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More snow in store for Himachal this weekend: Met Office

NORTHERN PLAINS SHIVERING

Shimla | Agencies

If you missed an opportunity to witness the snowfall in Himachal Pradesh, wait for a day more as the Met Office here on Friday has forecast chances of more snowfall in the state this weekend.

However, the state saw a marginal rise in the temperatures due to long sunny conditions. "There are chances of more rainfall and snowfall in the state from the night of February 3," a Met department official said.

He said the western disturbances -- storm systems originating from Caspian Sea and moving across the Afghanistan-Pakistan region -- would remain active again in the region till February 5. Most of the prominent tourist towns like Shimla, Narkanda, Kufri, Manali and Dalhousie, located in mid-hills, may witness more snowfall, he said. Shimla already received the season's first snowfall on February 1.



Another picturesque town Manali, some 250 km from Shimla, also experienced snow on that day. Samsdoh in Lahaul-Spiti district was the coldest place in the state on Friday with a low of minus 3.3 degrees Celsius. Shimla recorded the

minimum temperature at 4.3 degrees Celsius. Thousands of holidaymakers have reached Himachal Pradesh to enjoy the snow and their footfalls are likely to spike this weekend, say members of the hospitality industry. Snow is a big draw for



tourists, especially from the plains of northern India. "We are planning to travel to Shimla to witness the snowy landscape," corporate executive Deepak Goyal from Chandigarh told reporter. The mountain peaks viewed from Shimla's historic Ridge

have been wrapped in a thick white blanket of snow. Popular resort Manali and Shimla, and nearby destinations Kufri and Narkanda are getting a good share of tourists as the hills there have plenty of snowy landscape.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren to seek trust vote on February 5

Ranchi | Agencies

The Champai Soren-led coalition government in Jharkhand will seek trust vote on February 5, minister Alamgir Alam said on Friday after a Cabinet meeting. JMM legislature party leader Champai Soren took oath as the chief minister earlier in the day.

"The floor test to prove majority by the JMM-led alliance in the state will be held on February 5 on the first day of a two-day assembly session," Alam said. The decision was taken in the first cabinet meeting of the govern-



ment, chaired by Chief Minister Champai Soren. Soren was administered the oath of office by Governor C P Radhakrishnan at the Raj Bhavan here. Along with him, senior Congress leader Alamgir Alam and RJD leader Satyanand Bhakta took oath as ministers.

SC ASKS HEMANT SOREN TO APPROACH HC

New Delhi: The

Supreme Court on Friday asked former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren to approach the state high court to challenge his arrest by the



Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam. Declining to entertain the plea filed by Soren directly before the apex court, a special bench presided over by Justice Sanjiv Khanna said: "Go to the High Court. We will not entertain it." "We leave it open to the petitioner to approach the High Court under Article 226 of the Constitution... It would also be open for petitioner to ask for expeditious listing and disposal of the petition," ordered the bench, also comprising Justices M.M. Sundresh and Bela M. Trivedi.

NIGHT TEMPERATURE DROPS SEVERAL NOTCHES BELOW ZERO IN KASHMIR

Srinagar: Weather started clearing in J&K on Friday as minimum temperatures dropped several notches below the freezing point in the Valley. Minimum temperature dropped in all Kashmir districts as Srinagar recorded minus 0.3; Gulmarg minus 12, Pahalgam minus 11.9; and Sonamarg minus 15.1. Leh town in Ladakh region recorded minus 9.4 and Kargil minus 11.5 as the minimum temperature. Jammu city and Katra both recorded 5.7, Batote minus 3.8, Bhandarwah minus 5.2 and Banihal minus 6.8 as the minimum temperature.

JAMMU-SRINAGAR HIGHWAY PARTIALLY RESTORED FOR TRAFFIC

Jammu: Traffic on Jammu-Srinagar national highway was partially restored on Friday afternoon, officials said. Traffic department officials said that traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway was blocked due to intermittent shooting stones on the road in Ramban district. "Traffic was restored on the highway partially at 3 p.m. today. The road is single lane in Sherbibi stretch of the road and drivers are advised to drive cautiously in the area. "Stranded vehicles are now being cleared. Commuters are advised not to undertake the journey either from Jammu or from Srinagar without contacting our control rooms to know about the latest status of the road," an official said.

DELHI RECORDS 12.3 DEGREES CELSIUS MINIMUM TEMP

New Delhi: The national capital on Friday recorded a minimum temperature at 12.3 degrees Celsius, four notches above the seasonal average, the India Meteorological (IMD) Department said. The IMD's forecast for the day showed that the maximum temperature is likely to hover around 19 degrees, with the minimum at around 12 degrees. This morning, Delhi and its neighbouring regions were enveloped by dense fog, causing low visibility and significant disruptions in road, rail, and air travel. The IMD said that a layer of fog shrouded isolated areas of Delhi and East Uttar Pradesh, while dense fog was observed in isolated pockets of Haryana, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand.

Well-orchestrated conspiracy: Hemant Soren

New Delhi: In his petition filed before the Supreme Court, former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren termed his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) as part of a "well-orchestrated conspiracy" ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. Terming the arrest as "illegal", the plea filed by Soren alleged that the ED officials abused their powers for extraneous considerations under the dictates of the Central government as the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) is a prominent opposition party and an active constituent of the opposition INDIA bloc. "The arrest is part of a well-orchestrated conspiracy, which has been given shape at the anvil of the general elections slated in a few months," it said.

Crime Branch team reaches Kejriwal's residence to serve notice

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A team from the Crime Branch of Delhi Police reached the residence of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday to serve him a notice in connection with a case.

However, it is not yet clear as to in connection with which case has the notice been served to the AAP's national convener.

The ED had also issued a fifth notice to Kejriwal for questioning with regard to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. But instead of Kejriwal appearing before the agency, his supporters staged a protest in front of the BJP office here.



As per sources, the Crime Branch team also went to AAP minister Atishi's residence to serve a notice. However, the notices were not accepted at either location. "Atishi was not at home, while Kejriwal was also not at home. The Crime Branch team is likely to come again tomorrow," the sources said.

DOUBT IF CONGRESS WILL GET EVEN '40 SEATS' IN LS POLLS: MAMATA

Kolkata | Agencies

After making it clear that Trinamool Congress will go solo in West Bengal in the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee predicted on Friday that the Congress will pay heavily in terms of seats in the upcoming general elections.

Banerjee also said that she has doubt if Congress will be able to win even 40 seats in the elections. She also said that Congress does not have the strength to take on the BJP in the saffron-ruled states in North India.

Speaking to the mediapersons during her two-day sit-in demonstration against non-payment of central dues



to West Bengal, Banerjee also ridiculed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, without naming him, over the latter's mass reach out exercise during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in the state that moved to Jharkhand on Friday.

Making a direct reference to Rahul Gandhi's interaction with 'bidi' workers in North Bengal, Banerjee said, "One who does not have the minimum knowledge as to how bids are made is now resorting to photo-shoots.

This is the trend and fashion going on now."

She also reiterated that Trinamool Congress alone can resist the BJP in West Bengal. "We had resisted the BJP alone before and we will be doing the same this time as well," she said.

She also accused the Congress of not sending her an official invitation to attend the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra when it entered West Bengal.

"They came to our state but did not inform us even once. The rally entered West Bengal suddenly. I proposed Congress to contest 300 seats and leave the remaining for the regional parties. But it did not agree and instead showed its big-brother attitude," Banerjee said.

Himachal factory fire: 24 workers sustain burn injuries

Chandigarh | Agencies

At least 24 workers of a factory sustained burn injuries after a massive fire broke out on Friday at a cosmetic product manufacturing unit in Himachal Pradesh's industrial hub Baddi in the state's Solan district. The fire incident happened at the 'Aroma Cosmetic' factory in Jharmajri village.

Four of the injured individuals have been referred to the PGI in Chandigarh.

Three women employees, who jumped from the second floor to escape the fire, were injured. Thirty-two people have been rescued. Some people are feared to be still trapped in the factory. The officials said that no loss of life



has been reported so far. The accident spot is some 32 km from Chandigarh. Deputy Commissioner Manmohan Sharma said a team of 40 personnel of the National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) have been deployed to rescue the trapped workers. "An investigation will be conducted to ascertain the cause of fire," he said. Around 50 fire tenders from Punjab and Himachal have been deployed to extinguish the fire. Due to inflammable chemicals, the fire spread rapidly at around 2 p.m.

OVER 200 BJP, AAP WORKERS DETAINED DURING PROTEST IN DELHI

New Delhi: Over 200 BJP and AAP workers were detained on Friday while they were marching towards each other's party offices at Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg. According to police, at 2 pm, around 150 workers of AAP and about 60 BJP workers were detained.

"They have been taken to different police stations," said a senior police official.

Two units of paramilitary forces, consisting of female staff and personnel from Delhi Police, were stationed at DDU Marg equipped with anti-riot gear.

An official said that a large number of personnel were positioned in the vicinity of ITO and DDU Marg. The police officers were equipped with batons to manage and control the protesters.

While AAP is protesting over alleged rigging in Chandigarh Municipal Corporation's mayoral elections, the BJP is protesting against the alleged corruption by the Kejriwal government.

Bail matters ought to be decided as expeditiously as possible: Supreme Court

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Observing that bail matters ought to be decided as expeditiously as possible, the Supreme Court has issued a notice on a plea seeking bail despite the pendency of the matter before the High Court.

A bench of Justices B. R. Gavai and Sanjay Karol said that it could have disposed of the petition filed before the apex court by remanding the matter to the High Court and requesting it to decide the bail application expeditiously.

"However, taking into consideration the fact that the petitioner has been incarcerated in jail for a period of almost eight years, we are inclined to consider the request of the petitioner in this Court itself, despite the pendency of the matter before the High Court," the bench said. The petitioner has approached the apex court



with a grievance that his application for grant of bail is pending for more than six months before the Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court and the same is not being decided on merits. Deprecating the speed at which the High Court is dealing in the matter pertaining to personal liberty of a citizen, the Supreme Court said that the bail matters ought to be decided as expeditiously as possible and issued notice returnable on February 13.

SENSEX ZOOMS 1200 POINTS, NIFTY CROSSES 22K AFTER INTERIM BUDGET

New Delhi: BSE SENSEX has now zoomed more than 1200 points on Friday as markets absorb the Interim Budget 2024-25.

BSE SENSEX is at 72,916.43 points, up 1271.13 points or 1.77 per cent. Powergrid is top gainer up by 5 per cent followed by Infosys up by 3 per cent, NTPC is up 3 per cent, Tech Mahindra is up 3 per cent.

The Nifty crossed the 22k mark. Nifty top gainers are BPCL up 6 per cent, Adani Ports, up by more than 5 per cent. Motilal Oswal Financial Services said in a report that the Interim Union Budget 2024 was presented on 1st Feb'24. Although the Finance Minister had already informed that no "spectacular announcements" are forthcoming, the market participants had some expectations. However, notwithstanding the general elections, the ability of the GoI to resist any populist schemes or incentives is extremely commendable. Not only this, the fact that the GoI has budgeted a fiscal deficit of 5.1 per cent of GDP for FY25 (and lower than budgeted in FY24RE), it is extremely serious about its (tall) task of achieving 4.5 per cent of GDP by FY26. This clearly shows that the GoI is totally committed towards the long-term macro-economic stability, even if it comes at the sacrifice of growth in the short-term, the report said.

Allahabad HC refuses stay on 'puja' in Vyas tehkhana

Prayagraj | Agencies

The Allahabad High Court on Friday refused to allow the Gyanvapi Mosque committee's plea seeking an interim stay on puja being performed in the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi Mosque (known as Vyas Tehkhana).

However, the Court has directed the state government to maintain law and order situation in the area.

Puja inside the Tehkhana began on 31st January, shortly after the Varanasi District Judge passed an order directing the district magistrate to facilitate puja inside the area by making proper arrangements. The district magistrate complied with the order on the same day.

On Thursday, an appeal was moved by the Anjuman



Intezamia Masjid Committee (which manages Gyanvapi mosque) challenging the order of the Varanasi District Court allowing Hindus to perform prayers in the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque (Vyas Ji ka Tehkhana).

The committee also sought a stay on the worship rituals.

In its application, the mosque committee has contended that the administration was acting in 'hot haste' soon after the Varanasi Court's order to allow the

puja at night itself. The application further argues that these actions, occurring in the middle of the night, aimed to pre-empt any legal challenge by the mosque managing committee.

While hearing the matter today, a Bench of Justice Rohit Ranjan Agarwal refused to grant any interim relief to the Mosque Committee as it stressed that it had not challenged Varanasi District Judge's January 17th order, wherein the district magistrate was appointed as a receiver.



GOVT STARTS RETAIL SALE OF BHARAT RICE TO CHECK PRICE RISE, TRADERS ORDERED TO DECLARE RICE STOCKS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Department of Food and Public Distribution on Friday said that in order to manage the overall food inflation and prevent speculation that pushes up prices, the government has decided that stock position of rice/paddy must be declared by wholesalers and retail traders, big chain retailers and millers in all states and union territories.

The department said that these business entities to declare paddy and rice in categories such as broken rice, non-basmati white rice, parboiled rice, basmati rice, and paddy. "The declarations have been updated every Friday on the portal (<https://evegoils.nic.in/rice/login.html>) of Department of Food and Public Distribution. The stock position of rice has to be declared by these entities within 7 days of issue of the order," the department officials said.

They said that it has also been decided to start the retail sale of 'Bharat Rice' to general consumers to check inflationary trends in the food economy.

"In the first phase, 5 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of rice has been allocated for retail sale under 'Bharat Rice' brand through NAFED, NCCF and Kendriya Bhandar. Retail price for sale of Bharat Rice to general consumers will be Rs. 29/kg. Rice will be sold in 5 Kg and 10 Kg Bags. The Bharat Rice will be available for purchase from mobile vans and physical outlets of the three central co-operative agencies to begin with, and it will also be available through other retail chains including e-commerce platforms very soon," the officials said.

They said that the domestic prices of rice are increasing despite a good crop this Kharif, ample stocks with FCI and in the pipeline and various regulations in place on Rice exports.

"The retail prices have increased by 14.51 per cent over the past year. In an effort to curb



the prices of rice, various steps have already been taken by the government," they said.

The officials said that the sufficient stock of good quality Rice is available with FCI which is being offered to traders/wholesalers under OMSS at a reserve price of Rs. 29/Kg.

"In order to increase the sale of rice in the open market, GoI reduced the Reserve Price of rice from Rs. 3100/ Qtl to Rs. 2900/Qtl, and the minimum and maximum quantity of rice was revised to 1 MT and 2000 MT respectively," they said.

The officials said that regular publicity has been done by the FCI regional offices for wider outreach. As a result, the sale of rice has gradually increased.

"Till 31.01.2024, 1.66 LMT rice has been sold in the open market which is the highest

sale in any year under OMSS (D) for rice," the officials said.

The Department of Food and Public Distribution is also maintaining a close watch over the stock position of Wheat to control prices and ensure easy availability in the country. "The All-India average Domestic Wholesale & Retail price of Wheat is showing a decreasing trend over a month and year. Atta (Wheat) prices too, are showing decreasing trend over a week, month and year in the All India average Domestic Wholesale and Retail sections," the officials said.

It said that in order to increase the availability of wheat in the open market and to control the prices of wheat, the Central government has been offloading wheat in the market through weekly e-auction from

28.06.2023. "It has now been decided to enhance the quantity of wheat being offered under OMSS in the weekly auctions to 5 LMT and also increase the lot size to 400 MT," the officials said.

They said that sugar ex-mill prices have decreased by 3.5-4 per cent after start of the crushing season and all India Retail and Wholesale prices of Sugar are stable. "More than 99.9 per cent cane dues have been cleared in the Sugar Season 2022-23 and for current season 80 per cent cane dues have been cleared so far," they said.

They said that the government is also closely monitoring the domestic retail prices of edible oils to ensure that the full benefit of decrease in international prices is passed on to the end consumers.

RBI issues warning against fraud through KYC trick

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Reserve Bank RBI on Friday cautioned the general public against frauds in the name of KYC updation as more incidents are being reported of customers being cheated through this malicious practice. The modus operandi for such frauds usually involves customers receiving unsolicited communications, including phone calls/SMS/emails, through which they are manipulated into revealing personal information, account/login details, or installing unauthorised or unverified apps through links provided in the

messages. Such communications often employ tactics of creating a false urgency and threatening of account freezing/blocking/closure, if the customer fails to comply.

When customers share essential personal or login details, fraudsters gain unauthorised access to their accounts and engage in fraudulent activities. The RBI said in case of financial cyber frauds, members of the public should immediately lodge a complaint on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) or through cybercrime helpline (1930).

- In the event of receiving any request for KYC updation, directly contact their bank/ financial institution for confirmation/ assistance.
- Obtain contact number/customer care phone number of the bank/ financial institution only through its official website/ sources.
- Inform their bank/ financial institution immediately in case of any cyber fraud incident.
- Enquire with their bank branch to ascertain available modes/options for updating KYC details.
- For more details or additional information on the requirements and channels for updation/periodic updation of KYC, please read

paragraph 38 of the RBI Master Direction on KYC dated February 25, 2016, as amended from time to time.

Don'ts

- Do not share account login credentials, card information, PINs, passwords, OTPs with anyone.
- Do not share KYC documents or copies of KYC documents with unknown or unidentified individuals or organizations.
- Do not share any sensitive data/ information through unverified/unauthorised websites or applications.
- Do not click on suspicious or unverified links received in mobile or email.

Rape case against Chinmayanand withdrawn

Shahjahanpur (UP) | Agencies

A special MP/ MLA court in Shahjahanpur has acquitted former Union Minister of State Chinmayanand in a 2011 rape case, observing that it did not find enough evidence against the accused and the main complainant had also turned hostile.

The court has ordered initiation of proceedings against the survivor under CrPC section 344 (trial for giving false evidence). It may be recalled that a disciple of Chinmayanand had filed a complaint at Shahjahanpur Kotwali police station accusing him of raping her in 2011. A chargesheet was sub-



sequently filed in the court in October 2012, in which sections 376 (rape) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC were slapped against him. Om Singh, Chinmayanand's counsel said: "We are happy as justice has

been served. He was innocent. The complainant had clearly mentioned in her application that she had lodged a fake complaint after being pressured by her family."

Patna | Agencies

Four persons of a family in Bihar's Bhagalpur district were badly burnt in an attack early on Friday and are in serious condition, police said.

The victims, including three minor girls and an elderly person were sleeping in the night at their home in Murla village under Ragra police station in Naugachia sub-division in the district. When 8 to 10 persons set them on fire after pouring petrol on their bodies. They also left 5 to 6 petrol bombs at the place in a bid to blow up the house.

The family members, after the fire, raised an alarm and were immediately rescued by the other family members and neighbours and the flames doused before the petrol bomb caught fire.

The victims are identified as Vidyanand Singh, 60, and his three granddaughters Ari Kumari, 12, Bharti Kumari, 9, and Bhawna Kumari, 5.



"The incident occurred at 1.30 am on Friday when 8 to 10 persons on a four wheeler and a bike arrived there and poured petrol on the bodies of my father and my three daughters who were sleeping at the door of the house. They also left 5 petrol bombs to explode in the house. We doused the flame as soon as my daughters and father shouted for help. We managed to douse the flame before the

explosion of petrol bombs," Mukesh Kumar, the father of three minor victims, said. "We rescued them and took them to sub-divisional hospital Naugachia where doctors have referred them to JLN Medical College and Hospital Bhagalpur. After the treatment, my three daughters were referred to the Burns Hospital Bokaro (Jharkhand) while my father is admitted in JLN Medical College and

Hospital Bhagalpur," he added. Following the incident, the victims family members said that the local police arrived at the spot at 7 a.m. Naugachia SP Pura Jha and SDPO Om Prakash also reached the place and investigated the matter. "We have registered an FIR in this matter and are making efforts to identify and arrest the accused," Jha said.

Bride elopes with boyfriend from beauty parlour, groom returns home



Kanpur | Agencies

A bride eloped with her boyfriend from the beauty parlour where she went to get ready for the wedding.

The bride's father has filed an FIR in the matter and police are in search of the woman while the groom and his relatives have returned home.

The incident took place on Tuesday in Chaubeypur village. The bride, accompanied by her friend, went to the beauty parlour to get ready for the ceremony. Dressed in a red outfit, the bride later left for the wedding venue after getting ready.

However, she did not return home and when her enquired about her, they found out that the bride had run away with her boyfriend. Then, they informed the groom about the incident, who, along with the wedding procession, went home.

According to the information, the bride's family has been residing in Lucknow for 25 years, and she was involved in a relationship with a man there. However, her family was not in favour of the relationship and wanted her to get married to someone from their community.

Hence, they went back to their native village Chaubeypur in Kanpur.

ACP Vijay Dhull said that the woman was already in touch with the boy over the phone, and was against getting married as per her family's wishes. Meanwhile, the groom's family said that there was no reason for the bride's side to approach them with the marriage proposal when they already knew she was in a relationship with someone else. They added it would have saved them from humiliation. The bride's family, on the other hand, are unwilling to talk about the incident.

10 reasons why e-cigarettes and vaping devices can trigger serious health issues

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Vaping continues to pose irreversible dangers for society with new-age gateway products using innovative marketing techniques to lure children and youngsters. In today's age of information overload and misinformation, it is extremely vital for citizens to have access to credible and accurate information to ensure they do not fall prey to activities promoted by vested interests.

Mothers Against Vaping, a united front of concerned mothers combating the escalating vaping crisis among our youth, has highlighted 10 major health risks associated with vaping as it seeks to raise awareness about vaping and various health hazards ranging from excessive usage of nicotine to severe lung injury in children. The first risk it has highlighted is that new-age tobacco devices, unlike typical cigarettes, can result in excessive nicotine intake and these devices enable more prolonged usage sessions.

Secondly, there is a prevalent misconception that the vapours emitted from new-age tobacco devices are harmless, but in reality, these emissions consist of a range of harmful substances, including nicotine, diacetyl, which are linked to severe lung injury. The aerosol produced by e-cigarettes contains particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns (PM2.5), notorious for its detrimental impact on respiratory health.

The 2019 e-cigarette or vaping product use-associated lung injury (EVALI) outbreak in the United States



serves as a stark reminder that led to the hospitalisation of numerous Americans, predominantly teenagers and young adults, resulting in enduring lung damage and pulmonary dysfunction for many survivors.

Thirdly, the dangers of New-Age Gateway Devices go beyond just respiratory health issues. E-cigarettes, in particular, harm blood vessels, increasing the risk of heart disease. They are also linked to negative effects on the immune system and reproductive organs.

Fourthly, these devices contribute to environmental issues and consequently harm humans. The components of New-Age Tobacco Devices, including a cartridge, an atomizer, and a battery, contain materials such as metals and ceramics.

Improper disposal of these components contributes to e-waste, pos-

ing environmental hazards. For example, e-cigarette batteries can lead to environmental pollution with heavy metals, seeping into the soil and contaminating groundwater, rivers and lakes. This contamination not only harms the environment but also poses risks to human health, with children being more vulnerable than adults.

The fifth health hazard pertains to mental well-being. Peer-reviewed studies have revealed troubling connections between vaping, nicotine and the exacerbation of symptoms related to depression and anxiety. The findings suggest higher chances for individuals to be diagnosed with depression due to their vaping habits.

Sixthly, the chemicals in these products pose a significant risk to oral health, leading to issues like gum

disease, tooth decay and oral infections. A study by NYU College of Dentistry in February 2022 found that e-cigarettes alter the microbiome, contributing to gum diseases. The microbiome, a diverse community of bacteria and microorganisms in the gum, can be adversely affected by e-cigarette use, intensifying or causing oral health problems.

Seventhly, using these New-Age Tobacco Products during pregnancy poses serious risks to fetal health, significantly increasing the chances of adverse outcomes such as preterm birth, low birth weight, and developmental complications in newborns.

Eighthly, health hazard is that alternative tobacco products could act as a gateway to more severe addictions like cocaine and heroin. Early exposure and addiction to nicotine through these alternatives might pave the way for individuals, especially young users, to experiment with stronger addictive substances, significantly impacting their overall health and well-being.

Ninthly, nicotine exposure from new-age devices during crucial adolescent brain development can have lasting effects on cognition, attention and impulse control. This not only disrupts learning environments but also hampers the cognitive development of students engaging in this harmful behaviour.

Last but not the least, a crucial health hazard posed by these new-age gateway devices is their susceptibility to malfunctions or explosions, leading to severe risks such as burns, facial trauma and tragically even fatalities for users.

DPS RK PURAM BOMB THREAT: NOTHING SUSPICIOUS FOUND, PROBE UNDERWAY, SAYS POLICE



New Delhi: The Delhi Public School in the national capital's RK Puram area on Friday received a bomb threat, after which a search was launched but nothing suspicious has been found, a police official said. Following the bomb threat call received in the morning from school management, the school was immediately vacated and a search operation, with bomb detection team and sniffer dogs, was launched, said the official. "School and hostel have been thoroughly searched by BDT, and nothing found suspicious by teams. Further investigation into the matter is underway," said the Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Rohit Meena. Meanwhile, a video of the school shows students being asked to vacate the school immediately. "Students can also be seen coming out of the school in a queue," as per the video. In September last year, an email about a bomb being planted on the premises of the Delhi Police School in southwest Delhi's RK Puram was received, however, it later turned out to be a hoax.



KEN-BETWA LINK PROJECT WILL SPEED UP, BUNDELKHAND WILL BE BENEFITTED

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Bundelkhand in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh has been identified as an area of drought, poverty and migration. The main reason for this has been water crisis. But the Ken-Betwa Link Project coming into existence is going to write the story of changing the image and destiny of this area.

Ken-Betwa are two such rivers, which pass through many districts of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Keeping this in mind that the water of these rivers can be utilized as much as possible, the Ken-Betwa Link Project is being implemented under the 'River Linking Scheme'.

The ambitious project of the Central Government is worth more than Rs 44,500 crore. The central government will give 90 percent of the funds in this project. Whereas, five percent amount each has to be given to Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh governments.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has recently announced that the bhoomi puja of this project will be done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi this month.



Nine districts of Madhya Pradesh will benefit from this project. Whereas, people of five districts of Uttar Pradesh will also get benefits.

Once this project comes into existence, the water crisis problem of Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur, Panna, Damoh, Vidisha, Sagar, Shivpuri, Datia and Raisen of Madhya Pradesh will be solved. At the same time, Banda, Mahoba, Jhansi and Lalitpur districts of Uttar Pradesh will also benefit.

If we look at the increase in irrigation area due to the Ken-Betwa Link Project, then Ken Basin will irrigate 2 lakh 27 thousand hectares in Uttar Pradesh and 4 lakh 47 thousand hectares in Madhya Pradesh.

Whereas, there is a possibility of irrigation in 2 lakh 6 thousand hectares in Madhya Pradesh from Betwa Basin.

Sources say that discussions have been held with officials of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Center to remove the obstacles coming in the way of this project. It is expected that after the tenders are received, the construction work will start from the month of June.

Local bodies including municipal corporations will be made more empowered in the state: Chief Minister Dr. Yadav

► CHIEF MINISTER INAUGURATED THE NEWLY CONSTRUCTED COUNCIL AUDITORIUM OF INDORE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION. ANNOUNCEMENT OF RS 50 CRORE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF BUILDING OF INDORE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has said that municipal corporations and other local bodies in the state will be made more empowered. This will give new momentum and new direction to development. He said that efforts will also be made to make local bodies financially self-reliant. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav announced Rs 50 crore to complete the work of the under construction building of Indore Municipal Corporation.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that the residents of Indore are fortunate that their city is situated between two Jyotirlingas. There have been efficient and hardworking administrators like Ahilya Mata in Indore. He also men-

tioned the contribution made by Ahilya Mata and Holkar dynasty in the development of Indore. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Ahilya Mata has a special contribution in the development of Indore. Mata Ahilya has also got special development work done in other cities and religious places. We should take inspiration from them. Dr. Yadav said that it is a matter of pride to name the newly constructed council auditorium of Indore Municipal

Corporation after former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Late Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Vajpayee glorified the democratic system and established high ideals. We should take inspiration from them. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Madhya Pradesh will be made the number one state of the country. He said that local bodies have an important role in development.

In another event, Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has a campaign will

be launched enlisting greater public participation for the conservation of ponds and water resources across the state. He said that efforts will be made to get ponds of Indore and other wetland areas designated as Ramsar sites. Dr. Mohan Yadav India's philosophy holds that all creatures, rivers, mountains and hills are manifestation of Almighty. He said that Nobel laureate late Shri Hargobind Khurana proved that plants have life. It is a common belief in India that trees and plants too have life. Today we have enough scientific evidence. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav was addressing a programme organized at Ramsar Site Sirpur in Indore on World Wetlands Day 2024. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav inaugurated an exhibition of various materials and products obtained from the wetlands and appreciated outstanding work in the field. He expressed concern that natural resources got polluted. Sirpur pond, built 300 years ago in Indore, was supplying drinking water. Following change in lifestyle household wastes have polluted many water resources resulting in ecological imbalances besides threatening trees, plants and birds. The water resources need to be conserved at all cost. Yashwant Sagar was already a Ramsar site and Sirpur got second. Now efforts for Indore to be designated as Ramsar City are a welcome step.

Cough syrup worth lakhs containing codeine seized in Madhya Pradesh



Team Absolute | Bhopal

A large consignment of cough syrup containing codeine has been seized in Madhya Pradesh, the value of which is said to be more than Rs 25 lakh. First cough syrup was caught in Maihar and its main supplier was caught in Bhopal. According to the information received from the Crime Branch of Bhopal Police, cough syrup was being taken from Bhopal to Rewa in a

luxury car, when the police of Maihar and Amdara searched the vehicles, a large quantity of banned cough syrup was recovered in one car. The accused who was caught by the police revealed that he was bringing cough syrup from Bhopal. Addicts use cough syrup containing codeine as an addiction. This is why there is a ban on the sale of this type of cough syrup. At the same time, drug sellers earn a lot of profit by

selling this cough syrup. Deputy Commissioner of Police Shruti Kirti Somvanshi has confirmed the seizure of cough syrup. He told that on the basis of information given by the driver of the car caught in Maihar, the Crime Branch of Bhopal took action and raided a house in Shahjahanabad area here and a large quantity of cough syrup was recovered. In this case, the police has arrested a youth named Ankit.

Anganwadi workers and assistants have not been paid

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Anganwadi workers and assistants of the Women and Child Development Department have not received salaries for three months. Former CM Kamal Nath has cornered the BJP government regarding this.

Due to lack of budget in the Women and Child Development Department of Madhya Pradesh, Anganwadi workers and assistants have not received salaries for three months. At the same time, supervisor and CDPO are also not getting honorarium for two months.

The reason for this is said to be lack of budget in the department. At the same time, the Finance Department has written to the Cabinet for approval to give the salary for the item for which the money has been kept. This is the reason why the salaries of Anganwadi



workers, assistants, supervisors and CDPOs of the department across the

state are stuck. At the same time, the officials of the department in this mat-

ter say that the process of paying salaries is going on. Everyone will be paid soon. Former Chief Minister Kamal Nath has raised questions on the government regarding this matter. He wrote on social media that Yatra Naryastu Pujyante Ramante Tattra Devta. That is, where women are worshipped, the gods reside there. This is the eternal proclamation of our Indian culture. But the BJP government of Madhya Pradesh has sworn that women will not be able to live a normal life, let alone respect them in any way. More than 60,000 Anganwadi workers and assistants working in 35 districts of the state have not received honorarium for the last 3 months. On one hand, the Central Government is talking big about Anganwadi workers and assistants in the budget, while on the other hand, it is depriving them of their basic rights in Madhya Pradesh.

BJP's homework intensifies for Lok Sabha elections in MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In Madhya Pradesh, BJP is doing homework regarding the Lok Sabha elections and now it is being expedited. In this sequence, all the big leaders of BJP are going to gather in Bhopal. Seven clusters have been formed for the 29 Lok Sabha seats of the state and their responsibility has been assigned to prominent leaders of the state. Not only this, Dr. Mahendra Singh and Satish Upadhyay have been made state in-charge for the elections. Apart from this, National Organization General Secretary BL is responsible for every political activity of the

state. Santosh and co-organization general secretary Shiv Prakash are also keeping an eye on it. The first major meeting of leaders regarding the Lok Sabha elections is going to be held in Bhopal on Saturday. Apart from the cluster in-charge, prominent leader and state organization head Vishnu Dutt Sharma and Chief Minister Mohan Yadav will also be present in this meeting. BJP sources say that in this meeting, leaders associated with power and organization will prepare the strategy for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections and will also discuss other preparations. Also, a strategy

will be made as to how to work at the booth level. In view of the preparations for the Lok Sabha elections, BJP has divided 29 Lok Sabha seats into seven clusters. These include former minister in-charge of Gwalior Chambal Narottam Mishra, in-charge minister of Indore Kailash Vijayvargiya, former minister in-charge of Sagar cluster Bhopendra Singh, in-charge of Rewa Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla, in-charge of Jabalpur Rural Development Minister Prahlad Patel, in-charge minister of Bhopal Vishwas Sarang and Ujjain. Deputy Chief Minister Jagdish Deora has been made in-charge.

Tapti - Ganga Express was about to be robbed, nabbed by GRP police before the incident

Team Absolute | Katni

On the intervening night of January 31, three-four persons were planning to rob the Tapti Ganga Express going towards Jabalpur in the bushes near Khirhani Gate, Outer Katni, information about which was received by the GRP police from an informer.

As per the information received, the police took immediate action along with its police force. At the specified place, among the bushes, three-four persons were talking among themselves about the arrival of the Taptiganga train and committing robbery with the passengers by boarding the train. Those who were seen were surrounded and caught by the

persons already formed. Among the arrested accused, Vivek alias Bhalu Sahu, Sumit alias Gudakhu Nishad, Jai alias Jagga Nishad and Govinda Nishad gathered among the bushes at night and boarded the train when it slowed down on the outskirts of Tapti Ganga and stole the luggage of the passengers and the train. They were gathering together and planning a robbery. When the accused were searched, two screwdrivers, a hacksaw blade, key chain, pliers and a chain cutter were found. All the accused were arrested. The accused have admitted to having committed many incidents in the past also. Accused Jai alias Jagga Nishad, on 07.10.23, traveling in train Mahanagari Express

at Katni Khirhani Outer, killed Ravi Prakash, resident of village Baaki police station, Sikar district, Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh. Admitted to stealing earrings, silver chain, silver anklets, silver waist belt of the child, a mobile phone and two thousand rupees in cash from the wife's bag. The accused told that he sold the stolen item of jewelry across the river to Soni Jewellers for Rs 8,000. At the behest of the accused, stolen gold and silver jewelry worth Rs 31,600 was recovered from the possession of Soni Jewellers' owner Santosh Soni, father Bihari Lal Soni, resident of Masuraha Ward. All the accused were presented before the Honorable Court from where all were sent to jail!

Complex cases of Severe and Acute malnourished children are being managed better in the smart unit of AIIMS Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Severe and Acute Malnutrition Advanced Treatment and Referral (SMART) Unit was established in the year 2017 with a capacity of 20 beds under the aegis of the Department of Pediatrics through tripartite collaboration of AIIMS, Bhopal, National Health Mission Madhya Pradesh, and UNICEF Madhya Pradesh. This unit works as the top advanced center in the state for the management of Severe and Acute malnourished children. Children referred from all the nutritional rehabilitation centers of the state with very complex problems are diagnosed and treated in this unit. During the year 2023 a total of 455 Severe and Acute malnourished children were treated under the SMART Unit, in which 129 Severe and Acute malnourished children from various nutritional rehabilitation centers of the state were referred to the SMART Unit for advanced diagnosis and treatment, while 329 Severe and Acute malnourished children were directly admitted by the emergency department and OPD of AIIMS. Among the children admitted in one year, there were 271 boys and 184 girls. Head of Department Prof. (Dr.) Shikha Malik told that under the direction of Executive Director Prof. (Dr.) Ajai Singh there has been an



increase in advanced resources and effective improvement in quality treatment resulting enhanced popularity of AIIMS Bhopal. Now in serious cases, families prefer to admit their child in AIIMS. In the last one year, the highest numbers of cases were of anemia along with severe and extreme malnutrition, while at second place were cases of congenital defects, and at third place were cases of respiratory infections. From the inception of the unit till December 2023, about 2097 severely and severely malnourished children were admitted, of which about 493 children were less than six months of age. Nodal Officer of Smart Unit Prof.

(Dr.) Bhavana Dhingra said that due to the adverse impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, rate of admission of Severe and acute malnourished children had been reduced to almost half. There has been an improvement in the number of children admitted in the last year 2023. Prof. Dhingra said that the treatment of Severe and Acute malnourished children in the SMART Unit is completely free and the child's mother or father or caregiver will be given Rs 120 per day as salary reimbursement per the National Health Mission honorarium and Rs. 1400 as travel allowance (to patients coming from outside the district) from the National Health Mission, Madhya Pradesh during the admission period of the child.

Along with diagnosis and treatment of complications in Severe and Acute malnourished children, knowledge enhancing sessions are organized for the mothers or caregivers of the children on important aspects of child rearing, health and hygiene etc. They are taught to make nutritious food and toys. So that after the discharge of the child, the needs for the overall development of the children can be met at home. Here toys are available according to the age of the children which along with entertainment enhances cognitive behavior and develops creativity in them.



EDITOR'S SPECS

People queue up to buy property in Ayodhya

Home is where Ram is -- that is what people now believe. According to official sources, people -- both Indians and NRIs -- are now queuing up to buy property in the holy city that has come to be known as 'Hindu Vatican' after the opening of the Ram temple last month. Superstar Amitabh Bachchan made headlines last month when he bought a plot of land in Ayodhya. "Three NRIs from Thailand have approached the Ayodhya Development Authority to buy five acre plots. Earlier, delegations from Mexico, South Korea and Sri Lanka had visited the city to explore the options of buying land in Ayodhya, which has undergone a massive makeover because of infrastructure upgrade in view of Ram temple and state government's commitment to make it a global destination," said an official. Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA) secretary Satyendra Singh said: "A group of three individuals from Thailand came to me seeking a land parcel measuring at least 5-acre. We have forwarded their letter to officials of the housing and development board." As aggregating a big chunk of land within the city limits is difficult, those looking for large land parcels are being directed to Navya Ayodhya, a 1407-acre green-field township being developed by Awas Vikas Parishad. Singh said request letters from the group from Sri Lanka and Thailand were received recently while those looking for limited land are being entertained by the development authority. Both the officials clarified that formal requests by any country are routed through the Union government and hence those posing as representatives of the countries have been asked to provide formal authorisation letters through the embassies.

WHEN STARS DON'T SELL, STAR RATINGS DO

Vinod Mirani

I am not sure if film critics qualify to be called journalists. Maybe they did very, very long ago. Because, reviewing films was a part of their multiple other duties. One of the journalists on the roster was assigned the task because he was either a movie buff and threw around his 'gyan' about movies, or just because he was the editor's favourite. The reviewer's job was somewhat of a recreational break because it involved watching a movie for free and gorging on decent snacks during the interval. Press screenings or press shows were organised a couple of days before a film's theatrical release and that was the privilege a film critic enjoyed and boasted of. Everybody wanted to know from the critics how good or bad the film was!

There was no system of outsourcing film reviews as one of the staffers of a newspaper or magazine was assigned the role. This was the era of only the print media. Critics from reputed publications were expected to be honest and they did not let us down.

But, then, how many people read English publications in those days! So, the influence of the reviewers was really felt in B-rung publications and also the vernacular media.

This influence, though, came from the headline of the review being grabbed by either the male or female lead of the film, the PROs, or public relations men, of both approaching the reviewer with sealed envelopes. The weight of the envelope decided who grabbed the headline.

This was so because no one expected people to read a complete film review. (That has not changed even today.) Only the first and last paragraph of a film review was read.

The press screenings were held in what in those days were known as the Preview Theatres, with a seating capacity for not more than 50 people. It was a funny system because the vernacular media occupied front rows while the English and other reputed media houses used be assigned the rows behind. This system was not designed or imposed by anybody. It just so happened that those who

occupied the front row were the first to reach the refreshment area during interval!

How did this grabbing of the headline in a four/five column film review help an actor? Really speaking, it did not. There were two kinds of audiences which, I think, still holds true. There were these first-day-first-show types and those who took in a film within its opening weekend. A film with a reasonable star cast got that benefit. The rest did not matter. The second kind was the one that went by the word of mouth. Reviews? Who cared!

A film was worth watching only if the opinions were favourable, for it used to be a family outing. 'Paisa vasool' was the operative phrase in those days.

The opinions expressed in the reviews and the actors who grabbed the headlines were of interest only to the stars and the critics.

If no one cared for reviews and what the critics had to say about a movie when the money was scarce and movie outings were an occasion for most families to cherish together, what was the purpose of courting film reviewers? The film stars lived in their own world, nursed massive egos and the reviews were just an ego booster.

If the stars of yore loved to see themselves being praised in film reviews, it was simply that and did not mean they were trying to fool or deceive anybody for personal profit. Because, finally, the box office figures spoke louder than the reviewers.

I keep using the word reviewer because they were not critics, and possessed no specialised knowledge of filmmaking, such as the number of frames that rolled in a second! They took in a film, and liked or disliked it like any other layman.

A critic is one who does the critical analyses of a work of creativity. Instead, what the reviewers did was to start with a brief paragraph on the film and filled the rest of the column with a synopsis of film's story.

The scene today is pathetic. Let alone critics, the reviewers also come with riders. The review has to be favourable. Conditions apply. Otherwise, no invite. The production house and its PR machinery decide



what you are expected to write. As a result, you will see that the vocabulary is limited and the same phrases are repeated when extracts of the reviews are published to attract more viewers. Take for instance the advertisement for 'Fighter'. The film was released on January 25, but and on 26th, its ad carried 12 media comments. The word 'Brilliant' is used in three and word 'Cinematic blah blah' twice.

Other excerpts carry equally eloquent words of praise. You will not find this language when you read the review. These are quotations especially drafted for use in advertisements. The press screenings are no longer small preview theatre affairs. They need a multiplex auditorium seating 150 people at the least. Anybody and everybody has turned into a film reviewer. After all,

how much does it cost to register a portal? Say, Rs 150? And, how much for a blue tick on X? Barely Rs 600. That investment, I am sure, is recovered after one review.

The price of each reviewer is fixed and the old hands, the so-called trade analysts, cost a bit more. But you are required to praise just about everything in the movie and give it three to five stars; nothing less is acceptable. In most cases, the number of stars is dictated by PR companies.

Besides the money, what does the reviewer get? It is like this. For starters, a free movie outing along with samosa, popcorn and cola. Besides, the stars given to a film, accompanied by the name of the reviewer and of the

published in the newspaper ads and social media inserts by the PR companies.

This, their names being in print, they believe, is an endorsement of their being qualified film reviewers / critics / experts! It is a kick.

When did this business of reviews start becoming so blatant? From small-time film reviewers pocketing envelopes, the system has moved to media house managements, which also have got into the business of selling star ratings along with film reviews. The four-or-five-stars ratings, though, came with much bigger price tags.

With the onset of the digital media, it has become everybody's business. The erstwhile gate crashers at press screenings spent a few hundred to become owners of websites. Getting listed on the invitees' lists of PR companies was easy and then they were ready to review films.

Now, what this shameless soliciting has done is that when the PR machinery approaches the one or two remaining veteran journalists who review films, they are approached with offers to talk business.

How does this false notion of great reviews and highly inflated box-office figures help a filmmaker? After all, he is the one paying everybody, from the PR company to the reviewers!

It does not help him in any way except in wasting some more money. For, the people don't buy these reviews and the cinemas continue to remain empty. Yes, it does help the stars. It helps them because the outside world, mainly the advertising world, believes in the reviews and figures and the stars get multiple more assignments. That is how they mint money. Take, for example, Shah Rukh Khan, who was said to be on his last legs, but now has ten more endorsements post the social media blitz about the money his films 'Pathaan' and 'Jawan' made!

As things stand, the production houses have more faith in the stars they buy from film reviewers than the stars in their films!

international

BIDEN ADMIN IS CLOSE TO STRIKE IRAN-BACKED MILITANTS: US DEFENCE SECY

T. N. Ashok | Washington

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin has scotched reports and uncertainties coming out of his recent health condition and surgery as he was backing the Biden administration's reportedly closer move to a deadly drone strike as a strong response to the Jordan attack that killed three US troops.

Austin, who faced reporters for the first time since he was hospitalised on January 1 due to complications from prostate cancer treatment, addressed questions about his failure to notify the president of his condition.

He apologised for how he handled communications around the cancer diagnosis.

"I want to be crystal clear. We did not handle this right. And I did not handle this right," he said during his first press conference in months.

"I should have told the president about my cancer diagnosis. I should have also told my team and the American public, and I take full responsibility," Austin said adding, "I apologize to my teammates and to the American people."



He faced questions that were divided between potential responses to the deadly drone attack and his handling of the medical condition. Biden Reaches Decision on Response to Drone Attack: Austin said that he was still working through leg pain and that he is undergoing physical therapy. But

he said that "no one" recognises what a demanding job the position is more than him as he is likely eager to set aside health concerns ahead of any Pentagon response to the attack.

He couldn't put his recovery timeline in terms of days or weeks, saying improvements will be "incremental." "I won't be ready for the Olympics, but I'll improve," Austin was quoted by the US News and World report as saying.

Austin's reassurances come as developments this week hinted that a US response to the drone attack in Jordan is imminent.

CBS News reported on Thursday that US officials have approved plans "for a series of strikes over a number of days against targets - including Iranian personnel and facilities - inside Iraq and Syria."

Weather will be a big factor in determining when the strikes will take place, CBS News reported.

Earlier this week, Biden said that he knew how he wanted his administration to respond to the attack. And Austin on Thursday said it was "time to take away even more capability than we've taken in the past" from Iran-backed militias.

Toronto | Agencies

Gunshots were fired at the house of a Sikh activist related to pro-Khalistani leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a designated terrorist in India, who was shot dead outside a Sikh temple in the Canadian province of British Columbia last year.

No injuries were reported in the incident, which occurred just after 1:20 am on Thursday at a South Surrey home located near the 2800 block of 154 Street, the Surrey Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said.

Moninder Singh, a spokesperson for the B.C. Gurdwaras Council identified the house owner as Simranjeet Singh, a friend of Nijjar, the CBC news channel reported.

He added that the overnight attack nearly claimed the life of Simranjeet's six-year-old child.

According to CBC, a car was heavily damaged in gunfire, and there were multiple bullet



holes in the house itself. Investigators with the Surrey RCMP's Major Crime Section "believe this was an isolated incident" but did not confirm how many shots were fired into the home. Corporal Sarbjit Sangha said officers have spoken to the neighbours and witnesses, and are currently reviewing CCTV footage to find out more about the shooting. "The investigation is in, still, very early stages so the motive of this shooting has not been determined as of this time," Sangha told CBC News.

Israel's army to reach Rafah to dismantle Hamas brigades: Defence Minister Yoav Gallant

Tel Aviv | Agencies

Israel Defense Minister Yoav Gallant has said that the Israel forces would soon reach Rafah border and eliminate Hamas units in the border areas.

In a statement late Thursday night, Gallant said that the ongoing operations have severely weakened the terror group's ability to wage war.

He said that the fire power and force displayed by the Israel army so far during the war has put huge pressure on Hamas, forcing it to agree to release hostages it held during October 7 attack. The Israel Defense Minister, considered a hawk in Israel cabinet, said that Hamas' Khan Younis Brigade had boasted that it would stand against the IDF, but it is falling apart. After completing the mission in Khan Younis, the IDF would reach Rafah and eliminate everyone there who is a terrorist



and attacking Israel.

Gallant had visited the IDF's 98th division command in Khan Younis on Wednesday and had addressed troops. Addressing troops, the defense minister said: "IDF's operations in Khan Younis were 'progressing with impressive results,' and that it was 'much more difficult for Hamas.'" He said: "They (Hamas) don't have weapons, ammunition, ability to treat the wounded, they have 10,000 dead terrorists (throughout Gaza) and another 10,000 wounded who are not functioning."

Four Indian students dead in US: Angry netizens call for travel advisory

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Four Indian students have died in quick succession in the US, sparking fears regarding the safety and security of those studying abroad, and angry netizens calling for a travel advisory.

The most recent reported case was of Shreyas Reddy Benigeri, a student of Lindner School of Business in Cincinnati, on Thursday after the deaths of Purdue University's Neel Acharya, MBA student Vivek Saini in Georgia, and University of Illinois' Akul B Dhawan.

Announcing Benigeri's death, the Indian Consulate in New York said that a police investigation is underway even as calls for an advisory for



Indian students grew louder among netizens. "Deeply saddened by the unfortunate demise of Shreyas Reddy Benigeri, a student of Indian origin in Ohio. Police investigation is underway. At this stage, foul play is not suspected," the Consulate said in a post on X.

The Consulate further said it is in touch with the Benigeri family and is extending all possible assistance to them.

"MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) needs to issue an advisory for Indian students on keeping them safe in the US. Just shipping their remains to India is not their sole job," Debashish Sarkar, a user on X, wrote in response to the Consulate's post.

Calling the US an "increasingly becoming an unsafe place for Indians", X user Sonam Mahajan wrote: "It's high time

India issued a travel advisory against the US for Indians looking to move to the country for both higher education and work opportunities".

"India should perhaps issue travel advisory for Indian students wanting to study in US," another user Rakesh Bakshi wrote, while many others urged External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to take swift action.

'We work closely with India on our most vital priorities': US

Washington | Agencies

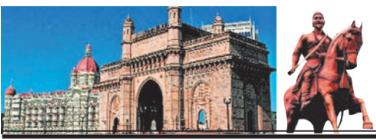
Reiterating that its partnership with India is one of the most consequential relationships, the US has said it is working closely with the country on "most vital priorities".

The remarks by State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller came hours after the Biden administration notified the US Congress on Thursday of its decision to sell 31 armed drones to India.

"I would say that our partnership with India is one of our most consequential relationships. We work closely with India on our most vital priorities," State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters at his daily news

briefing on Thursday.

Wishing outgoing Indian Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu on his future endeavors, Miller said that the US looks forward to welcoming his replacement. "We have had a close working relationship with the ambassador, have been able to work with him on a number of those shared priorities, including the crucial role India plays in ensuring a free, open Indo-Pacific that is connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient. We wish him well in his future endeavors and look forward to welcoming his replacement," Miller said. The spokesperson also informed that Secretary of State Antony Blinken and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar share a "close working relationship".



BMC presents Rs 59.95K cr budget - highest ever, with a 'green component'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) here on Friday presented a Rs 59,954.75 crore budget for 2024-2025, its highest ever, and 10.50 per cent higher than the previous fiscal's Rs 54,256.07 crore, with a 'green component' but no new major infrastructure project was proposed. In the budget, BMC Commissioner I.S. Chahal said there will be a capital expenditure of Rs 31,774.59 crore and a revenue expenditure of Rs 28,121.94 crore. The actual revenue income for 2022-2023 was Rs 28,693.30, the budget estimates of revenue income for 2023-2024 was Rs 33,290.03 crore, which was revised to Rs 32,897.68 crore -- a fall of Rs 392.35 crore. The actual income received till December 31, 2023 was Rs 19,231.55



crore, the estimated revenue income for the current year is proposed at Rs 35,749.03 crore -- which is Rs 2,459 crore higher than the budget estimates of last year. The country's biggest and richest civic body's major sources of revenue income estimates are the current year (2024-2025) are -- Grant-in-Aid for Octroi compensation Rs 13,331.63 crore, Property Tax Rs 4,950 crore, DP Department income Rs 5,800 crore, Interest on Investments Rs 2,206.30 crore and Water & Sewerage Charges Rs 1,923.19 crore. The state government owes the BMC an amount of Rs 8,936.64 crore till December 2023 under various heads, reimbursement of Rs 2,037.42 crore and Rs 2,119.26 crore for expenditure during the Covid-19 pandemic from the State Disaster Response Fund.

Maratha quotas: Jarange-Patil warns of fresh stir, hunger strike from Feb 10



Team Absolute | Jalna

Shivba Sanghatana President Manoj Jarange-Patil on Friday threatened a fresh agitation and hunger-strike from February 10 if the Kunbi Caste certificates are not issued to the Marathas, enabling them to get quotas under the OBC category. His latest warning came in a terse X post at dawn, barely a week after the government issued a draft notification on his major demand of 'Sage-Soyare' (family bloodline) eligibility for the quotas. "On this issue (Sage-Soyare), the stand of the government seems doubtful. They must clarify their stance or I shall launch another hunger strike and agitation

from next Saturday (February 10)," Jarange-Patil told media persons. The new ultimatum came a day after Jarange-Patil stepped in his home for the first time since he launched agitation in August 2023 - after nearly 155 days - and was accorded a tearful but warm welcome by his wife and minor kids. Last week while calling off his siege plans for Mumbai, Jarange-Patil had declared that the movement for quotas had not ended, but put off temporarily to enable the government complete the work of issuing the Kunbi Caste documents to eligible Marathas. The government's draft notification - which Chief Minister Eknath Shinde

handed over to Jarange-Patil in Navi Mumbai and ended his hunger strike - has created much heart-burn among the OBC sections in the state, including the ruling Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party-Nationalist Congress Party-AP alliance. The draft note, symbolically dated January 26, has defined 'Sage-Soyare' which includes relatives of the applicant's father, grandfather, great-grandfather and earlier generations out of marriage within the same case. However, the OBC groups, including NCP-AP Minister Chhagan Bhujbal, have opposed this as a backdoor entry to Marathas in the OBC reservation which would not stand legal scrutiny.

Man arrested for killing son, over complaints from school



Team Absolute | Pune

A man was arrested in Maharashtra's Solapur for allegedly killing his 14-year-old son with a sodium nitrate-laced drink due to frustration and anger over his behaviour, a police official said on Friday. Accused Vijay Battu (43) has claimed he was angry as there were constant complaints from school about Vishal Battu, while other issues included the victim watching explicit content on his phone, neglecting studies and picking fights with his sister, Inspector Ajay Jagtap of Jodhavi police station said. "On January 13, Vijay and his wife Kirti lodged a missing person complaint after Vishal did not return home. His body was discovered on the same day by the road near Tuljapur Naka, after which an accidental death case was registered." "However, we sensed some foul play. His father Vijay's behaviour was also suspicious. He was taken in for questioning, during which he confessed to giving his son a cold drink laced with sodium nitrate and then abandoning the body near Tuljapur Naka," the official said. Vijay Battu was arrested on January 29 and has been remanded in police custody, Senior Inspector Rajendra Karantok said.

"Election Is Nearby...": Sharad Pawar's nephew after probe agency questions him for 8 hours



Team Absolute | Mumbai

After appearing before the Enforcement Directorate in connection with an alleged money laundering case, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Rohit Pawar claimed a perceived political motive behind the timing of the inquiry by the ED. Rohit Pawar, who is the grand-nephew of party supremo Sharad Pawar, expressed his concerns, alleging a pattern of probes selectively targeting opposition leaders. Speaking to the media, Rohit Pawar said, "Election is nearby, so people feel that these proceedings against opposition leaders are because of that... The probe is happening against only opposition leaders." "ED has sought some information on February 8, someone from my office can go and give it to them. I have got a hint that I might be called against on February 12 or 13", he added. Pawar was summoned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), for questioning on Thursday as part of an alleged money laundering probe. The probe is in connection with the Maharashtra State Cooperative (MSC) Bank scam case that relates to the alleged fraudulent disbursement of loans amounting to 25,000 crores. Meanwhile, NCP supporters initiated a hunger strike demonstration outside the NCP headquarters in Mumbai to express their opposition to the investigations conducted by the central agency. Earlier on January 24, ED had

interrogated Rohit Pawar for about 10 hours in the money laundering case and had called him for interrogation again on February 1. After undergoing extensive questioning by the Enforcement Directorate on January 24, NCP leader Rohit Pawar criticized the central government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He emphasized that the NCP would persist in its ongoing opposition and resistance against the government. "We always fight against this government and agencies. I have submitted all necessary documents to ED and I have been summoned on February 1 by them. I will go again," said Pawar while speaking to the reporters. MSC Bank scam amounting to 25,000 crores triggered the filing of a PIL Petition in the Bombay High Court by four persons. The PIL shed light on the alleged modus operandi of the fraud. In the petition, it was alleged that some sugar mills defaulted on the loans, which were given without due diligence. Those sugar mills were attached by the MSC banks and auctioned to various office bearers of the bank and politicians. Acting on the PIL the Bombay High Court ordered the registration of a case. The Economic Offences Wing (EOW), which is under the Maharashtra government, investigated the case. When EOW filed a closure report in 2020 in the Bombay Session Court, ED filed an intervention petition against the closure report and started an investigation.

Western Railway to operate jumbo block on Sunday

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Western Railway (WR) has announced that it will operate a Jumbo Block on Sunday, February 4, 2024, to facilitate essential maintenance work on tracks, signaling, and overhead equipment. Chief Public Relations Officer of Western Railway, Sumit Thakur, in a statement said that the block will be implemented on the up fast line between Borivali and Andheri stations and on the down fast line between Goregaon and Borivali stations, for five hours from 10 am to 3 pm. "During the block period, all up fast line trains will be diverted to operate on the up slow line between Borivali and Andheri stations. Simultaneously, all down fast line trains will be rerouted to the down slow line between Andheri/Goregaon and Borivali stations." As a consequence of the Jumbo Block, cer-



tain up and down suburban services are expected to be canceled for the duration of the maintenance activity. Additionally, specific Borivali and Andheri trains will terminate their journeys at Goregaon on the Harbour line. The spokesperson advised the commuters to check detailed information available with the concerned Station Masters to stay informed about the alterations and adjustments made to the train schedules during this maintenance period.

No Court relief to Kangana Ranaut in defamation case filed by Javed Akhter

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Friday dismissed actor Kangana Ranaut's plea seeking a stay on the proceedings of a defamation complaint filed against her by lyricist Javed Akhter. A single bench of Justice P D Naik said the trial in the complaint filed by Javed Akhter had already commenced, and hence, the relief sought by Kangana Ranaut could not be granted at this stage. Last month, the actor filed a petition in the high court seeking a stay on Akhter's criminal defamation complaint filed in 2020 and prayed for the case to be heard along with the cross-complaint she subsequently filed against him. "The trial in the complaint by Akhter has already commenced. The applicant (Ranaut) has preferred this application at a belated stage. Akhter's complaint is first in point of time and process (notice) has been issued. Considering the factual matrix, no relief can be granted," the court said. While the defamation case Akhter filed against Ranaut is ongoing before the magistrate in Andheri, the sessions court has stayed the latter's complaint against the lyricist. Ranaut, in her petition, stated that both cases had their genesis in a meeting (between Ranaut and Akhter) in 2016, and hence, they should be tried together. The lyricist opposed the petition and, in an affidavit through his advocate



Jay Bharadwaj, said that Ranaut has not challenged any order passed by the magistrate's court and has, without any basis, sought a stay on the proceedings. Akhter had alleged that it was an attempt to delay the proceedings on his defamation complaint. In his complaint, the lyricist had claimed that Ranaut defamed and damaged his "immaculate reputation" by dragging his name into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death in her interview with a news channel in July 2020. In 2021, Ranaut hit back by filing a counter-complaint against Akhter before a magistrate's court, alleging criminal intimidation and insult to modesty. The actor had alleged that during her meeting with the lyricist at his residence in 2016, he had criminally intimidated her demanding that she apologise to a co-star.

Chhagan Bhujbal junks claims of being sidelined in party, says no proposal to join BJP

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra minister and senior Ajit Pawar-led NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal on Friday dismissed claims of being sidelined within the party, an ally of the ruling coalition, despite criticising the state government's handling of the Maratha quota agitation. According to the news agency, Chhagan Bhujbal, the Food, Civil Supplies, and Consumer Protection Maharashtra Minister, asserted his standing within the party, saying that no one has opposed him and that Ajit Pawar, deputy chief minister, supported his advocacy for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Responding to Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad's call to 'kick' him out of the state cabinet, Chhagan Bhujbal, a prominent Other Backward Classes leader, acknowledged the right of anyone to demand his resignation, emphasising his longstanding commitment to the OBC cause without expecting anything in return. "But whether to keep me in the cabinet or not is the prerogative of the chief minister (Eknath Shinde). I don't think he will kick me out because I used to be a leader of his mentor Anand Dighe in Shiv Sena," Chhagan Bhujbal said, adding the CM though has the authority to remove him from the cabinet anytime. The 76-year-old politician was a prominent



figure in the undivided Shiv Sena and quit the Bal Thackeray-founded party more than three decades ago. "I want to tell Sanjay Gaikwad that I was a senior professor at the 'Shiv Sena institute' where you studied," the NCP (Ajit Pawar group) leader said, stressing the need for toning down the language of criticism. Gaikwad had said Chhagan Bhujbal should be "kicked" out of the cabinet for opposing the decision of the state government to provide Kunbi (OBC) certificates to Marathas. Furthermore, he denied receiving any proposals to join the BJP, countering activist Anjali Damania's tweet claiming that such offer had been made to him.

Nine injured in fire triggered by gas leak in Chembur

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nine persons were injured in a fire that broke out after a gas leak in Chembur area, according to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said on Friday. The injured persons have been admitted to hospitals. The gas leak in Chembur occurred in a chawl at Siddharth Colony in Chembur East around 11.45 pm on Thursday, the civic body said. A fire brigade official told news agency that one fire engine, a jetty and ambulances were rushed to the spot. The fire was doused in 10-15 minutes, he said. Nine persons, including a 17-year-old boy, suffered burns in the accident. All the injured persons have been admitted to four different hospitals



in the city. The injured persons have been identified as Sangita Gaikwad (55), Jitendra Kamble (46), Yashoda Gaikwad (56), Narmada Gaikwad (60), Ramesh Gaikwad (56), Shreyash Sonkhambe (17), Sherya Gaikwad (40), Vrishabh Gaikwad (23) and Sandip Jadhav (42). More details are awaited.

Uddhav Thackeray targets BMC commissioner Chahal over 'administrative scams'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Maharashtra chief minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray Friday asked why the government was not acting against Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal over alleged scams in the civic body. Speaking at a gathering of party workers in neighbouring Raigad district, he slammed the BJP-led Union government for unfairly targeting his party leaders over alleged financial irregularities in the purchases made by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation during the coronavirus pandemic, a news wire reported. In many of these cases, Chahal had signed the files, the former Maharashtra chief minister



claimed. "Why the commissioner is not being arrested? Because he is with you now? Whatever scams that are happening in Mumbai are administrative scams," Thackeray said. Sena (UBT) leader and former city mayor Kishori

Pednekar was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate earlier this week in an alleged scam in the purchase of body bags during the pandemic. Chahal, who is acting as administrator of the BMC since the term of its elected body expired in March 2022, would on Friday present the budget of the country's richest civic body, and "he himself will pass it," Thackeray quipped. Meanwhile, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has revealed its comprehensive budget for the financial year 2024-25, amounting to a substantial Rs 59,954 crores. The BMC budget 2024 presentation was led by the Municipal Commissioner and IAS officer Iqbal Singh Chahal, emphasizing key areas such as women's empowerment, healthcare, basic amenities, cleanliness, and pollution control.



Tiffany Haddish pleads 'no contest' to reckless driving case

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Tiffany Haddish pleaded no contest to reckless driving for a DUI incident that occurred in Los Angeles late last year. The 'Girls Trip' actress, 44, had her two misdemeanor charges dropped after taking a plea deal following her DUI arrest over Thanksgiving weekend, reports People magazine.

The legal process was revealed by the Los Angeles District Attorney's office. Haddish appeared in person and entered a no contest plea to reckless driving, a violation of Vehicle Code section 23103, as per the statement from the Los Angeles District Attorney's office.

As per People, the 'Haunted Mansion' actress was placed on summary probation for one year. She was also ordered to complete 40 hours of community service and enrol in a Mothers Against Drunk Driving's Victim Impact Program.

She was also given a "Watson" admonition — a legal document those with DUIs must sign stating that they are aware of the harmful or deadly impact their actions can cause.

As per the statement provided to People, the actress was also ordered to provide proof of completion to the clerk's office.

As of now, there are no future scheduled court appearances. Haddish originally entered a not guilty plea in late December. A pretrial hearing had been scheduled for February 14.



Justin Bieber shares footage from recording studio, hints at new music

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Justin Bieber seems to be getting ready with new music. Photos shared on Instagram by the pop star, 29, this week have his supporters wondering if he could be teasing a new project. In two separate carousels, the 'Never Say Never' singer shared content of himself in the studio and rehearsing on a

microphone with bandmates, reports People magazine. "Justin's back", Instagram's social media account commented on one set of photos. On both posts, fans asked if Bieber was warming up for a Super Bowl performance — a theory not out of left field, as his mentor and collaborator Usher is the scheduled halftime performer. As per People, before this week, the singer had seemingly been focusing on endeavours outside of the music world such as his recent Drew House and Adidas collaboration for this year's NHL All-Star jerseys. Drew House was co-founded by Bieber and he owns the fashion brand with his friend Ryan Good. Before that deal, the Grammy winner had taken time away from social media. He returned from his three-month hiatus in August with a sweet photo of himself, wife Hailey Baldwin Bieber and the couple's niece Iris, who is the daughter of Hailey's sister, Alaia Baldwin. If his studio posts from this week are an indication of his musical return, it will be long-awaited. Following a Ramsay Hunt syndrome diagnosis in June 2022, he postponed several dates on his Justice World Tour, then canceled all of his remaining shows to focus on his health.

Amy Adams in talks to star opposite Jenna Ortega in 'Klara And The Sun' adaptation

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Amy Adams is in negotiations to co-star alongside Jenna Ortega in 'Klara and the Sun', which Taika Waititi is set to direct. The film, based on Kazuo Ishiguro's eponymous novel, is being produced by Heyday Films' David Heyman, Garrett Basch and Waititi, reports Deadline. Ishiguro is an executive producer on the film. 'Klara and the Sun' tells the story of Klara (Ortega), an Artificial Friend designed to prevent loneliness. Klara is purchased by a mother (Adams) and a bright teen named Josie who adores her new robot companion but suffers from a mysterious illness. This is the story of Klara's pursuit to save Josie and those who love her from heartbreak and how in the process Klara learns the power of human love.

As per Deadline, the novel was published in March 2021 by Alfred A. Knopf in the U.S. and Faber in the UK. After landing Waititi's commitment right before the WGA strike last spring, 3000 Pictures made this a priority once both strikes had been resolved, aiming high for two stars for the Klara and mother role; once a deal closes for Adams, production is expected to start in the coming weeks.

As for Adams, the project gives the six-time Oscar nominee another role that will attract plenty of awards attention given Ishiguro adaptations like 'Remains of the Day' have always garnered awards attention in the past.



Brad Pitt in talks to star in Quentin Tarantino's final film 'The Movie Critic'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Brad Pitt is likely reuniting with Quentin Tarantino for the filmmaker's 10th and ostensibly final feature, "The Movie Critic".

The status of the deal is unclear. Tarantino has remained tight-lipped about 'The Movie Critic' but it's reportedly set in southern California during the 1970s and centres on a cynical film reviewer, reports Variety.

It's rumoured to be inspired by the life of Pauline Kael, the late New Yorker writer who was one of the most influential film critics of her time.

Tarantino sidestepped inquiries about 'The Movie Critic' during a conversation at the Cannes Film Festival in 2023, saying to audience: "I can't tell you guys (anything) until you see the movie. I'm tempted to do some of the character's monologues right now, but I'm not going to."



Maybe if there were less video cameras. You just have to wait and see."

As per Variety, Brad Pitt is expected to spend a portion of 2024 filming a Formula One racing feature from 'Top Gun: Maverick' director Joseph Kosinski. In that film, an Apple production, he's playing a veteran driver who comes out of retirement to compete alongside a rookie racer and the titans of the sport.

Schwarzenegger says he feeds his grandchildren the same oatmeal treat as his pets

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Arnold Schwarzenegger has revealed that in his house, his granddaughters love the same sweet treat as his farm animals do. The Austrian actor, 76, said that he has three dogs, two ponies and a pig, reports People magazine.

The actor made the revelation in an interview on 'The Tonight Show' With Jimmy Fallon. As seen on his new Netflix documentary Arnold, Schwarzenegger told Fallon, 49, that it's his job to feed all of the animals in the morning.

As per People, he said that their breakfast is "oatmeal cookies that we put together that are made out of honey and out of bananas and oatmeal."

"They were made for the horses basically, for Lulu and for Whiskey", the former governor of California said. "But I realised that the dogs also love them....and then I found out that the pig also loves them. But the pig loves everything. The pig will eat stones."

The actor admitted that his two granddaughters are also unexpected connoisseurs of the famous oatmeal cookies. The 'Terminator' star's daughter Katherine Schwarzenegger shares her daughters Lyla Maria, 3, and Eloise Christina, 20 months, with her husband Chris Pratt, and brings them to visit the animals about once a week.

He told Fallon that if his granddaughters are over while he's feeding the animals their oatmeal cookie breakfast "they then stand in line". So, the actor said as he's feeding his farm animals, the young girls stand in line with their mouths open, waiting to be fed by their "Opa." Schwarzenegger even mimicked them holding their mouths open.

"As soon as we go outside, she says, 'Opa, can I have more cookies?'" Schwarzenegger said of one of his granddaughters, adding that they love coming over to play with the animals.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Amber Turner



India vs England 2nd Test, Day 1

JAISWAL'S UNBEATEN 179 PROPELS INDIA TO A COMMANDING 336/6

Visakhapatnam | Agencies

Late strikes by Shoaib Bashir and Rehan Ahmed brought England back into the match even as Yasasvi Jaiswal's highest Test score of 179 off 257 deliveries propelled India to 336 for 6 at the end of Day 1 of the second Test at Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium here on Friday.

The England bowlers took three wickets in the final session to leave honours even on a pitch that hasn't offered any great deal of turn so far while India added 111 runs in the last session of the day.

An unlucky dismissal for debutant Rajat Patidar, who looked in great touch, as Ahmed's googly rolled back onto the stumps after hitting the bat. Patidar got out for 32 after he and Jaiswal, who struck 17 boundaries and five maximums in his unbeaten knock, added 70 runs for the fourth wicket and were looking set to put India in the driver's seat. With stumps just over six minutes away, wicket-keeper-batter K.S. Bharat fell in much the same way as Axar



Patel had a little while ago, giving Rehan Ahmed his second wicket. While Axar had scored 27 runs, Bharat made an enterprising 17. When play was called off for the day, Jaiswal was batting on 179 with Ravichandran Ashwin keeping him company at five. A late strike in the day brought the visitors back into the game. India will be particularly disappointed with how they lost wickets No. 5 and 6 as Axar Patel fell to Bashir at backward point trying to

square-cut the delivery. Jaiswal batted through the 93 overs, showing a precocious variety of Test-match gears to finish unbeaten on 179, his second Test hundred and his second big hundred too -- his previous best was a lovely, unhurried 171 on debut in Dominica against West Indies. India lost two quick wickets, Axar Patel fell to Bashir and K.S. Bharat caught at backward point to Ahmed while failing to keep the square cut down.

James Anderson, who played a big role in keeping India honest, dismissed Shubman Gill for the fifth time in Tests while going at just 1.76 across 17 overs. The star of the day though was Jaiswal as he cruised to an unbeaten 179 at a fair clip, showing a good balance between defence and attack.

Brief scores

India 336/6 in 93 overs (Yasasvi Jaiswal 179 not out, Shubman Gill 34; Rehan Ahmed 2-61; Shoaib Bashir 2-100) against England.

ANDERSON BECOMES OLDEST FAST BOWLER TO PLAY TEST IN INDIA

Visakhapatnam:

England bowler James Anderson on Friday became the oldest pace bowler to play a Test match on Indian soil, at the age of 41 years and 187 days, during the second Test against India here at Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium.

Anderson after taking the ground shattered the record that had withstood in Test cricket for 72 years. Lala Amarnath, an Indian cricketing legend, held the mantle as the oldest pacer to play a Test in India since 1952. Amarnath was 41 years and 92 days old when he played his last Test match against Pakistan at Eden Gardens.

Alongside Anderson and Amarnath, the list featured names like Ray Lindwall, Shute Banerjee, and Ghulam Guard, all of whom had left their indelible mark before the cricketing landscape transformed in 1961. Anderson also became the fifth oldest player to play a Test in India. Zimbabwe player John Traicos has the record by playing at the age of 45 years 304 days in 1993.



SA20: Verreynne's unbeaten 116 in vain as Pretoria Capitals lose to MI Cape Town



Centurion | Agencies

Kyle Verreynne rewrote the SA20 record books with the highest ever score of 116 not out, but it was not enough to prevent the Pretoria Capitals from falling to a 34-run defeat to MI Cape Town.

Verreynne enthralled the Centurion crowd with a 52-ball innings that included seven boundaries and nine sixes, to better Joburg Super Kings' captain Faf du Plessis's 113 not out from Season 1.

He single-handedly prevented MI Cape Town from claiming the invaluable bonus point on offer after the Capitals were reduced to 42/6 in their pursuit of the visitors' mammoth 248/4.

Centurion certainly was a batter's paradise on the night,

with a new league record match aggregate of 32 sixes struck. The competition's leading run-scorer, Ryan Rickelton, and Rassie van der Dussen (21 off 9 balls) set the tone for the evening with a rapid 64-run opening stand for MI Cape Town in only five overs. The MICT opening pair rediscovered their touch after going quiet in recent matches after a blitzkrieg start to Season 2. Rickelton was certainly back to his best with the left-hander striking the ball sweetly again as he plundered 90 off just 45 balls (10x4, 5x6). It was Rickelton's third score within the 90's in Season 2 along with an 87.

Dewald Brevis also came to the party with 67 not out, off only 32 balls (3x4, 6x6) before Kieron Pollard (27* off 7 balls) and Sam Curran (22* off 12

balls) delivered the finishing touch.

Capitals' seamer Daryn Dupavillon suffered the misfortune of conceding the worst figures in SA20 history of 1/73. MI Cape Town's seamers Kagiso Rabada (2/32) and Nuwan Thushara (3/37) then showed their class by adapting to the batting-friendly conditions before Verreynne took control with a spellbinding innings to get the Capitals up to 214/8. The two sides will meet again at Newlands on Saturday with MI Cape Town (13 points) and Pretoria Capitals (10) both hoping for a Joburg Super Kings (13) defeat to leaders Durban's Super Giants in order to give one of them an opportunity of clinching the final playoff spot on offer in Season 2.

Premier League: Ward-Prowse penalty helps West Ham earn Bournemouth draw

London | Agencies

West Ham United extended their unbeaten run in the Premier League to six games with a hard-earned 1-1 draw at home to AFC Bournemouth under the London Stadium lights.

Dominic Solanke broke the deadlock for the visitors in the opening moments of the match, and half-chances for James Ward-Prowse and Tomáš Souček were as close as the home side came to equalising during a disappointing first 45. An improved performance after the interval delivered a goal in the 61st minute however, with Ward-Prowse dispatching the 15th top-flight penalty of his career, but neither



side could find the winner and both were ultimately forced to settle for a share of the spoils. A point keeps West Ham sixth in the standings, on 36 points after 22

games, ahead of an away trip to seventh-placed Manchester United on Sunday afternoon, while Bournemouth stay 12th on 26 points.

Madrid | Agencies

Striker Joselu scored twice to help Real Madrid return to the top of La Liga night with a 2-0 win away to Getafe.

It was a match that rescheduled due to their participation in the Spanish Supercup in early January, and Real Madrid cruised to their sixth consecutive league win.

Real Madrid enjoyed a flying start, quickly in control of the ball and pushing Getafe into their own half. It took 14 minutes for Joselu to open the scoring with a neat downwards header after a cross from Lucas Vazquez from the right, reports Xinhua.

The striker had already rattled the Getafe crossbar on eight minutes.

Getafe are usually one of the



toughest sides in Spain to play against, but they were unable to break up Madrid's midfield play and the first half was one-way traffic.

The bad news for the visitors was an injury to central defender Antonio Rudiger after a collision with Mason Greenwood. The German had to be replaced by Eduardo Camavinga in the second half. Greenwood created Getafe's first two chances of the game after the break, grazing the outside of the post and then firing well wide, before Joselu doubled Madrid's lead with his second goal of the match.

The striker collected a pass from Vinicius Jr with his right foot at the edge of the area before scoring with an angled left-foot shot. Getafe keeper David Soria then denied Joselu his hat-trick.

Ronaldo-less Al Nassr whitewash Messi-benched Inter Miami in friendly

Riyadh | Agencies

Saudi Pro League club Al Nassr whitewashed the U.S. Major League Soccer (MLS) giant Inter Miami 6-0 here in a friendly match.

"The Last Dance" match was supposed to be the final chapter in Miami member Lionel Messi's rivalry with fellow global superstar and Al Nassr player Cristiano Ronaldo.

Ronaldo didn't play in the match due to an injury suffered last week. Messi was initially excluded from the Miami lineup, but a late change saw him added to the bench, and he played the final minutes of the match, reports Xinhua.

Al Nassr midfielder Otavio opened the scoring in the third minute when he got the ball on the left corner of the box, cut in and curled the ball into the top right corner.



Anderson Talisca doubled the lead in the 10th minute. The Brazilian tapped home a cross from Otavio following an excellent team move. Two minutes later, Al Nassr tri-

pled the lead with a screamer from Laporte, who found the net from his own half which is a world-class goal! In the 42nd minute, Busquets and Boushal picked up a yellow card

each. Boushal was booked for his challenge, while Busquets was booked for retaliating as players from both teams picked a fight.

In the second half, Talisca converted a penalty, and Maran scored a header off a corner kick, bringing up the Saudi league team's fifth goal of the night. Fans were seen cheering as Lionel Messi was warming up to hopefully come on soon on 71 minutes. Talisca pulled off a sensational finish to find the net in the 73rd minute.

Although the lineswoman signaled he was offside, after a VAR check, the referee confirmed that Talisca was not offside, and he completed his hat-trick after all. The Brazilian celebrated the goal with Ronaldo's trademark "Siuuuu" celebration. In the 83rd minute, Messi replaced Campana to join the match.

Visakhapatnam | Agencies

Former India cricket captain and head coach

Ravi Shastri warned young batter Shubman Gill after he got dismissed by James Anderson for 34 during the second Test match between India and England at Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium here on Friday.

"It's a fresh side, a young side. These youngsters have to prove themselves. Don't forget, Pujara is waiting. He is grinding it out at the Ranji Trophy and is always on the radar," said Shastri during the commentary. Gill made a promising



start, an enticing 34-run knock off 46 deliveries, yet the failure to convert it into a big knock left a lingering question mark over his place in the side. The promising right-handed batter had been given a pivotal role in the reshaped batting order; a

move that saw him replace the stalwart Cheteshwar Pujara. The seasoned Pujara, currently displaying his prowess in the Ranji Trophy playing for Saurashtra, had set the stage ablaze with a double hundred and a season brimming with runs. He currently has 538 runs in seven innings at 89.66 this term.

The warning from Ravi Shastri, resonating from the commentary box, underscored the competitive nature of Indian cricket. Pujara, the experienced campaigner, patiently waits in the wings, his domestic exploits demanding attention and consideration.

Avani lies fourth after first round of Women's Asia Pacific golf

Pattaya | Agencies

India's top amateur star Avani Prashanth got off to a good start with a 4-under 68 that put her in tied fourth place after the first round of the 2024 Women's Amateur Asia Pacific.

She is one shot behind three players, Thai duo of defending champion Eila Galitsky, her teammate Novaporn Soontreeyapas, who had a hole-in-one and Taiwan's Chen-Wei Wu. They shot 5-under 67 each.

India is fielding a six-member team. While Avani was the leading Indian, two others,

who came close to even par score were Vidhatri Urs and Saanvi Somu, who shot 1-over 73 each. They were tied 39th. The other scores were disappointing. Keerthana Rajeev Nair (81) and Heena Kang (81) were T-84 and Mannat Brar (82) was 86th. Avani was tied for fourth place with Thailand's Pimpisa Rubrong, Amy Im of New Zealand and China's Yahui Xiang. They all shot 68 each.

Avani, the winner of the Queen Sirikit Cup individuals last year, started from there on and I set myself up for a birdie on nearly every hole from there.

birdies and two bogeys in her round at the challenging Siam Country Club in Pattaya, Thailand. Avani birdied three times between the 13th and the 16th. Avani was happy with her round and said: "I definitely am. The way I started, I was quite confused about how the day was going to go. But then, you know, I took control of my full round by the time I was on the 13th, and that really put things in place. I'm so glad it turned out how it did." I put myself in good positions from there on and I set myself up for a birdie on nearly every hole from there.

'There's so much more failure than success' says Megan Schutt ahead of 200th int'l match

Adelaide: On the verge of completing 200 international appearances for Australia during their ODI series opener against South Africa at her home ground Adelaide Oval on Saturday, pacer Megan Schutt feels that despite the game having more failure than success, she just loves being in the sport.

Megan will become just the sixth women's cricketer from Australia to play 200 international matches, joining a coveted club featuring Ellyse Perry, Alyssa Healy, Alex Blackwell, Meg Lanning and Jess Jonassen.

"I love the game - it's a stupid game, and there's so much more failure than success, but I just love it, I love the people that are involved and it's a



game that keeps evolving as well. I keep striving to be better and being a

fast bowler in a batter's game it is quite tough, but I like the challenge." As long

as my body holds out and as long as Cricket Australia want me (I'll keep going) ... admittedly it's a bit harder to get out of bed in the mornings but I'll keep pushing hard at the gym, doing what I can to keep getting a contract and keep playing. I've been fortunate enough to be number one bowler in the world. I'd love to retake that again before I retire," said Megan to reporters. Since her ODI debut in December 2012, Megan has won World Cups in both white-ball formats with Australia, has been a member of Ashes winning side at home and away conditions, along with a Commonwealth Games gold medal in the women's T20 event. In ODIs, she has picked 260 wickets in 87 ODIs.



Mystery shrouds reports of Poonam Pandey's death from cervical cancer

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The big news from the entertainment world on Friday morning was the colourful and controversial reality TV actress Poonam Pandey's death from cervical cancer. But as the day passed, questions began to be raised about the news that got Kangana Ranaut to take to her social media and lament the death of someone so young.

It all started with a post that appeared on Pandey's official Instagram handle announcing her death. The post took everyone by surprise because no one who knew her had any clue about her health condition.

Her last Instagram post two or three days ago, in fact, was about her holiday in Goa and the actress, whose never kept anything about her life out of the public domain, made no mention about suffering from something as serious as cervical cancer.

Actress Sambhavna Seth has gone on record saying that she met Pandey with a common friend some days back and the reality TV actress made no reference to suffering from cancer, nor did she show any signs of it.

"Just think how strong she was, she never even mentioned it," Seth told a news channel.

When IANS went to her housing society, The Park in the Oshiwara area of Mumbai, people in the neighbourhood said the actress hasn't been at her house for the last two days and no movement has been witnessed at her home.

Throughout the day, there has been no sign of any activity inside or outside her building.

A security guard at the housing society said: "She hasn't been home for two days. Her driver last went out of the building around 3:45 p.m. today (Friday)."



Reports from Pune also suggest that there is no movement in or around her home in that city.

It was then rumoured that she had gone to Kanpur where she passed away.

Poonam's publicist isn't answering phone calls after issuing the statement that she received the information about the death of the actress from a relative of hers.

The mail that carries the name of Nikita Sharma as Pandey's manager carried fake contact details that trace back to a person in West Bengal who hasn't even heard about the actress.

And as mystery blankets the whereabouts of the actress, no details are available yet about her funeral.

Juhi Chawla reveals how Ajay Devgn, Aamir Khan played pranks on sets of 'Ishq'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Juhi Chawla took a stroll down the memory lane, as she reminisced about the days of shooting for the romantic action comedy 'Ishq' (1997), sharing how her co-stars Ajay Devgn and Aamir Khan used to play pranks on the sets of the movie. Directed by Indra Kumar, 'Ishq' stars Juhi, Kajol, Ajay and Aamir in lead roles. Juhi, who appeared on the celebrity dance reality show 'Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa', recalled about the shooting of 'Ishq', saying, "While shooting for 'Ishq', Ajay and Aamir, despite their straight face and innocent appearances, would continuously play pranks. There was a new assistant director, and whenever he came to give the clap for a shot, Ajay and Aamir would poke him and the clapboard would shake." "As a result, the assistant director would often get scolded by our director, Indra Kumar. Sometimes they would even erase the markings for the shot. Each time, the assistant director would be scolded by our director, unaware that it was actually Aamir and Ajay who were behind the mischief," Juhi said. The special episode titled 'Jashn Juhi Ka' is an ode to Juhi Chawla's career in Indian cinema. It featured dance performances by the contestants on some of her most iconic songs from the 90s. Adding a unique twist to the celebrations, the judges - Farah Khan, Arshad Warsi, and Malaika Arora - challenged the contestants with a thrilling 'Grand Costume Party' challenge, where the contestants had to deliver dramatic performances wearing a unique costume. Known for his soulful voice and dynamic performances, Sreerama Chandra, along with choreographer Sonali Kar, presented their interpretation of the popular song 'Neend Churayee Meri' from 'Ishq', infusing it with their distinctive style and energy. Impressed with the performance, Juhi, on whom the song was picturised, said: "Very nice. I must say both of you look very interesting. The costumes are very good. Sreeram, you were dancing with a lot of enthusiasm. I enjoyed it very much." "Sonali, since you wore heels while performing, I remember a flashback from the 90s when Sridevi used to dance on screen in high heels. We all used to follow her, so we had to wear those stiletto-toe heels and dance like her, which I found very difficult. Still, dancing in heels brings a certain grace," she added. Malaika said: "I love the costume that you have shown; I loved the whole pirate feel. Both of you consistently do pure hardcore dancing. Your lifts today were brilliant. It was a fantastic act."



Akshay Kumar becomes target of deepfake video; actor plans legal action

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a concerning turn of events, actor Akshay Kumar finds himself in the crosshairs of a deepfake scandal, as a fabricated video has surfaced online, featuring the superstar promoting a game application.

"The actor has never indulged in promotions of any such activity. The source of this video is being looked into and legal action is underway for misusing the actor's identity for false advertising," said the sources.

"A cyber complaint against the social media handle and the company has been filed for creating and promoting this fake video."

In the AI generated video, Akshay is seen saying, "Do you like to play too? I advice you to download this application and try the aviator game. This is the popular slot all over the world that everyone plays here. We are not playing against the casino but against other players."

The users wrote in the comment section: "Fake alert". One fan said: "Deep fake".

Sources close to the actor further said: "He is deeply upset at having his identity



misused and has instructed his team to deal with this matter using all legal remedies available." Earlier, there have been deep fake

videos of actors like Rashmika Mandanna, Nora Fatehi, Katrina Kaif, Kajol and cricketer Sachin Tendulkar doing rounds on the internet.

Parineeti Chopra shares rendition of Farida Khanum's classic; trolls not impressed

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Parineeti Chopra has shared a sneak peek of her first ever live singing performance, crooning her nana's favourite song 'Aaj Jaane Ki Zid Na Karo'. However, the diva found herself amid online scrutiny as netizens weighed in with varied opinions, sparking a wave of trolling and discussions on the internet. On January 25, Parineeti had announced her singing debut. She had recently performed at the Mumbai Festival 2024, and is sharing behind-the-scenes from the musical night on her Instagram account. In the new video, the "Ishaqzaade" actress can be seen singing 'Aaj Jaane Ki Zid Na Karo'. The Urdu ghazal, 'Aaj Jaane Ki Zid Na Karo' is originally sung by Farida Khanum. Sharing the video, Parineeti wrote: "My nana's favourite song #firstliveconcert #Aajaanekizidnakaro".

The Reel video which garnered 5.6 million views, has received mixed reactions from the netizens.

Some fans appreciated Parineeti's efforts and wrote: "He would have loved to hear you sing this", "You rocked", and "magical voice".

However, most of the users trolled the 'Kesari' fame actress and said: "Aaj gaane ki zid na karo."

fan said: "who told her that she can sing", another commented: "Stop singing please. My ears will bleed now."

A user wrote: "singer can be actor but actor can't be singer."

Another fan added: "Autotune doesn't work on stage."

Parineeti has earlier sung the female version of the patriotic song 'Teri Mitti', which is written by Manoj Muntashir and composed by Arko. It featured in the 2019 war movie 'Kesari', starring Akshay Kumar and Parineeti.

The 35-year-old actress also has the unplugged track 'Matlabi Yariyan' in her discography. This song is from the mystery thriller film 'The Girl on the Train'. It stars Parineeti, Avinash Tiwary, and Aditi Rao Hydari.



Jaya Bachchan says she doesn't mind being a 'meme-generator'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran actress and politician Jaya Bachchan, who often gets into a playful tiff with the paparazzi, has said that she doesn't mind being the source for such entertainment and a "meme-generator". The senior actress, along with her daughter Shweta Bachchan, appeared on the second season of her granddaughter Navya Naveli's podcast, 'What the Hell, Navya'.

The three discussed the term 'Jaya-ing'. Shweta and Navya explained the meaning of the term to Jaya.

Shweta said that when someone is being 'salty', it is said that the person is 'Jaya-ing'. Shweta told her mother: "You are an internet sensation, a meme-generator."

During the podcast, they also touched upon the subject of side-hustle, a concept where people indulge in other works as a source of additional income.

Jaya Bachchan said: "I do a side hustle. I provide meals for some of the people who do my memes. I don't mind people making fun of me, but people should do it properly."

Shweta also spoke about how being a mother or a

housewife is a thankless job and that it's just taken for granted, but running a house is like a mini business and nobody respects it.

She said: "It's not given any respect. It's just something you're supposed to do. But if you stop house-wifing, everything will go helter-skelter. It's something which is just taken for granted. Nobody even writes it in a form as a profession that you're a housewife. You're doing HR, finance, day-to-day management. You're basically running a mini business and shaping up minds."



Shehnaaz Gill visits Golden Temple, offers prayers

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Days after her 30th birthday, the 'Big Boss 13' fame actress Shehnaaz Gill has visited the Golden Temple, in Amritsar, Punjab, and offered prayers. Shehnaaz, who turned 30 on January 27, took to Instagram and shared series of pictures from her holy visit to the temple. The 'Kala Shah Kala' actress, who enjoys 17.4 million followers on the photo-sharing application,

dropped clicks, wherein she can be seen wearing a black oversized coat, paired it with blue denim pants. She is folding her hands and smiling for the lenses, with the backdrop of the beautiful Golden Temple. The post is captioned: "Waheguru ji! Her massive fan following showered love and blessings on their favourite actress. On the professional front, Shehnaaz will be next seen in the movie 'Sab First Class'. She was last seen in 'Thank You for Coming'.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Neha Malik