

# absolute india

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'NEET papers sold for Rs 30-32 lakh, cops traced burnt documents', admit mastermind & students

TN hooch tragedy: 40 die after consuming illicit liquor

## NEET-2024: WASN'T NEAT

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Patna

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) 2024 paper leak fiasco saw a fresh twist on Thursday with the accused persons confessing before the police that question papers were arranged for certain candidates a day before the exam for which the aspirants shelled out close to Rs 30-32 lakh.

The shocking confession came from four persons arrested by the Bihar Police, including a NEET aspirant named Anurag Yadav, his uncle Sikander Yadavendu - a junior engineer in the Danapur Municipal Council, and two others named Nitish Kumar and Amit Anand, the purported mastermind behind the paper leak. They admitted before the police that the question papers were provided to them a day before the NEET that was conducted on May 5. Anurag Yadav confessed before the police that his uncle Sikander Yadavendu arranged the NEET papers for him in advance.

Sikander Yadavendu claimed that he was told by Amit Anand and Nitish Kumar about the paper leak before the test.

"Amit and Nitish told me that the question papers for NEET would be leaked and it would cost about Rs 30-32 lakh. I agreed and told them about four students -- Ayush Kumar, Anurag Yadav, Shivanand Kumar, and



Abhishek Kumar. On May 4, I took all four students to a place where aspirants were already cramming up answers for all the questions.

"Out of greed, I asked for Rs 40 lakh from each student instead of the original amount. However, I was later caught by the police," Yadavendu said, revealing the chain of events leading to the NEET paper leak.

Nitish Kumar and Amit Anand, in their statement to the police, admitted their role in the paper leak and revealed how their collusion with Yadavendu led to their arrest.

"After Yadavendu was arrested, he directed the police towards us. The police also raided the spot where the students were given the leaked papers. They also found the remaining pieces of the burnt question papers," the duo said in their statement to the police.

About 24 lakh aspirants appeared for NEET on May 5 for admission to medical colleges. The results were announced before time on June 5 but were marred by allegations of paper leak and awarding of grace marks to over 1,500 candidates.

**SC issues notice on plea seeking directions to NBE on NEET (PG) exam question paper, answer key**

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday issued notice on a plea seeking directions to the National Board of Examinations (NBE) to release the question paper and answer key of the NEET (PG) examination. Agreeing to examine the plea, a vacation bench presided over by Justice Vikram Nath sought a response from the NBE, Medical Counselling Committee (MCC) and others. "Issue notice returnable on 8th of July, 2024. In the meantime, respondents may file their counter affidavits," ordered the Bench, also comprising Justice S.V.N. Bhatti. The Supreme Court on Thursday also issued notice on a plea filed by a batch of tribal students from Meghalaya seeking directions to the National Testing Agency (NTA) to permit them to appear in NEET-UG retest since they had also suffered loss of time in taking the examination held on May 5.

"I was preparing for NEET at the Allen Institute in Kota (Rajasthan). My uncle Sikander Yadavendu called me to Patna and took me to Amit Anand and Nitish Kumar, where I was given some questions and the answer keys for the exam. I was told to memorise all the answers. When I sat for the test the next day, I saw it had the same questions which were given to me on May 4. However, after the test, the police arrested me."

Anurag Yadav, Aspirant



Chennai | Agencies

At least 40 people have died and many more are in various hospitals following a hooch tragedy in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi district, said officials on Thursday.

"The death toll due to alleged illicit liquor consumption in Kallakurichi rises to 29," confirmed Kallakurichi District Collector M.S. Prashanth.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin expressed shock over the deaths and took action against officials who failed to prevent it. Also, he announced a compensation of Rs 10 lakh each to the 34 families who had lost their loved ones.

According to reports, the number of persons who have lost their lives consuming the killer drink has touched 40 and over 100 persons are undergoing treatment in various hospitals with many battling for their lives.

The government has also appointed a one-man commission under retired High Court Justice B. Gokuldas to look into the issue and rec-

ommend measures to prevent such occurrences in the future.

The CM said the CBCID (Crime Branch-CID) has been asked to investigate the source of methanol.

According to him, action has been taken against the police officials concerned and the District Collector has been transferred.

Meanwhile, Stalin's son and Youth Welfare and Sports Development Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin visited the affected people in the hospital and later distributed the Rs.10 lakh compensation to the families who had lost their loved ones.

Tamil Nadu BJP President K. Annamalai visited the affected families and consoled them. He also said Rs 1 lakh will be paid by the party to the families as relief.

Governor R.N. Ravi, condoling the deaths and wishing a speedy recovery of the victims, blamed the state government for its lapses.

The continued hooch tragedies in Tamil Nadu show the callous attitude of the state government, said actor-turned-politician Vijay, president, of the TVK.

### GUILTY WON'T BE SPARED: EDUCATION MINISTER

New Delhi: Facing flak from various quarters over the paper leak episode in NEET examinations, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday announced the setting up of a high-level committee to probe the irregularities while asserting that none of the guilty will be spared. Addressing a press conference, Pradhan said that the future of students remains a top priority for the government as it is committed to conducting zero-error exams. "I want to assure everyone that once we get concrete evidence, none of the guilty will be spared. Our priority is the future of students," he said. He also told the press that the government has decided to set up a high-level committee for improving the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts a slew of entrance and competitive examinations.



### THIS AS AN "ANTI-NATIONAL ACTIVITY": RAHUL GANDHI

New Delhi: With the NEET-UG paper leak case snowballing into a major controversy, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi hit out at the BJP-led Central government on Thursday, saying that the Opposition will raise this issue in the upcoming session of the Parliament.

Addressing a press conference here, the Congress MP mentioned that during his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' from Manipur to Maharashtra, hundreds of youth brought up the issue of paper leaks. He also took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, suggesting that while it was claimed that the PM stopped the Russia-Ukraine war, he seems unable or unwilling to prevent paper leaks in India. "The reason for paper leaks is that the BJP's parent organisation has taken control of the education system. Unless this is reversed, paper leaks will continue," he said.

## Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal granted bail

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a major relief for Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, a city court on Thursday granted him bail in the excise policy scam case.

The bail was granted by the Rouse Avenue Court.

However, the Delhi CM is unlikely to walk out of the jail for now, sources said.

He is likely to be set free on Friday after the court orders reach Tihar Jail.

Earlier in the day, the court reserved its order on the bail plea of Delhi CM in the money laundering case, in connection with the liquor policy scam.

Kejriwal was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on March 21. He was granted temporary relief by the Supreme Court and allowed to campaign in the 2024 General



elections. He surrendered again on June 2, as per court directions. Notably, Kejriwal's judicial custody was extended till July 3 by the

### BJP MP BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB APPOINTED PRO TEM SPEAKER

New Delhi:

Bhartruhari Mahtab, the BJP's key leader from Odisha said to be in the running for the Speaker's post, has been appointed Pro Tem Speaker by President Droupadi Murmu.

The post of Pro Tem Speaker - a temporary one -- traditionally goes to the senior-most member of parliament, who later administers oath to the Prime Minister's Council of ministers and other MPs, till a Speaker is appointed.

The 18th parliament will be convened on Monday. The seven-time MP from Cuttack had moved to the BJP ahead of the election after years with Naveen Patnaik's Biju Janata Dal, expressing displeasure over the party's functioning.



## Railways conduct trial run on world's highest rail bridge in J&K

Srinagar | Agencies

Indian Railways on Thursday conducted a successful trial run of an eight-coach MEMU train on the newly electrified 46-km section between Sangaldan and Reasi in Jammu and Kashmir passing through the world's highest Chenab Rail Bridge.

Sharing the news, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in a post on X said: "Successful trial run of MEMU train between Sangaldan-Reasi section of USBRL project. Jammu & Kashmir."

The trial run was conducted at a speed of 40 km per hour. The MEMU train started at 12:35 p.m. from Sangaldan and reached Reasi at 2:05 PM, passing through nine tunnels with a combined length of 40.78 km. The USBRL project was inaugurated in multiple phases, starting with the 118-km Qazigund-Baramulla section in October 2009, followed by the 18-km Banihal-Qazigund section in June 2013, and the 25-kilometer Udhampur-Katra section in July 2014.

The latest phase, including the 48.1-km Banihal-Sangaldan section, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 20, 2024.



The successful trial run signifies the nearing of the completion of the USBRL project. This project after completion is expected to enhance social integration, facilitate easier movement of people and goods, and boost economic activities such as tourism and trade in the region.

## India Becomes World's 3rd Largest Domestic Airline Market: Report

Ten years ago, India was the smallest market with around 8 million seats, followed by Indonesia at 4th and Brazil at 3rd place, and the US and China occupying the top two positions.

India's capacity growth rate of seats over a 10-year average is the highest, growing at 6.9 per cent annually.

According to the OAG report, another interesting metric to consider across these large domestic markets is low-cost carrier (LCC) capacity share.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Driven by robust growth in the aviation sector in the last decade, India is now the third-largest domestic airline market in the world, up from 5th position 10 years ago.

Today, the US and China remain the largest domestic aviation markets. "However, India is surpassing the Brazilian and Indonesian domestic markets to become the third-largest domestic market with airline capacity of 15.6 million seats in April 2024," according to OAG data. "India is the fastest growing market across all five domestic markets we considered. China was close behind with annual growth of 6.3 per cent between 2014 and 2024, and there is a much smaller growth rate in the US and Indonesia," according to the data. In April 2024, LCCs accounted for 78.4 per cent of domestic airline capacity in India, the highest LCC



share of any of these five domestic markets. "In the last 10 years, IndiGo has almost doubled their market share, from 32 per cent of capacity in 2014 to 62 per cent today. While the rest of the market has barely grown, averaging just 0.7 per cent a year, IndiGo has a domestic capacity growth rate of 13.9 per cent annually," the report mentioned.

## India now has 3,600 deeptech startups, ranks 6th globally: Nasscom

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India now ranks sixth among the top nine deeptech ecosystems globally with 3,600 such startups, which received \$850 million funding last year, a Nasscom report said on Thursday.

From 3,600 startups, over 480 were established last year - two times higher than the number established in 2022 -- according to the report by Nasscom and Zinnov.

Of these 480 startups launched in 2023, over 100 are "inventive deeptech firms that have developed intellectual property or innovative solutions in new domains."

Notably, 74 per cent of the deeptech startups established this year have concentrated on AI, a significant increase from 62 per cent in the period from 2014 to 2022.

Deeptech startups such as Agnikul, GalaxyEye, HealthPlix, Sarvam AI and Peprits, among others, are emerging in areas of healthtech, sustainability, AI and space-tech etc.



"Areas such as AI, quantum computing, space-tech, next-gen robotics and others will come together in interesting ways and be applied across every domain from education, entertainment, commerce, agriculture, industrial manufacturing, mobility, and several others," said Jeyandran Venugopal, Chair, Nasscom DeepTech Council.



# OVER 3.20 LAKH AFFECTED BY FLOOD FURY IN NORTHEAST

Guwahati/Itanagar | Agencies

Incessant monsoon rains during the past few days triggered landslides, floods and water-logging in several northeastern states, affecting around 3.20 lakh people and badly affecting normal life besides damaging public and private property, officials said on Wednesday.

According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), incessant rain has thrown life out of gear in a majority of the districts in the state with around three lakh people in 19 districts reeling under the fury of floods.

ASDMA officials said that 105 relief camps were set up in different districts to provide shelter to the flood-affected people while 3,326.31 hectares of cropland have been affected by the current flood.

In the current monsoon flood, at



least 26 people died so far in different districts of Assam.

In Arunachal Pradesh, landslides, floods, and water-logging have badly affected the normal life for several thousand people in different districts.

A portion of National Highway-415 and a culvert were washed away at Karsingga, severing connectivity

between Nirjuli and Banderdewa. Officials said eight relief camps have been established in Itanagar and adjoining areas to provide temporary shelter to those affected by landslides and flooding.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu, who also holds the Disaster Management portfolio, held a review meeting on Wednesday with

officials. He has urged the people to stay safe, take necessary precautions, avoid unnecessary travel, and stay updated on weather advisories, emphasizing that the administration is on high alert to ensure everyone's safety.

In Meghalaya, nonstop rain in the state over the last few days has claimed two lives and affected over 3,000 people in 42 villages in six districts.

Meghalaya State Disaster Management Authority (MSDMA) officials said that the deceased were identified as Probino Warbah, 48, in East Khasi Hills and Kantly Maram, 49, in West Khasi Hills.

The incessant rain and flood also affected life and damaged houses and roads in Mizoram and Tripura.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasted heavy rains in several states in the northeast over the next few days.

## J&K will soon have elected Assembly, statehood back, says PM Modi

Srinagar | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday assured the people of J&K that they will soon have an elected Assembly and attain new heights of prosperity with its statehood coming back.

Addressing a gathering of youth and others at the SKICC, he said: "You will soon choose your own government and J&K will prosper with its statehood."

The PM said that India has joined its new era of strengthening democracy and J&K has made a great contribution towards this by participating in record-breaking numbers in the Lok Sabha elections. "J&K has lived up to Atalji's (former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee) vision of 'Jamhoriyat, Insaniyat and Kashmiriyat'. You have made the victory of democracy possible in J&K and our efforts of the last ten years have borne fruit. Our daughters and members of the



underprivileged classes, Pakistani refugees, Valmiki Samaj, and safai karamcharis have got the right to vote. Members of Valmiki Samaj have got ST status. For the first time, seats have been reserved for STs in the Assembly."

"OBC reservations have been made in Panchayats. The letter and spirit of our Constitution is to change the lives of people for the better by empowering them. Today, we are living our constitution. We are looking for new avenues to help J&K. The country's constitution has been implemented in J&K. Governments at the Centre in the past haven't done this and they are responsible for the

troubles of the people here," he added.

"The wall of Article 370 has been brought down. The change is clearly visible to the whole world. Those who attended the G-20 summit here appreciate the change in J&K. Today, children play in Lal Chowk, the youth go to cinemas and this makes the hearts and minds of the citizens outside J&K filled with pride and satisfaction. Sports car shows on the banks of the Dal Lake were seen by everybody. We are now talking of record-breaking arrivals of tourists here. Last year, over 2 crore tourists came here. This supports the livelihood of the local people," he said.

## Adopt scientific approach to fixing MSP for all crops: Sukhbir Badal

Chandigarh | Agencies

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) President Sukhbir Badal on Thursday called for adopting a scientific approach towards fixing the minimum support price (MSP) for all crops, even as he asserted the marginal increase in the MSP for paddy by Rs 117 per quintal did not take into account the comprehensive cost plus 50 per cent profit as mandated by the Union government and the Swaminathan Commission.

He also noted that though the MSPs for both moong and maize had been increased, no mechanism was in place to procure these crops on MSP.

"Farmers in Punjab as well as elsewhere in the country have been left to the mercy of



private players because the Union government is not procuring these crops from MSP. In case of Punjab, farmers bore huge losses after their sowed moong over a huge area following an appeal by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann the same

would be procured on MSP, but the government reneged on its promise."

Speaking about the manner in which the MSP for paddy had been increased, Badal said: "The entire process of calculation of the comprehensive cost (C-2), including the imputed cost of the land and its rent value should be put in public domain. Farmers rightly feel that they are being short-changed and that if the C-2 cost is not calculated accurately then they will not get the justified MSP as 50 per cent profit is to be calculated on the C-2 figure."

He advocated that a committee be formed to calculate the C-2 plus 50 per cent profit figure for all 14 kharif crops and that this committee should include farmer representatives.

## Maha Leader of Opposition Wadettiwar, Ambedkar meet striking OBC leaders

Jalna (Maharashtra) | Agencies

Maharashtra's Leader of Opposition Vijay Wadettiwar and Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi President Prakash Ambedkar here on Thursday called on the striking OBC leader Laxman Hake and Navnath Waghmare and assured them of full support in their agitation.

For the past one week, Hake and Waghmare have been sitting on an indefinite hunger strike near a temple in Wadigodri village, and their health declined further on Thursday.

Both the visiting leaders offered them a glass of water, while a visibly emotional Wadettiwar -- himself a senior Congress OBC leader -- dialled Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde from the venue and apprised him of the situation of the striking leaders.

Hake is a former Maharashtra State Backward Classes Commission member, while Waghmare is the Samata Parishad district president, and both have stopped eating food since June 13.

Shinde reiterated to Wadettiwar, who kept his phone to a microphone, and the striking leaders that the government would not dilute the OBC



quotas while deciding on the Maratha reservations and promised to send an official delegation to meet them on Friday (June 21).

Wadettiwar reminded the Chief Minister that while he makes assurances, his own Bharatiya Janata Party minister Girish Mahajan has said that the issue of 'sage-soyare' (bloodline) will not sur-

vive in the court, and its because of the faulty policies of the state government that two major communities are now standing against each other.

Hake has repeatedly demanded a written assurance from the MahaYuti government assuring that the state would not disturb the existing 29 per cent OBC reservation while deciding the quotas for any other community.

In February this year, a special session of the state legislature unanimously passed the Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Economically Backward Bill, 2024, paving the way for 10 per cent quotas for the Maratha community.

However, Shivba Sanghatana chief Manoj Jarange-Patil has been demanding that the state should declare Marathas as 'Kunbis' and grant them a separate quota from the OBCs, plus give reservations to 'sage-soyare' (bloodline) that would widen the scope of reservation.

However, prominent OBC leaders from different parties, including Wadettiwar (Congress), and Food & Civil Supplies Minister Chhagan Bhujbal (Nationalist Congress Party), are strongly opposing the watering down of the OBC quotas to accommodate the Marathas.

## Racket selling 'herbal pills' to boost sexual health busted in Gurugram; 11 held

Gurugram | Agencies

The Gurugram Police on Thursday raided a fake call centre in Sector 18 and arrested 11 persons, including four women, for allegedly duping people on the pretext of selling online herbal medicine to boost sexual health.

The accused used to post ads for such medicines on Google to target the victims. When the victims called them on the given numbers, they duped them on the pretext of selling herbal medicines that they claimed helped boost sexual health.

They also cheated people in the name of GST charges, parking charges, and courier charges, and received money from the victims through UPI and QR codes. After receiving a tip-off that an illegal call centre had been operating in Sector 18 for the past one year, the district police formed a special team under the supervision of ACP Vipin Alahawan.

The team raided the call centre on Thursday, where 11 persons were found making calls to the victims who were taken into custody after questioning.

The callers confessed that they were working to



sell sex-enhancing pills.

"The accused received Rs 15,000 as salary per month along with 5 per cent commission on the duped amount," he said.

Seven mobile phones, SIM cards, two CPUs, and other documents were seized from the call centre, the police said.

The accused were produced in a local court which sent them to police custody.

## MAMATA GOVT DISTANCES ITSELF FROM CELEBRATION OF WEST BENGAL FOUNDATION DAY AT RAJ BHAVAN

Kolkata: West Bengal Foundation Day was observed at the Raj Bhavan here on Thursday with the state government machinery and the members of the state cabinet distancing themselves from the programme. Raj Bhavan insiders said that the celebration of West Bengal Foundation Day, which started on June 20, 2023, lacked the pomp and grandeur that was there in the same programme last year.

Insiders said that June 20 has been chosen as West Bengal Foundation Day since on the same day of 1947, the then Bengal Legislative Assembly held a meeting to decide if the Bengal Presidency would stay with India or Pakistan, or be divided, having the Hindu majority districts staying with India as West Bengal and the Muslim majority areas forming East Pakistan. However, the ruling Trinamool Congress has been against celebrating the day as it believes that this date historically signifies the pain of partition. Instead, the state government through a proposal passed on the floor of the state Assembly last year decided to choose Bengali New Year Day as the date for the celebration of the West Bengal Foundation Day.

## Delhi's Nigambodh Ghat sees sudden spike in bodies being brought for cremation

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid the heatwave across north India, Delhi's largest crematorium Nigambodh Ghat has witnessed a sudden surge in the number of bodies being brought for last rites, officials said.

On average, 50 to 60 bodies used to reach Nigambodh Ghat daily, but the number has more than doubled in the last two days. According to the Nigambodh Ghat administration, as many as 90 bodies were brought to the crematorium on June 18 while on June 19, the number increased to 142 -- the second highest since the Covid period. Nigambodh Ghat in-charge Suman Gupta told reporter that as many as



1,500 bodies were brought to the crematorium in the month of June during the Covid period, however this time, almost 1,100 bodies have already been cremated at the Ghat between June 1-19.

A maximum of 253 bodies were brought on one day to the Nigambodh Ghat during the Covid period.

According to Gupta, the number of bodies being brought also increases during severe winters.

## 20 girl students fall ill after eating meal in hostel in Tripura



Agartala | Agencies

At least 20 students of a government-run Girls' Higher Secondary School fell ill after allegedly consuming meal at a hostel in Tripura.

The students were hospitalised after they complained of severe stomachache and chest pain, officials said.

A teacher of the Bodhjung Girls' Higher Secondary School here said that the girls suddenly fell ill during the school's prayer session and they were immediately taken to Government-run Govind Ballabh Pant Medical College

and Hospital.

"All the 20 girl students are currently under observation in the hospital," doctors said, adding that their condition is now stable.

Doctors said that they are now examining their health condition and symptoms to determine the exact cause of their illness.

Initial investigations suggest that food poisoning in the students' hostel might be the cause.

All the affected students are from the tribal community residing in a hostel at Indranagar on the outskirts of the city.

## Patna HC strikes down Bihar govt's quota hike from 50 pc to 65 pc

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a major blow to the Bihar government, the Patna High Court on Thursday struck down the decision to increase the reservation from 50 per cent to 65 per cent for Backward Classes, Extremely Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the state, brought into effect last year. The quota hike was applicable in jobs and educational institutions in the state.

A division bench led by Chief Justice K. Vinod Chandran revoked the amendments passed by the Bihar Assembly in 2023, saying that they violated the equality clause under Articles 14, 15, and 16 of the Constitution. The quota was raised by the Bihar government after it carried out a caste survey in the state. In a notification issued in



November 2023, it sought to amend the existing reservation laws. A petition was filed in the Patna High Court by petitioner Gaurav Kumar, challenging the decision of the Nitish government. The petitioner argued that as per the Supreme Court's judgement, the reservation can't

extend beyond 50 per cent.

The Nitish government's decision would have brought the quota to a total of 75 per cent in the state, which included 20 per cent for SCs, 2 per cent for STs, 25 per cent for Extremely Backward Classes, 18 per cent for Other Backward Classes (OBC) and

10 per cent for Economically Backward Classes.

Last year, the Punjab and Haryana High Court also nullified a legislation by the Haryana government, which sought to provide 75 per cent reservation in Haryana-based industries for state residents.

## Unlock Your Civil Services Potential: Free Seminar in Jaipur on June 23

Lalit Sharma | Jaipur

A free one-day seminar titled "How to Crack Civil Services" is set to take place on June 23 at the Next IAS Coaching Center in Gopalpura, Jaipur. The event promises to provide invaluable insights and motivation for students aspiring to conquer the Civil Services Examination.

Manisha Bhardwaj, the center head at Next IAS, announced that the seminar will kick off at 11:00 AM on Sunday. Esteemed speakers, including Kuldeep Patel, an IAS aspirant, and Mohan Gupta, an IPS officer, will guide participants through strategies and share their experiences to help them achieve their goals in civil services.

"This seminar is a golden opportunity for students to gain crucial knowledge about the Civil Services Examination and learn strategies that can steer them towards success," Bhardwaj

stated. "Our commitment is to support students in their journey to public service."

B. Singh, CMD of Next IAS, will also be in attendance to lend his support. The seminar is open to students who have completed their 12th grade and their parents. This initiative highlights Next IAS's dedication to equipping future civil servants with the necessary skills and knowledge. Upcoming Programs: Next IAS is set to launch new batches soon, offering classes in both Hindi and English. These programs will be conducted by top faculty from Delhi, ensuring high-quality education and training for aspirants.

Interested students and their parents are encouraged to attend the seminar to benefit from expert guidance and clear any doubts about the civil services preparation process.

For more details, visit the Next IAS Coaching Center in Gopalpura, Jaipur, or contact them directly.



## KISAN KALYAN YOJANA WILL CONTINUE: CM MOHAN YADAV

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Thursday said that his government will continue to provide Rs 6,000 to eligible farmers under 'Kisan Kalyan Yojana'.

The state government provides Rs 6,000 annually to eligible farmers in three instalments, while the Central government also gives Rs 6,000 in three instalments. It means, farmers receive a total sum of Rs 12,000 per annum.

"PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana and CM Kisan Samman Yojana have together changed the lives of farmers. We would continue to provide disbursement of Rs 6,000 to our farmers in Madhya Pradesh," CM Yadav said.

Earlier, the MP government was giving Rs 4,000 per year to the farmers, and the amount was increased to Rs 6,000, which was highlighted by the BJP during the elections - Assembly and Lok Sabha.

The primary objective of the 'Mukhyamantri Kisan Kalyan Yojana'



is to make agriculture a profitable business. This scheme encourages farmers to adopt advanced technologies and promotes self-reliance among them. CM Yadav also congratulated farmers as Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Union Cabinet has approved an increase in the minimum support prices (MSP) for all 14

kharif crops for the 2024-25 crop season that runs from July to June.

The highest increase came for oilseeds niger seed and sesamum. The hike was by Rs 983 and Rs 632 and was fixed at Rs 8,717 and Rs 9,267 per quintal, respectively. Pulses like tur or arhar (pigeon pea) also benefited from a big MSP hike by about Rs

550 from last year to stand at Rs 7,550 per quintal. The MSP of paddy, the main kharif crop, has been raised by Rs 117 to Rs 2,300 per quintal for "common" grade variety and Rs 2,320 for grade A. Jowar, Bajra, Ragi and Maize, other major cereals' MSPs have been increased to Rs 3,371-3,421, Rs 2,625, Rs 4,290 and Rs 2,225 per quintal from last season's Rs 3,180-3,225, Rs 2,500, Rs 3,846 and Rs 2,090 a quintal. For pulses and oilseeds, the increase in MSP has been between Rs 124 to Rs 983 compared to last year. The MSP for cotton, an important cash crop, was fixed at Rs 7,121 for the medium staple variety and Rs 7,521 for the long staple variety, an increase of Rs 501 for both.

Commenting on the Union cabinet's decision on MSP, CM Yadav said, "What PM Modi says, he does and this is one of the examples. This decision will bring a big change in the farming sector. I would thank PM Modi for this decision and also I would congratulate farmers."

## Cong candidate for Amarwara bypoll Dheeransha Invati files nomination

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Congress candidate for the July 10 Amarwara bypoll in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district -- Dheeransha Invati -- on Thursday filed his nomination for the upcoming electoral contest.

The Congress on Wednesday announced Invati's name as the party nominee against BJP's Kamlesh Shah.

Madhya Pradesh unit Congress chief Jitu Patwari, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, Umang Singh and former state Cabinet minister Sajjan Singh Verma, along with several party leaders accompanied Invati during the nomination filing process.

Veteran Congress leader and former chief minister Kamal Nath, who was also expected to accompany Invati on Thursday, however, was not present.

Kamal Nath on Wednesday, through a social media post, appealed to the



people of Amarwara to support Invati.

BJP's nominee for the July 10 bypoll, Kamlesh Shah, had already filed his nomination papers in the presence of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and state unit BJP chief V.D. Sharma on Tuesday.

Kamlesh Shah, a Congress-turned-BJP leader, is a three-time MLA from Amarwara

Assembly constituency. Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, Shah switched to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and also resigned as a Congress legislator, necessitating the by-election.

The Congress won all seven assembly seats of Chhindwara district in the November 2023 Assembly polls.

## 3 MP villages selected for DOT's Urban Administration Minister Vijayvargiya informed how to plant trees

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has announced a proposal for '5G Intelligent Village' showcasing the advantages of 5G connectivity, for which it has selected 10 villages from different states.

Out of these, three villages are from Madhya Pradesh -- Raosar, Aari, and Banskhedhi -- which come under the Guna Lok Sabha constituency represented by Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia.

This news came 10 days after Scindia assumed charge as the Union Minister of Communications. Scindia, who contested his sixth Lok Sabha elections this year, but first on a BJP ticket, from his family bastion Guna, won against Congress' Rao Yadendra Singh Yadav by a margin of more than 5 lakh votes.

According to the Department of Telecommunications' (DoT) official statement, the '5G Intelligent Village' initiative aims to enable effective utilisation of Ultra-Reliable Low-Latency Communication (URLLC) and massive Machine Type Communication (mMTC) aspects of 5G in selected villages.

"Proposals can also include plans for estab-



lishing 5G connectivity in areas without the existing coverage. This initiative aims to unite telecom service providers, sensor manufacturers, CCTV suppliers, and IoT providers on a single platform to explore and exploit the potential advantages of 5G, serving as a hub for research and development in this field," it said. The DoT has invited participants from industry, small businesses, startups, academia, and government departments involved in technology design, development, and commercialisation of telecom products and solutions.

Team Absolute | Indore

Preparations are underway to plant 51 lakh trees in Indore, the commercial city of Madhya Pradesh. State Urban Administration Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya is telling the common people how to plant trees.

Sapling plantation campaigns are being run at different levels during the rainy season in the state. In this sequence, Urban Administration Minister Vijayvargiya has pledged to plant 51 lakh trees in Indore. Pits are being dug for planting these plants, while there is also talk of taking the help of technology for planting the plants.

Kailash Vijayvargiya says that planting of plants also has its own technique and with their planting it is known whether the tree will survive or not. Therefore, Vijayvargiya himself is telling people how to plant



trees.

He has told people to bury only the root portion of the tree in the ground, if the trunk is buried in the ground then there is a possibility of the tree rotting. It is also important to remove the polythene stuck over the roots. During this time it is important to keep in mind that the roots should not scatter.

He has said that at the place where the tree is to be planted, there will be a pit, manure will be available and a shovel will also be available. Buckets and jugs will also be available for water.

Earlier, Jal Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan was launched in the state for water conservation and tree plantation. This campaign started from World Environment Day and continued till Ganga Dussehra on 16th June.

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has resolved to plant five and a half crore saplings in Madhya Pradesh.

## FIRE BROKE OUT IN A THREE-STORY HOUSE IN GWALIOR, FATHER AND TWO DAUGHTERS DIED

Gwalior: Three people of the same family died in a fire in a three-storey building in Gwalior district of Madhya Pradesh on Thursday morning.

Police said that the dead included a father and his two daughters. The incident took place in Kailash Nagar located in Bahodapur police station area. A sudden fire broke out in Vijay Gupta's three-storey house on Thursday morning. There was a dry fruit warehouse on the second floor of the house. The fire started from the kitchen and gradually took a huge form.

On receiving information about fire in the house, fire brigade vehicles and police reached the spot. Even before the fire could be controlled, a wall of the house was demolished. Bodies of three people were found inside. There is a possibility of death of all three due to suffocation. The cause of the fire is said to be short circuit.

The bodies of the father and both daughters have been sent to the hospital for post-mortem.

## Cong to introspect on humiliating poll defeat in MP, 3-member panel to visit soon

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Congress has begun introspection for its humiliating defeat in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls in several states, including Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Delhi and will form a three-member panel to find out the actual reasons behind the defeat.

The fact-finding committee for Madhya Pradesh comprises three members -- Prithviraj Chavan, Saptagiri Shankar Ulka and Jignesh Mevani.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday formed six fact-finding committees to find out the actual reasons behind the party's



loss in the general elections. The members of these fact-

finding committees would be visiting the states assigned to them.

During the visit, committee members would meet the state leaders and party workers.

To collect the actual reasons, the committee members would not visit just one particular place or state party headquarters, but at different parts and would submit their reports to Kharge.

Congress has witnessed a humiliating defeat by winning just one of the 40 Lok Sabha seats in Chhattisgarh.

In Madhya Pradesh Lok Sabha polls, the Congress had secured two and one seats in 2014 and 2019, respectively, but lost all 29 seats to BJP in 2024.

The vote share also reduced in 2024 to 30 per cent as compared to 38 per cent in 2019.

## International Yoga Day programs will be held at every booth

Chief Minister, State President, Regional Organization General Secretary and State Organization General Secretary will participate in the program.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Bharatiya Janata Party will organize yoga programs at booths across the state on the occasion of International Yoga Day on June 21. Party officials and workers will do mass yoga at the Bharatiya Janata Party state office at 7 am. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav at Bhopal's Lal Parade Ground, Party's State President and MP Vishnuddutt Sharma, Yoga Day organized at 6 am in the Jugal Kishore Temple com-

plex of Panna, Regional Organization General Secretary Ajay Jamwal and State Organization General Secretary Hitanand Sharma BJP State Office will participate in the program.

Bharatiya Janata Party workers will organize yoga camps at each booth. Party officials, MPs, MLAs, public representatives and party workers will also participate in the programs organized in various educational institutions, social institutions and public parks across the state.

## AIIMS Bhopal shines in the national INI-SS exam results

Team Absolute | Bhopal

All the DM and Mch seats in clinical super speciality departments at AIIMS Bhopal were filled in the first counselling of the INI-SS examination for July 2024 session. This nationwide test is conducted for the super speciality courses across all Institutes of National importance in the country. This year, AIIMS Bhopal has filled up all 29 advertised seats in 5 Mch and 9 DM courses.

Another remarkable achievement was that the seats in Mch in Pediatric Orthopedics, Pediatric Nephrology and Joint replacement surgery were taken up by AIR-1 holders in the respective disci-

plines. In addition, six seats in Burns and Plastic Surgery, three seats in Urology, one seat in Pediatric Hematology and Oncology and two seats each in Critical Care, Endocrinology, Nephrology, Neuroanesthesiology, Neurology, Oncoanesthesiology, Pulmonary Medicine, and Neurosurgery were all filled up by high ranking students from across the country. This achievement was made possible by a series of positive efforts made at AIIMS Bhopal for development of super speciality departments under the able guidance of Prof (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director and CEO of AIIMS Bhopal. Further, the following

six students of AIIMS Bhopal were selected for various super speciality courses:

- 1) Dr Athira (Pediatrics) for Pediatric Nephrology
- 2) Dr Ashutosh Pandey (Anesthesiology)- DM critical care AIIMS Raipur
- 3) Dr Saniya Jaiswal (Anesthesiology) - DM Neuroanesthesia AIIMS Delhi
- 4) Dr Suruchi (General Surgery)- Mch surgical Gastroenterology AIIMS Patna
- 5) Dr Mrinal Pattnaik (Forensic Medicine)- DM Toxicology AIIMS Raipur
- 6) Dr MM Ajeena (ENT) for Mch in Burns and Plastic Surgery.

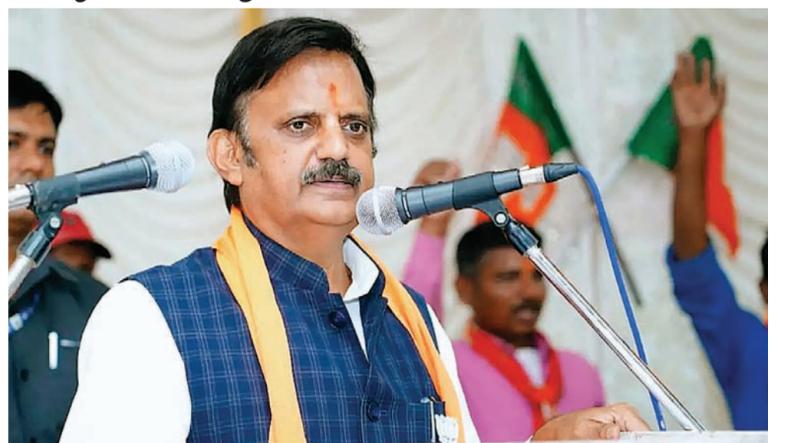
AIIMS Bhopal congratulates all the selected students, wishes them well, and looks forward to their contribution to society.

## Yoga is a symbol of healthy and balanced lifestyle : Deputy Chief Minister Shukla

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla has said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has taken important steps to give yoga global recognition and is continuously striving to make it an integral part of every person's lifestyle. The Deputy Chief Minister has called upon all citizens to move towards a healthy and happy life by adopting yoga in their lives. Quoting Maharishi Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, he said that "Yoga: Chittavritti Nirodhah." That is, yoga is the control of the instincts of the mind. Helpful in achieving mental peace and stability. It is a matter of immense pride that Yoga, which is a precious gift of our sages, has today become a symbol of a healthy and balanced lifestyle all over the world.

Shukla has appealed to the people of the state to make yoga a part of their daily life. Yoga not only keeps our body healthy but also provides peace and balance to our mind and soul. You can do this alone or with your family. The Deputy Chief Minister has urged the parents, guardians and youth to teach the importance of Yoga to their children and younger brothers and sisters from an early age and inspire them to adopt it in their lives.



Deputy Chief Minister said that the theme of Yoga Day this year "Yoga for Self and Society" gives the message that Yoga is important not only for individ-

ual health but for the welfare of the entire society. Yoga helps us achieve physical, mental and spiritual balance, allowing us to build a better society.



SPECIAL ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA

# Yoga : A powerful medium for women empowerment and world peace

Lalit Garg

The 10th celebration of International Yoga Day will be celebrated in India as well as in most of the countries around the world on 21st June 2024 with a new theme - 'Yoga for women empowerment'. This year the theme of Yoga Day is based on women to promote the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual well-being of women by using yoga as a tool. This will ensure that women are healthy, confident and play a leading role in society. Yoga is being made a medium to connect human beings. In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had proposed to celebrate Yoga Day in the United Nations meeting, after which it was announced on 11 December 2014 to celebrate 21 June every year as International Yoga Day. Due to India's efforts regarding the importance of yoga, countries around the world started celebrating Yoga Day at the world level. Through Indian Yoga and Meditation, India is succeeding in achieving 'Vishwa Guru' status and a unique identity in the world. That is why International Yoga Day has been accepted by the whole world.

The vision and efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has created an unusual atmosphere for the international acceptance of Yoga Day. Today every sphere of life is surrounded by problems due to pandemic, Great War, terrorism, rising inflation, poverty, unemployment, due to which every person and family is feeling extreme stress/pressure in their daily life. Everyone is living a life of doubt, conflict and mental turmoil. There is a crisis of life in front of man. Mental balance is getting disturbed. Mental balance means to establish harmony in different situations and to achieve this; the powerful and effective medium is yoga. Yoga is such a technique, a science that heals our body, mind, thoughts and soul. It removes our stress and frustration. When we do yoga, focus on the breath, do pranayama and exercise, all this inspires our body and mind to be happy and cheerful from within. Yoga is a powerful way to get rid of the hustle and bustle of life.

Yoga is the process of purifying and enlightening the consciousness of man, it is an undertaking to elevate man, it is a means to establish balance in life and it is the science of oneness with God and the universe. Realization of self is the task of life, the goal. This realization can neither be attained by discourse, nor can it be attained by intellect, nor by listening a lot, for that it is necessary to have self-realization and this realization happens only to the one whose conscience is pure and selfless.

The pure conscience is the mirror in which the vision of the soul, the manifestation of nature and the vision of the self are seen. In a pure conscience, the intellect remains heavenly and clean, the mind as pure as the Ganges, the mind as steady as the light of a motionless lamp without wind, and the entire consciousness flowing like rivers to meet the ocean. Just as one's face is visible in the mirror only when the mirror is clear and stable, similarly the Supreme power of self is visible only through a pure conscience. Yoga is such an effective form of exercise, through which balance is created not only in the



parts of the body but also in the mind, and soul. This is the reason that apart from physical ailments, mental problems can also be overcome by yoga.

The importance of yoga, which is found in our Vedas or even earlier literature, today the same yoga is gaining its fame all over the world and due to the corona crisis, the usefulness of yoga has increased more than before. Seeing its benefits, everyone seems to be adopting it in their rushing life and life crisis caused by epidemics, war, violence, economic instability and terrorism. Slowly, but people are understanding that by doing yoga, not only the biggest diseases can be driven away but also happiness can be brought in their life, life can be balanced, Work-efficiencies can be increased, peace and harmony can be established.

Yoga is the only way for physical, mental and spiritual peace of health. But in the occult age, the history of yoga is hidden in the infinite depths of time. By the way, some people also believe that the science of yoga is older than the Vedas. In the excavations done by the Archaeological Department of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, many such sculptures have been found in which Shiva and Parvati are shown performing various yogasanas. Swami Vivekananda, who promoted Indian Yoga to the world, says - "A pure heart is the best mirror for the reflection of truth. That's why all spiritual practice is for purifying the heart. When it becomes pure, all the truths are reflected in it at that very moment. Unholy imagination is as bad as unholy acts."

Modern materialistic and convenient life is pushing man towards disturbance, imbalance, tension, fatigue and irritability, due to which the disorder is increasing. Yoga is such a powerful medicine that keeps the mind cool and the body fit to keep such heterogeneous and discrepant life healthy and

energetic. The pace of life can be given a musical pace through yoga. Yoga is the oldest identity of our Indian culture. The awakening of Yoga-consciousness leads to purification of the mind. Its process is to see the soul through the soul. Observing the tendencies and states of mind by the free consciousness of attachment and aversion. Right philosophy is a powerful undertaking to transform the Self. The secretions of the glandular system are balanced by the experiments of self-realization. Due to this the feelings remain pure, thoughts become healthy.

The word yoga is derived from the age of culture, which means the union of the soul with the universal consciousness. Yoga has been practiced for more than ten thousand years. According to the Vedic Samhitas, it is mentioned in the Vedas about the ascetics since ancient times. Sculptures depicting yoga and meditation were also found in the Indus Valley Civilization. In Hinduism, Yoga civilization was adopted by sages, monks and yogis from the very beginning, but not much time has passed since this method has spread among the common people. However, knowing the glory and importance of yoga, it is being adopted extensively for a healthy lifestyle, mainly because of its positive effects in busy, stressful and unhealthy routines.

Yoga is necessary for us to stay healthy. Through yoga, you can benefit from many diseases like asthma, diabetes, blood pressure, and arthritis. Yoga removes stress and gets good sleep, appetite is good, not only this, digestion is also improved. Body fat can be reduced only through yoga. When man takes shelter of yoga to solve his physical, mental and spiritual problems and get their solution, then he connects with yoga, makes relationships, and tries to bring it into life. But when one starts knowing something about it, knowing it steps in the process of action, and then it reaches the limit of use. By making the role of this experiment an integral part of life, we can give a new shape to humanity.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is deeply interested in Yoga, has implemented it with a great resolution. Surely his yoga-revolution will become the medium of development, happiness and peace in the life of world humanity. Yoga not only teaches how to live a beautiful and orderly life, but also teaches the art of improving personality, communal harmony, good governance and balanced life. Those who do politics in the name of yoga are doing great harm to humanity. Because Yoga is not associated with any religion, sect, caste or language. Yoga means to unite, so it talks about love, non-violence, compassion and taking everyone along. Yoga is an investigation into the process of life. It came into existence before all religions and it opened up infinite possibilities before human beings. This science related to inner and spiritual development, human welfare is a great gift for the whole world.

## international

## World's citizens to gather at UN to showcase yoga's power to unite

**Arul Louis** | United Nations  
Citizens from around the globe will gather here on Friday to show the uniting power of yoga across boundaries and divisions as the world organisation celebrates the 10th International Day of Yoga.

The theme for this year's celebration is 'Yoga for Women Empowerment' and it will be featured on the North Lawn of the UN headquarters where diplomats, UN officials and employees, and aficionados of the ancient art will perform asanas in synchronicity.

Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed is expected to participate in the event and a video message from General Assembly President Dennis Francis is anticipated.

The global celebrations with millions participating every year were set in motion by the General Assembly in December 2014 when it declared June 21 as the International Day of Yoga in a



resolution proposed by India, cosponsored by 175 countries and adopted unanimously.

The date was chosen because the Summer Solstice falls on that day in the northern hemisphere most years, although it is a day early this year and next.

The yoga celebration is here at 6 p.m. New York Time (3:30 a.m. IST Saturday) will be webcast by the UN (<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1b/k1bvb85iak>).

With a blazing tempera-

ture of 35 degrees Centigrade, it will be held on a day that is forecast to be the hottest so far this year.

India's UN Mission is cosponsoring it with the UN Secretariat.

Last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the yoga celebration at the UN and it made it to the Guinness Book of World Records for the most nationalities -- 135 -- participating in yoga practice at one place.

On the day of the Solstice, Thursday, the annual 'Mind

over Madness' event will be held at Times Square with day-long yoga sessions creating an island of calm and serenity amid the cacophony and the bustle of the place known as 'the Crossroads of the World'.

India's Consulate General is one of the sponsors of the event that runs from 7.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. and features seven yoga classes run by instructors of several ethnicities and national origin showing yoga's universality.

PM Modi presented the idea of an International Day of Yoga in September 2014 at his first address to the General Assembly, declaring, "Yoga is an invaluable gift from our ancient tradition".

Asoke Kumar Mukerji, who was then the permanent representative, rounded up the 175 cosponsors cutting across international divisions and had it adopted within three months -- likely a record for the quickest passage of a resolution at the General Assembly.

## Wildfires rage across California, engulf acres of forest



**San Francisco** | Agencies

The fast-growing Sites wildfire in Northern California remained just 5 per cent contained, officials said. The Sites Fire, about 100 miles northwest of Sacramento, the capital city of the western US state of California, broke out on Monday and is among over a dozen wildfires that have ripped through the state, Xinhua news agency reported.

The blaze, currently the largest and fastest-growing wildfire in Northern California, has engulfed some 15,656 acres in Colusa County. Evacuations are ongoing, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. In Sonoma County, the

Point Fire, which erupted Sunday in Geyserville and has burned more than 1,207 acres, was 50 per cent contained as of Tuesday evening.

In Calaveras County, a blaze that erupted on Monday afternoon has been dubbed the Aero Fire, and it has been deemed a threat to more than 3,600 structures. It was 33 per cent contained on Wednesday afternoon, having charred more than 5,351 acres.

Officials warned that the risk of new fires erupting in Northern California remained high.

The probability of ignition is "still up at around 100 per cent," said fire behaviour analyst Jonathan Pangborn of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

## Canada declares Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps 'terrorist entity'



**Ottawa** | Agencies

Canada has declared Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a branch of the Iranian Armed Forces, as a "terrorist entity".

Canadian Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc announced on Wednesday afternoon, saying that Canada will use all of the tools at its disposal "to combat the terrorist activity" of the IRGC.

Thousands of senior Iranian government officials, including top IRGC members, are now banned from entering Canada, and those already inside the country may be investigated and removed, LeBlanc said.

As an immediate consequence of the listing, Canadian financial institutions, such as banks and brokerages, are required to immediately freeze the property of a listed entity, and it is a criminal offence for anyone in Canada and Canadians abroad to knowingly deal with property owned or controlled by a terrorist group, according to a press statement issued by Public Safety Canada as quoted by Xinhua news agency report.

According to local media, charitable organisations can lose their status if they maintain their connections to terrorist groups, and people found to be associated with those groups can be denied entry into Canada.

The US designated the IRGC a "terrorist group" in 2019.

## Israel's military spokesman says Hamas 'cannot be eliminated'

**Jerusalem** | Agencies

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Spokesman Daniel Hagari has said that Hamas "cannot be eliminated" and suggested that only a swap deal could secure the release of all hostages still held in Gaza.

The remarks, made during an interview with Israeli Channel 13 TV news, mark the first time an Israeli official has said on Wednesday that the Palestinian group cannot be eliminated.

The statement diverges from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's set goals for the war: "eliminating" Hamas and releasing hostages held in Gaza, Xinhua news agency reported.

"Hamas is an idea, Hamas is a party. It is rooted in the hearts of the people -- whoever thinks we can eliminate Hamas is wrong," said the IDF officer.



Hagari said that the way to weaken Hamas is to establish a new government in the Gaza Strip that would replace it and take care of food distribution and public services, adding that the only way to secure the release of all Israeli

hostages is by reaching a swap deal.

In response, Netanyahu's office released a statement saying that the security cabinet "has defined as one of the war goals the destruction of Hamas's military and governance capabilities," indicating a slight shift from the previously stated objective of eliminating Hamas.

Israeli forces have been fighting in Gaza for more than eight months, causing a humanitarian crisis and mass destruction and killing more than 37,300 people, mainly civilians.

According to the Israeli army, much of Hamas' militant infrastructure has been dismantled.

Israel launched the war to retaliate for a surprise Hamas attack on southern Israeli communities, killing about 1,200 people.

## Putin lauds ties with Hanoi on state visit to Vietnam

**Hanoi** | Agencies

Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed the importance of expanding his country's strategic partnership with Vietnam, state media reported, at talks with Vietnamese President To Lam on the first day of his state visit to the Southeast Asian country.

The Russian leader also invited Lam to participate in commemorations in Moscow next year, marking the 80th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, the Russian state news agency TASS reported.

Putin arrived in Hanoi late on Wednesday after a visit to North Korea. He is expected to attend a state banquet on Thursday after meetings with Nguyen Phu Trong, the general secretary of the country's ruling Communist Party, and



Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh.

Having been isolated on the international stage, Putin is seeking to shore up support from Russia's remaining allies. Commentators suggest his brief tour of Vietnam and North Korea is of practical as well as symbolic importance.

"Putin's trip to Vietnam will reinvigorate their comprehensive strategic part-

nership and shore up economic relations through trade and investment commitments by adopting a rouble-dong currency exchange mechanism for goods and services payments," said Vietnam expert Carl Thayer, emeritus professor of politics at the University of New South Wales in Australia.

Another item on the agenda could be Russia's war with Ukraine. The Ukrainian ambassador in Hanoi, Oleksandr Haman, told dpa news agency that he does not expect Vietnam to abandon its neutral stance in the conflict.

During his stay in Hanoi, Putin is staying at The Sofitel Metropole, a French-owned hotel. Prior to his arrival, a Russian-chartered jumbo jet shipped in limousines for Putin's use throughout his visit.



# Congress entitled to LoP post, INDIA bloc constituents will support: Sharad Pawar

Team Absolute | Pune

Nationalist Congress Party (SP) President Sharad Pawar on Thursday said that the Congress will decide who will be the new Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha and the selected one will be backed by the INDIA bloc constituents.

Talking to media persons, Pawar said, "In the INDIA bloc, Congress has bagged the highest number of seats and would be entitled to the LoP post."

"Before the Lok Sabha session starting from June 24, the INDIA bloc will have a meeting and finalise the name for the LoP post. We shall endorse the decision," said Pawar.

The NCP (SP) supremo added that the post of Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha is unlikely to go to the Opposition parties, contrary to speculation in political quarters.

"Last time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not honour the promise (to give Deputy Speaker post



to the Opposition), though we shall discuss it this time," declared Pawar.

Criticising the Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA 3.0 government at the

Centre, Pawar said that the people's faith in PM Modi has been shattered both in Maharashtra and elsewhere in the country, and the masses do not

believe in the 'Modi Guarantees' any longer.

Against this backdrop, the NCP (SP) supremo said that the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) allies Congress-Shiv Sena (UBT)-NCP (SP) are poised to win at least 155 of the 288 seats in the Maharashtra Assembly elections due in October.

"In the recent LS elections, of the 48 seats, the MVA allies bagged 31 seats. If we calculate the six assembly segments that make up these parliamentary constituencies, then we have secured leads/wins in 155-plus Assembly seats in the LS polls. This indicates that the people's mood is against the MahaYuti," Pawar pointed out.

Scheduled to wind up his three-day tour of the drought-hit regions of Baramati on Thursday, Pawar revealed that after the upcoming monsoon session of Parliament, he would embark on a tour of the state and in all the constituencies where the MVA allies will contest the Assembly elections.

# Mirae Asset Mutual Fund launches India's 1st EV exchange-traded fund

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mirae Asset Investment Managers (India) on Thursday launched India's first exchange-traded fund (ETF) focused on the electric vehicles (EV) and new-age automotive segment, after the National Stock Exchange (NSE) launched a new Nifty EV index last month.

The New Fund Offer (NFO) for Mirae Asset Nifty EV and New Age Automotive ETF will open for subscription on June 24 and close on July 5.

In the scheme, the minimum initial investment during NFO will be Rs 5,000, with subsequent investments being multiples of Re 1.

"With the launch of India's first ETF focused on the Electric Vehicles and the New Age Automotive segment, we aim to offer investors a unique opportunity to participate in the future of mobility," said Swarup Anand Mohanty, Vice Chairman and CEO, Mirae Asset Investment Managers (India).

The index will seek to capture companies participating in emerging segments like electric vehicles, hybrid vehicles, battery manufacturing etc. across sectors and market cap segments, but will also intend to capture initiatives and possibly future disruptions like hydrogen-fuel cell and autonomous vehicles



etc.

"By investing in companies leading the charge in EV and new automotive technologies across the value chain, this new ETF will offer investors exposure to the innovative and rapidly evolving ecosystem in this space," said Siddharth Srivastava, Head-ETF Products, Mirae Asset Investment Managers (India).

NSE Indices, NSE's index services subsidiary, last month launched a new Nifty EV and New Age Automotive Index, as the adoption of EVs surges amid an increase in charging infrastructure.

The index will be reconstituted semi-annually and rebalanced on a quarterly basis.

# Maximum 'burnt memory/microcontroller of EVMs' from Ahmednagar LS seat, plea for recheck to ECI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has received applications from six states for checking/verification of 'burnt memory/microcontroller of EVMs' used in the recently held Lok Sabha elections, an official statement said on Thursday.

From the six states, the complaints originated from 92 polling stations spread in eight LS seats, including one from Maharashtra's Ahmednagar constituency.

The ECI said that in the Ahmednagar LS seat, there were a total of 40 such instances of burnt memory/microcontroller of Electronic Voting Machines



(EVMs) in all six Assembly segments. They include - Shrigonda, Parner (10 each), Karjat-Jamkhed, Ahmednagar City, Rahuri and Shevgaon (5 each), totaling to 40. This is the highest among all the eight LS con-

stituencies spread in six states, and Bharatiya Janata Party sitting MP Sujay Vikhe-Patil - who was trounced by Nationalist Congress Party (SP)'s winner Nilesh D. Lanke - has now applied for checking/verification of the

concerned (40) EVMs in his constituency. While Lanke secured 624,797 votes and romped home, Vikhe-Patil polled 595,868 votes and lost, with a margin of 28,929 votes - shocking BJP circles.

The complaints were received as per the Standard Operating Procedures of the ECI announced on June 1, said the statement.

Apart from Maharashtra, similar pleas have been received from Vizianagaram (Andhra Pradesh - 02 EVMs affected), Kanker (Chhattisgarh - 04 EVMs), Faridabad and Karnal (Haryana - 06 EVMs), Vellore and Virudhnagar (Tamil Nadu - 20 EVMs), and Zahirabad (Telangana - 20 EVMs).

# Pune woman hangs from building holding man's hand, All for a reel

Team Absolute | Pune

She clung to a man's hand and was hanging from the edge of a building, while another filmed it. The scene is not from 'Amazing Spider-Man 2' where Gwen Stacy fell off the building and Peter Parker tried to save her. It's from Pune.

To check their 'grip strength' two people performed a stunt for an Instagram reel. While Emma Stone, who played 'Gwen Stacy' in 'Amazing Spider-Man 2', wore a safety harness to perform the stunt, the woman in the reel was just holding the man's hand and



was hanging approximately 100 feet from the ground.

The identity of the man and the woman and other people part of the stunt is not

known. This incident took place near Swami Narayan Temple in Pune where two people risked their lives for views on Instagram. There

was a multi-camera setup for the reel - A man on the roof was seen filming it, while another person shot the video from the ground.

The third cameraperson leaned slightly towards the edge to film it. In the video, no safety precautions were taken by anyone while performing the stunt.

The reel triggered a response on social media, with users calling it reckless, unnecessary and pointless to form such an act and risk their lives.

# Bar Mumbai Shiv Sena winner's oath-taking as MP: Losing candidate's notice to LS officer

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

In an unprecedented development, a losing candidate in the recent Lok Sabha elections from Mumbai North West has shot off a legal notice to the Lok Sabha Secretary-General seeking to bar the winner, Shiv Sena's Ravindra D Waikar, from taking oath as an MP. The notice was sent by Advocate Asim Sarode here on Thursday on behalf of Hindu Samaj Party's Lok Sabha poll candidate Bharat K Shah, who has now challenged Waikar's election on various grounds of alleged irregularities in the counting process. After a lot of tension during counting at the NESCO centre in Goregaon East, Waikar was proclaimed the winner from Mumbai North West, late on June 4. In the notice, the aggrieved Shah has said, "In the background of serious complaints regarding malpractices, irregularities NESCO vote counting center... Not to allow Ravindra Waikar to take oath of allegiance under Article 99 as a MP". Sarode said in the notice that after the counting process, Waikar was declared the winner with 452,644 votes against his closest rival, Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Amol G. Kirtikar who polled 452,596 votes - by a wafer-thin margin of 48 votes - while Shah, who lost had secured just 937 votes. Probably for the first time, a close relative of a candidate, namely Waikar, was found using a mobile phone inside the NESCO centre at the time of vote counting and Shah



immediately lodged a complaint with the Returning Officer, besides lodging a FIR with the Vanrai Police Station (No.201/2024). Shah's notice further claimed that the police probe revealed that Mangesh V Pandilkar - who is reportedly related to Shiv Sena President and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde - was using a mobile phone which was allegedly connected to an EVM. The Investigating Officer said that Pandilkar's mobile phone was used to generate an OTP to unlock the EVM that evening and a notice under CrPC Section 41A has also been served to Dinesh Gurav, who was the opera-

tor of the ENCORE (Poll Portal) of the Election Commission of India (ECI). The police have sent Pandilkar's mobile for forensic analysis plus fingerprinting, besides taking and checking the CCTV footage inside the counting centre.

Police also found an Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) for service voters that is used after the EVMs. "The specific allegation against the accused is that to unlock the postal ballot system, Gurav used the same mobile phone and generated an OTP," said Sarode's notice.

He pointed out that during the EVM counting, Kirtikar was leading but after the ETPBS count, he trailed and Waikar was declared the winner by just 48 votes. The notice said that this was the first time when a specific process of fraud through an EVM came to light and became the point of discussion all over India and internationally, as "Waikar's win is tainted and prima facie under clouds of criminal activities done by him in an organised manner." In view of this, Shah said that it would not be just and proper to allow Waikar to take his oath as MP so as to retain and regain the confidence of voters in India that there is some evaluation system functional which takes serious and swift cognisance of election frauds. Sarode added that Shah is determined to approach all the appropriate legal forums to seek justice and bring transparency into action in the country's election process.

# Man booked for raping woman on marriage pretext

Team Absolute | Thane

The Navi Mumbai Police in Maharashtra booked a 31-year-old man for allegedly befriending a woman through a matrimonial site and raping her, an official said on Thursday.

According to the news agency, after allegedly assaulting the 30-year-old complainant on the pretext of marriage, the accused, a resident of Dombivli in Thane district severed ties with her, the official said citing the FIR.

The police said that the suspect who has been identi-

fied as Shadab Munaf Ansari and the woman, who lives in Mumbra, became friends a few years ago. Promising to marry her, the man raped her at a lodge in Panvel of Navi Mumbai and in a hotel in Dombivli, the woman claimed. The woman approached the police after Ansari allegedly backtracked on his promise, the official said. The Panvel town police in Navi Mumbai on Wednesday registered a case against Ansari for rape under the Indian Penal Code and launched a probe, the official added.

# IIT Bombay Fines Students Rs 1.2 Lakh Each Over Ramayana Skit

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay has fined eight students for staging a controversial play titled 'Raahovan,' believed to be a parody of Ramayana, during the institute's Performing Arts Festival (PAF) on March 31.

A section of students had formally complained against the play, alleging that it was loosely based on the revered Hindu epic Ramayana and had derogatory references to Hindu beliefs and deities. Some students alleged that the play lampooned the lead characters and mocked cultural values in the guise of 'promoting feminism'. The complaints led to a disciplinary committee meeting on May 8, resulting in the penalties announced on June 4.

The institute imposed fines of Rs 1.2 lakh each on four students - the amount is



almost the same as a semester's tuition fee. Four other students were fined Rs 40,000 each. Graduating students faced additional sanctions, including a ban from the institute's gymkhana awards given to students. Junior students were debarred from hostel facilities. The penalties are due on July 20, 2024, at the office of the Dean of Student Affairs. The institute warned that any breach of this penalty would result in further sanctions. The controversy gained traction on social media when the 'IIT B for Bharat' group denounced the play on April 8, citing it as a mockery of Lord Ram and the Ramayana. The group

posted video clips from the performance, alleging that the students misused academic freedom to ridicule revered figures. The videos that went viral on the internet show students presenting a play allegedly inspired by Ramayana characters and plot settings. In one video, a student, allegedly playing Sita, praises her 'kidnapper' and the place she was taken to. "We welcome the disciplinary action taken by the IIT Bombay administration against those involved in the play 'Raahovan,' which depicted the Ramayana in a derogatory manner," the group stated on social media platform X. "We urge the

administration to establish guidelines to ensure that no religion is ridiculed under the guise of freedom of expression on campus." While certain groups appreciated the institution's decision to initiate disciplinary action against the students, some have condemned it as an attack on freedom of expression. "I had always heard that educational institutions should be safe spaces, safe for voicing opinions. Alas, even IITs are no longer safe spaces," wrote one person on X. "This is egregious. Students cannot be fined in colleges for being disrespectful to any religion. Colleges are places where one should be able to freely mock religion. IIT Bombay must take this back," wrote another. The Performing Arts Festival is an annual cultural event at IIT Bombay, known for showcasing student talent in various art forms.

# Rains lash parts of city; moderate to heavy rain expected for 24 hrs

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mist shrouded Mumbai on Thursday morning and sporadic downpours cooled the city. On Wednesday, in spite of it raining in parts of the city, it was not enough to alleviate the heat.

As per the latest Mumbai weather update, the city will be experiencing a generally cloudy sky with moderate to heavy rainfall in the city and suburbs.

The Mumbai weather update issued by the India Meteorological Department also stated that the maximum and minimum temperatures are very likely to be around 30 degrees Celsius and 25 degrees Celsius respectively.

Meanwhile, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, in their Mumbai weather update, stated that the city's coast will be hit by high tides twice today. The sea is expected to swell at 11.05 am and 10.52 pm today with the tides going as high as 4.14 meters and 3.55 meters respectively.

Meanwhile, the coast along the city will see low tide at 5.04 pm and at 4.49 am on June 21 and the tides are likely to



reach 2.16 meters and 0.64 meters high. The weather bureau, per the Mumbai weather update, has sounded a yellow alert in the city until Thursday while neighbouring Raigad, Thane and Palghar have been issued yellow alert till June 23.

On June 9, the IMD reported the commencement of the southwest monsoon over Mumbai. After the monsoon arrived in Mumbai on June 9, two days earlier than usual, the rains stayed away for the last two days, making the weather sweltering.

The BMC, in its Mumbai weather update, also said that the city had

received 19.88 mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours. The eastern suburbs, it said, saw 29.56 mm rainfall and the western suburbs recorded rainfall of 59.30 mm.

The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) said that the satellite city saw 16.20 mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours with Koparkhairne receiving 22.80 mm of rainfall. Nerul received the lowest amount of rainfall; the tally stood at 9.60 mm.

The southwest monsoon, which stalled after reaching Mumbai, is picking up speed and is likely to strengthen by June 21-11, according to the India Meteorological Department. According to the report, the effort is expected to provide respite to north India, which is now undergoing a severe heat wave.

"Monsoon activity was weak after it hit Mumbai, but it is slowly turning moderate. It will strengthen by June 21-22 and coastal Maharashtra is likely to receive good rainfall. Central Maharashtra, including Marathwada, will receive light to moderate rainfall during this time," Sunil Kamble, Head of the Regional Meteorological Department (IMD) in Mumbai said.



# TRAVIS SCOTT ARRESTED IN MIAMI

Los Angeles | Agencies

Travis Scott was arrested in Miami for alleged disorderly intoxication and trespassing after a warning. The 33-year-old "SICKO MODE" rapper (real name: Jacques Bermon Webster II) was booked at the Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center on Thursday.

"The Miami Beach Police Department confirms the arrest of Mr. Jacques Webster, D.O.B 4/30/1991, on June 20, 2024, at approximately 1:44 a.m. Mr. Webster was taken into custody following an incident at the Miami Beach Marina located at 300 Alton Road."

According to the affidavit, authorities noted they were called to the Miami Beach Marina at 12:44 a.m. regarding a disturbance on a yacht. Police claimed that Scott was "yelling at the vessel occupants." Furthermore, police claimed they "could sense a strong smell of alco-



said, "It's Miami."

hol coming from the defendant's breath." An officer then informed Scott that he had to either leave the dock or he would be arrested.

The "goosebumps" artist proceeded to leave the premises, walking back to a vehicle with his security personnel. However, five minutes later, he returned to the dock and "bypassed officers" around the vessel who told him not to go back to the vessel. Scott "began yelling once again, becoming erratic," the affidavit read. He was subsequently arrested at 1:17 a.m., then booked at 4:35 a.m.

Police noted in the affidavit that Scott admitted that

he had been drinking alcohol and

# Lupita Nyong'o revealed that she injured her vocal cords

Los Angeles | Agencies

Oscar-winning actress Lupita Nyong'o revealed that she injured her vocal cords while working on the upcoming animated movie 'The Wild Robot'.

The actress had to wear a badge to inform fans why she was keeping quiet at the event.

Appearing on 'Late Night With Seth Meyers', she said: "Sometimes people, fans thought I was being rude because I wouldn't say anything. I'd just be like, (striking a pose)."

"So, then, I just thought, okay, let me let people know what's going on and that way they'll have sympathy for me instead of hatred."

The actress said: "Well, okay, so, she's a robot. And she goes through this journey to finding, I guess, what we would call humanity, like empathy."

"And so, at the start of the movie, I chose to do this very kind of like super positive voice. And it was just not in my local register, which is a lot lower."

"And so, I did it for way too long over a number of days, and I got a vocal polyp. And so, I lost my ability to speak. And my doctor put me on vocal rest. I was on vocal rest for three months."

The actress wanted to avoid undergoing surgery, especially after being told by her doctor that 35 per cent of people recover naturally, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

"And I was so determined to be part of that 35 per cent. And I did. I cured myself," she said.



# Kourtney Kardashian opened up about her son Rocky's emergency fetal surgery

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kourtney Kardashian opened up about her son Rocky's emergency fetal surgery during her pregnancy on the episode of The Kardashians that dropped on Thursday, June 20. The reality star, 45, shed some light on why her and Travis Barker's son needed the emergency surgery before she gives birth in the episode. She spoke about how uncommon the condition is and how lucky she and Travis, 48, were that he had a successful surgery.

In the episode's confessional, Kourtney reflected on her pregnancy, and she looked back on the "terrifying scare" that the emergency surgery gave them. "Baby Rocky had to have fetal surgery for fluid in his lung," she said, via People. "It's super rare, that this [is] the condition that he had but it's also super rare and lucky that we caught it. And thank you, God, for this successful surgery."

"I'm honestly just so grateful, I have no words."

Afterward, Kourtney talked about the power of positive thinking and cited the documentary

Heal as part of the inspiration for her. She credited it with helping make sure the rest of her pregnancy went smoothly.

"I started talking to the baby every day, saying my prayers, and after I had that mindset shift, the fluid was completely gone and we had not one single problem after," she said.

Kourtney had the health scare in September 2023, shortly before giving birth to Rocky. This wasn't the first time that the Lemme co-founder has opened up about the scare on The Kardashians. She shed some more light into what was going on in an episode in May, where she said that there was "a hole in the amniotic sac," which led the doctors to go in for surgery.

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Los Angeles | Agencies

EGOT winner Jennifer Hudson has opened up about discovering that her father had 27 children and her desire to meet all of them.

The 42-year-old shared this revelation on the finale episode of the 'Your Mama's Kitchen: Conversations from the Heart of the Home' podcast this week, where she talked about her family life.

Talking about siblings, host Michele Norris said: "Your father had a big personality. You and your siblings found him at some point and discovered you had many more siblings?"

"Yes, a lot of us. Apparently, he had 27 children," Hudson shared.

A shocked Norris noted, "That's a lot of children," before Hudson explained that she had never met them all, "that's what we were always told."

The EGOT winner said that when she found out about her siblings at 16, she wanted to delve deeper into her family, reports people.com.

"It was my dream to have all of us at a grand Thanksgiving or Christmas table, and we all sit and eat together -- that was my goal at 16," she explained. Hudson said that she eventually met six or seven of these siblings, in addition to those she grew up with, Jason and Julia. "We found quite a few of us. And I'm the youngest of all of them," she said.

As for them finding out about her, Hudson said it was her father's side of the family that helped unite the siblings she ended up meeting.

"When my grandma on his side passed, my siblings over there were like, 'Y'all got a sister that can really sing, you should meet her,' she said. "And eventually we all came together."

Jennifer Hudson talks about discovering her father had 27 kids

# I INTENTIONALLY CHANGE MY VOCAL PLACEMENT : ARIANA GRANDE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Ariana Grande's voice doesn't always sound the same, and? The 30-year-old "Yes, And?" hitmaker clarified in a new comment why her pitch drastically changed in a now-viral video from her interview on "Popcrushed." While replying to a fan's TikTok video that questioned whether Ariana underwent a "voice change," the Nickelodeon alum commented, "Habit (speaking like this for two years) and also vocal health." Ariana continued, "I intentionally change my vocal placement (high/low) often depending on how much singing I'm doing." She concluded her clapback by noting, "I've always done this BYE." In the clip, Ariana was discussing her music with "Popcrushed" host Penn Badgley. At the beginning of the video, the Victorious alum spoke with a lower tone before quickly shifting to a soprano pitch a few moments later.

Social media blew up over the tone fluctuation in Ariana's voice, and countless X users weighed in about it. One tweeted earlier this week, "Regular Ariana was coming out for a second," while another wrote, "THE SWITCH IN VOICE PLEASE HELP ME."



# ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Candice Swanepoel

# GOLDIE HAWN SAYS IT WOULD BE FUN AND CRAZY TO MAKE A MOVIE WITH HER FAMOUS FAMILY

Los Angeles | Agencies

Oscar and Golden Globe-winning actress Goldie Hawn expressed her desire to work on a project with her famous family, stating it would be fun and crazy.

In a new interview, the actress expressed her desire to work with family members, including her husband Kurt Russell and her children Kate Hudson, Oliver Hudson, and Wyatt Russell.

"What I would love, actually -- before we all get too old -- (it) would be so great to do a movie together," Hawn said during an appearance on the Let's Talk Off Camera with Kelly Ripa podcast. "Wouldn't it? It would be so fun and so crazy and oh, my God," she added.

Hawn brought up the idea after podcast host

Ripa suggested that her family should star in a reality show, reports deadline.com.

"We might do something with Oliver that is a cartoon, so in other words, we would all be the voices for that. That would be a lot of fun," Hawn added. Hawn has an extensive career in film and won an Oscar for her role as Toni Simmons in the 1969 Gene Saks film 'Cactus Flower'. She would get nominated at the Academy Awards again after starring in the 1980 film 'Private Benjamin', playing the role of Judy Benjamin. In 2018, she played Mrs. Claus in the Netflix movie 'The Christmas Chronicles' opposite her life partner Kurt Russell, who played Santa Claus. Oliver Hudson also starred in the Christmas comedy. Hawn and Russell reprised their roles in 'The Christmas Chronicles 2', which was released in 2020.





## T20 WORLD CUP: INDIA REGISTER 47-RUN WIN OVER AFGHANISTAN

Bridgetown (Barbados) | Agencies

Fast bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh picked three-wicket hauls each as India maintained their unbeaten run in the 2024 Men's T20 World Cup with a clinical 47-run win over Afghanistan in their first Super Eight match at the Kensington Oval here on Thursday.

With the pitch being damp and slow, Suryakumar Yadav proved to be the difference by hitting a 28-ball 53, laced with five fours and three sixes at a strike-rate of 189, and being mighty effective with his sweep shots to take India to a strong 181/8.

His 60-run stand with Hardik Pandya (32) and a late cameo of 12 from Axar Patel helped India raise the tempo as 56 runs came in the last five overs.

In reply, Bumrah took 3-7, including bowling 20 dot balls, while Arshdeep, despite being occasionally wayward, took 3-36 to bowl out Afghanistan for 134.



Rahmanullah Gurbaz got Afghanistan's chase off to a flying start by carting Arshdeep for four and six in the opening over. But the big-hitting Gurbaz was foxed by a cutter from Bumrah in looking to hit over cover and gave an outside edge behind to keeper. Ibrahim Zadran slashed to Virat

Kohli at point, but he dropped a simple catch off Arshdeep's bowling. But Axar struck quickly as Zadran didn't get any elevation and hit straight to extra cover. Bumrah came back with an off-cutter which gripped off the pitch and took a leading edge off Hazratullah Zazai's bat to backward point.

The triple strikes from India meant Afghanistan's required run rate ballooned, despite Azmatullah Omarzai and Gulbadin Naib hitting five boundaries between themselves till the halfway mark.

But after the drinks break, Kuldeep broke the 44-run stand by having Naib miscue high in the air to the keeper and was followed by Ravindra Jadeja having Omarzai holding out to long-on. From there on, the result was a foregone conclusion as Bumrah and Arshdeep ended up with three-fers, while Kuldeep had a two-wicket haul on his T20 World Cup debut in a comfortable win for India.

### Brief scores

India 181/8 in 20 overs (Suryakumar Yadav 53, Hardik Pandya 32; Rashid Khan 3-26, Fazalhaq Farooqi 3-33) beat Afghanistan 134 all out in 20 overs (Azmatullah Omarzai 26; Jasprit Bumrah 3-7, Arshdeep Singh 3-36) by 47 runs

## Former India pacer David Johnson falls from apartment building, dies in Bengaluru



Bengaluru | Agencies

Former Team India cricketer David Johnson has died after falling from the fourth floor of his apartment in the Kothanur police station limits in Bengaluru on Thursday.

Police suspect that 52-year-old Johnson committed suicide by jumping off the apartment building. However, an official statement is yet to come in this regard. According to police, Johnson fell from the fourth floor of the SLV Paradise Apartment. Although he was

immediately rushed to the hospital, the cricketer succumbed to his injuries.

The preliminary investigation indicated that the deceased, Johnson, was suffering from depression. Kothanur police are investigating the case.

The police stated that Johnson had been facing health issues for a year and had spent the last week in the hospital.

Former Indian cricketer Anil Kumble stated, "Saddened to hear of the passing of my cricketing colleague David Johnson.

Heartfelt condolences to his family. Gone too soon, 'Benny'!"

Johnson was a former fast bowler known for his brief stint with the Indian cricket team. He played two Tests for India in 1996, taking three wickets. In domestic cricket, he picked up 125 wickets for Karnataka in 39 first-class appearances. The highlight of Johnson's career was clocking a speed of 157.8 km/h during a Test match against Australia.

He was born on October 16, 1971, in Arsikere town of Hassan district in Karnataka.

## FIFA RANKINGS: THE INDIAN MEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM HAS DROPPED THREE PLACES TO 124TH

Zurich (Switzerland) | Agencies

The Indian men's football team has dropped three places to 124th in the latest FIFA rankings released on Thursday. It has been India's worst finish in the standings since March 9, 2017, when they were placed 132nd. This comes after India's failed campaign in the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers and unceremonious exit of head coach Igor Stimac.

In Asia, India are ranked 22nd, behind the likes of Lebanon, Palestine, and Vietnam.

India failed to qualify for the third round of the Qualifiers after suffering losses against Qatar and Afghanistan.

Under Stimac's tenure, India won four titles over five years including two SAFF Championship crowns, one



Intercontinental Cup, and a Tri-Nations Series. India entered the top 100 of the rankings in July last year at the back of their glittering performance.

Since then, the team's record has completely collapsed, as they have lost nine of their twelve games. This includes a dismal showing at the AFC Asian Cup when they

lost all three of their group-stage matches without managing to score a goal.

After the departure of Indian football legend Sunil Chhetri earlier this month, this is Blue Tigers' first FIFA rankings in the absence of the star striker in almost 20 years. Currently, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu is donning the captain's armband for the side.

## T20 World Cup: Powell feels WI were '15-20 runs' short against England

Gros Islet (St Lucia) | Agencies

West Indies captain Rovman Powell lamented missed opportunities and straying from their plans as his side suffered an eight-wicket defeat against England in their Super Eight match at the T20 World Cup 2024 in Gros Islet.

Chasing a challenging target of 181, England cruised to victory with Phil Salt remaining unbeaten on 87 and Jonny Bairstow contributing a rapid 48 not out off 26 balls. Their unbroken partnership of 97 off 44 balls sealed the win with 2.3 overs to spare.

Reflecting on the match, Powell acknowledged that his team left runs on the table and didn't execute their bowling plans effectively. "You have to look at it from a batting perspective. We left 15-20 runs out there as a batting group," Powell said. "I will say that we should have put up a better display as a bowling group. We are normally very good in the last five overs, but credit has to be given to the



England bowling unit. They had clear plans, and the execution was good."

West Indies' innings started promisingly, but they couldn't capitalise fully in the death overs. The missteps continued in the field as

they offered lives to Salt and Moeen Ali, with wicketkeeper Nicholas Pooran unable to hold on to thin deflections on both occasions. These dropped chances proved costly as Salt, who has a liking against West

Indies, made them pay once again. "Those chances are always difficult," Powell admitted. "But credit has to be given to Phil, he seems to like playing against West Indies. Every time he plays against West Indies, he always hurts us. We strayed away a little bit from our plans to Phil. It's just for us to look back at those plans and re-evaluate."

Despite the loss, Powell remains optimistic about West Indies' chances in the tournament. He emphasised the importance of sticking to their strategies and improving their execution in the upcoming matches. The captain is hopeful that Johnson Charles, who suffered a side strain, to be available for the next two matches. "Our destiny is in our hands. Once we win well, it will bring us back. We are playing good cricket. We need to re-evaluate. Hopefully, King can pull through for the next two games."

West Indies will now take on the USA in Bridgetown on Saturday.

## PCB to make changes in selection committee after poor show in T20 World Cup: Report

New Delhi | Agencies

In the aftermath of Pakistan's disappointing T20 World Cup campaign, significant changes loom for the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) selection committee. A comprehensive review is set to uncover what went wrong for the team, but streamlining the selection committee's operations has emerged as a top priority, according to a news report on Thursday.

According to ESPNcricinfo the seven-member committee, currently without an official head, is likely to be downsized, and the PCB may abandon its recent experiment of a leaderless selection process.

Just three months ago, the current selection committee was formed, with Wahab Riaz being stripped of his role as

chair but remaining a member. The committee functioned based on equal votes and majority decisions. However, this setup is now under scrutiny, with frustrations mounting within the PCB, including from Wahab himself, over the public perception that he unofficially leads the committee and bears the brunt of criticism.

As a result, Wahab's complete departure from the committee is a strong possibility, as PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi seeks to demonstrate that no one is immune to repercussions.

The report also said that, despite the turmoil, a decision on Babar Azam's captaincy is not immediately anticipated. Although emotions have run high following Pakistan's World Cup exit, the urgency to



address the captaincy issue is less pressing given Pakistan's next white-ball match is not until November.

The review process will incorporate feedback from several management members who accompanied the team, with head coach Gary Kirsten's input holding significant weight. Kirsten, appointed in April after an exhaustive search, has reportedly

expressed concerns about the team's lack of unity. While the exact nature of his remarks remains uncertain, it is clear that a frank and robust exchange of views took place, which will likely influence his report to the PCB.

Furthermore, the forthcoming revisions to players' central contracts, set to expire on June 30, may signal additional changes to the national setup. Although a landmark three-year contract agreement was reached last year, individual players' positions can be adjusted based on performance.

Currently, Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, and Shaheen Shah Afridi hold the highest category contracts, but their standings could be reevaluated in light of recent performances.

## EURO 2024: SERBIA THREATEN TO PULL OUT OVER ALLEGED OFFENSIVE CHANTING BY FANS

New Delhi | Agencies

Serbia have threatened to leave the ongoing Euro 2024 if UEFA fails to take action against alleged chanting between fans of Croatia and Albania. A section of supporters attending the 2-2 draw in Hamburg on Wednesday could be heard taking part in offensive chants aimed at Serbia, a media report said.

The Football Association of Serbia general secretary Jovan Surbatovic said that they may pull out of the tournament if the continental governing body did not sanction both federations, the ESPN reported.

"What happened is scandalous and we will ask UEFA for sanctions, even if it means not continuing the competition," Surbatovic told Serbia's state broadcaster RTS.

"We will demand from UEFA to punish the federations of both selections. We do not want to participate in that, but if UEFA does not punish them, we will think how we will pro-

ceed," he added.

A journalist from Kosovo, Arind Sadiku, had his media accreditation revoked by UEFA on Wednesday due to allegations that he made a nationalist gesture toward Serbian supporters during their match against England in Gelsenkirchen. A statement issued by UEFA read: "UEFA can confirm that one journalist has had his accreditation cancelled due to misconduct at the UEFA EURO 2024 match between Serbia and England on 16 June 2024."

Following the display of a banner that "transmitted a provocative message unfit for a sports event" and for throwing objects inside the stadium by their fans, the Serbian Football Association was penalized by UEFA. The development came after the Kosovo Football Federation com-



plained to UEFA about "Serbian fans displaying political, chauvinistic, and racist messages against Kosovo" during their 1-0 defeat to England.

"We were punished for isolated cases and our fans behaved much better than the others," Surbatovic said.

"One fan was punished for racist insults, and we don't want it to be attributed to others. We Serbs are gentlemen, and we have an open heart."

## T20 WORLD CUP India's batting-depth can make huge difference in Super 8, says Robin Singh

New Delhi | Agencies

Robin Singh, the former India all-rounder, believes the Rohit Sharma-led side is in pretty good form ahead of starting their 2024 Men's T20 World Cup Super Eight campaign against Afghanistan at Barbados on Thursday night, adding that their long batting line-up could prove to make a huge difference.

India enter the Super Eights after topping Group A as the lone unbeaten team from the matches held in USA. India have met Afghanistan eight times in men's T20Is since 2010 and have never lost to them in the format.

"I think it's a really important game from many standpoints

because the first game in a Super 8 that India is playing becomes very critical. Then you need to win by pretty sizeable margins if you can. But I guess the first most important thing is to win. I think Afghanistan, they have played reasonably good cricket."

"They have a really good spin bowling attack which is something they will use. Probably the venue is something that may not suit them as much as the other venues that they have played on. But in saying that, probably India has been in pretty good form. I mean, they have won all the games. They have a pretty good all-round bowling team as well as a long batting line-up. So, that should make a huge difference,"



said Robin in an exclusive conversation with IANS.

India will also be up against Bangladesh and Australia in their

quest to be the top two teams from Group 1 and enter the semi-finals. "No, I think every game is important. In T20, anybody can

win. We have seen so far in the World Cup, they have won a lot of upsets by weaker teams. But I guess the wickets had a big say in that, right? To be frank, the wickets were not great."

"So, hopefully, I think they are playing in Barbados and generally, it's not a bad wicket. It's a reasonably good track, and it favours fast bowling, as always. I would say, definitely, India has a major upper hand in this game (against Afghanistan), considering that you have a four-pronged attack, including Hardik," added Robin, who played 136 ODIs for India.

At Barbados, there has been constant chatter over left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav being given a game after not play-

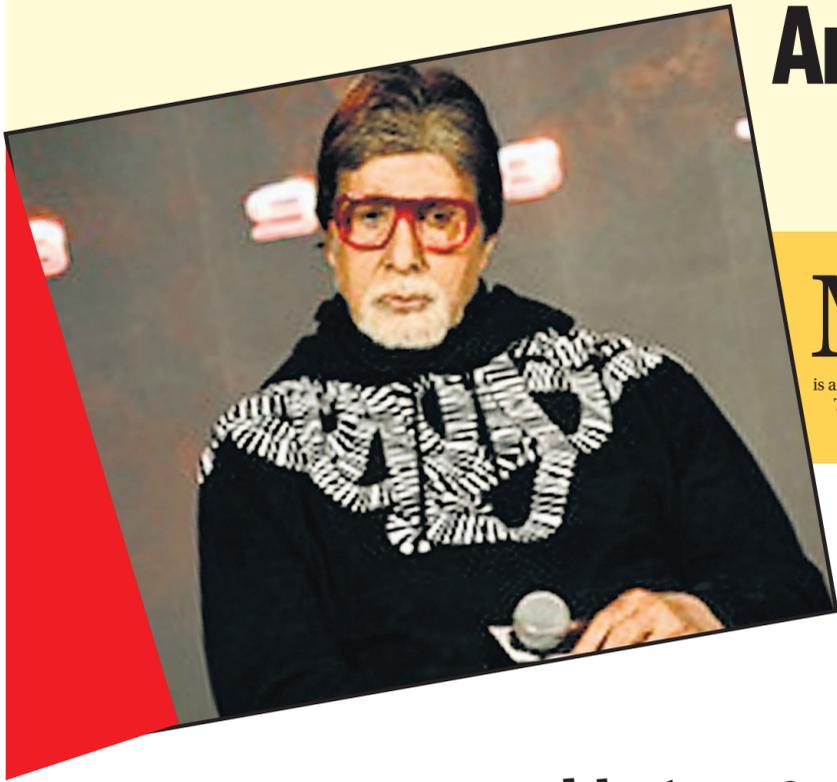
ing Group A games due to conditions not being conducive for spinners to thrive in New York. Asked if India could make any changes to their playing eleven for the Afghanistan game, Robin felt it's hard to figure out if the side would make a change to their winning combination.

"Look, I think they have won with this squad. Of course, I don't really know what are their game plans. It's very easy for us to come and say X should play and Y should play. But it's difficult to make a proper assessment, considering the wickets that they have played on, like who's done well, who's not done well."

"But I think, in general, all the bowlers have come to the party

and most people have delivered. So, I would say that probably they would go with the same team. I don't see them changing this winning combination, and they have the depth with someone like Axar Patel. So, he gives you that extra batting depth, which is critical in T20. So, you can play with a lot more freedom."

"So, it's very hard for me to say who they're going to leave out if they do play him. You can't leave out the batters and fast-bowlers for sure. So, it's not even a like-to-like choice. It's a question of preference against the opposition, that who probably will play spin better than most oppositions," he concluded.



## Amitabh Bachchan says he shies away from promotional work

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**M**egastar Amitabh Bachchan shared that he shies away from promotional work but expressed his delight about being part of the upcoming film, describing it as an extraordinary vision by the maker and director. The cine icon took to his blog and shared some pictures from the movie's event held in Mumbai on Wednesday evening. "The day of presence... the day of being with the greats of those that make the presence of the film... KALKI 2898 AD," he wrote. "My presence for promotional work is one that I shy away from... but for the sake of the most humble Production team... and more particularly, a team that is run by daughters of the Head... it is a justification beyond personal choices... And..."

The actor then praised the team of the upcoming film, directed by Nag Ashwin.

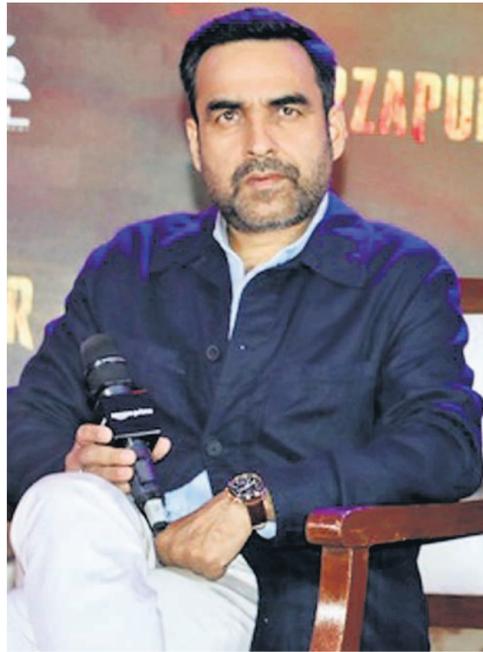
"To be part of the vision of the maker and director, of some extraordinary thought, was a delight I had not imagined or was even close to..."

The thespian also shared a picture of himself "buying a ticket" of the film from producer Ashwini Dutt, the father-in-law of the director.

## Rohit Shetty relives his teens by doing 'raw, real stunts'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**F**ilmmaker and host Rohit Shetty revealed that the "raw and real stunts" in 'Khatron Ke Khiladi 14' make him relive his teenage years as a stuntman. Rohit took to Instagram on Thursday morning and shared two pictures from the sets of the stunt-based reality show, currently being filmed in Romania. The first image depicted Rohit walking on the sets. The second image showcased Rohit performing a death-defying stunt on a truck, with a car on fire emerging from it. The filmmaker captioned the image: "Khatron Ke Khiladi raw and real stunts... That is what I like about my show. Makes me relive my teen years as a stuntman." Rohit, who is known for action comedy and masala films, has helmed blockbusters such as the 'Golmaal' franchise, the 'Singham' franchise, 'Sooryavanshi', 'Simmba', and 'Chennai Express'.



## Writers or directors are masters, actors are just puppets: Pankaj Tripathi

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctor Pankaj Tripathi, who is known for 'Singham Returns', 'Gangs of Wasseypur', 'Masaan' and several other projects, has said that actors are just puppets and do what writers or directors ask them.

The actor attended the trailer launch of the third season of the fan-favourite show 'Mirzapur' at a 5-star property in the Bandra area of Mumbai on Thursday along with Ali Fazal, Shweta Tripathi Sharma, Rasika Dugal, Vijay Varma, Anjum Shharma, Priyanshu Painyuli, Harshita Shekhar Gaur and Sheeba Chadha.

While the floor wasn't opened to the media for the interaction, Pankaj told the emcee, "We actors are just puppets. The writers and directors are puppeteers, they run the show and streamline the story. As actors, we do what we are told or briefed about."

The actor then made a minor correction in the statement as he looked at the media inside the Ballroom and said, "Chaliye, theek hai, upar waala humse karwa raha hai aur hum kar rahe hain..."

## Sunny Deol to star in 'biggest action film'

**Mumbai:** Bollywood star Sunny Deol will be starring in filmmaker Gopichand Malineni's upcoming directorial, which is being tagged as the "biggest action film of the country." The Makers on Thursday took to X and announced the film, tentatively titled 'SDGM'. "Make way for the biggest action film of the country - #SDGM. Starring Action Superstar @iamsunnydeol. Directed by @megopichand. Produced by @MythriOfficial and @peoplemediacy," the tweet read. The shoot will begin soon for the film.

The tweet further read: "MASS FEAST LOADING! Shoot begins soon. @MusicThaman @RishiPunjabi5 @artkolla." Sunny shared the announcement on his Instagram with the same caption. Gopichand Malineni, who primarily works in Telugu cinema, made his directorial debut in 2010 with the action comedy film 'Don Seenu'. He has since directed films such as 'Bodyguard', 'Balupu', 'Pandaga Chesko', 'Winner', and 'Krack'. Sunny was last seen in the mega-blockbuster 'Gadar 2'. He will next appear in 'Lahore 1947', directed by Rajkumar Santoshi, which also stars Preity Zinta and Ali Fazal.



## Alia Bhatt wakes up celeb fitness trainer Yasmin early in the morning

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctress and fitness enthusiast Alia Bhatt surprised her trainer Yasmin Karachiwala by reaching early for her morning workout session. Karachiwala, who trains the who's who of Bollywood such as Katrina Kaif, Deepika Padukone, Janhvi Kapoor, and Sara Ali Khan, among others, took to her Instagram stories and shared a picture of Alia.

The image shows Alia with her back towards the camera, sitting on a stationary cycle.

The actress is dressed in black shorts and a T-shirt with "Pilates has your back" written on it. Karachiwala captioned the image: "Guess who wakes me up early."



## I would say yoga is the real workout: Rajeev Khandelwal

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**head of International Yoga Day on Friday, actor Rajeev Khandelwal, a sceptic, shared that

his journey into the world of yoga has been nothing short of life-changing. "I always treated yoga as a form of exercise for those who are lethargic and don't want to indulge in the 'real' workout," said Rajeev.

The actor said: "As I stepped into the world of yoga, I realised how wrong I was. If I were to compare the two, I would say yoga is the real workout, which also enhances the potential of other workouts."

The actor emphasised that yoga has not only improved his physical fitness but has also significantly boosted his performance in other physical activities.

"Yoga has made my running better. My gym workouts give me much better results by cutting down the chances of injuries."

Among the myriad of yoga poses, Rajeev's

favourite is the headstand.

"I love headstands. They give me a sense of balance between my mind and body. I have mastered the art of doing it and can show off the pose anywhere, anytime," he said.

His most transformative experience with yoga has been through the practice of pranayama, the ancient art of controlled breathing.

"For me, the most transformative experience has been the breathing techniques. I was never the type who would even try it," he confessed.

"Now I wake up early only to do my pranayama. It kept me going even when I was Covid-positive. I didn't take any medication. I just did my pranayama thrice a day."



Alaya F