commenting on his expulsion from the party, Ibrahim said that "Deve Gowda and Kumaraswamy did not have the people behind them".

"I was the state unit chief for three years. A meeting has been called on December 9. I will make 12 MLAs of JD-S sit and speak to them in January... you will all see the support we go on to gamer," he stated.

Responding to reports of a Muslim cleric allegedly having links with the terror group

Islamic State, Ibrahim said that the cleric against whom such allegations have been made is a Sufi saint.

"BJP legislator Basanagouda Patil Yatnal's family visits the dargah. Just for votes, a controversy is being created. Mr. Yatnal, focus on the problems of people, education, and health. You do your job, and we will carry out ours," he said.

The JD-S has 19 MLAs in the 224-member Karnataka Assembly.

Former PM Deve Gowda has said that everything has been finalised regarding the alliance with BJP.

He said that his son H.D. Kumaraswamy would hold final talks with top BJP leaders soon.

BJP MLA wanted to target PM Modi by linking Moulvi to terror elements: Karnataka CM

Belagavi | Agencies

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has accused BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal of attempting to target Prime Minister Narendra Modi through his allegations against Muslim seer Syed Tanveer Hashmi, popularly known as Tanveer Peera, claiming connections with terrorism. Taking to social media on Friday, CM Siddaramaiah said that despite MLA Yatnal making allegations against him by releasing photos with Moulvi Tanveer Hashmi, the real target appears to be PM Modi, and it is slowly coming to light.

"The photos released in the media clearly convey the relationship of BJP leaders, including PM Modi, with Moulvi Hashmi. Is it possible to believe that MLA Yatnal, who is a neighbour of Moulvi Hashmi and closely connected to him, did not know about it," CM Siddaramaiah taunted.

"MLA Yatnal is seething with anger after losing the posts of State President and Leader of the Opposition (LOP) in BJP. To take revenge for this on PM Modi and Union Home Minister Amit



Shah, he made allegations against me and Moulvi Hashmi," CM Siddaramaiah claimed.

"MLA Yatnal was sure that after raking up the issue and making allegations against me, the relationship of Moulvi with PM Modi would also come out in public. He created a drama by making

allegations against me, but his real intention was to insult the PM and BJP leadership," he stated.

"I have had a friendly relationship with Moulvi Hashmi in public. Hashmi has also challenged a probe through the central government. Now, PM Modi is compelled to answer allegations

against him. PM Modi should immediately order a probe if Hashmi has terror connections and also clarify his relationship with Moulvi Hashmi," CM Siddaramaiah stated.

"If not for this action, at least initiate action against MLA Yatnal for false allegations," he demanded.

"MLA Yatnal is repeatedly making such allegations. He made a series of serious allegations against former CM B.S. Yediyurappa and his sons. Yatnal stated that one has to make a payment of Rs 2,000 crore for the high command to become Chief Minister. What force is behind MLA Yatnal, making him speak against the high command?" CM Siddaramaiah questioned.

"Which of the 'Ji's' blessings are protecting him from punishment should also come out. As per media reports, MLA Yatnal has business connections with Moulvi Tanveer Hashmi's family. The central government should probe why he was silent all these years and what are the reasons behind such allegations," he explained. CM Siddaramaiah also shared photos of PM Modi attending a conference in which Moulvi Hashmi participated.

Akbaruddin Owaisi appointed protem Speaker of Telangana Assembly

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Friday appointed All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin (AIMIM) MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi as protem Speaker of newly-elected Assembly.

He will be sworn in as the protem Speaker on Saturday morning at Raj Bhavan before the beginning of the Assembly session at 11 a.m. and will administer oath to the newly-elected MLAs. According to a notification issued by the Governor, Owaisi will perform the duties of the Speaker till a Speaker is elected under Article 178 of the Constitution.

Being the senior most member of the Assembly, the AIMIM legislator has been appointed as the protem Speaker.

In the just-concluded Assembly elections, Akbaruddin Owaisi was elected from Chandrayangutta constituency in Hyderabad for a sixth consecutive term. This is the second time that a MLA of AIMIM has been appointed as Protem Speaker after Mumtaz Ahmed Khan in 2018.

Meanwhile, BJP MLA T. Raja Singh said that he will never take oath before Owaisi. He said like in 2018, he would not take oath on the first day and would wait for appointment of a full-time Speaker. Raja Singh also claimed that no BJP MLA will take oath before Owaisi.



He alleged that by appointing Owaisi as the protem Speaker, the Congress government was following into the footsteps of BRS to appease minorities. The BJP has eight members in the 119-member Assembly.

The Congress wrested power from the BRS in the November 30 elections, bagging 64 seats. It has already announced that Gaddam Prasad Kumar will be the Speaker.

A Dalit leader, Kumar was elected from Vikarabad (SC) seat.

Scores attend funeral of J&K Police inspector killed in terror attack



Team Absolute | Srinagar

Scores of mourners on Friday attended the funeral of the J&K Police inspector who succumbed to injuries on Thursday, over a month after he was attacked by the terrorists. Scores of people from different walks of life joined the funeral procession of inspector, Masroor Ahmad Wani, who succumbed to injuries in AIIMS Delhi on Thursday. The body of the deceased police officer was flown home on Friday after which a wreath laying ceremony was held at the district

police lines in Srinagar. Senior police officers and family members of the martyred police officer attended the wreath laying ceremony. Later the body was taken to his home in Narwari area of Srinagar city where he was buried. Wani was attacked by terrorists in Eidgah area of Srinagar on October 29 when he was playing cricket with the local boys. He battled for life in the Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) in Srinagar from where he was flown to AIIMS Delhi on December 6 where he succumbed to the injuries on Thursday.

RBI hikes limits for UPI payments & e-mandates, to set up cloud facility, FinTech repository

Team Absolute | Chennai

Enhancing the payment limits for Unified Payments Interface (UPI), electronic mandates, setting up of cloud facilities, the financial sector and fintech repository were some of the major announcements made by the Reserve Bank of India Governor, Shaktikanta Das on Friday.

Das announced these measures on Friday after declaring the Monetary Policy Committee's decision to retain the repo rate at 6.5 per cent and predicting the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate at 7 per cent and inflation rate at 5.4 per cent for FY24.

"To encourage the use of UPI for medical and educational services, it is proposed to enhance the limit for payments to hospitals and educational institutions from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh per transaction. Separate instructions will be issued shortly," he said.

According to Das, the UPI is



becoming popular and the transaction limit was set at Rs 1 lakh barring categories like Capital Markets (AMC, Broking, Mutual Funds and others), Collections (Credit card pay-

ments, Loan repayments, EMI), Insurance and others where the transaction limit was set as Rs 2 lakh. In December 2021, the transaction limit for UPI payments for Retail

Direct Scheme and for IPO subscriptions was increased to Rs 5 lakh.

As regards the electronic mandates, Das also said the RBI has decided to exempt the additional factor of authentication (AFA) for transactions up to Rs 1 lakh for the following categories, viz., subscription to mutual funds, payment of insurance premium and payments of credit card bills.

The other existing requirements such as pre- and post-transaction notifications, opt-out facility for users, etc., shall continue to apply to these transactions.

The RBI Governor said the number of electronic mandates registered currently stands at 8.5 crore, processing nearly Rs 2,800 crore of transactions per month.

In order to ensure the security, integrity and privacy of financial sector data, the RBI has decided to set up a cloud facility for the sector and will be operated by Indian Financial Technology & Allied Services (IFTAS) a wholly-owned subsidiary of RBI.

"Eventually, the cloud facility will be transferred to a separate entity owned by the financial sector participants. This cloud facility is intended to be rolled out in a calibrated fashion in the medium term," Das said. He said banks and financial entities are maintaining an ever-increasing volume of data utilising various public and private cloud facilities.

Similarly, for better understanding of the developments in the FinTech ecosystem with an objective to appropriately support the sector, Das said it is proposed to set-up a Repository for capturing essential information about FinTechs, encompassing their activities, products, technology stack, financial information and others.

FinTechs would be encouraged to provide relevant information voluntarily to the Repository which will aid in designing appropriate policy approaches. The Repository will be operationalised by the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub in April 2024 or earlier.



Maha govt to take up ban on sugarcane juice for ethanol with Centre: Ajit Pawar

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday assured the agitated Opposition in the Maharashtra Assembly that the government has taken up the Centre's ban on the use of sugarcane juice for manufacturing Ethanol.

"I had a discussion with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and tried speaking to Union Minister for Trade and Commerce, Piyush Goyal but could not speak to him," said Pawar.

Responding to the members' concern in the Assembly, Pawar informed the House that the issue was discussed with Union Minister for Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari who had invited him for further discussion.

Pawar said those manufacturing Ethanol in Maharashtra will be in trouble as on five per cent seed capital they have raised institutional loan to the tune of 95 per cent and will face consequences



if ban is not revoked

In a later development, the entire Opposition staged a walkout in the Maharashtra Assembly over the denial of a full fledged discussion on the reservation policy, compensation to farmers over losses to oranges, cotton and other crops due to untimely rain in the state. Leader of Opposition, Vijay Wadettiwar, group leader Nana Patole, (both Congress), Jayant Patil (NCP) and others insisted that the House should take up discussion immediately while Speaker Rahul Narvekar said he will allow it later in the day or Saturday, which irked them and led to walkout. Patole said the government was not serious on the important issue affecting a large number of farmers, cotton and orange growers. Sunil Prabha (Shiv Sena-UBT) and Varsha Gaikwad (Congress) were heard shouting anti-government slogans on the stairs of Vidhan Bhawan along with others.

After political fracas, Ajit Pawar's NCP 'disowns' jailed ex-minister Nawab Malik

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Rattled by the political row witnessed a day earlier, the ruling ally Nationalist Congress Party (AP) of Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday virtually 'disowned' its tainted former minister Nawab Malik here.

Malik, who was jailed for 18 months, and released on a medical bail, reached Nagpur to attend the Winter Session of Maharashtra Legislature on Thursday.

He was seen occupying the treasury benches, sparking outrage among the ruling allies Shiv Sena of CM Eknath Shinde and Bharatiya Janata Party's Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis.

An irked Fadnavis Thursday evening shot off a stinker to Ajit Pawar raising strong objections to Malik 'joining' the ruling side, but for the second day Friday, he (Malik) raised eyebrows after he was seen sitting in a back row of the treasury benches.



"MLA Nawab Malik has been our senior colleague for many years... He had nothing to do with the events (NCP split) that took place in the intervening period (when he was in jail). We have not had any political discussions with him," said state NCP (AP) President Sunil Tatkare.

Referring to several of his party leaders meeting and greeting Malik, Tatkare claimed that after he

was granted bail on medical grounds, "we met as old colleagues to enquire about his health", and after he came to the Assembly, it was only natural that he interacts and meets with old acquaintances.

As the issue boiled and continued to embarrass the ruling MahaYuti government, it is learnt that NCP (AP) Working President Praful Patel is likely to meet and discuss it with Fadnavis later in the day.

According to political sources, CM Shinde has taken an equally grim view of Malik throwing his weight behind the Ajit Pawar faction and sitting on a back row of the treasury benches, leading to an uproar from the Opposition Congress-Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP).

Several ruling Shiv Sena and BJP legislators have also expressed concerns on the tainted Malik ostensibly joining the ruling bloc, and are worried over its long-term political repercussions, especially since both Shinde and Fadnavis had both strongly attacked the former minister (Malik) in the past.

Danve fires salvo against Praful Patel for Dawood links, seizure by ED

Team Absolute | Nagpur

The Opposition slammed the Maha-Yuti over Devendra Fadnavis's "letter bomb" in which he and his party tried to keep a distance from the NCP MLA and former Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik, and asked Fadnavis whether they would give the same treatment to Praful Patel, who had an alleged connection with an aide of Dawood Ibrahim.

The leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Legislative Council Ambadas Danve on Friday wrote a letter to Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in this regard and pointed out a meeting of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Praful Patel recently.

In the letter, Danve asked Deputy Chief Minister Fadnavis "what is your position regarding MP Praful Patel, who is accused of financial dealings with Dawood's special emissary."

On Thursday 7, Fadnavis wrote a letter to fellow



Deputy Chief Minister and alliance partner Ajit Pawar expressing his opposition to inducting NCP MLA Nawab Malik in the Mahayuti government. Fadnavis's letter came after Nawab Malik, who is out on bail, attended the Winter Session of the Maharashtra Assembly and met NCP leaders of the Ajit Pawar faction in the cabin of minister Anil Patil.

The letter released by Deputy Chief Minister Fadnavis has created a political furor. To retaliate and take cognizance of this letter, Danve has writ-

ten a letter to Fadnavis saying, "Glad to read your strong sentiments about Assembly Member Nawab Malik. We opposed the appointment of Nawab Malik on the ruling bench of Ajit Pawar due to his links with traitors. This shows how strong you are about morality and nationalism."

However, a photograph of Ajit Pawar group's national leader Praful Patel meeting Home Minister Amit Shah was seen everywhere and Patel welcomed Prime Minister Modi at the Gondia airport.

"This same Patel has relations with Dawood and his henchmen and because of Patel's financial dealings with Dawood's special henchmen, ED has confiscated Patel's property, on Worli Seaface in Mumbai", he pointed out.

"We can understand your strong feelings about Nawab Malik. Do you feel the same about Praful Patel? This needs to be disclosed by us," the letter said and added that he hoped that appropriate action will be taken in this regard.

'Fadnavis did right', says Maha BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Maharashtra Bharatiya Janata Party President Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Friday endorsed Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis' letter raising objections to tainted former Minister Nawab Malik 'joining' the breakaway Nationalist Congress Party (AP) led by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar.

"Fadnavis has acted correctly... He has reflected the sentiments of all the BJP workers and the 14-crore people of the state. We fully support him in this... However, we have nothing personal against Malik," declared Bawankule.

Interacting with the media, the state BJP chief said that considering the serious allegations of 'treason' and charges of shady (mafia) links that Malik is facing, Fadnavis took the appropriate steps in promptly bringing it to the notice of Ajit Pawar.

Responding to a question that despite the BJP



objections, Malik continued to sit on the treasury side on Friday, Bawankule said that he had full faith in the wisdom of Ajit Pawar and expressed hope that he would act in the best interests of the government. Malik, 67, who was jailed for 18 months,

made an entry to the Maharashtra Legislature's Winter Session here on Thursday, interacted with the NCP (AP) leaders and other parties' leaders, and later occupied a back row on the ruling side, sparking a huge political furor. The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi allies Congress-Shiv Sena (UBT)-NCP (SP), the Congress Leader of Opposition (Assembly) Vijay Wadettiwar, Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Leader of Opposition (Council) Ambadas Danve, and others slammed the government leading to heated exchanges in the House and outside. Rattled by the row, Fadnavis hurriedly penned a stinker to Ajit Pawar raising strong objections to Malik's purported 'entry' which could pose ramifications for the ruling MahaYuti regime which was not acceptable. Today, several NCP (AP) legislators like Amol Mitkari, expressed unhappiness at Fadnavis' letter-bomb, which was made public, and said it would have been ideal if he had discussed it personally with Ajit Pawar to sort it out amicably.

Onion farmers block Mumbai-Agra highway, halt auctions amid centre's export ban

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Onion farmers in Maharashtra's Nashik district staged a protest by blocking the Mumbai-Agra Highway and bringing auctions to a standstill in wholesale markets.

The demonstration was held in response to the Centre's announcement of a ban on the export of onions, effective until March 31, 2024, with the objective of bolstering domestic availability and controlling prices.

The disruption extended to onion markets in Lasalgaon, Chandwad, Nandgaon, Dindori, Yeola, Umarane, and other locations in Nashik district, where auctions were halted on Friday.

While auctions were not held at the Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC), they proceeded at the Vinchur and Niphad sub-committees of Lasalgaon APMC.

Approximately 600 vehicles loaded with onions arrived at Vinchur on Friday, with prices ranging from Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,300 per quintal and an average of Rs 2,700 per quintal, according to officials. Concurrently, hundreds of cultivators congregated on the Mumbai-Agra Highway, employing tractors to block the road at three locations for a period.

Rasta rokos, or road-blocks, were also staged at



Jaikheda, Chandwad, Umarane, Nandgaon, and Mungse in Malegaon. The Nashik police intervened, appealing to protestors who subsequently dispersed peacefully without the use of force.

Lasalgaon APMC Chairperson Balasaheb Kshirsagar voiced dissatisfaction with the Centre's decision, asserting that it was not in favor of farmers. He argued that onion prices had not seen a significant rise and had, in fact, decreased over the past five to six days. Kshirsagar emphasized the potential losses to farmers and demanded a rollback of the export ban.

Also read: Notices issued to eight NCP MLCs amidst factional dispute, responses sought on disqualification pleas Presently, onion prices range between Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,200 per quintal, although some are selling at Rs 3,000 per quintal.

Kshirsagar blamed middlemen for the price hikes and suggested a direct government role in onion sales, eliminating intermediaries.

Kiran Darade, a protesting farmer in Yeola, criticized the Union government for imposing the export ban without prior notice or justification. Darade highlighted the losses suffered by farmers due to adverse weather conditions and urged a swift revocation of the ban.

In October, the Centre had initiated the sale of buffer onion stock at a subsidized rate of Rs 25 per kg in retail markets to alleviate consumer burdens.

To further control prices, a minimum export price (MEP) of USD 800 per tonne was imposed on onion exports from October 28 to December 31. Additionally, a 40 per cent export duty on onions was enforced until December 31 as part of broader efforts to stabilize onion prices.

MMRDA starts work on new cable-stayed bridge on Mumbai highway



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) has started work on launching an orthotropic steel deck (OSD) for a cable-stayed bridge on the Western Express Highway as part of the crucial Santacruz-Chembur Link Road (SCLR) extension projects, an official said here on Friday.

The SCLR will give crucial connectivity with the cable-stayed bridge between Vakola Nullah and the Panbaji International School on the WEH through the OSD. The OSD is utilised owing to qualities like low self-weight and enhanced strength compared to concrete or composite girder bridges, thus reducing the size and count of the piers, making it a valuable addition to the innovative cable-stayed bridge. The

OSD employs E-410 Grade Steel which is known for its superior quality, and will be painted with corrosion-resistant paint for improving its resilience and longevity. The entire cable-stayed bridge will include 58 pieces of the OSD and the dimension of each piece is 4 x 10.5 metres to 17.50 metres, and the welding process for these pieces will be done at a workshop in Wada, Thane. To start with, two pieces have been launched and the remaining pieces will conclude the work by February 2024, after which the remaining work like cable-stressing, concrete work, and asphalt work will be taken up. MMRDA Commissioner Sanjay Mukherjee said that the SCLR Phase-I will comprise an intersection above the Vakola Flyover on WEH to facilitate traffic movement between Kalina-Andheri.

The cable-stayed bridge will be 215 m, and width ranges from 10.5 m. to 17.5 m., and the weight of the deck would be around 1,780 tonnes, standing 9 m above the Vakola Flyover and 22 m from the ground-levels, he added. "This level of elevation from the ground emphasizes the necessity for a cable-stayed bridge, as it can supersede suspension bridges in their capacity to withstand extensive pressure," said Mukherjee. Part of the Mumbai Urban Infrastructure Project (MUIP), the SCLR Extension is a mega-project costing Rs 670 crore and will extend to a total length of 5.40 km. After completion around May 2024, it will have huge benefits, smooth connectivity to the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, signal-free rides between the WEH and Eastern Express Highway.

Johnny Lever, Aditya Pancholi, Raza Murad, others attend Jr Mehmood's funeral

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bollywood celebrities like Johnny Lever, Raza Murad, Aditya Pancholi, Rakesh Bedi, among others, attended the funeral of comedian, and character actor Naeem Sayeed also known as Junior Mehmood, at Dara House, here on Friday. In the video, we can see Johnny attending the funeral along with his daughter Jamie and son Jessy. He can be seen consoling the sons of Jr Mehmood in the video. The 'Karan Arjun' actor was dressed up in white shirt and blue denims. Johnny said to the paparazzi: "It's a moment of deep grief for us. We have lost our brother. He was a wonderful friend and a brother." The other video shows Johnny, Aditya and Rakesh sitting on the chairs, holding the picture of Jr Mehmood. Raza, who is present at the funeral, wore a black kurta pajama. Junior Mehmood passed away after a protracted battle with cancer, here on Friday morning. Starting his film career as a child actor in 'Mohabbat Zindagi Hai' (1966), Jr Mehmood went onto work in over 250 films in multiple Indian languages, besides directing half a dozen Marathi films and crooning a few songs. He enacted big and small roles with films like 'Nauhiha' (1967), 'Brahmachari' (1968), 'Kati Patang' and 'Aan Milo Sajana' (1970), 'Caravan', 'Haathi Mere Saathi', 'Hare Rama Hare Krishna' and 'Jr. Mehmood in Hong Kong' (all 1971), 'Aap Ki Kasam' and 'Amir Garib' (1974), 'Geet Gaata Chal' (1975), 'Shehzade' (1989), 'Aaj Ka Arjun' (1990), 'Judaai' (1997), 'Journey Bombay to Goa' (2007), and many more.



6 Dead in fire at candle factory near Pune

Team Absolute | Pune

At least six persons died and eight sustained injuries after a fire broke out at a sparkling candle manufacturing unit in Pimpri Chinchwad area of Pune district on Friday, an official said. The fire brigade received a call about the blaze at the factory located at Talawade around 2.45 pm, said Pimpri-Chinchwad municipal commissioner Shekhar Singh. The factory manufactured sparkling candles which are generally used for birthday celebrations, he said.

"The fire has been doused. The cause is yet to be ascertained," Singh added. The injured were admitted to hospitals in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation area, the commissioner informed.



EDITOR'S SPECS

New Telangana CM hears public grievances at Praja Durbar

Day after assuming office, Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Friday started holding 'Praja Darbar' for hearing people's grievances. He received applications from people who had queued up since morning at the chief minister's official residence. Accompanied by Minister P. Srinivasa Reddy, Revanth Reddy heard people's grievances and after taking their petitions handed them to officials. Hundreds of people, including women, reached Jyotirao Phule Praja Bhavan in Begumpet Friday morning to submit their representations about various problems to the chief minister. Revanth Reddy, who is still staying at his house in Jubilee Hills, reached Praja Bhavan around 10 a.m. and personally heard the grievances of the citizens. A few patients and physically challenged on wheelchairs were among those who met the CM. Nagesh, one of the citizens who gave his petition for old age pension and house to the chief minister, told media persons that he was happy that after a long time there is a chief minister who is hearing the public grievances. "It's like YSR sir has been born again," he said referring to late Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy of the united Andhra Pradesh. Narayan Reddy, who lost both hands and a leg due to electricity shock more than a decade ago, requested the chief minister to arrange artificial limbs. The Congress party, in its election manifesto, had promised to revive Praja Darbar. After taking oath as the chief minister on Thursday, Revanth Reddy had announced renaming Pragati Bhavan as Jyotirao Phule Praja Bhavan. Soon after taking over, the new government also dismantled iron fencing in front of the building so that people have unrestricted access to CM's official residence. The fencing was also seen as a hurdle in the movement of vehicles on the busy road.

India bats for global goal of adaptation at Dubai climate talks

Vishal Gulati

Reaffirming its trust and faith in the multilateral climate process, India on Friday, the final week with negotiators from nearly 200 countries aiming to agree on how to bolster emissions-cutting targets set by the Paris Agreement and the future of fossil fuels, batted for the global goal of adaptation, which it said "is close to the hearts of the developing countries".

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, the establishment of the global goal on adaptation is set to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience, and reduce vulnerability to climate change and in the context of pursuing efforts to reduce global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Intervening during the plenary of the United Nations Climate Conference (COP28) led by the UAE presidency, India's negotiator said: "We are taking stock of the implementation of Paris Agreement through GST (global stocktake)."

"We believe that over the next few days we can achieve serious progress in narrowing down the options, through direct negotiation between parties, for subsequent ministerial deliberations and consultations."

"We need a decision that is reached by consensus by negotiations among parties and in conformity with the mandates given by the Paris Agreement... this will not only give us a robust GST decision but will reaffirm our trust and faith in the entire multilateral climate process."



The global stocktake was designed under the Paris Agreement to assess the global response to the climate crisis and chart a better way forward.

The global stocktake is held every five years and is intended to inform the next round of nationally determined contributions to be put forward by 2025. India, a leading voice for developing nations, said: "We are second to none in our desire for an ambitious outcome. But such ambition must be founded on equity and feasibility in a nationally determined manner."

"This concern of ours applies also to other agenda items, especially that of the global goal of adaptation, an item that is close to

the hearts of the developing countries, and the billions of people to whom adaptation is the key to their future.

"We once again reiterate the need for negotiated outcomes, and the opportunity to work towards an end acceptable to all, while ensuring that the same is achieved within the framework of principles and processes of the Convention and its Paris Agreement."

Saying India would like to assure the continued support to ensure that this COP (conference of parties) achieves the desired outcomes for all, the negotiator said: "With what has been achieved so far, we are confident of moving towards the shared objective of fighting climate change. We appreciate the need for an open and inclusive environment of negotiations. Shared objectives need shared and inclusive approach, involving all party countries."

"We are at an important turning point in our work at this 28th Conference of Parties at Dubai. We have heard with careful attention the words and plan presented by our COP28 hosts."

India, which aligned itself with the statements made by Cuba on behalf of G77 and China on behalf of Like Minded Developing Countries, said during the past week it shared frankly in what it believe in.

"This is important to achieve the objectives of the convention and goals of its Paris Agreement. We believe in the sanctity of processes under them," India added.

Stop fighting, let's focus on climate justice, children plead to COP28 dignitaries

Children are the most impacted by the climate emergency and they represent one third of the world's population (around 2.2 billion people), with half of them (more than one billion) currently living in places exposed to severe climate risks, especially in the Global South.

Children tell how the climate emergency has affected their lives. They are being seen and heard at the most influential spaces at the ongoing UN Climate Change Conference (COP28), which has entered the final and crucial phase to set the pace for a new era in climate action.

Now roughly the 196 parties to the UN climate agreement have to sort out that the fossil fuels need to be rapidly cut and poor and vulnerable nations are being hammered.

COP28 meetings will have a different participation: in addition to traditionally suited representatives of countries, 25 children's testimonies from 12 countries will be heard this week. They talk about how their lives have been impacted by the climate emergency and demand effective action from authorities.

The films were produced by UNICEF and Alana, in partnership with Bernard van Leer Foundation.

In the world today, more than one in four deaths of children under five years of age are attributable to unhealthy environments.

Despite this, the children do not participate or are taken into consideration in COP (conference of parties) agendas and negotiations, which will define their lives.

In more than 30 years since the UNFCCC (United Nations



Framework Convention on Climate Change) entry into force, there has never been a decision focused on the protection of children and adolescents. "When we speak about climate change, we are speaking about children. We need to protect their futures -- it's that simple. The powerful testimonies of children like these need to be the last thing that negotiators hear before entering discussions that determine what kind of world they will grow up in. We can only hope they listen," an official statement quoting UNICEF global lead on climate change Gautam Narasimhan said.

"Children are not just victims, but also active contributors as agents of change. We have seen children stand up around the world and push for solutions. They have the right to participate in decisions," said J.P. Amaral, Nature Manager at Alana.

In the films, children from Madagascar, Somalia, Serbia, Australia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, the US, Barbados,

Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Brazil spontaneously express their genuine concerns and call for immediate solutions from the planet's top leaders.

The statements arose from the question "Do you think adults are doing enough to help solve the problems of climate change?"

The children were definitive in their responses: "I would like to say yes, but they are not," says Yehansa from Australia;

"I don't think adults do anything about climate change," says Hidayra from Somalia;

"Stop fighting and let's focus on what really matters," says Sadie of the US; and

"If you keep burning, we are going to die in this heat," says Raoni from Brazil, the host to COP30 in the Amazonian city of Belem do Para in 2025.

Tzaporah Berman, chairwoman of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, said: "The COP presidency has brought baggage to this process, and far too many oil lobbyists."

"For many, the presence of fossil fuel lobbyists at COP is a sign of an event that has been purchased by the opposition, and ultimately compromised."

"However, is there more here that we're missing? We think so."

international

War cabinet member's son among two Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza

Tel Aviv | Agencies

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on Thursday announced the death of two of its soldiers in the Gaza Strip during war with Hamas, taking the death toll in the ground offensive to 89.

The IDF in a statement said that one of the soldiers killed on Thursday was Master Sgt. (res.) Gal Meir Eisenkot (25) of the 551st Brigade's 699 battalion. He was also the son of former Chief of IDF and present member of Israel war cabinet, Gadi Eisenkot.

The other soldier killed on Thursday was identified as Sgt. Major Jonathan David Deitch (34) of the 55th Brigade's 6623rd Reconnaissance Battalion.

The IDF said that Eisenkot was killed in fight in northern Gaza Strip while Jonathan was killed in southern Gaza Strip. Three other IDF soldiers are seriously injured during fights



and admitted to military hospital.

Israel war cabinet minister and former IDF chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot in a speech at his son Gali Eisenkot's funeral said, "we'll take care of the country that you loved so dearly."

"I salute you forever, and I pledge to you that we will do everything we can to be worthy of making the right decisions

for those who fell for the country and for those who embrace us in this difficult time," he said.

Gali was killed while fighting Hamas in Northern Gaza strip on Thursday.

Choking up throughout the speech, Gadi recalled a conversation with his son from several years ago during which Gal said that he had really missed his father throughout his childhood as the dad was with IDF

and moving around.

Eisenkot who was visibly in tears and wearing a dark sunglasses said that he had told his son that mom was there and that he had built close relationship within the family with mom and siblings and that as a dad he was proud of that.

The Israel war cabinet minister said that Gal had always wanted to be in the army and never wanted the support of his father who was a former Chief of IDF for his growth in the forces.

Gad Eisenkot also said that his son even did not revealed his surname during army trials and made his way into the IDF without even the family knowing of it.

Israel President Issac Herzog, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, war cabinet ministers and other dignitaries, family members and common people attended the funeral of Gal Eisenkot.

Putin to seek re-election in 2024 Presidential polls

Moscow | Agencies

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday announced that he will seek re-election in 2024 for his third consecutive term, and sixth overall, media reports said.

He made the announcement at a ceremony in the Kremlin where he awarded Hero of Russia medals to servicemen who had taken part in the special military operation against Ukraine, RT reported.



Putin outlined his decision to contest in response to a question by Hero of the Donetsk People's Republic Artyom Zhoga.

Under the amendments made to the Russian Constitution in 2020, an individual can hold the post of President for two terms only. However, the provision is not retrospective, enabling Putin, who was first elected President in 2000 and held the post till 2008, before returning in 2012 after a stint as Prime Minister, to contest.

Amid NKorea threats, SKorea defence chief orders military readiness

Seoul | Agencies

South Korea's defence chief on Friday renewed his calls on the military to keep a constant state of readiness to retaliate against North Korea, if provoked.

South Korea Defence Minister Shin Won-sik visited the Army Missile Strategic Command in Wonju, 87 kilometers south-east of Seoul, the latest in a series of inspection tour since taking office in October, Yonhap news agency reported.

"Maintain a readiness posture at all times to immediately operate world-class, long-range, high-precision and high-power missiles when given the task," he said at the command, according to the ministry. He also ordered the troops to



immediately and powerfully retaliate against North Korea, if provoked.

Shin described the command as a key unit for the country's "three-axis" deterrence system against North Korea threats, calling on troops to "firmly punish" enemy provocations, the ministry said.

The three-pronged system refers to the

Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation, an operational plan to incapacitate the North Korean leadership in a major conflict; the Kill Chain pre-emptive strike platform; and the Korea Air and Missile Defense system.

Shin's visit to the unit came amid heightened tensions after the North effectively scrapped a 2018 inter-Korean military agreement designed to reduce tensions and prevent accidental clashes along the border.

Last month, the North vowed to restore all military measures halted under the deal after Seoul partially suspended the agreement in protest of Pyongyang's launch of a military spy satellite on November 21.

11 houses gutted in fire in Myanmar

Yangon | Agencies

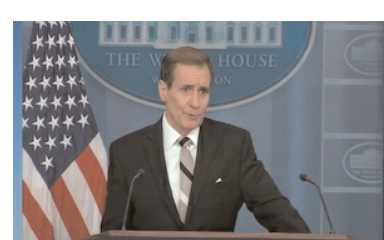
Eleven houses were gutted after a fire broke out in Madaya Township of Myanmar's Mandalay region, the state-run media reported on Friday. The accident occurred when a five-year-old boy played with a match and a bed caught fire. Later, the fire spread from that house to other houses and 11 houses were gutted, an official from a rescue organisation told Xinhua on Friday. The fire broke out at Taungpyone Gyi Village in Madaya Township of Mandalay region at 11.30 a.m. local time on Thursday, and it was extinguished about one hour later, Myanmar Alinn newspaper said. "We pulled out the people from under the rubble and extinguished the fire," the rescue organisation said. There were no casualties from the fire, the official added.



Those behind plot to kill Pannun should be held accountable: White House

Washington | Agencies

Calling India and the US strategic partners, the White House has reiterated that it wants the plot to kill a Sikh separatist on its soil fully investigated and those behind it be held "properly accountable". "India is a strategic partner. We are deepening that strategic partnership. They are a member of the Quad in the Pacific and we participate with them on a range of security-related issues and we want to see that continue unabated," John Kirby, Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House, said on Thursday. "That said at the same time we certainly recognise the seriousness of these allegations and as I said earlier we want it fully investigated and those responsible to be held properly accountable," Kirby told



reporters at a news conference here. He was responding to a question on the impact of the allegations on India-US bilateral ties, and President Joe Biden's visit to India in 2024. The indictment of Indian national Nikhil Gupta in plotting to assassinate Khalistan leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun has reportedly thrown a spanner in the works of the US President's attendance at Republic Day next year. While Kirby said he has no travel to announce at

this time, the National Security spokesperson added that they are glad that their Indian counterparts are taking the Pannun issue seriously. "It's (the case) under active investigation. We have said that we are glad that our Indian counterparts are taking it seriously in doing that. We want those responsible for these attacks to be held fully accountable but I won't get ahead of an investigation that isn't complete," Kirby said at the news briefing. The remarks came as US Principal Deputy National Security Advisor Jonathan Finer visited India this week during which he held talks with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra. FBI Director Christopher Wray is set to visit India next week against the backdrop of the allegations.

Seven killed in road accident in Indonesia

Jakarta | Agencies

Seven members of a family were killed after a minibus they were travelling in was hit by a truck in Indonesia's Bengkulu province, a local traffic police officer said Friday. The incident occurred on Thursday after the truck which was on its way from Mukomuko to the province's capital Bengkulu, lost power while driving up a hilly road and hit the minibus with the eight people on board behind, Xinhua news agency reported.

Mukomuko traffic police chief Rully Zuldh Fermana said further investigations were still underway.



Is BJP electing the new Chief Minister in a democratic manner or matter is something else?

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Can BJP make an unknown face the Chief Minister in Madhya Pradesh? Now political experts have started raising this question, they say that this has happened before also and the possibility is still increasing that a new Chief Minister will come, whether it is Uttarakhand or Haryana. Such a face was put forward at the last moment about which no one had any idea. In Madhya Pradesh, in 2005, when Babulal Gaur was asked to step down from the post of Chief Minister, Shivraj Singh Chouhan's name was nowhere in the race. He was an MP from Vidisha. But his name came up at the last moment. The question arises that

who will be the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh? The 'suspense' regarding this still remains. While the election results were declared on December 3, the name of the Chief Minister has not come yet. BJP has appointed observers in the three winning states today itself, it is likely that the names will be revealed by Sunday, if we talk about Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, he is engaged in his mission in Madhya Pradesh instead of asking to go to Delhi to talk to the high command. Yes, even before these elections, attempts were made several times to remove Shivraj Singh but the Center was unsuccessful. BJP won this election without the face of the Chief Minister and at the same time it has also come under

the scanner of allegations. Before the elections, it was clear in all the surveys that there is an atmosphere against BJP, but while BJP is happy with the bumper victory, the public is questioning its victory. The team of observers will also discuss with the MLAs and then submit their report to top leaders. Many names are being discussed. But the party's high command has not revealed its cards. The series of meetings is going on from Bhopal to Delhi. The leaders involved in the race for Chief Minister are also doing a lot of lobbying from their level. But till now the top leadership of the party has not reached any conclusion regarding Madhya Pradesh.

'FAKE NEWS' Congress on reports of Kamal Nath quitting as MP unit chief

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Congress in Madhya Pradesh on Thursday termed the reports of its state unit president Kamal Nath stepping down from his position following the party's defeat in the recently concluded Assembly polls as "fake news". Kamal Nath's media advisor Piyush Babele said that such reports making rounds on social media were fake. On Thursday evening, messages surfaced on social media that Kamal Nath had resigned as Madhya Pradesh unit Congress president. Some official social media handles had also claimed that Kamal Nath had resigned. The reports, in fact, emerged amid a buzz in the political circles that the All India Congress Committee (AICC) might pick a new face for the post following the party's disappointing show. The BJP won 163 seats of 230 while the Congress bagged 66. Meanwhile, BJP spokesperson in Madhya Pradesh, Narendra Saluja claimed that "Kamal



Nath will meet Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge tomorrow (Friday) and to submit his resignation (from the state president's post)". However, Kamal Nath's media advisor Babele and former minister P.C. Sharma also dismissed the claims and speculation, calling the reports fake. After Congress' poll defeat, Kamal Nath had asked party members not to get disheartened by the results. He urged them to regroup, focus, and gear up for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections which are just a few months away. In an effort to uplift the spirits of party workers, Kamal Nath recalled the Congress' significant setback in the post-Emergency 1977 Lok Sabha polls. Meanwhile, senior Congress leader Lakshman Singh, brother of former Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh, took to X on Wednesday, saying the EVMs are being blamed to "hide" the infighting in the party. He said: "The machines cannot talk back." His comments came barely hours after Kamal Nath met Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party leader Rahul Gandhi at Kharge's official residence in Delhi.

LAXMAN SINGH BLAMES 'INTERNAL RIFT' FOR PARTY'S DEFEAT IN MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal



Laxman Singh, the younger brother of former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh, on Friday held the internal rift in the party's state unit responsible for its massive defeat in the recent Assembly polls. The former MLA questioned how the party lost when it was in a very strong position in the state. Blaming the internal fight within the state unit, he said, "In its surveys, the Congress was in a position to win the election in Madhya Pradesh. But, unfortunately the surveys can not reveal how many seats it lost due to sabotage. It (sabotage) is the biggest reason the Congress lost the election," Laxman Singh posted a message on his social media handle. Laxman contested the election from Chachoura Assembly constituency of Guna dis-

trict and lost by 61, 570 votes against BJP's Priyanka Penchi. A couple of days ago, he had said that the Congress has been demanding use of postal ballots for the elections, so why didn't it approach the court? "We have long been demanding postal ballots on social media, media by going among the public, approaching the Election Commission, but till date we have not taken the help of law, why so? Perhaps to hide the insider attack, EVMs have been banned. Blame the machine's mouth." He made the statement on social media soon after his elder brother and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh claimed the Congress lost in MP because EVM machines were allegedly hacked. Digvijaya's son Jaivardhan Singh, who had contested the election from Raghogarh, retained the family's traditional seat by a narrow margin of 4,505 votes.

CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN PLANTED SAPPLINGS OF PEEPAL, SYCAMORE AND SAPTAPARNI



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan today planted saplings of peepal, sycamore and Saptaparni in the Smart Garden at Shyamala Hills. Brajesh Kirar, Naval Singh, Nitin, Gaurav, Hakam Soni, Shailendra, Abhishek, Yashwant Pawar, Mahesh, Sanju and Ramkumar also planted saplings along with Chief Minister Chouhan. Apart from this, Security Officer Nilesh, Nikhit Mishra and family members also participated in sapling planting.

Shivraj's roar in Digvijay's stronghold, said - 'Congress was defeated by its ego'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On one hand, BJP has got a landslide victory in the assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, on the other hand, BJP has also got defeat at many places. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is visiting the places of defeat. In the same sequence, on Friday he reached Raghogarh, the stronghold of former Chief Minister Digvijay Singh, and fiercely attacked the Congress, saying that it was not EVMs but Congress's arrogance that defeated the Congress. Attacking Congress and Digvijay Singh fiercely in the workers conference by doing a roadshow in Raghogarh, Chauhan said that those who ruled the state and Raghogarh for 10 years are criminals of the state and Raghogarh. In the year 2003, I had contested elections from Raghogarh. At that time I used to think that since it is the Chief



Minister's area, the development must have been better, but as soon as I entered Raghogarh, I did not realize whether there were potholes in the roads or roads in potholes. There was no electricity,

as their property and had the contract to win nearby seats, won by 60 thousand and 50 thousand votes in his district. Regarding those blaming EVMs, Shivraj said that the naughty cats should scratch the pillars, Congressmen are now blaming EVMs that EVMs have defeated, EVMs have defeated. Congress has lost not because of EVM machine but because of its ego. The day Congress won in Karnataka, BJP won in Madhya Pradesh on the same day, because the victory in Karnataka had filled the Congress with arrogance. Shivraj said that my sisters and brothers, I have come for Mission-29. By winning 29 out of 29 seats in Madhya Pradesh in the Lok Sabha elections, BJP has to put 29 lotus garlands around the neck of Narendra Modi. For that we will leave no stone unturned to win not just 29 seats but 230 assembly seats in the entire state.

PRAHLAD PATEL REACHED ASSEMBLY AS MLA FOR THE FIRST TIME

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Union Minister Prahlad Patel, elected MLA from Narsinghpur Assembly, reached the Assembly today. He completed the paperwork after being elected MLA here. Assembly Chief Secretary AP Singh got his documentation done. He has been elected MLA for the first time. Before this he had been an MP and Union Minister. He has recently resigned from the membership of Parliament and the post of Union Minister after becoming an MLA. Prahlad Patel is among the contenders for the post of CM in Madhya Pradesh. On coming to the Assembly from Lok Sabha, he said that no house is small or big. The only difference is numbers and rules. If God has given you the job of watchman, then you should do watchmanship only, it has nothing to do with promotion. House is House, on coming to the Assembly for the first time he said



that I am proud to have entered the Madhya Pradesh Assembly as an MLA for the first time. I express my gratitude to the leadership. On the delay in the announcement of Chief Minister Face, Prahlad Patel said that decisions have to be taken regarding five states. That's why it's taking time. He said that even when I was in charge of Manipur, it took time. Patel further said that at present the Lok Sabha is also going on. That's why it's taking time. There is no such thing as delay. On the question of his own Chief Minister face, he said that thank you all.

COLD INCREASES IN MADHYA PRADESH, ARRANGEMENTS FOR BONFIRE WILL BE MADE AT PUBLIC PLACES

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The effect of cold has increased in Madhya Pradesh. The winds are chilling. In such a situation, it has become difficult for those people who have to spend the night in shelters or in the open. To provide relief from the cold to these category of people, bonfires are being arranged at public places. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan has instructed all urban bodies to make elaborate arrangements in view of the cold. He said that bonfires should be arranged in all shelters and public places to protect from cold. Hot water for bathing, quilts and blankets for covering should be provided in the shelter. Make sure to transport the homeless to the shelter in a convenient manner by making rounds through mobile vans at night. It is noteworthy that the Chief Minister had recently inspected the night shelter located at Shahjani Park in the capital and directed that in such urban bodies where there is no permanent shelter, they should be provided with temporary shelter in a rent-



ed building or in any building authorized by the vacant body. Make sure to provide shelter and other relief to all the urban homeless by opening shelters. Chief Minister Chouhan said, ensure proper arrangements for medical checkup of the beneficiaries staying in the shelter by coordinating with the health department. Timely disinfection of shelter sites should be ensured and beneficiaries should be made aware about safety measures to deal with the effects of the pandemic. The Chief Minister has also given instructions to display the helpline number and the numbers of the manager and caretaker posted at the shelter at a public place, so that the public can participate in helping the urban homeless reach the shelter.

The passion, spirit and skill of the players is inspiring: Governor Patel

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that victory and defeat come and go. Must be motivated. The effort is important, not the result. Results vary. He told the players participating in the competition that their passion, passion and skills are a source of inspiration for the future generation and the entire society. Every player in the competition is a winner in his own right, who has overcome his physical weaknesses with his persistence and passion. Patel was addressing the differently-abled players at the inaugural function of the cricket tournament for the disabled at the Campion School playground. Governor Mangubhai Patel encouraged the players. He said that he salutes the strong will and power of self-employment and employment in various activities as well as active participation in sports, self-esteem and self-reliance amidst

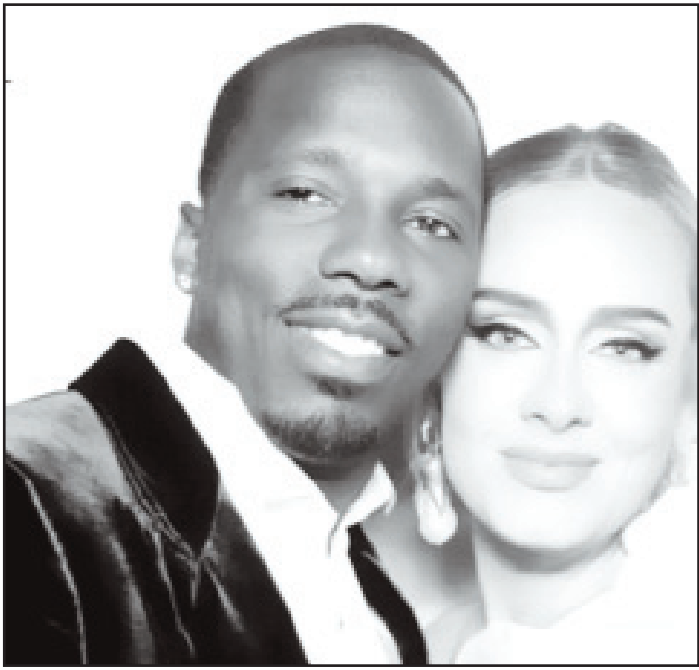
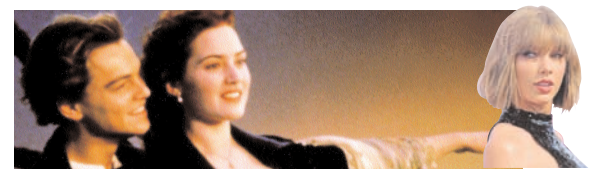


physical challenges. He said that society needs to be inspired by their struggle, concentration, determination and self-belief. He said that disabled sportsmen have proved that no weakness can be greater than courage. Everything in life can be found with courage, skill and courage. He said that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi believes that "Weakness of a limb is not the weakness of a person," he has clarified the government's feelings and sentiments towards disabled people by naming them as Divyangjan. He said that the government has launched many welfare and disability support schemes and Accessible India campaign for the benefit of disabled people, self-reliance, rehabilitation.

Municipal Corporation President Kishan Suryavanshi said that all the players participating in the competition are the inspiration of the country. He has made a unique identity in the country, because he has focused on his specialties and not on his shortcomings. He has made his own power. He thanked the Governor for reaching out to the players. His arrival has given the grandeur and divinity of the program. Deepthi Patwa of Umang Gauravdeep Welfare Society expressed her gratitude. Information regarding the competition. It was told that a total of 8 states teams are participating in the tournament. Teams from 6 states Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh are included in the men's category. In the women's category, teams from 4 states Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Jammu Kashmir and Madhya Pradesh are participating.

WOMAN WENT TO FAIR STABBED TO DEATH IN BALAGHAT

Balaghat: A heart-wrenching incident took place in Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh late on Thursday night. A woman who had gone to visit the fair here was brutally murdered by a balloon seller by stabbing her with a knife. The incident took place in Rampayali police station area. According to the information received from the police, a fair is going on in Rampayali area, where Deepika had gone to visit the fair with her husband Akshat Aggarwal. When she was returning after visiting the fair, balloon seller Ram Rao attacked her. The woman had got married only about a year ago. It has been told that the accused attacked the woman with a knife and when her husband tried to defend her, the accused also attacked him with a knife. The woman bled badly in this attack, she was taken to the hospital for treatment, where she died. The reason for the murder of the woman has not been made clear. But there is a suspicion that this could be a matter related to love affair. The police have taken the accused into custody. Police is engaged in investigation, the accused is said to be a resident of Maharashtra, the woman was also a resident of Maharashtra.



Adele thanks Rich Paul's late mom for raising a good man

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Adele shared gratitude for her partner Rich Paul's late mother in an acceptance speech. On Thursday, the 'Easy on Me' songstress accepted the Sherry Lansing Leadership Award at The Hollywood Reporter's Annual Women in Entertainment Gala and thanked his late mother, Minerva Martin, for raising her son to be a "proper man", reports People magazine.

"I actually have many men in my life who I love and who love me, but in the spirit of this morning and in fear of bras being burned, I'm gonna thank their mothers and not them," shared the Grammy winner, 35. "I would like to thank Minerva Martin," she continued. "Thank you to them for raising [a] good man who [does] not think that a woman's power diminishes their own." The 'Hello' singer concluded: "That's a proper man. Thank you".

As per People, Adele and Paul were first seen together publicly at an NBA game in July 2021. After they were spotted courtside, a source confirmed to 'People' that the artiste had been dating the sports agent for "a few months".

In October, Paul opened up about his relationship with the singer and his new memoir, 'Lucky Me: A Memoir of Changing the Odds'. Paul detailed the deep trauma he faced having a mother who struggled with drug addiction and his early childhood growing up in a crime-ridden area of Cleveland in the 1980s and 1990s.

Selena Gomez confirms Benny Blanco romance

Los Angeles | Agencies



Singer-actress Selena Gomez has confirmed her romance with music producer Benny Blanco, and defended their love before the haters. Instagram account PopFactions posted a picture headlining "Selena Gomez Seemingly Confirms That She Is in a Relationship", in which she commented "facts", reports Mirror.co.uk. The post came after the account posted a picture saying: "Selena Gomez is Rumoured To Be Dating Producer Benny Blanco." The singer and actress liked both posts. As per Mirror.co.uk, Benny has worked with artistes like Halsey and Khalid and was featured on Selena's ex-boyfriend's Justin Bieber song, Lonely. Because Benny has worked with Selena on her song 'I Can't Get Enough' in 2019, some fans thought the news was a "marketing plan".

A comment under the post said: "I hope this is marketing for a new album." Another fan wrote: "Her taste in men is so..." She later posted an Instagram Story of her cuddling up with a man, showing no face of post about him when a fan said he was "unhandsome".

Selena wrote: "I feel bad for you." PopFaction posted photos of other comments where she defended Benny, writing: "He has treated me better than any human being on this planet." In another comment, she shared: "He's still better than anyone I've ever been with. Facts."

Selena hinted at having a crush on someone when filming her Selena + Chels holiday special. Selena dated Justin for eight years in an on-and-off relationship before finally parting ways in 2018. Justin worked with Benny in 2021 and they have performed together on stage. Benny also produced Justin's hit song, Love Yourself, from his 2015 album, Purpose. After Selena, Justin married super-model Hailey Baldwin.



Natalie Portman reveals she, Britney Spears were an understudy for same role

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood Actress Natalie Portman revealed that she has a very unexpected connection to Britney Spears as they both rose to fame after starring in the same understudy role when they were kids. The Oscar-winning actress shared the unlikely match-up this week during a guest appearance on 'Live' with Kelly and Mark while promoting her brand new movie 'May December', reports Mirror.co.uk.

In the interview, the 42-year-old actress shared the shocking news that she and Britney were both an understudy for the same play. Back in 1992, the pair both starred as the backup for child star Laura Bell Bundy on the Off-Broadway musical 'New Ruthless'.

As per Mirror.co.uk, Natalie revealed that despite playing the same character, she never actually crossed paths with Britney, as she took on the role after her. She told the hosts: "So we actually didn't meet but we, like, knew of each other. Like I knew I was taking over for her."

'New Ruthless' was met with great praise after airing from March 1992 to January 1993 in New York City featuring a talented all-female cast. Although Natalie found her start on set of the play, she didn't rise to stardom until a few years later, following her memorable performance as Mathilda in the action-thriller 'Leon' in 1994.

Since then, Natalie has become one of the most well-known and beloved actresses of her generation, starring in a remarkable 70 films throughout her three decades-long career. Some of Natalie's most memorable films include her iconic roles in 'Black Swan', 'Closer', 'Thor', 'V for Vendetta', 'The Other Boleyn Girl', and many more. So far, the Hollywood star has been awarded both an Academy Award and two Golden Globes for her unforgettable performances.



Chris Hemsworth shows off muscles wearing nothing but towel

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Chris Hemsworth sent fans pulses racing as he took to Instagram sharing a video of him wearing nothing but a towel. The former superhero's ripped body was on full-display in a newly posted clip he shared of his pals pranking him fresh out of the shower, reports Mirror.co.uk.

In the video, the Hollywood star was singing to himself while exiting his bathroom when a group of his friends set up a camera and jumped out of the shadows to scare him.

As per Mirror.co.uk, the actor visibly sprung in surprise then doubled over in laughter. The 40-year-old star playfully captioned the video: "Who needs enemies when you've got mates like this."

The actor's fans went wild for the clip gushing over how incredible Chris' shirtless body looked and making hilarious comments about the towel wrapped around his waist. One fan cheekily wrote: "The real enemy here is that towel..." And another agreed: "Anyone else thinking/wishing that towel would drop?"

The fun-loving post comes as the actor recently announced that he is undergoing some major lifestyle changes including "slowing down" on this career and taking on fewer roles in the future to prioritise his health.

Bruce Willis' family has more bad days than good amid dementia battle

Los Angeles | Agencies

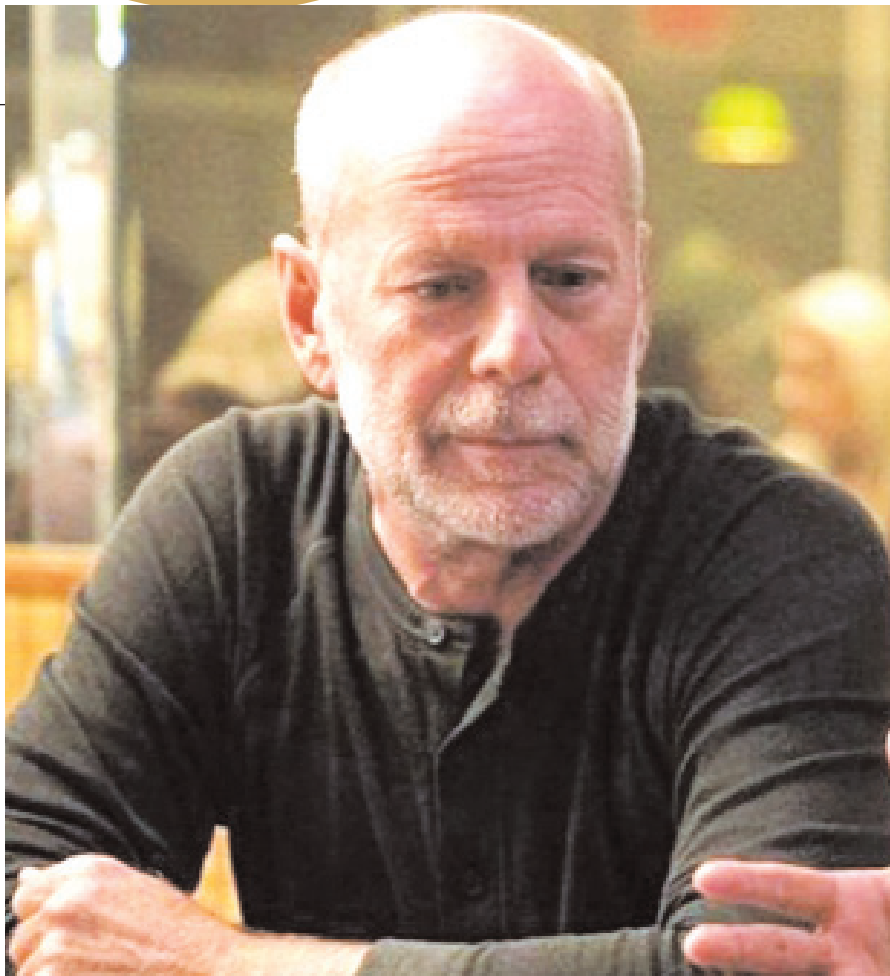
Hollywood star Bruce Willis' family is said to be "soaking up every moment" with him while they still can. The 'Die Hard' actor, 68, has frontotemporal dementia (FTD), an uncommon form of the disease which causes a deterioration in personality, behaviour, and language.

A source told this week's edition of UsWeekly, "Bruce has good days and bad days, but in the last two months, there are many more bad days than good. This experience has brought the whole family even closer together."

"No one knows how much time Bruce has left, so they're soaking up every moment they get with him. (Everything) revolves around him, Bruce has around-the-clock care, but at least one family member is always with him."

Bruce, who is married to model Emma Heming Willis, 45, but has daughters Rumer Willis, 35, Scout Willis, 32, and Tallulah Willis, 29, with ex-wife Demi Moore, became a grandfather for the first time when his eldest welcomed daughter Louetta in April and a second insider went on to add that the 'House Bunny' star is keen to make sure the little one is "involved" with him as much as possible, reports aceshowbiz.com.

The source said, "Once Bruce was diagnosed, everyone came together to keep his memory of the family intact and to be there as a constant reminder (that they) love him. Rumer wants to make sure Louetta knows (Bruce). She wants him to be actively involved in Louetta's life. It's a very special bond."



Arabella Chi

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY





I-League 2023-24

Holders Gokulam Kerala drop points in opening match draw with Sethu FC

Kozhikode | Agencies

Gokulam Kerala FC's campaign to win the title fourth time in a row started on a disappointing note as they were held goalless by former champions Sethu FC in the opening match of the Indian Women's League (IWL) 2023-24 at the EMS Corporation Stadium here on Friday. On the other hand, Sethu FC coach Kanan Vitthal Priolkar has surely returned to the dressing room a satisfied man. He spoke about his ambition to snatch a point in the away outing and he achieved his purpose successfully, no matter how unspectacular his defensive tactics were. Sethu, champions in 2018-19, executed their gameplan perfectly but were certainly assisted by the sheer uncertainty displayed by Gokulam, especially at the upfront. Unlike the free-flowing side they were last season, the home side



often looked clueless despite having the lion's share of the exchanges.

Yet the show could have been different-for Gokulam, at least. The likes of Soumya Guguloth, Anju Tamang and Ghanaian Veronica Appiah were clearly the better play-

ers, with more imagination and approach to situations. But all their good work went haywire in the attacking third, much to the relief of Sethu defenders.

It wasn't that the teams didn't make efforts to attack or create

chances within their limitations. While Gokulam showered crosses from both flanks at regular intervals, Sethu did some good work through the left. But then, most of the crosses were either ill-directed or went abegging with no one to take care of them. Gokulam can claim that some of their key attackers from last year's side are currently missing from the line-up. It definitely cannot take the credit away from Sethu's defenders, who stuck to their strategy to take a point home.

It is a good achievement for them, and they can be more ambitious when they host the queens of club football in India in their backyard. This is the inaugural year of home and away games in the IWL; Gokulam must be disappointed to surrender a couple of points on their home turf.

Premier League

Everton beat Newcastle to climb out of relegation zone

Liverpool (UK) | Agencies

Late goals from Dwight McNeil, Abdoulaye Doucoure and Beto earned Everton a 3-0 win as they punished Newcastle United's defensive mistakes at a raucous Goodison Park.

The win sees Everton leapfrog Luton Town and move out of the relegation zone. Without the 10-point deduction, a sanction the Club has officially appealed, it would have seen Sean Dyche's side climb into the top half of the Premier League table.

For the second time in the space of five days, McNeil's "paintbrush" left foot set the Blues on their way to victory 11 minutes from the end. Doucoure's fifth strike of the campaign doubled the lead seven minutes later.

Then, deep into the 10 minutes of stoppage time second-half substitute Beto got in on the act, running the length of the half after being played outside by Trippier, adding a third to seal a richly deserved victory.

Only a second home win for Everton this season moves Everton into 17th, with 10 points. Newcastle are seventh with 26 points. Notably, Seamus Coleman's made his



353rd appearance in the Premier League for Everton on the Thursday night when he returned to action from a serious knee injury, and is now the outright most of any outfield player for the Club in the competition.



India outshine Korea 3-1 in a classification match of the women's junior World Cup 2023

Santiago | Agencies

The Indian Junior Women's Hockey Team defeated Korea 3-1 in the 9th - 12th place qualification match of the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup 2023 played in Chile, on Friday.

Ropni Kumari (23'), Mumtaz Khan (44'), and Annu (46') scored goals for India, while Jiyun Choi (19') was the lone goal scorer for Korea. In the opening quarter, both teams clashed fiercely in a bid to seize an early advantage. Korea dominated possession and secured the first penalty corner, yet couldn't capitalize. India, opting for counter-attacks, kept Korea's defense busy but couldn't convert their promising entries, resulting in a goalless deadlock by quarter's end.

The second quarter mirrored the intensity of the first, with India and Korea persisting in their attacking plays. Jiyun Choi (19') of Korea broke the deadlock with a precise penalty corner strike, but India swiftly responded through Ropni Kumari (23'), equalizing the score from another penalty corner.

Korea, desperate to regain the lead, ramped up their aggression. Despite their fervent efforts, India's solid defense thwarted Korea's advances and counter-attacked skillfully,

keeping the pressure on Korea's defensive line. However, no more goals were scored in the second quarter as both teams entered the half-time break with the score levelled at 1-1.

In the third quarter, India dominated the proceedings by keeping the ball possession and troubling Korea's defense rigorously and the strategy paid dividends as Mumtaz Khan (44') brilliantly slotted the ball home on a penalty corner to give her team a much-deserving lead. The penultimate quarter ended 2-1 in favour of India.

Riding high on confidence after taking the lead, India intensified their attacks and extended their lead early in the fourth and final quarter of the game as Annu (46') netted a superb field goal, securing a two-goal advantage for her team. India, despite being ahead, continued to unsettle Korea's defense, maintaining their momentum and denying any chance of a comeback as the match culminated in a 3-1 victory for India.

The victory means that India, who had earlier bowed out of the title contention after finishing third in the Pool C, will stand a chance to finish ninth in the tournament when they take on either Chile or USA in their last match of the competition on December 10.

Glenn Maxwell ruled out of Perth Scorchers match due to forearm injury

Brisbane | Agencies

Melbourne Stars captain Glenn Maxwell has been ruled out of Wednesday's match against Perth Scorchers due to an injury.

Maxwell suffered a forearm injury in the opening match of the Big Bash League (BBL) season 13 while batting against Brisbane Heat. The Stars lost by 103 runs despite Maxwell scoring 23 off 14 balls.

"Maxwell suffered the injury whilst batting against the Brisbane Heat on Thursday night and will start his rehabilitation immediately," stated Melbourne Stars in a statement released on Friday.

"Nathan Coulter-Nile will undergo scans this weekend to determine damage to a calf injury suffered whilst bowling against the Brisbane Heat. The club will provide a further update ahead of the clash against the Scorchers on Wednesday," it further added.

Maxwell received medical attention twice during the game against Heat, had his forearm wrapped, and was later shown icing it in the dugout after getting out at the Gabba. Marcus Stoinis will have to carry more of the load as the starting batting opener in Maxwell's absence since the Stars will be without a key spin-bowling option.

The Stars will hope that Maxwell will have enough time to heal and miss just



one game when they play Sydney Thunder in Albury on December 23 after their match against the Scorchers on Wednesday at the MCG, followed by a 10-day break. After only recently arriving in the nation, Haris Rauf from Pakistan was not picked versus Heat; Stars will be hoping to rely on him quickly. Olly Stone, an England fast bowler, was one of their three overseas players, along with Usama Mir and Liam Dawson.

Mantra for India will be new ball in Test series against South Africa: Irfan Pathan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former India left-arm fast-bowler Irfan Pathan believes the visitors' mantra for the Test series against South Africa happening later this month should be acing the new ball challenge in both batting and bowling innings.

India will play two Tests against South Africa, in Centurion from December 26-30 and in Cape Town from January 3-7, 2024. It is India's second series of the 2023-2025 World Test Championship cycle, after winning the two-Test series in West Indies in July 1-0.

"Look, they have to search for that mantra, and I think that the mantra is in the new ball. When you bat and bowl well with the new ball, that is the biggest mantra, that you conquered it, then things will become easier for you. Because in South Africa, the toughest thing to do is bat and face the new ball," said Pathan to Star Sports.

The last time India played a Test series in South Africa was in December 2021-January 2022. India won the first Test in Centurion before South Africa bounced back to win matches in Johannesburg and Cape Town to eventually claim the



series 2-1.

"I found that last time when we played that and won a Test series when we won against them, the way we bowled in the second and third spell, we were tired as a bowling unit, and our length was a bit short, there was no shine and when we bowled up the pitch to them, I remember the pitch map very well, the balls pitched up were not shining at all, it was just speed," added Pathan. For India, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami (subject to fitness), Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna and Mukesh Kumar form the fast-bowling department. With the bat, captain Rohit Sharma will be leading the batting charge alongside Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul and Ishan Kishan.

SREESANTH RECEIVES LEGAL NOTICE FROM LLC OVER RANT AGAINST GAUTAM GAMBHIR: REPORTS

New Delhi:

Former India pacer Sreesanth has been served a legal notice by the Legends League Cricket (LLC) commissioner over his rant against Gautam Gambhir, following the on-field altercation between the two players during an Eliminator match between Indian Capitals and Gujarat Giants in the ongoing LCC 2023 tournament. Gambhir and Sreesanth got into a heated exchange during the LLC Season 2 Eliminator match between India Capitals and Gujarat Giants at the Lalbhai Contractor Stadium on Wednesday, and the umpires had to step in to keep things civil. The next morning, Sreesanth went live on the social media platform, Instagram, and accused Gambhir of saying rude words. The Kerala pacer also said that Gambhir called him a 'fixer', referring to the 2013 Indian Premier League (IPL) spot-fixing scandal. The legal notice from LCC mentioned that Sreesanth was guilty of breaching his contract while playing in the T20 tournament, according to an India today report. The report further stated that talks with the pacer will only be initiated once he removes the videos criticising the player within the preview of the league. Earlier, LCC issued a statement saying it will conduct an internal investigation on the violation of the code of conduct in the incident involving former India teammates Gambhir and Sreesanth.



Mumbai Indians to pick up three-four players & develop their skills for future: WV Raman

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Head of the Women's Premier League (WPL) auction to be held on Saturday, former India women's head coach WV Raman believes defending champions Mumbai Indians will be aiming to pick three-four players and develop their skills so that they can serve the side for a long time.

Ahead of the auction, Mumbai retained 13 players while letting go of Heather Graham, Dhara Gujjar, Sonam Yadav and Neelam Bisht. They have vacant player slots in the form of four Indians and one overseas with the remaining purse of INR 2.1 crores.

"I think they'll use this auction for

investment and they'll unearth a diamond like they always do. They'll pick up 3-4 players for the future and develop their skills so they can serve them in the years to come."

"They'll look for young Indian players because they know you have to have a strong Indian contingent in your squad for you to win tournaments. They've seen it work for them in the men's vertical," said Raman on JioCinema.

Former India captain Anjum Chopra thinks Mumbai are aiming to buy a leg-spinner and an all-rounder who can do the finisher role. "You want to keep your nucleus and build upon it. They're very aware. The little conversations I've

picked up on, they're looking for a leg-spinner. Also, have an all-rounder batter who can be an explosive finisher in this role." "They've got a good batting line-up with Amelia Kerr coming in after Nat-Sciver Brunt. But if you can get an Indian recruit like Simran Shaikh and Simran Bahadur, it will help. That's where they can strengthen with Jintimani Kalita and Amanjot Kaur, all are similar all-rounders."

Runners-up Delhi Capitals have a remaining purse of INR 2.25 crores and have three slots to fill, one of which is of an overseas player. Raman thinks they will be eyeing a back-up wicketkeeper to Taniya Bhatia.

Pressure related to the No. 1 spot was 'bit overwhelming': Iga Swiatek

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Top-ranked female tennis player Iga Swiatek expressed that the pressure of defending her World No.1 status was overwhelming in the middle of the season. She added that Aryna Sabalenka would have been deserving of finishing the year at the top of the world rankings. After winning her maiden WTA Finals title, Swiatek has reclaimed the World No. 1 spot that she had ceded to Aryna Sabalenka after her disappointing fourth-round loss at the US Open earlier this year. The Pole had been on top of the tree for 75 weeks from April 2022 to September 2023.



"It was certainly a demanding season that taught me a lot, and which makes me even more proud. This year-end result exceeded all my expectations. The fact that I came back to No. 1 and that it happened in Cancun with all the pressure and strange circumstances,"

Swiatek told Eurosport Poland. Sabalenka won her maiden Grand Slam to open 2023 in Australia and reached the final at the US Open, rising to the top spot for the first time in her career. But her defeat in the semifinals of the WTA Finals to Swiatek cost her the chance to end the year as the World No. 1.

But Swiatek acknowledged the chance of the Belarusian finishing the year at the top. Surprisingly, she welcomed this possibility, expressing satisfaction as her focus lay elsewhere, feeling that the weight of being No. 1 could be a bit overwhelming.



Dot calls 'The Archies' 'perfect jumping off point'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress-musician Aditi Saigal, professionally known as Dot, who is receiving a lot of positive response to her recently released streaming film 'The Archies', has shared that the Zoya Akhtar directorial is the "perfect jumping off point" for her as she got to contribute musically and lyrically to the film.

In the film, Aditi plays the role of Ethel, and has written and sang all four 'Dear Diary' themes picturised on Khushi Kapoor, as well as lent her voice to the character of Betty (Khushi) singing and composing the song 'Asymmetrical'. She has also sung the other two chartbusters 'Dhishoom Dhishoom' and 'Sunoh'. Talking about the same, Dot said: "It feels wonderful to receive all this love and appreciation for my role in 'The Archies'. Zoya has sparked such a curiosity in me about the film world, I can't wait to explore it deeper and see how my career can take shape through both acting and music. Coming from musical roots, 'The Archies' seemed like the perfect jumping off point for me since I got to contribute musically/lyrically (through 'Dear Diary' 'Asymmetrical' and 'Sunoh'), as well as my role on screen playing the headstrong Ethel."



She added: "I could not have asked for a better debut, and will aspire to express myself through both these creative fields. After two incredible years working on sets, rehearsing like mad and learning the ropes - all I'm left with is gratitude. Gratitude to have

worked with a visionary like Zoya, gratitude for the incredible cast, crew and music team, gratitude for the lovely people connecting with the work."

'The Archies' is streaming on Netflix.

Triptii Dimri shot for 48 hours in a row for a project along with 'Animal'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Triptii Dimri, who has been hailed as the national crush following her impactful performance in the recently released action thriller 'Animal', continuously shot for 48 hours in Delhi while juggling two projects, 'Animal' and another undisclosed venture.

Exhibiting sheer dedication, she undertook an intense shooting spree for two days in the national capital amid a demanding schedule.

Talking about juggling two projects simultaneously, the actress said: "I feel blessed to encounter such good challenges in my life, where I must navigate between two exciting opportunities. In an industry where securing work can be a real struggle, I am grateful to have had the chance to be part of two projects concurrently."

She further mentioned: "Despite the physical and mental exhaustion, it's all worthwhile at the end of the day. As artistes, we are built for these challenges, and our lives revolve around such experiences. The sense of fulfillment comes when we receive accolades for our performances. Hence, I look forward to encountering more such opportunities in the future."

Recently, the actress secured 2nd spot on IMDb's Popular Indian Celebrities List of the Week, just behind Bollywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan at 1st position.

In her upcoming projects, Triptii Dimri is set to feature in Raaj Shaandilyaa's 'Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video' and Anand Tiwari's 'Mere Mehboob Mere Sanam'.



Manoj Bajpayee: Want to make the most out of good roles coming to me

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actor Manoj Bajpayee, whose survival thriller drama 'Joram' hit the screens on Friday, opened up on whether the characters he portrays take a toll on him. He shared that the good roles are coming to him and he wants to make the most of it. Directed by Devashish Makhija, the film promises an intense portrayal of survival, with Manoj in a commanding role as a father on the run. In a conversation with reporter, Manoj spoke about the characters taking a toll on him, survival thriller genre, and more. If playing 'Dasru' took a mental and physical toll on him, Manoj told IANS: "I don't know whether it is taking a toll or not. I try to come out of it not by going anywhere, I just start preparing for my next. And when I start preparing for next, then slowly the new character overpowers my mind." The 'Aks' actor shared: "I don't know what it has done to my brain but we will come to know that in times to come. At this



point it's impossible to tell what toll it has taken on my mind. Good roles are coming to me, I am working with good directors and I want to make the most of it." What is missing in genres like survival thriller, and psychological drama?

Manoj said: "We are doing quite well. Also the independent filmmakers like Devashish Makhija, Vikramaditya Motwane, all of these people are working continuously, and exploring things in this genre. All of them have a different take and that's the beauty of it."

"When it comes to the middle of the road or independent cinema you see a lot of experiments happening. Directors who are doing it are primary cinephiles. They are the people who are purely cinema lovers. They want to grow in cinema, they want to grow as a cinema person all the time. They themselves are bettering and educating themselves, and are growing all the time with each film of their own," said the 'Shool' actor.

Manoj said there is nothing lacking, it is just that it is not just Devashish or Vikramaditya Motwane (directors like these) and their responsibility, but people who are coming after them, it is their responsibility too, to make stories that are far more accessible, and to make films that are far more exciting.

"I also believe that audiences should be encouraged to come and watch the films of these directors," said the National Film Award winner.

Manoj further said that the middle of the road cinema or genres needs a lot of makers.

Social media has turned everyone into health expert: Lara Dutta

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Lara Dutta, who was recently seen in the streaming series 'Charlie Chopra & The Mystery Of Solang Valley', has said that the world of social media and the Internet has made everyone a health expert and that it's a very unsettling precedent.

The actress said that in matters of health one should always consult the professionals who have invested their time and energy in research and have a deep understanding of the subject.

The 'Kaun Banegi Shikharwati' actress attended the Media Roundtable on Empowering Menopause Conversations on Thursday, where she spoke about menstrual health.

She said, "All of us today with everything that we are exposed to, we have all become Google, Instagram doctors. Even for women, we are bombarded constantly with so much information. Today, if you want to know what you're going through even if you mistakenly click on one link, the algorithm will throw up multiple posts about the same thing."



DHARMENDRA CELEBRATES 88TH BIRTHDAY WITH FANS, CUTS 7-TIER CAKE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran Bollywood actor Dharmendra, who was recently seen in 'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani', celebrated his 88th birthday on Friday at his residence in the Juhu area of Mumbai. The actor celebrated the special day with his fans and his elder son Sunny Deol also posed with him for the paparazzi. The actor cut a massive cake, a special gesture from one of his fan clubs. The cake featured the actor's photos and colourful, edible roses.

Dharmendra's younger daughter with actor Hema Malini, Ahana Deol, took to her Instagram, and shared a photo with her dad at midnight and wrote: "Happy birthday to my first love. The strongest & most loving man I know."

Esha Deol posted: "Happy birthday my darling papa, love you.. I pray for you to always be happy, healthy & strong. I just love you so much @aapkadharam #happybirthday #fatherdaughter #happybirthdaydharmendra #loveyou #gratitude."

The Deol family has had a stellar run at the box-office this year as first Dharmendra's 'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani' went on to become a huge hit at the box-office followed by the Sunny Deol-starrer 'Gadar 2' which registered a historic success at the box-office. Sunny's younger son, Rajveer Deol, marked his Bollywood debut with 'Dono'. And now, Bobby Deol is receiving a lot of appreciation to his small yet impactful role in the Ranbir Kapoor-starrer 'Animal'.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Anandita Roy