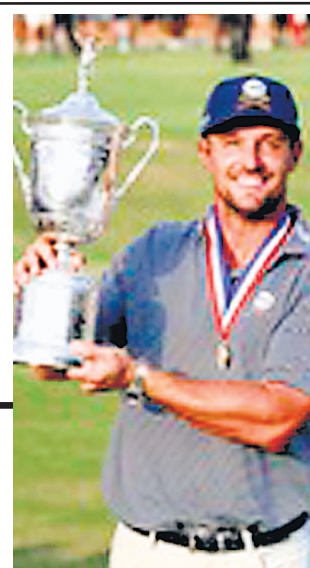


# absolute india



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## Northern states likely to get respite from heat wave after 2 days

- Heat wave to severe heat wave conditions were witnessed in most parts of Delhi-Haryana-Chandigarh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh in the last 24 hours.
- Heat wave conditions also prevailed in some parts of Jammu-Kashmir, north Madhya Pradesh; in isolated pockets of Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand, north Rajasthan and Vidarbha.
- Maximum temperatures are in the range of 44-46 degree C in most parts which are above normal by 4-8 degrees C over these regions.
- The India Meteorological Department said on Monday that conditions are favourable for further advance of the Southwest Monsoon into some more parts of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, coastal Andhra, some parts of West Bengal, and Bihar over the next four days.
- The weather office also forecast heavy rain in the Northeastern states, Saurashtra and Kutch in Gujarat; Konkan and Goa, central Maharashtra, Marathwada, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and coastal Karnataka.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Heatwave to severe heatwave conditions are likely to continue over many parts of North India during the next two days and gradually abate thereafter under the influence of approaching Western Disturbance towards Northwest India, according to an India Meteorological Department forecast on Monday.

IMD said a Western Disturbance is likely to bring isolated to scattered light rainfall with thunderstorms, lightning & gusty winds (30-40 kmph) over Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana-Chandigarh-Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan during June 18-20.

It also said that strong surface winds (speeds reaching 25-35 kmph) are very likely over the plains of Northwest India during the next five days.

Warm night to severe warm night conditions was observed over some parts of Delhi-Haryana-Chandigarh; in isolated pockets of Uttar Pradesh and warm night conditions were observed in isolated pockets of Punjab, Rajasthan & West Madhya Pradesh. The highest maximum temperature of 47.6 degrees C was reported at Prayagraj (East Uttar Pradesh) over the country.



## KANCHANJUNGA EXPRESS HIT BY GOODS TRAIN IN BENGAL, 9 DEAD, 41 INJURED

The Centre has announced an ex-gratia of Rs 10 lakh each for the families of those killed in the accident, while Rs 2.5 lakh and Rs 50,000 were announced for those with grievous and minor injuries, respectively.



Kolkata | Agencies

The Sealdah-bound Kanchanjunga Express collided with a goods train on Monday between New Jalpaiguri and Rangapani stations in West Bengal.

The last two compartments of the Kanchanjunga Express, which had started from Agartala, were derailed after being hit by the goods train.

The accident took place close to the Rangapani railway station near New Jalpaiguri, on the 'Chicken's Neck' corridor that connects the Northeast with the rest of the country.

The deceased include the loco-pilot of the goods train and the guard of the Kanchanjunga Express. The assistant loco-pilot of the goods train was severely injured.

According to officials of the state administration, 41 injured persons are currently undergoing treatment at two hospitals near the accident spot, including the North Bengal Medical College & Hospital in Siliguri.

As per the officials, the condition of some of the injured persons is critical.

Railway officials said one factor that limited casualties is the fact that the rear part of Kanchanjunga Express comprised the parcel coach and the guard's coach while the passenger compartments further ahead suffered less impact.

After reaching the accident spot on

Monday evening, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said the state government is setting up a help desk which will be monitored by state ministers Snehasish Chakraborty and Firhad Hakim

From the Bagdogra airport, the Chief Minister first reached the hospital in Siliguri and enquired about the injured persons admitted there.

Meanwhile, Railways officials informed that the railway tracks at the accident spot have been cleared, and train services in the down-section towards New Jalpaiguri have resumed.

"There is nothing called passenger safety. Presently, the Railway is nothing but a 'propaganda-oriented' department. The Railways had a rich heritage which has been destroyed now. Even there is no separate rail budget now."

Mamata Banerjee, CM, Bengal

"The investigation will be conducted by the office of the Commissioner of Railway Safety. After we get a report, the real reason behind the accident will be known and corrective measures will be taken accordingly so that such mishaps are not repeated."

Ashwini Vaishnav, Minister, Railways

## Congress's K Suresh To Be Temporary Speaker Till Government's Decision

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress's K Suresh will be named the pro temp speaker when the 18th parliament is convened and will administer the oath of office to MPs till a formal decision on the Speaker's post is taken by the government, sources have said.

Mr Suresh, the 68-year-old MP from Kerala's Mavelikara, is the longest-serving member of parliament. He will be administered the oath of office by President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan

before parliament is convened on June 24. He, in turn, will administer the oath to the Prime Minister's Council of Ministers and other MPs.

The government is likely to name the Speaker of the Lok Sabha on June 26, sources have told reporter.

Several names are doing the rounds, including that of Om Birla, who was the Speaker in the last term, Bhadrachari Mahtab and D Purandeshwari -- leaders from the two states that top the BJP's 'thank you list'. Mahtab is a key Odisha leader who joined the BJP

from Naveen Patnaik's Biju Janata Dal. Ms Purandeshwari is the chief of the party's Andhra Pradesh unit. Both are states where the BJP achieved spectacular results in the recently concluded general elections. In a first, the party has formed the state government in Odisha as well, ending the 24-year rule of the BJD. Sources said on June 26, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will move the motion on the name of the Speaker. After the motion is accepted, he would introduce his Council of Ministers to the House.

## 29 THOUSAND TREES WILL NOT BE SLASHED IN BHOPAL FOR VIP'S ACCOMMODATIONS

Bhopal: The government has canceled the plan to build bungalows for ministers and MLAs by cutting 29 thousand trees in Bhopal. Urban Administration and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya gave this information on social media X on Monday afternoon.

He wrote - Considering the environmental protection of the revitalization plan of New Bhopal and the existing trees in the area, the proposal has been rejected. Also, instructions have been given to test other alternative places. The protest to be held this evening will continue even after the tweet by Urban Administration Minister Vijayvargiya. Former councilor Amit Sharma said that he has seen the tweet of Urban Administration and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya. Verbal assurances have been given many times before. Yesterday itself, former Chief Minister and Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan had also said verbally, but we need orders. Government should issue orders. We will move only after this.

## AIR INDIA PASSENGER FINDS BLADE IN FLIGHT MEAL

Team Absolute | New Delhi

An Air India passenger claimed he found a metal blade inside his in-flight meal from Bengaluru to San Francisco. Mathures Paul, a journalist, took to social media to share his ordeal aboard Air India AI 175 flight last week.

In his post, Paul said that he was enjoying his in-flight meal of roasted sweet potato and fig chaat when he felt a piece of metal in his mouth. Upon inspecting it, he realised it was a metal blade. "Air India food can cut like a knife. Hiding in its roasted sweet potato and fig chaat was a metal piece that looked



like a blade. I got a feel of it only after chewing the grub for a few seconds. Thankfully, no harm was done. Of course, the blame squarely lies with Air India's catering service but the incident doesn't help the image I have of Air India," he said, sharing an image of the bowl showing the metal blade next to the

food. Paul highlighted the serious consequences of the error wondering what would have happened if the meal was served to a child. "What if the metal piece was in the food served to a child? First picture shows the metal piece that I spat out and the second picture shows the meal before it put metal into my life," he added.

In response to the incident, Air India contacted the passenger and offered a one-way business class ticket valid redeemable on any Air India flight for up to one year. However, Mr Paul reportedly declined the offer, terming the gesture as a 'bribe'.

## RAHUL TO RETAIN RAEBARELI, PRIYANKA TO CONTEST FROM WAYANAD

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Thiruvananthapuram

Congress President Mallikarjuna Kharge announced on Monday that Rahul Gandhi, who was elected from both Kerala's Wayanad and UP's Raebareli in the recent Lok Sabha elections, will relinquish the former seat where Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi will be fielded as the party candidate for the ensuing bypoll.

The announcement, which followed consultations between the Gandhi family and top Congress leaders, was greeted with jubilation by party leaders and allies in Kerala.

"We all in the Congress have decided that Rahul Gandhi will remain the MP from Raebareli. He had also



fought from Wayanad, whose people are very supportive. Thus we have decided that Priyanka Gandhi will fight the polls from Wayanad," Kharge said. Rahul Gandhi said that he has "an emotional relationship with

Raebareli and the people of Wayanad".

"In the last five years, the people of Wayanad stood with me and gave me energy to fight in a very difficult time. I'm confident that Priyanka is going

to win the elections and will be a very good representative for the people of Wayanad. My doors are always open for the people of Wayanad for the rest of my life & I love every single person in Wayanad," he added. "I'm very happy to be able to represent Wayanad. I won't let the people of Wayanad feel Rahul ji's absence. I will try my best to be a good representative," Priyanka Gandhi said.

She also said that she had a very old bond with Raebareli, which cannot be broken at any cost.

"Me and Rahul will be present both in Raebareli and Wayanad," she added. Leader of Opposition in Kerala Assembly, V.D. Satheesan, said that Priyanka Gandhi would win the bypoll with the highest margin ever seen in Kerala.

## 39% INDIANS AVOID NEWS, FIND IT REPETITIVE OR OVERLY NEGATIVE, FINDS SURVEY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India is experiencing a significant increase in digital news consumption, driven by widespread internet access and smartphone use, a new report has revealed.

The Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2024 shows a shift towards online platforms for accessing news, indicating a growing preference for digital channels among the Indian audience. The survey was conducted between January and February of this year.

Key findings of the report:

The report highlights a continued shift towards digital platforms for accessing news. In India, increasing internet access and smartphone usage are driving more people to consume news online rather than through traditional media channels like newspapers or television. The report reveals that only a small proportion (5%) of Indian respondents have paid for online news in the past year. This indicates that most news consumers in India prefer free access to digital content, posing a challenge for media organisations to generate revenue from their online platforms. Trust in media outlets in India remains a concern, with only 32% of respondents actively putting their trust in the news most of the time. Factors contributing to this scepticism include perceived



bias, accuracy issues and transparency in reporting. The report notes that 39% of Indians are increasingly avoiding news, often due to its repetitive nature or for being overly negative. This shows a growing phenomenon known as news fatigue among Indian audiences, who feel overwhelmed by constant coverage of conflicts, disasters and political developments.

Indian media organisations are starting to embrace new formats like podcasts and video content to better connect with changing audience tastes. Podcasts, in particular, are trending, especially among the younger demographic. This trend not only offers a chance to vary how news is delivered but also provides an opportunity to captivate audiences with fresh and engaging storytelling approaches.

The report advises Indian media to tackle issues like trust, news fatigue and sustainable revenue models. It points out the importance of investing in high-quality journalism, integrating technology effectively and adopting strategies to engage audiences which will help navigate the complexities of the digital era successfully.

## Union Home Minister reviews Manipur situation at a high-level meeting

New Delhi/Imphal: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday chaired a high-level meeting in New Delhi to review the law and order situation in Manipur, which has been ravaged by ethnic violence since May last year.

Manipur government officials said that the state officials apprised the Home Minister about the ongoing situation in the northeastern state. Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, Intelligence Bureau Director Tapan Deka, Army chief, General Manoj Pande, Army chief-designate Lt General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief Secretary Vineet Joshi, Advisor to the Manipur government,

Kuldip Singh, state Director General of Police Rajiv Singh and other senior officers attended the meeting. However, Manipur government officials in Imphal refused to disclose the outcome of the meeting.

Manipur Governor Anusuiya Uikey called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Sunday and discussed the situation in the state. She apprised the President about the hardships faced by the displaced persons sheltered in various relief camps in the state, and requested immediate action for their resettlement in their respective villages, the sources said.





# MASSIVE QUAKE CHANGED COURSE OF GANGA RIVER 2,500 YEARS AGO, CAN OCCUR AGAIN: STUDY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A team of US researchers on Monday said that a major earthquake of magnitude 7 or 8 around 2,500 years ago changed the course of the Ganga River and a densely-populated region in Bangladesh remains vulnerable which could see cascading effects of shaking if another big quake occurs.

The study led by geophysicists at the Columbia Climate School in the US, published in the journal Nature Communications, said the previously undocumented quake rerouted the main channel of the Ganga River in what is now densely populated Bangladesh, which remains vulnerable to big quakes.

Scientists documented many river-course changes, called avulsions, including some in response to earthquakes.

"It was not previously confirmed that earthquakes could drive avulsion in deltas, especially for an immense river like the Ganges," said lead study author Liz Chamberlain, an assistant professor at the Netherlands' Wageningen University.



In satellite imagery, Chamberlain and the team spotted what they say was probably the former main channel of the river, some 100 kilometres south of the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka.

This is a low-lying area about 1.5 kilometres wide that can be found intermittently for some 100 kilometres more or less parallel to the current river course.

Filled with mud, it frequently floods and is used mainly for rice cultivation. Chamberlain and other

researchers came across a freshly dug excavation for a pond that had not yet been filled with water.

They spotted sand volcanoes which erupt at the surface. Called seismites, they were 30 or 40 centimetres wide, cutting up through 3 or 4 meters of mud.

Further investigation showed the seismites were oriented in a systematic pattern, suggesting they were all created at the same time.

Chemical analysis of sand grains and particles of mud showed that the

eruptions and the abandonment and infilling of the channel both took place about 2,500 years ago.

Furthermore, there was a similar site some 85 kilometres downstream in the old channel that had filled in with mud at the same time.

The conclusion: This was a big, sudden avulsion triggered by an earthquake, estimated to be magnitude 7 or 8, according to the study funded by the US National Science Foundation.

A 2016 study led by Michael Steckler, a geophysicist at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory which is part of the Columbia Climate School, shows that these areas are now building stress, and could produce earthquakes comparable to the one 2,500 years ago.

The last one of this size occurred in 1762, producing a deadly tsunami that travelled up the river to Dhaka. Another may have occurred around 1140 CE. "Large earthquakes impact large areas and can have long-lasting economic, social and political effects," said Syed Humayun Akhter, vice-chancellor of Bangladesh Open University.

# Cleric objects to removal of chapter on Babri in NCERT books

Bareilly (UP) | Agencies

Maulana Mufti Shahabuddin Razvi Bareilly, National President of All India Muslim Jamaat, has said that the removal of chapters on Babri Masjid and Gujarat riots from Class 12 books of NCERT, amounts to tampering with history which is regrettable.

He said that earlier, the history of Mughal emperors was also removed from the pages of the book, and the chapter on the rise of Islam has also been removed.

The Maulana, in a statement, further said it proves that the people sitting in the NCERT board want to erase the signs of Muslims, and are promoting a particular viewpoint and thinking, but this is not going to last long.

The Maulana said that history is history, the more you suppress it, the more it will come to the fore. People who blur and scratch history have never been successful. The historians of the present time want to create a new history in the country with their new ideology, but they cannot succeed. It may be recalled that the NCERT has introduced several significant changes in the Class 12 Political Science textbook, which are now available in the market. The most notable change is the removal of the term "Babri Masjid," which has now been referred to as a "three-domed structure" in the new edition. Additionally, the chapter on



Ayodhya has been condensed from four pages to two. NCERT Director Dinesh Prasad Saklani said that it was not an attempt to sardonise books. "We don't follow any ideology when we publish books. Experts have done what they thought was fit for the syllabus," he said. On being asked about the removal of references to Babri Masjid from the book, he said, "We have gone with what the latest update on that matter is. Subject experts have deliberated and brought out the final books. The Supreme Court has now sorted out the matter and the new published excerpts show that."

# Yediyurappa appears before CID in POCSO case

Bengaluru | Agencies

Former Chief Minister and BJP leader B.S. Yediyurappa on Monday appeared before the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in connection with a POCSO case lodged against him.

Speaking to reporters before appearing for the probe, Yediyurappa said he would attend the investigation and return. The team headed by CID Superintendent of Police (SP) Sara Fathima will grill Yediyurappa in the case.

Yediyurappa, who faced arrest in connection with the case, got temporary relief on Friday as the Karnataka High Court directed the police not to initiate the procedure against him. The bench, headed by Justice Krishna S. Dixit, had directed Yediyurappa to appear before the court on



Monday (June 17) without fail, as he had mentioned in his reply to the police.

A complaint was filed against Yediyurappa in March under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act. A

woman alleged that her daughter was harassed when they went to the former CM's residence to seek help. The development led to a heated exchange of words between the BJP and Congress.

# 40 PC REDUCTION IN DJB'S WATER SUPPLY TO LUTYENS' ZONE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As the national Capital reels under a severe water crisis, Delhi's Lutyens' Zone where the residences of the majority of MPs, ministers and senior bureaucrats are situated, experienced a 40 per cent reduction in supply.

This reduction by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) resulted in low water pressure in areas such as Bengali Market, Ashoka Road, Copernicus Marg, Purana Quila Road, Babar Road, Barakhamba Road, KG Marg, Windsor Place, Feroz Shah Marg, Canning Lane and surrounding areas.

Delhi's water supply woes that began from middle class-inhabited areas like Geeta Colony, Gandhinagar, Seelampur, Uttam Nagar, Khanpur and Burari have now reached the doorstep of the elite in Tilak Marg and Bengali Market in the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) area.

According to NDMC, the water supply in DJB's underground reservoir (UGR) has decreased by about 40 per cent.

As much as 70 Million Gallons per Day (MGD) of drinking water is produced daily in Delhi.

According to the Delhi government, the production of potable water has decreased due to raw water shortage. According to official information, the water supply from DJB's UGR in Tilak Marg and Bengali Market located in the NDMC area decreased by about 40 per cent. The DJB informed that due to the non-availability of raw water, potable water production from the Wazirabad water plant is below capacity.



Therefore, water is being supplied to the command area of Tilak Marg UGR and Bengali Market UGR once a day, preferably in the morning.

Given the shortage of water, the NDMC has listed phone numbers for water tankers in the control room: 011 -2336 0683, 011 -2374 3642 and asked people to contact them in case of need. Regarding the shortage of water, the NDMC has also appealed to the people living in posh areas to save water and use it judiciously as water is essential for life but the

municipal council has a limited amount of it. "Do not use drinking water to wash cars. Every effort should be made to recharge the groundwater. Micro-irrigation techniques should be adopted in gardens or plantations. Do not pollute water sources at any cost," the NDMC said.

The NDMC stated that water conservation is about efficient resource management by using only the required amount of water, preventing wastage and fixing every leak.

# Won't Do Any Work Of Muslims, Yadavs: Nitish Kumar's Party MP Sparks Row

Patna | Agencies

Newly elected MP of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U) on Monday found himself at the centre of a controversy for comments about "Muslims and Yadavs" not voting for the BJP-led NDA.

In a video clip that has gone viral on social media, Sitamarhi MP Devesh Chandra Thakur can also be heard ruing that "NDA's own voters" gravitated towards the opposition RJD.

Thakur, 71, a former chairman of the state legislative council, made his parliamentary debut in the recently held Lok Sabha polls, winning the seat by a modest margin of less than 55,000 votes.

Thakur could be heard asking in the video, which was not independently verified by us, "I have made it clear that Yadavs and Muslims must not expect me to be of any help to them. They will be treated with due respect, even offered tea and snacks,



when they call on me. But I will not take up any of their problems." The JD(U) MP added that he had expressed the sentiment before a "Muslim" who visited him after the

elections. The JD(U) leader's outbursts met with disapproval from the RJD as well as ally BJP, leaving the party to fend for itself. "The remarks made by

Thakur are objectionable. An MP is the representative of all sections of society in his constituency," said Bhai Virendra, the RJD's chief spokesperson and an MLA.

# Three day program will be organised in Jaipur in an effort to save the environment

Lalit Sharma | Jaipur

For environmental conservation, The Indian Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning is organising a convention in the capital of Rajasthan i.e Jaipur. This convention will take place from 1 August to 3 August.

The organiser of the convention, Mr. Sudhir Mathur said that this event, which is going to be held in JECC, International and Novotel, is a major initiative to end environmental problems. This event pledges to delve into in-depth explorations of major topics like decarbonization, sustainability, and climate resilience, HVAC systems, along with providing innovative solutions. It will also facilitate various discussions and deliberations, focusing current environmental impacts.

The focus of this COOL CONCLAVE is on



decarbonization. Highlighting cutting-edge techniques and practices to reduce carbon emissions, the event aims to provide the necessary knowledge and tools to implement effective decarbonization strategies. Additionally, the program will provide networking opportunities for the exchange of various ideas and perspectives, forge collaborations that can drive forward-thinking projects and initiatives, making a tangible difference in the fight against climate change.

According to the chairman of the convention, Pankaj Dharakar, an impressive lineup of keynote speakers will discuss various aspects including data centers, healthcare services, reconstruction, commercial centers, and residential areas, and will present specialized knowledge on many of its facets. According to Vice Chairman Ashu Gupta, important stakeholders and decision-makers from governments, industries, and individuals will also be present here.

Program coordinator Sujal Shah said that this program will also feature Decarbonization Excellence Awards, nominations for which have been open since May 15, 2024. As we confront the reality of our home and become aware of the challenges ahead, this platform of the convention can help us find solutions to environmental challenges.

# SBI Life's #PapaHainNa honour's the role of father, as 'Life Mitra'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The digital film highlights the role of fathers being 'Life Mitra' to resolve life's challenges with sound practical advice

Fathers have always been a constant source of inspiration in the lives of their children. Their wise ways to tackle life challenges are unmatched and every child is grateful for their father's advice. This Father's Day, SBI Life Insurance honours the multi-faceted role played by father's in their child's life as 'Life Mitra' - a friend, mentor & financial guardian. This is beautifully depicted in SBI Life's digital film released under the company's flagship digital property



#PapaHainNa to highlight the pragmatic & insightful side of father's, who apply their experiences to navigate through life's challenges. The digital film showcases the essence of SBI Life's brand philosophy, emphasizing the dual role played by fathers both as professionals and caregivers. By portraying a Life Mitra (life insurance advisor) in his element, guiding his son through a moment of crisis, the digital film aims to highlight how insurance advisors are well-

equipped to handle both professional and personal challenges with equal finesse. Speaking about the campaign, Ravindra Sharma, Chief of Brand, Corporate Communication & CSR, SBI Life, said, "We appreciate the remarkable commitment of SBI Life's 'Life Mitras' towards their profession while showering immense love on their children, pushing them to pursue their dreams, driving them to never give up in the most difficult of times.

# SENIOR K'TAKA BJP LEADER DIES OF HEART ATTACK AFTER PROTEST AGAINST FUEL PRICE HIKE

Shivamogga: Senior Karnataka BJP leader and former MLC, M.B. Bhanuprakash (69), passed away on Monday due to a heart attack after participating in a protest against the fuel price hike introduced by the Congress government in the state on Saturday.

Soon after the protest at the Gopi Circle in Shivamogga city, Bhanuprakash collapsed. Although he was rushed to a private hospital by the BJP workers, he was declared dead there.

The body has been sent to his native place, Muttur.

# Indian banks have bounced back in 10 years with 4-fold jump in profits: Report

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian banks have bounced back over the last 10 years with a 4-fold increase in profits and a sharp decline in bad loans, according to a report by capital markets and investment group CLSA.

"Balance sheets of Indian banks are the strongest they have been in over a decade, and profits have rebounded sharply (quadrupling in 10 years)," the report states.

The report points out that non-performing loans (Net NPL), which were a bane of the Indian banking sector earlier, have now declined to decadal lows, driven by better asset quality, stronger



provision buffers, and an improved capital position.

Deposit growth should coincide with the acceleration of loan growth, which increased from 10 per cent to 15 per cent on average over

the previous two years during FY12-22, it added.

In the past year and over the last five years, public sector banks have done much better than private sector banks, the report points out.

However, it also noted that in the past decade, the private sector banks have outpaced PSU banks in current account (CA) deposits and have also pared down non-deposit borrowings.

CLSA report also states that the loan growth in the sector has picked up from a decadal average of 10 per cent to 15 per cent over the past two years driven by all sub-segments and possibly some shifts from corporate bond substitution.

Over a long period, loan growth and deposit growth have been in sync. The quality of corporate credit, too, has improved over the past 5-7 years, the report added.





# CONG TO CORNER MAHA GOVT ON DROUGHT & FARMERS' DISTRESS DURING MONSOON SESSION: NANA PATOLE

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Congress has hit out at the Maharashtra government saying that the government has been a silent observer, especially during the critical drought situation in the state. State unit chief Nana Patole said that the Congress party would corner the state government on the deteriorating drought conditions, loss of lives due to heatstroke and farmers' distress during the upcoming monsoon session of the legislature beginning June 27. "Although June is coming to an end, it has not yet rained in many parts of the state. People are facing severe drought. People have no water to drink and animals have no fodder. Tanker mafias have been looting the people while the sale of bogus seeds is rampant in the state. Several people have died due to heatstroke in various parts of the state. But the government is



nowhere to be seen as it is engaged in issuing tenders, distributing funds and taking commissions. When the state is facing such a dire situation, the ministers of the ruling party are going abroad and enjoying the cold

air," said Patole in his media interaction. He added that the government should announce how many people died due to heatstroke in the state. "Ministers have to take the per-

mission of the central government to go abroad. Have the ministers taken such permission? Who is paying for their foreign trip? The government should give answers," said Patole. He further said that the party will also grill the government over the recent cases of explosions in various industrial units and hit-and-run cases reported in various parts of Maharashtra. Patole claimed that the government has nothing to do with the lives and deaths of the people. On the raging controversy over NEET results, Patole said that the future of lakhs of students has become bleak due to NEET paper leak and result confusion. "Students are protesting at various places but the government has not yet taken its notice. Even in the state, the papers of every recruitment exam are leaked. Unemployed youths are frustrated by these malpractices. The party will raise these issues in the monsoon session," he added.

# Chhagan Bhujbal demands caste census in India

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amid the ongoing protests over Maratha and OBC quotas in Maharashtra, NCP minister and Samata Parishad Founder, Chhagan Bhujbal on Monday made a strong case for conducting a caste census across India, saying that he will urge Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the same. "If this census is done, it will be of great benefit to the OBCs of the country as they will get a huge amount of funds from the Centre," he told reporters after chairing the Samata Parishad meeting here. "Narendra Modi has become the Prime Minister of the country for the third time. Now we are going to make an appeal to him to get a caste census done. If it is done, it will shed light on various issues of OBCs. We will not only understand the population but also the situation of OBCs," said Bhujbal. He added that the funds would be available to OBCs also which currently are available only to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Bhujbal's demand for a caste census came



days after NCP(SP) chief Sharad Pawar demanded it last week. Interestingly, the Congress, NCP and NCP(SP) have strongly demanded a caste census while the BJP has yet to make it stand clear on this issue.

# Sharad Pawar urges Shinde to call meeting to mull ways to end drought in Pune District

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Chief and former Union Minister, Sharad Pawar, in a letter has requested Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to convene a meeting soon to discuss permanent measures to overcome the recurring drought in Pune District. Sharad Pawar, who visited the drought-hit villages in Purandare, Indapur, Baramati and Daund talukas on June 12 and 13, said that the villagers brought to his notice a lot of issues related to various irrigation schemes. He said they also suggested measures for the availability of enough water for drinking and farming. Sharad Pawar has urged CM Shinde that during the proposed meeting, both the Deputy Chief Ministers



Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar, ministers of soil and water conservation and water supply need to be present. He said that in the meeting they need to review the situa-

tion with officers from the departments concerned and deliberate the measures needed to address the drought situation in Pune District.

# EVM ROW: SHIV SENA-UBT TO FILE PETITION AGAINST 'MISUSE' OF GOVT MACHINERY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amid the row over allegations of EVM malfunctioning in the Mumbai North West Lok Sabha constituency where Shiv Sena nominee Ravindra Waikar defeated Shiv Sena (UBT) candidate Amol Kirtikar lost by a thin margin of 48 votes, the Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray will soon file a petition under the Representation of the People Act over the 'misuse' of government machinery, corrupt practices, and related issues. "The court battle over Amol Kirtikar's election defeat will begin very soon because we actually won the seat. The verdict of Mumbaikars against dictatorship is well known. However, we would like to present the technical aspects of the mess that has taken place. "If we look at the election result, it shows the Election Commission of India is not the poll panel, but an 'Entirely Compromised Commission'. They are working at the behest of a particular party. Despite all the mess, the



INDIA bloc achieved good success in the Lok Sabha polls. Had this mess not happened, the government would have changed in Delhi," Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray said during a press briefing on Monday. He also said the party would release the technical details during the court battle showing how the government machinery was misused and how Waikar was declared victorious by 48 votes. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Anil Parab also claimed that Kirtikar won the

elections but his victory was snatched away using government machinery. "The Election Commission should take our complaint seriously and conduct an inquiry. It should also check the Returning Officer's history, especially about how many corruption cases are pending against her. It is clear that the RO was working under someone's pressure," he alleged. Parab also claimed that there was a lack of transparency in the counting of votes since the 19th round. "There was a difference of 650

votes between the ARO (Assistant Returning Officer) and our votes which were not counted after the 19th round. Kirtikar was defeated by 48 votes, which is a dubious result. After the 19th round, the election process was completely abandoned," he claimed. Parab also said that before announcing the results, the election officials generally tell candidates and their representatives. However, this practice was not followed in the Mumbai North West constituency, he claimed. "When we asked for CCTV footage, we were told that it would be provided within two days after the results were announced. But later they refused to provide the footage. Now they are saying that it cannot be provided as per a court order. "We have all the information about the mobile phones used during the counting of votes, and whose calls were received on them. A case was registered after 10 days. The mobile phones were possibly changed during these 10 days," claimed Parab.

# Musk will have to be tutored by Election Officer Suryavanshi, taunts Raut

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) on Monday alleged that the Mumbai North West constituency results where Shiv Sena nominee Ravindra Waikar won by 48 vote due to EVM manipulation is one of the most exemplary scams in the Lok Sabha election process. "The BJP and its allies have won some constituencies across the country by wrong means. A good example of this is the North West Mumbai Constituency. These people have taken over the government and election system and committed scams," he claimed. Raut taunted that the Tesla and 'X' owner Elon Musk would have to be tutored by Election Officer of Mumbai Suburban District, Vandana Suryavanshi, who on Sunday ruled out malfunctioning of EVMs saying that the machines were standalone devices without any wired or wireless connectivity with units outside the



EVM system. Sanjay Raut said that the Election Officer had earlier declared the Thackeray faction nominee Amol Kirtikar as a winner but after that the vote was recounted and the fresh results were announced.

"Election officer Vandana Suryavanshi has a big hand in this scam. Now she is talking about technical matters. Basically it is not her domain. Elon Musk, the giant of the world of technology, should teach Suryavanshi. The biggest man in the

world of technology is saying that EVMs can be hacked and these people (BJP) make different claims," he added. Raut demanded that the North West Constituency Election Officer's past should be checked, so also the CCTV footage of the place where the election result counting took place. "The election officials should also check whose calls were received during that period and seize their phones. Relatives of Ravindra Waikar were roaming there. The Vanrai Police should probe the case thoroughly," he said. "The North West constituency results are mysterious and doubtful, so I think Ravindra Waikar should not be sworn in as a member of the Lok Sabha. "This matter has not been investigated, people's doubts have not been removed, and stopping him from taking oath is true democracy. The Election Commission should prevent him from taking oath because he has won by stealth," said Raut.

# 17-Year-old boy hits woman with car after dispute in Pune, detained

Team Absolute | Pune

Police have detained a 17-year-old boy on charges of attempt to murder after he allegedly knocked down a woman with his car following a dispute in Maharashtra's Pune district, an official said on Monday. The woman suffered minor injuries in the incident which took place at Vadgaon Ghenand village in Alandi area on Saturday, he said. A video has surfaced on social media showing a car being driven recklessly and hitting a woman. The incident is the fallout of a dispute between families of the juvenile and the woman, according to the Pimpri Chinchwad police. On Saturday, the juvenile hurled abuses at the woman's husband and father-in-law after a dispute. He then got into the car and allegedly threatened to kill



the woman and her husband, a police official said. The juvenile then drove the car recklessly, knocking down the woman, he said. "The juvenile has been detained. He was presented before the Juvenile Justice Board and was sent to an observation home. We have filed an application requesting permission to try the minor as an adult in the case against him," an official from

the Pimpri Chinchwad police station said. The minor has been booked under various Indian Penal Code sections, including 307 (attempt to murder), and provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, the police said. On May 19, a Porsche car allegedly driven by a 17-year-old boy hit a motorbike in Pune's Kalyani Nagar area, killing two IT professionals.

# BMC not informing about '40 pc' water cut in Mumbai: Aaditya Thackeray

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On Sunday, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray accused the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) of giving false information about water cuts in Mumbai, reported news agency. Aaditya Thackeray, who is Worli MLA and former Maharashtra minister, alleged that there is a 40 per cent water cut in Mumbai, but civic officials were keeping mum. "Normally, during April and May, the city faces 5-10 per cent water cut but this time it was not implemented due to the Lok Sabha polls (between April 19 and May 20 in the state). However, water cut is now in place but people have not been informed about it," Aaditya Thackeray claimed. Aaditya Thackeray said BMC commissioner-cum-administrator Bhushan Gagrani must share factual data. Meanwhile, Shiv Sena



(UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray said the Election Commission of India (ECI) lacks courage to release the CCTV footage related to Mumbai North West Lok Sabha seat with regard to allegations that the winning candidate's kin used a mobile phone in the counting centre on June 4, reported news agency. A media report said Mangesh Pandlikar, brother in law of Ravindra Waikar, who won from seat by just 48 votes, had used a mobile phone to "unlock" an EVM when the votes were being counted, allegations which returning officer Vandana Suryavanshi and Mumbai police rubbished during the day. Pandlikar and a polling official Dinesh Gurav have been booked by Vanrai police under section 188 of the

Indian Penal Code for flouting the EC ban on mobile phones inside counting centres. "We have always had suspicions about this regime tampering with EVMs. Even Elon Musk has expressed his views, claiming everything can be hacked. Despite several requests, the Election Commission does not have the courage to release the CCTV footage of the counting day that would support our claims," Aaditya Thackeray claimed. "Once a fraudster always a fraudster," he said referring to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Expressing concern over alleged lack of transparency in the functioning of the ECI, Aaditya Thackeray claimed the BJP would have won just 40 Lok Sabha seats and not 240 if polling was held using ballot papers instead of EVMs. Addressing a press conference, returning officer Suryavanshi said CCTV footage can only be released on the orders of a competent court.

# 3 ARRESTED FOR REPEATEDLY RAPING 3 MINOR SISTERS IN PALGHAR

Palghar: Three people were arrested for allegedly raping three minor sisters in Maharashtra's Palghar district, a police official said on Monday. The parents of the victims had separated and they were in the care of their father, who is an alcoholic, Senior Inspector Jitendra Vankoti of Pelhar police station said. "The three accused, Datta Kshirsagar (35), Nishad Khan (19) and Sayyed (27), took advantage of the distress of the three sisters and raped them repeatedly over the past one year. The three men were arrested on Sunday for rape and other offences under Indian Penal Code and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act provisions," he said.

# Pankaja Munde weeps over death by suicide of 4 party workers

Team Absolute | Mumbai

BJP leader Pankaja Munde was seen weeping at a condolence meeting for four party workers who allegedly died by suicide following her defeat in the recent Lok Sabha election. "Don't give up on life," the BJP leader urged her supporters on Sunday, as she met with the family members of the workers. "My workers are important to me. Please don't take such a step, don't leave your children and family," she pleaded. Pankaja Munde was seen weeping copiously at the meeting yesterday at the home of Popatrao Vaibhase, one of the activists who died by suicide. In photos shared on X, she was seen consoling Vaibhase's family. "Popatrao was an active worker who devoted himself to every task. Actually, a fighter. But, to leave his family by taking such an extreme decision will weaken me," she wrote in a post in Marathi. The others who died were Sachin Munde, Pandurang Sonawane and Ganesh Bade. "I will continue to share the burden of their grief," she said, adding she would be "taking all the responsibility of their innocent children and families".



"But this responsibility is painful for me," said the former Maharashtra minister, who lost the Beed Lok Sabha seat to Bajrang Sonawane of NCP (Sharad Pawar). "We are certainly not weak enough to be depressed by a defeat, but this pain is unbearable for me. Don't give up on your life. If you want a leader who fights with courage, I also want a worker who fights with courage. I don't want to lose my people. I don't get dis-

couraged by defeat but such incidents shake me. I am very upset today." Munde also met with the family of Ganesh Bade. In the Lok Sabha polls, the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi of Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) won 30 of 48 seats. The BJP won nine seats, a sharp drop from the 23 it won in the 2019 election in the state. Its ally Shiv Sena won seven seats.





## EDITOR'S SPECS

## UP BJP cadres seek to review alliances with small parties

The elections in Uttar Pradesh have put the allies of BJP, particularly the smaller parties, in a spot. BJP cadres are now wanting a review of their relations with the allies because BJP did not get any benefit from these allies that represent specific caste groups, although, the allies did get votes from BJP's core voters. For instance, according to Anil Rajbhar, "The Rajbhar community did not vote for SBSP and the votes that Arvind Rajbhar got in Ghosi, came from BJP. Om Prakash Rajbhar could not save his own Assembly seat Zahoorabad." Similar is the case of the Nishad Party President Sanjay Nishad who could not even manage the victory of his son Parveen Nishad in Sant Kabir Nagar even though Parveen was contesting on the BJP symbol. The Nishad Party has six MLAs. Another leader said: "Our party has been pampering these allies without any apparent reason and these allies have been taking maximum advantage of BJP leadership's leniency. They do not deserve what they have got and we need to do some serious rethinking about them before it is too late." Apna Dal, on the other hand, could win only one of the two seats that it contested in the recent Lok Sabha polls. Anupriya Patel won her Mirzapur seat while Rinki Kol lost her Robertsganj seat. In the case of Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), the party won both the seats it was allotted in the elections-Baghat and Bijnor. But RLD could not muster Jat support for BJP - if it had, BJP would not have lost the Kairana seat to SP. Albeit on condition of anonymity, several BJP leaders, including legislators, said that the party high command should reconsider the future of these alliances which had caused more harm than good to the party.

# KEEPING UP VIGIL IN PUNJAB

DC Pathak

At least two protagonists of Khalistan won the parliamentary elections in Punjab with large margins making it easier for them to further push the separatist agenda in the sensitive border state. Khalistan ideologue Amritpal Singh lodged in Dibrugarh jail under the National Security Act, secured victory with a margin of 1.93 lakh votes -- the highest in this election in Punjab.

Significantly, the Akali Dal registered a decline -- winning only the Bathinda seat -- which could be interpreted as a weakening of the moderate Sikh voice.

The AAP got three seats that did not set any trend but the relative performance of the Congress and the BJP showed interesting pointers. The BJP increased its vote share from 6.6 to 19 per cent without scoring any victory while Congress lost its vote by a corresponding 13 per cent and won 7 of the 13 seats in the state.

The Jat Sikh and Dalit vote apparently shifted to the Congress while the Hindus seemed to have rallied behind the BJP.

Incidentally in the parliamentary election in nearby Haryana, the Congress and the BJP equally shared the ten seats of the state -- all at the cost of regional groupings -- which was welcome to the extent it showed the voter's preference for mainstream politics.

Anything that accentuates community differentiation in Punjab has to be avoided as that would only benefit radicals and separatists -- Hindu-Sikh unity founded on the teachings of Guru Nanak was an intrinsic political antidote for the Khalistan movement.

It may be recalled that the Khalistan terror witnessed by Punjab last time had seen targeted killings of Hindus. There is no gain-saying the fact that Punjab has been exposed in recent months to the after-effects of a lot of pro-Khalistan activities that were taking place outside India -- particularly in the US and Canada -- instigated by our

adversaries. There were incidents like attacks on temples abroad to create a Hindu-Sikh divide -- the intention obviously was to create a communal backlash in Punjab as well.

Three trends are currently in play that should cause concern. One is the unmitigated process of build-up of the Khalistan advocacy seen in Canada, the US, Australia and even the UK attributable to anti-India forces -- with a clear indication of Pak ISI's hand in it. Pak establishment was known to be in league with Amritpal Singh -- it had arranged his stay in Dubai before he shifted to India.

Amritpal Singh was trying to emulate Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale -- he visited village Rode in Moga district and took to Bhindranwale's attire. He was obviously testing waters in Punjab when he rallied hundreds of followers to raid Ajnala Police Station near Amritsar in February 2023 and successfully rescued his aid who had been earlier arrested for violence.

The crowd carried Guru Granth Sahib as a strategy of defence -- this might encourage the trend of stray Gurudwaras being used wherever possible for the promotion of Amritdhari cult.

The modus operandi used by Pak ISI for fuelling terrorism in Punjab in the late 80s was likely to be repeated and this should help the government to frame its counter-measures against the covert plans of the adversary. This time around, Pak ISI is banking in a big way on spreading addiction to drugs in Punjab so that the vulnerable youth could be indoctrinated more easily for taking the path of separatism and violence.

It has made use of Sino-Pak strategic friendship to secure Chinese drones for dropping arms and narcotics in Punjab -- under-terred by the close vigilance of BSF and state police against this planned mischief.

It is reported that Amritpal Singh was using 'de-addiction centres' in the state for hiding weapons sourced from Pakistan.

The state government needs to

have the political will to clean up these establishments, strengthen its Intelligence machinery and secure public cooperation to put down any externally instigated violence -- particularly in the border districts of Punjab.

It should be presumed that Pak ISI would keep up its covert offensive in both J&K and Punjab -- an indication of this is the ambush of a bus carrying pilgrims returning from Vaishno Devi at Reasi, executed by a group of terrorists said to be from Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) on June 9 -- around the time when in Delhi the new cabinet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was being sworn in. In the intense firing on the bus, the driver was hit and the vehicle subsequently fell into a deep gorge -- resulting in nine deaths and grievous injuries to 33 passengers.

In Punjab, there was another attempt recently to drop narcotics from a drone. Pakistan backed by China has stepped up its anti-India operations particularly after the Indian Parliament voted for the abrogation of Article 370 relating to Kashmir in August 2019. This period has seen a rise in pro-Khalistan violence outside India -- notably in Canada and the US -- at the hands of Pak ISI-backed forces such as Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) and Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF).

In April this year, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the leader of the opposition in Canada were welcomed at the Vaisakhi rally in Toronto organised by Khalistan supporters, with slogans of 'Khalistan Zindabad'. This led to India charging the Canadian PM with giving space to separatists and extremists for political reasons. India-Canada relations have suffered a setback on this issue.

Earlier, 'Sikhs for Justice' active in the US called for a 'Khalistan Referendum' on January 28, 2023, which evoked a response from Sikh separatists in the US, Canada, the UK and Australia. A violent-looking mob created a ruckus at the Indian Consulate in San Francisco and flashed Khalistan flags on the occasion.

In March 2023, Khalistan sup-

porters gathered in front of the Indian Embassy in Washington, raised abusive slogans and threatened the Indian Ambassador. Around the same time, protestors carrying Khalistan flags broke into the Consulate premises in San Francisco and painted graffiti calling for the release of Amritpal Singh who had been arrested in India and lodged in Dibrugarh jail in Assam. In July again, Khalistan supporters set fire to the San Francisco Consulate building at midnight.

Indian Embassy in Melbourne, Australia, witnessed a protest demonstration by Khalistan elements in June 2023 and Sikh -- Hindu tension cropped up in Sydney as well.

In London, Khalistan supporters including Dal Khalsa and Khalistan Tiger Force members tried to attack Indian High Commission in March 2023 in retaliation against the arrest of Amritpal Singh, the Khalistan protagonist who had come from Dubai -- leading the organisation called 'Waris Punjab De' -- and as mentioned earlier organised a violent raid at Ajnala Police Station on the outskirts of Amritsar in February last year. The protestors pulled down the national flag, caused damage to the building and injured some people.

India's national security scenario is characteristically marked by the fact that covert external threats are the prime danger to the country's internal security at present. This is attributable to the Sino-Pak strategic alliance that works basically against India. The Khalistan movement is being instigated by Pak ISI and China is collaborating with the latter by supplying drones to Pakistan for cross-border operations of dropping arms and narcotics in Punjab.

Intelligence collection on the doings of the Sino-Pak axis against India has to be stepped up using also the intelligence-sharing channels with friendly countries who were opposed to China and who felt threatened by the advent of 'radicalisation' in the Muslim

world. India is handling the threat of revival of the Khalistan movement in Punjab with a multi-prong strategy using diplomatic, police and socio-political measures to contain and counter the danger -- drawing lessons from its handling of the Khalistan 'terror' that had overtaken the state in the latter 80s.

In February 2024 at the India-US Homeland Security Dialogue held in Delhi, India raised the demand that pro-Khalistan outfits in the US be investigated for instigating violence against India.

A clear message has been delivered to Canada and the US that the freedom of expression did not extend to giving anti-India calls for violence in the name of Khalistan.

Pro-Khalistan elements do not have the benefit of a cult figure like Bhindranwale within Punjab but the anti-India forces abroad are in a determined way trying to instigate the separatist movement and inject the Hindu-Sikh communal divide into the border state, from outside.

The Centre should take an early step to appoint a senior person with a national security background and knowledge of how the terror that prevailed in Punjab in the past was handled as the Governor so that counter-measures could be coordinated and the state government guided suitably in the socio-political sphere and also instructed properly on security issues.

The new challenges for Intelligence are the scanning of social media, uncovering of clandestine funding of separatist movements and keeping track of the activities of anti-India elements within the state and outside. In matters of national security, the state and central governments have to be on the same page.

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

## international

## Netanyahu dissolves Israeli war cabinet after resignations

Tel Aviv | Agencies

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dissolved his war cabinet on Monday, a spokeswoman for the Prime Minister confirmed.

The key political decision-making body for how the war in Gaza was being conducted was dissolved just more than a week after the withdrawal of influential Opposition leader Benny Gantz.

Israeli media had earlier leaked the news about the disbanding of the cabinet, which was formed after the Hamas terrorist attacks of October 7. A spokeswoman for Netanyahu confirmed the news on Monday. Government sources said that Netanyahu would discuss critical decisions regarding the conflict in smaller forums in future.

The cabinet had been formed in an attempt to demonstrate political unity after the Hamas attack.

Netanyahu leads a government composed of far-right and religious parties, but the war cabinet contained Gantz, a key opposition figure.

Last week, Gantz -- a former general and Defence Minister -- announced his withdrawal due to differences of opinion concerning the Gaza war and what



would happen to Gaza after the war is over. An observer member of the cabinet, Gadi Eisenkot, also withdrew, leading to even greater expectations that the cabinet would be dissolved.

Investigations continue into the deaths of eight Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers. The Israeli army said on Monday that it believes an anti-tank missile was used in an attack on an Israeli armoured vehicle in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip which killed eight

soldiers on Saturday, according to Israeli media. The incident is one of the most serious for the IDF since the start of the war more than eight months ago.

Initial findings showed that a door of the Namer armoured personnel carrier was open contrary to instructions, the newspaper Israel Hayom wrote on Monday. All of the vehicle's occupants were killed instantly when the rocket hit the vehicle. The incident is still being investigated.

## LANDSLIDE CLAIMS EIGHT LIVES IN ECUADOR

Quito: At least eight people were killed and three others injured in a landslide on a major road in Ecuador's central Tungurahua province, local authorities said.

The landslide led to the closing of the roadway in the resort city of Banos de Agua Santa and damaged houses in the area, reported Xinhua news agency, citing the Ecuadorian National Risk Management Secretariat.

"We are coordinating and deploying more machinery to help with the relief effort," said Ecuadorian Transportation and Public Works Minister Roberto Luque on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Operations at three hydroelectric plants had also been disrupted by the heavy rains, added Luque.

## More nuclear warheads being kept operational, says watchdog

Copenhagen | Agencies

Nuclear weapons states are strengthening their nuclear arsenals in the face of numerous conflicts worldwide, a leading Swedish think tank on conflict and defence said on Monday.

According to a new report published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the number of operational nuclear warheads is steadily rising.

"While the global total of nuclear warheads continues to fall as Cold War-era weapons are gradually dismantled, regrettably we continue to see year-on-year increases in the number of operational nuclear warheads," said SIPRI director Dan Smith.

"This trend seems likely to continue and probably accelerate in the coming years and is extremely concerning."

The number of nuclear



weapons in development is also on the rise, as states bank on nuclear deterrence, the report said.

Of the estimated total of 12,121 warheads recorded worldwide in January, around 9,585 were part of military stockpiles for potential use.

Around 3,904 of these warheads were mounted on missiles and aircraft -- 60 more

than in the same month a year earlier. According to the report, the rest were kept in centralized storage facilities.

For decades, the global number of nuclear weapons has been steadily declining. However, the decline is mainly due to the fact that discarded warheads are gradually being dismantled by Russia and the US following the Cold War.

## WILDFIRE FORCES 1,200 PEOPLE TO EVACUATE IN CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles: A fast-moving wildfire has burned over 12,200 acres (about 49.4 square km) overnight in Southern California, forcing at least 1,200 people to evacuate from a popular recreation area, authorities said on Sunday.

The wind-driven wildfire, dubbed the Post Fire, started Saturday afternoon in Gorman, about 100 km north of Los Angeles, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire). The blaze was 2 per cent contained as of Sunday afternoon and has damaged two structures. Cal Fire warned in a Sunday update that "slightly higher temperatures and lower humidity are expected to continue through the weekend, residents are reminded to remain vigilant and be prepared to evacuate if fire activity changes". The South Coast Air Quality Management District issued a smoke advisory, urging residents in the area impacted by smoke to limit their exposure by remaining indoors or seeking alternate shelter.

## ATTACK THAT KILLED 8 IDF SOLDIERS CAUSED BY ANTI-TANK MISSILE: ISRAELI MEDIA

Tel Aviv | Agencies

The Israeli army assumes that an anti-tank missile was used in an attack on an Israeli armoured vehicle in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, which killed eight soldiers, Israeli media reported on Monday.

The incident, which occurred on Saturday, is one of the most serious for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) since the start of the war more than eight months ago.

Initial findings showed that a door of the Namer armoured personnel carrier was open contrary to instructions, the newspaper Israel Hayom wrote on Monday.

All of the vehicle's occupants were killed instantly when the rocket hit the vehicle. The incident is still being investigated.

Other media reported possible secondary explosions caused by explosive devices attached to the outside of the tank. It took two hours after the heavy

explosion before troops were able to approach the destroyed vehicle.

According to military sources, the soldiers had been travelling in a convoy of armoured vehicles after an operation in the northwest of Rafah. It was initially reported that it was unclear whether the explosion was caused by an anti-tank missile or a booby trap.

The military arm of the Palestinian Islamist terrorist organisation Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

Israel wants to eliminate one of Hamas' last strongholds in Rafah.

The IDF has been stepping up ground operations against Hamas there since the beginning of May but wants this to be understood as a limited operation, not a large-scale offensive.

US President Joe Biden had declared the latter to be a "red line". Due to the many deaths and the catastrophic humanitarian situation, Israel's actions in the Gaza war are internationally controversial.

## Indian national accused in alleged assassination plot against Khalistani extradited to US

New York | Agencies

Nikhil Gupta, who has been accused of involvement in an alleged plot to assassinate a Sikh separatist here has been extradited to the United States and is in federal custody, according to prison records. The Federal Bureau of Prisons inmate records on Sunday showed him locked up in the Metropolitan Detention Centre in Brooklyn, where prisoners due for appearances in federal courts here are kept.

According to a spokesperson for the federal court of the Southern District of New York, quoted by NBC TV network, he is scheduled to appear in court on Monday.

Gupta was arrested in the Czech Republic on June 30 last year and the US had

asked for his extradition.

His extradition was held up by his appeal to the Czech Constitutional Court earlier this year against his extradition, which was rejected last month clearing the way for him to be sent to the US.

The alleged plot raised concerns in the US because an Indian police officer is accused of masterminding it.

According to court documents, Gupta, who also uses the name "Nick", is charged with participating in a plot with an unnamed Indian "senior field officer" to assassinate the leader of a "US-based organisation that advocates for the secession of Punjab state" and the establishment of a "Sikh sovereign state called Khalistan".

The group's leader, who is not named in the court documents, is Gurpatwant Singh

Pannun, a lawyer with US and Canadian citizenships, who lives in New York and runs a campaign for Khalistan. He is designated as a terrorist by the Indian government. In a filing in the New York court in January, Gupta's lawyer Jeffrey Chabrowe said that according to his family's media interviews he "faces basic human rights violations while in custody in Prague" and was kept in "extended" solitary confinement without consular access.

According to the charging document in the court, Gupta was recruited by the "senior field officer" to "orchestrate the assassination." He, in turn, the document said, contacted a person he believed was a "criminal associate, but was, in fact, a "confidential source work-

ing with US law enforcement". That person introduced him to a "purported hitman" who was an undercover US law enforcement officer who was offered \$100,000 to carry out the assassination, the document said. Gupta arranged for an advance of \$15,000 to be delivered by an associate to the presumed "hitman", who was also given details about Pannun and also told him that a Canada-based Khalistan leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was killed in British Columbia had been a "target", according to the document. The prosecution said that he had himself described his "involvement in narcotics and weapons trafficking" and asked the "senior field officer's" help in getting cases against him in India dismissed.





## STATE LEVEL EVENT OF "SCHOOL CHALEN HUM ABHIYAN 2024" WILL BE HELD TODAY

▶ ON JUNE 20, A "MEETING WITH THE FUTURE" PROGRAM WILL BE HELD IN ALL THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS OF THE STATE WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav will launch "School Chalen Hum Abhiyan 2024" on June 18. The state level inauguration program will be held at Government Subhash Excellent Higher Secondary School from 9:30 am. This program will be broadcast live through web-cast and other communication mediums.

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav will welcome the newly admitted students to the school in the "Praveshotsav" program.

During the "Entry Festival" being organized in government schools across the state on June 18, MPs, MLAs and other public representatives will also participate in one of the schools. Former students of the school and public representatives



have also been invited to the School Chalen Hum campaign program organized at the school level. During this period, the identified children who are out of school in the village/habitation will be enrolled in the school and their parents will be welcomed at the school level. Special food will be distributed in schools on the day of entry festival.

Teacher-parent meeting will be organized in all the schools on the second day of School Chalen Hum

campaign. During this time, a letter addressed to the parents will be distributed by School Education Minister Uday Pratap Singh. In these meetings, school activities are discussed with the parents, in which mainly information about class-wise subject section, academic calendar, study-teaching process, parent-teacher meeting, co-scholastic activities, facilities available in the school etc. will be provided. Free text books will be distributed.

With a view to convert the School Chale Hum campaign into a mass movement, "Meeting with the Future program" will be organized in all the government schools of the state with the participation of the public. During this period, to guide the students, famous, influential, enlightened and respected persons from various sectors of the society, local dignitaries etc. will meet the students in the role of motivators and share their experiences with the students and inspire them to create a better future.

Apart from this, other interested people of the society like public representatives, communication friends, people associated with social organizations, social workers, advanced farmers, actors, artists, players, industrialists, businessmen or officers also visit any school of their choice and provide guidance to the students will be able to cooperate. To participate in this program, they should register themselves on the link education portal dot mp.gov.in slash MPSCCH (https://educationportal.mp.gov.in/mpsch/) and visit any one school at their convenience. During the program, the persons invited to the schools will also be able to gift items for school use to the students.

## Cong can't question as EVMs were brought during UPA regime: Lakshman Singh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former MLA and Congress veteran Digvijaya Singh's brother Lakshman Singh on Monday said the party's top leadership should not question the authenticity of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM).

He said that the Congress leadership should instead focus on strengthening the party for the next elections.

Lakshman Singh went on to say that the EVMs were brought into the electoral system when Congress top brass Sonia Gandhi was the Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA).

"We should not question EVMs because Elon Musk raised a doubt on it. We do not need his (Elon Musk) views on EVMs as we are capable of running our country. Unnecessary remarks (by politicians) should not be made because someone made a comment on EVMs," Singh added.

Meanwhile, he advised Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge to work



to strengthen the organisation so that the grand old party is able to win the elections in the next five years.

Responding to Kharge's comment that PM Modi-led NDA government may fall as it lacks majority, Singh said, "Kharge (Mallikarjun) is a senior leader, he should

refrain from making such comment."

Speaking about the Madhya Pradesh unit of the Congress, Singh said there was a need for change in leadership.

"State committees should be reshuffled to revive the party's position," he said.

## Gondwana Gantantra Party made Bhalawi its candidate from Amarwada seat of Chhindwara

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Gondwana Gantantra Party (GGP) has declared its candidate for the by-election in Amarwada assembly constituency of Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh. The party has fielded Dev Ravin Bhalawi as its candidate from Amarwada.

Voting on this seat is to be held on July 10 and the results will be announced on July 13.

Kamlesh Shah, who was the MLA from this assembly seat, had left Congress and joined BJP during the Lok Sabha elections. After that Kamlesh Shah had also resigned from the membership of the Assembly.

BJP has made Kamlesh Shah its candidate. BJP and Gondwana Gantantra Party (GGP) have announced their candidates. Whereas, brain-



storming is going on in Congress for candidate selection. Congress has appointed former ministers Sukhdev Panse and Sunil Jaiswal in-charge for this assembly seat.

In the assembly elections held in 2023, Congress had won all the seven seats of Chhindwara district. During the Lok Sabha elections, MLA from Amarwada seat

Kamlesh Shah had switched parties.

Chhindwara is considered to be an area under the influence of former Chief Minister Kamal Nath. But, in the Lok Sabha elections, Kamal Nath's son Nakul Nath had to face defeat from Chhindwara seat. BJP candidate Vivek Bunty Sahu had won from this seat.

## MARKETS WILL NOW REMAIN OPEN 24 HOURS IN MADHYA PRADESH

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Markets are going to open 24 hours in the coming time in Madhya Pradesh. It will be beneficial in increasing employment along with business. Besides this, the revenue of the state government will also increase.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav wrote on Twitter on Monday, "Markets will open 24 hours, trade will increase, markets will open day and night in the state, which will give wings to the state's economy."

Under the new system being implemented in Madhya Pradesh, all the markets of the state will remain open 24 hours, this will make the markets buzzing.

Restaurants, malls, hotels, business centers and offices related to information technology will operate day and night. This system is being implemented in 16 big cities of the state.

According to information received from sources, the Labor Department had planned to implement this system in Bhopal and Indore Municipal



Corporation areas as a pilot project, but Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has asked to implement it in all Municipal Corporation areas.

On the basis of the same, the Labor Department prepared a proposal and proposed amendment in Section 6 of the Rules of Madhya Pradesh Shop

Establishment Act 1958 and sent it to the Law Department. Sources say that this system is already in force in some states of the country like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Telangana and there everything from malls, restaurants to main markets and busi-

ness centers remain open 24 hours. With the implementation of this system in Madhya Pradesh, new employment opportunities will be available. The government's revenue will also increase. Also, pubs etc. will function as per schedule only.

## EID NAMAZ AMIDST DRIZZLING RAIN IN BHOPAL: WITH PRAYERS FOR PEACE AND HARMONY



■ Eid prayers were held amid drizzling rain in Bhopal, India's capital, where thousands of people participated. Special prayers were offered for peace and tranquility in the country. After the namaz, the locals hugged and wished each other a happy Eid. Eid prayers were organized in all the major mosques of Bhopal, in which Muslims participated in large numbers. On this special occasion, the mosques of Bhopal resonated with the message of happiness and brotherhood, symbolizing the cultural and religious diversity of the city.

## Demonstration of workers on Chief Minister's announcement of salary hike

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Controversy is increasing in Madhya Pradesh regarding the Chief Minister's announcement of salary increase. Today, daily wage workers demonstrated across the state including Bhopal and lodged more than 180 complaints in the CM helpline. The workers demand that the wage increase be re-implemented immediately.

The workers protesting under the leadership of Madhya Pradesh Employees Forum say that the Chief Minister's big announcement of increasing the salaries has proved to be false. State President Ashok Pandey

issued a press release saying that as per the announcement of the Chief Minister from April 1, 2024, the salary of the workers was increased by Rs 2225 per month. But due to a stay order of Indore High Court, this salary has been reduced from June 1, 2024.

Ashok Pandey said that orders have now been issued to withdraw the increased salary in the month of April. Due to this, there is huge dissatisfaction among lakhs of daily wage workers of the state. The workers say that when the salary was increased on the announcement of the Chief Minister, then on what basis has it been reduced.

The workers raised questions on the stay order of the Indore High Court and said that this order has been implemented on all the departments and workers without any study by the senior government lawyer. He demanded a high-level inquiry and appealed to re-implement the increased salary. The workers said that the special announcement of the Chief Minister should not be thwarted.

This demonstration and complaints highlight the contradiction between the Chief Minister's announcement and the Court's order, and the workers demand that a proper resolution to the matter be found at the earliest.

## 44 QUINTALS AND 15 KG OF ILLEGAL DRUGS SEIZED, 2 SMUGGLERS ARRESTED

Team Absolute | Neemuch

Nayagaon outpost police station Javad has taken major action against drugs and seized 44 quintals and 15 kg of illegal doda powder. Police also arrested two smugglers from whom Doda powder worth approximately Rs 4 crore 50 lakh was recovered.

On the Neemuch-Nimbahera highway, the police had received information from an informer that a huge quantity of illegal drugs was being transported in a truck. Showing promptness, the police blocked the highway on June 16, 2024 and stopped truck number PB-10-DZ-4860. On searching the truck, 44 quintals and 15 kg of illegal doda powder was found in 211 bags.

Police arrested two smugglers, Simran Jeet Singh alias Arshdeep Singh, age 23 years, resident of village Thathikhara, Tehsil Tarn Taran,



Punjab and Gurusevak Singh, age 29 years, resident of village Thathiya Mahanta, both hails from Punjab, from the spot. A case has been registered against both the accused under Section 8/15 of the NDPS Act. Behind this action were the

instructions of Inspector General of Police Ujjain Zone Santosh Kumar Singh and Deputy Inspector General of Police Ratlam Range Manoj Kumar Singh. This campaign was successful under the efficient direction of Superintendent of Police Ankit

Jaiswal and the guidance of Additional Superintendent of Police Naval Singh Sisodia, In-charge Sub-Divisional Officer of Police Javad Vaishali Singh, and Police Station In-charge Javad Jitendra Verma.

Nayagaon outpost in-charge Sauni Rampal Singh and his team had an important contribution in this campaign. This great success was achieved due to his alertness and efficiency. Police are now interrogating the accused regarding the sources of Doda sawdust and other smugglers. This is an important action under the Chief Minister's state-wide anti-drug campaign. This year, compared to last year, the cases of drug trafficking have doubled and three times more drugs have been seized. This important success will further strengthen the ongoing campaign against drugs and will help in establishing a drug-free society in the state.







## Angelina Jolie gets elegant design of tiny bird as a tattoo

Los Angeles | Agencies

**H**ollywood star Angelina Jolie recently flaunted her new tattoo. The actress and producer of 'The Outsiders' walked the red carpet at the 2024 Tony Awards, held at Lincoln Center's David H. Koch Theater in New York City. Jolie wore a custom light-teal Atelier Versace velvet draped gown featuring a sweetheart neckline, which showed off what appears to be a new tiny bird tattoo, reports 'People' magazine. The sparrow-like bird is depicted in flight.

Jolie's tattoo wasn't visible in April when she and her daughter Vivienne attended the musical's opening night.

Jolie also wore a matching velvet shrug and coordinated with 15-year-old Vivienne, who is credited on 'The Outsiders' playbill as a producer assistant. According to 'People', for Broadway's biggest night, the teenager wore a crisp white shirt under a teal vest, along with teal trousers and a bow tie. She completed her look with Converse sneakers.

Jolie was nominated for co-producing the musical adaptation of S.E. Hinton's 1967 book 'The Outsiders', which is up for 12 Tony Awards, including Best Musical. Danya Taymor took home the Tony for Best Direction of a Musical. During the evening, Jolie introduced a performance from the show's company, which included renditions of the songs 'Tulsa '67' and 'Grease Got a Hold'. The performance ended with the entire cast performing the rumble, an elaborate dance fight that takes place as the rain falls.

"S.E. Hinton wrote 'The Outsiders' in high school, and half a century later, it still speaks to us. Society changes, but the experience of being an outsider is universal," said Jolie.

"To any young person, any person, feeling on the outside, you are not wrong to see what is unfair. You are not wrong to wish to find your own path. As the cast raises their voices, I hope it inspires many of you watching to value yours. Please welcome the extraordinary company of 'The Outsiders,'" she added.



New York | Agencies

**E**kin-Su Culcuglu turned heads on Sunday evening, as she made an unexpected arrival on the red carpet at the 77th Tony Awards held at Lincoln Center's David H. Koch Theater in New York City. The Love Island star looked radiant in a stunning black gown covered in intricate beading and silver star-shaped sequins, reported dailymail.co.uk. Underneath the sheer glittering number, she wore a skintight black minidress that showed off her slender figure and cleavage. Her high-necked dress also boasted a daring thigh-high slit at the side, exposing a glimpse of her toned legs.

Ekin-Su gave herself a couple of extra inches in a pair of black strappy high heels and added more sparkle with a diamond encrusted clutch. The reality star completed her striking look by styling her long hair poker straight and sporting a full face of bronzed makeup.

This year's Tony Awards will be hosted by Ariana DeBose who had previously been nominated in the Best Featured Actress in a Musical

*An unexpected arrival*

category for Summer: The Donna Summer Musical.

The 32-year-old also won an Academy Award for Steven Spielberg's movie adaptation of the Broadway classic West Side Story.



Los Angeles | Agencies

**N**ick Jonas - who was recently seen on the set of his new musical - put on a trendy display in an all black suit and silver chain while arriving to the Tony Awards in New York City on Sunday night.

He arrived alongside his new Broadway musical co-star Adrienne Warren who looked radiant in an off the shoulder black gown on Sunday evening.

The 37-year-old actress's jaw dropping ensemble boasted a sexy leg slit and a lowcut neckline that teased her chest, reported dailymail.co.uk.

She paired the look with silver diamond necklace, a matching ring and droplet shaped earrings.

The co-stars posed up a storm on the red carpet, teasing their upcoming project marking their return to the stage.

Their joint arrival comes just hours after they both announced that they joined the cast of The Last Five Years from Tony-nominated director Whitney White.

Jonas, 31, will play aspiring novelist Jamie opposite Tony winner Adrienne Warren, who will be playing his wife Cathy.

The Last Five Years will be directed by Whitney White, 37, who is currently nominated for Best Director of a Play for Jaja's African Hair Braiding.

The musical romantic comedy is told from both points of view of the husband and the wife and was last mounted off-Broadway in 2001 and 2013.

It is expected to hit the stage sometime in 2025.



**Nick Jonas and Adrienne Warren rock the red carpet together**



## Amid divorce rumours, Jennifer Lopez shares Father's Day message for Ben Affleck

Los Angeles | Agencies

**A**ctress-singer Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck, who are reportedly going through a challenging time in their marriage, recently shared a sweet moment.

Amid rumours that they could be headed for divorce, Lopez seemed to quash some of the intense speculation by sharing a heartfelt message for her husband, reports Mirror.co.uk.

Taking to Instagram, JLo shared a black-and-white image of a brooding Ben, 51, accompanied by some kind words.

She referred to Ben as "Our Hero," showing that there is clearly still a lot of love between them. She added a heart emoji and concluded the post with "Happy Father's Day."

As per Mirror.co.uk, Ben is the father of children Violet, Serafina, and Samuel, whom he shares with ex-wife Jennifer Garner.

He is also the stepfather to JLo's two children,

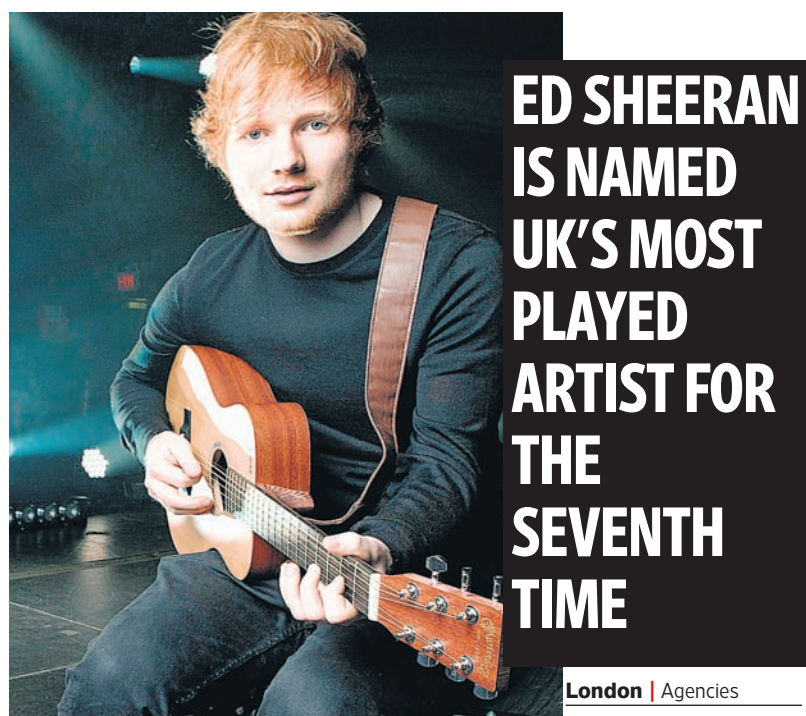
Max and Emme.

Jennifer's post follows reports earlier this week that she was "over" trying to salvage her marriage with Ben amid rumours that he had moved out of their marital home.

A source alleged to the publication that she is no longer willing to do "more" to keep their marriage together. The insider claimed, "Jenny has had enough, and she really tried, but she can do no more. It's not getting any better; it's worse."

The outlet also claimed that Jennifer has had enough due to Ben's alleged "grumpy and negative" nature. The insider added, "Ben is a great guy, but he can be grumpy and a downer. I think the world saw that in photos, like when they were at the Grammys last year; he wouldn't smile. If they saw how it really was, they would not attack her."

"He chain-smokes and cusses and seems irritated a lot of the time. Great director and actor, but not a lot of laughs with him, you know?" the source added.



**ED SHEERAN IS NAMED UK'S MOST PLAYED ARTIST FOR THE SEVENTH TIME**

London | Agencies

**E**d Sheeran has been named the most played artist in the United Kingdom for the seventh year, while British artists dominate a new chart compiled by music licensing company PPL, reported dailymail.co.uk.

The Suffolk-based singer-songwriter tops the list for most songs played on British radio, television and in public places.

Sheeran has topped the same list on seven different occasions, having sold more than 150 million records across the world since his emergence with debut album + in 2011.

Acknowledging his placement, he said: "Thank you for naming me the most played artist for last year."

"Thank you to my team, not just for me, but for all the other artists you work with - I'm happy that you get this recognition."

His latest appearance at the top of the PPL chart is his third in as many years and sees him overshadow pop titan Taylor Swift, who climbs from 10th to second place, matching her 2015 placement.

British-Albanian star Dua Lipa - whose third album Radical Optimism was released in May - also features in third place.

Elsewhere Scottish DJ and producer Calvin Harris, whose work includes collaborations with Lipa, Rita Ora and Rihanna among others, occupies fourth position.

In fifth place, French DJ David Guetta is the only non-British artist in the top six, with Sir Elton John sitting directly below him in sixth.

Elsewhere Tom Grennan is a new entry at number eight, with former One Direction star Harry Styles - whose last album, Harry's House, was released in 2022 - occupying ninth place.

**ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY**



**Nicole Scherzinger**





## Golf: DeChambeau edges McIlroy for second US Open title

Pinehurst (US) | Agencies

America's Bryson DeChambeau won the US Open golf championships by one stroke, squashing Rory McIlroy's chance to end a 10-year wait for a major title. He capped off a 1-over-par 71 for a 72-hole total of 6-under 274.

DeChambeau, who carried a three-shot advantage into Sunday's final round, survived a wild back nine that saw him lose the lead to four-time major champion McIlroy before executing a perfect bunker shot from 54 yards on the par-4 18th hole to 4 feet.

It came some 15 minutes after McIlroy lipped out a 4-foot par putt for his third bogey over his final four holes, dropping him one shot behind DeChambeau.

"I don't know what to think; it hasn't fully sunk in yet. I just want everybody to enjoy it, as well. As much as it is heartbreaking for some people, it was heartbreak for me at the PGA. I really wanted this one," DeChambeau told the assembled media, as quoted by the tournament website.



website.

"When I turned the corner and saw I was a couple back, I said, 'Nope, I'm not going to let that happen.' I have to focus on figuring out how to make

this happen. I was a little lucky. Rory didn't make a couple putts that he could have coming in. I had an amazing up-and-down on the last. I don't know what else to say. It's a dream

come true," he added.

The 30-year-old joined a select group of 23 golfers who have won multiple US Open titles, a list that includes Ben Hogan, Bob Jones, Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods and fellow Mustang Stewart.

Like Nicklaus and Woods, he also owns U.S. Amateur and NCAA individual crowns to go along with his National Open victories, according to tournament stats.

Fellow American Tony Finau's final-round 67 matched the day's lowest round and earned him a career-best tie for third with compatriot Patrick Cantlay at 4-under 276.

Cantlay, an eight-time PGA Tour winner still seeking a first major title, fired a 70, while Matthieu Pavon, the 2024 Farmers Insurance Open champion who had never been in a final-round final pairing in a major, posted a 71 for solo fifth at 277.

Hideki Matsuyama, the 2021 Masters champion, finished sixth (278) after a final-round 70. Russell Henley and world no. 2 Xander Schauffele tied for seventh at 1-under 279 after shooting 67 and 68, respectively.

## 130 athletes to take part in Khelo India Women's Weightlifting Zonal League

Indore (Madhya Pradesh) | Agencies

The Asmita Khelo India Women's Weightlifting Zonal League is scheduled at the Shri Ram Gymnasium here from June 17 to 21. Approximately 130 weightlifters will be competing across junior, senior, and youth bodyweight categories.

The women's weightlifting league has seen the likes of Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Mirabai Chanu compete in the year 2022 at Nagrota Bagwan, Himachal Pradesh. Mirabai, who has qualified for her third Olympics, won the gold. It was also the inaugural Khelo India women's weightlifting tournament.

The Khelo India tournament has seen the participation of Target Olympic Podium Scheme weightlifters and international medalists like Bindyarani Devi, Harshada Sharad Garud, Akanksha Vyavhare and Soumya Dalvi over the years.

The Khelo India Women's Weightlifting League tourna-



ments for the 2024-25 season are part of a larger calendar of events throughout the year. Following the upcoming zonal event in Indore, two more zonal events will take place this year in Bhubaneswar, Odisha and Modinagar, Uttar Pradesh. The Zonal League is a key component in identifying and developing talented weightlifters across India.

Following these zonal rounds, an inter-zonal event is scheduled in 2025 in Odisha, which will feature the top performers from each zone. This multi-stage structure provides an even greater opportunity for athletes to showcase their abili-

ties and compete for national recognition.

This event, organised by the Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) and conducted by the Indian Weightlifting Federation, gives a much-needed platform to showcase the talent and potential of India's future weightlifting champions.

While the junior and senior weightlifters will be contesting across 10 weight categories, from the 45kg category to the +87kg category, the youth women weightlifters will also contest across the 10 weight categories starting from 40kg to +81kg.

## Murray predicts Dapper to 'top world rankings' after maiden ATP title

New Delhi | Agencies

Former world no.1 Brit Andy Murray spoke highly on Jack Dappers' potential after his maiden ATP title win in Stuttgart and believes he could go 'right to the top of the world rankings'.

Following Dapper's maiden ATP title win at the Stuttgart Open on Sunday, the 22-year old moved up to World Ranking of 31, making him the British no. 1.

"Jack, I think, has bigger goals to aspire to than being British number one. In my opinion, he can get right up to the top of the game, right to the top of the world rankings. He genuinely loves the sport. He is really into it, he works really hard and I think grass is a brilliant surface for him. I think he'll do really well over the years on the surface," said Murray to BBC.

Draper's first title win came after beating Italy's Matteo Berrettini 3-6 7-6 (7-5) 6-4 in the finals.

The Brit will be competing against Mariano Navone of Argentina at Queen's Club Championship on Tuesday. Should Draper go past his first-round match, he will square off against Carlos Alcaraz if the defending Wimbledon champion and current world number two also progresses to the next round.



"It's amazing for him to win his first tournament and obviously I'm delighted for him. This year has been tricky for him and it could have looked a whole lot different as well, a lot more positive than it has been, because he's lost a number of extremely close matches.

"You change a couple of those results and all of a sudden he's up easily in the top 20 in the world. In my eyes, he's definitely playing good enough to be right up there," concluded the two-time Wimbledon winner.

## Rishabh Pant playing at No.3 is a big positive, says Harbhajan

New Delhi | Agencies

India ended their group-stage campaign in flying colours in the T20 World Cup with an unbeaten run in Group A. Former spinner Harbhajan Singh analysed the Men in Blue's journey in the tournament so far and backed wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant to continue batting at the No.3 spot in the Super Eight.

The veteran bowler detailed that Pant coming one-down helps the side to maintain a left-right batting combination in the middle which poses a great challenge to any bowling unit. In the tournament so far, Pant is the highest run-getter for the Indian team with 96 runs in three innings on a challenging New York pitch while all-rounder Hardik Pandya is the joint-highest wicket-taker with Arshdeep Singh, with both taking seven scalps each.

"To make Rishabh Pant play at number 3 is a big positive. The left-right combination is formed when Rishabh Pant plays at number 3. There are a lot of positives. Of course, there are challenges and difficulties. But the challenges come in for those who are brave. This team is a team of brave players. They fought well and



played very well. Because of this, they topped the group," Harbhajan told Star Sports. The former bowler further outlined Pandya's contribution to the showpiece as the "biggest positive" for the Rohit Sharma-led side.

"The biggest positive is that Hardik Pandya took the wicket. He was the fourth bowler in this tournament. But if you look at his wicket tally, he has done much better than what was expected of him. Along with him, Rishabh Pant played at number 3. His

role was completely changed. Before this World Cup, we were saying that Sanju Samson would play in the team because he has made big runs," the veteran said.

Harbhajan also recalled Jasprit Bumrah's exceptional spell against Pakistan, which changed the momentum of the match and helped India beat their arch-rivals.

"The biggest positive is that when you are in trouble, how do you get out of it? One or the other player raised

his hand and did his job that day. Jasprit Bumrah's spell, Rizwan hit a bad shot and got out, after that, the energy the team showed was commendable. All those who were asleep woke up and pulled the match from that situation while defending a small score. It was not a common thing to win the match against Pakistan from their claws," he added.

India will lock horns with Afghanistan in their first Super Eight match in Barbados on June 20.



## Tennis: Alcaraz eyes grass-court glory after French Open triumph

London | Agencies

French Open champion Carlos Alcaraz is gearing up for more success on the grass courts after his remarkable victory at Roland Garros. The 21-year-old made history by becoming the youngest man to secure major titles on all three surfaces -- grass, hard courts, and clay -- with his thrilling five-set win over Alexander Zverev in Paris last Sunday.

Fresh off his clay-court triumph, Alcaraz is now setting his sights on the grass-court season, beginning with the Queen's Club tournament. He is determined to replicate his impressive feat from last year, where he clinched victory at Queen's Club and followed it with his maiden Wimbledon title.

Speaking to reporters at Queen's, Alcaraz shared his excitement and focus for the upcoming challenges.

"I had a few days off, I went to Ibiza with a group of friends. I had fun, I enjoyed my time. Obviously Roland Garros was a fantastic two weeks for me, a dream come true to lift the trophy, but right now my mind must be here on the grass. To be ready as soon as I can to play good

tennis here at Queen's and obviously to get ready for Wimbledon," Alcaraz was quoted by BBC.

The Spaniard's ambitions don't stop at the grass-court season. The young champion is also looking forward to Paris Olympics, where he will partner with the legendary Rafael Nadal in the doubles event.

"Right now my focus is on the grass season, the two tournaments and after that my mind will be to be ready on clay again and playing my best tennis at the Olympic Games," Alcaraz noted.

Expressing his joy and honour at the prospect of teaming up with Nadal, Alcaraz said, "I feel really, really happy to play doubles in the Olympics and with an idol like Rafa. I mean, I didn't expect to play doubles at the Olympic Games with Rafa. It is a unique moment for me but of course I am very happy about it. Let's see how it's going to be but it's going to be a great time."

He added, "Honestly, I feel he is going to teach me how to deal with everything. I am a young guy who needs to grow up as a player, to grow up as a person as well. Of course, it's going to be my first Olympic Games. Everything is new for me, so I hope to learn a lot from him."

## TENNIS: ARYNA SABALENKA PULLS OUT OF PARIS OLYMPICS CITING HEALTH REASONS

Berlin | Agencies

World number three Aryna Sabalenka has pulled out of the upcoming Paris Olympics citing health reasons and to focus on hard court tournaments. The 26-year-old defending Australian Open champion made a quarterfinal exit in last month's French Open after losing to Russian teenage Mira Andreveva.

"Especially with all the struggles I've been struggling with the last months, I feel I have to take care of my health. It's too much for the scheduling and I made the decision to take care of my health," Sabalenka told reporters at the Berlin Ladies Open.

"I prefer to have a little rest to make sure physically and health-wise I'm ready for the hard courts and I'll have a good preparation before going to the hard-court season. I feel that this is safer and better for my body," the Belarusian added.

The upcoming Olympic tennis event marks a significant change as it shifts to clay courts for the first time since Barcelona in 1992. This transition means players will need to adjust from grass at Wimbledon to the clay at Roland Garros, followed by a return to North American hard courts.



The summer season includes consecutive WTA 1000 events in Toronto and Cincinnati on hard courts, leading up to the final Grand Slam of the year at the US Open, where Sabalenka reached the final last year.

Sabalenka, who is currently participating in the Berlin Ladies Open, will play against world no.14 Daria Kasatkina in the round of 16 on Tuesday.

## 'ENGLAND CAN WIN TITLE IF BUTTLER, ARCHER ARE AT THEIR BEST', FEELS VAUGHAN

Gros Islet (St Lucia) | Agencies

Former England captain Michael Vaughan has said if the defending champions are to win the 2024 T20 World Cup, they would require for captain Jos Buttler and fast-bowler Jofra Archer to be at their absolute best from Super Eights onwards.

England went through the Super Eight of the tournament after defeating Namibia by 41 runs in a rain-affected Group B match in Antigua on Saturday. They were hugely helped by Australia knocking out Scotland with a five-wicket win in St Lucia.

England will now face co-hosts West Indies and USA, as well as South Africa in Group 2 of the Super Eights.

"To get to the semi-finals and even further, England need two players at their best. Jofra Archer is hugely important for England. He's that bowler who can bowl every over of the 20, and his return has been very good so far.

"And then Jos Buttler has got to find form. The skipper needs to find a bit of rhythm with the bat. Jos is that kind of player that can win a game on his own. England are going to need him," wrote Vaughan in his column for The Daily Telegraph on Monday.

He added that if England go all the way to defend their title, it won't come as a huge surprise for him. "It wouldn't surprise me if England won the tournament. It's reminded me very much of the last T20 World Cup in Australia 18



months ago. England lost to Ireland then and had a horrible week where we all worried that they would be going out -- but they put it behind them, won four games in a row and lifted the title.

"That tournament, I reckon they played one pure game -- the semi-final against India -- but they still did enough. England are a very dangerous team. My worry is that they can play incredibly well, but they can produce a performance which is very average. They've become a team that's quite inconsistent, which is not what we're used to from the white-ball team.

"In the Super Eight, they're in what people would term the easier of the groups, meaning no disrespect to the United States. But you would expect the

three major teams to win against them. So it comes down to the two big games against South Africa and West Indies -- England will have to win at least one. It's not the worst position to be in at all," he elaborated.

Vaughan signed off by saying leg-spinner Adil Rashid will become more and more important for England in the Super Eight stage due to slow nature of pitches in the Caribbean and wants to see Moeen Ali bat at number three to lead the side's charge against the opposition's spinners.

"Spin's going to play a big part in the last stages of the tournament, as we play on some used pitches, especially in the day games. Adil Rashid will become more and more important by the game.

"If I was playing England, I'd make sure that there was a great player of spin to target Rashid in the seventh over, which he always seems to bowl. Hit Rashid out the attack and you'd mess with England's plans.

"The crucial question is going to be how England play spin. England have got very good players of spin but they also need to be smart. We've seen India use Rishabh Pant at number three.

"So I'd like to see Moeen at number three, to break up the right-handers. If there's a short boundary to target, or the wind's a factor, you want a left and right-hand combination out there, especially as West Indies will pick two left-arm spinners."





## First brought into Bollywood due to resemblance with Preity Zinta: Taapsee

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Taapsee Pannu has revealed that she was brought into Bollywood due to her resemblance to Preity Zinta. Taapsee, who appeared on cricketer Shikhar Dhawan's talk show 'Dhawan Karengé', opened up during a candid conversation about looking up to the mesmerising actress Preity, who is also

well-acquainted with Shikhar.

The 'Mulk' actress shared: "I was first brought into Bollywood because I share a resemblance with Preity Zinta. She has very good energy, and you know it well."

Taapsee continued: "The aura of Preity ma'am is very lively, and she seems very intelligent. I felt like I had to live up to her reputation, as I was brought into the industry because of her name. So, I always put in an effort to be like her."

For the unversed, Shikhar is the captain of the IPL team 'Punjab Kings', which is owned by Preity.

'Dhawan Karengé' is streaming on JioCinema Premium.

Meanwhile, Taapsee was last seen in the comedy-drama 'Dunki' alongside Shah Rukh Khan.

Her upcoming projects include 'Woh Ladki Hai Kahaan?', 'Phir Aayi Haseen Dillrubu', and 'Khel Khel Mein'.

## After SRK in 'Jawan', Atlee to team up with Salman Khan for his next movie

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After collaborating with Shah Rukh Khan, director Atlee is set to join forces with another Bollywood superstar for his next film.

The director is reportedly set to team up with Salman Khan, who was last seen in 'Tiger 3'.

According to media reports, Atlee initially aimed to collaborate with Telugu superstar Allu Arjun. However, after not getting the actor's approval, he pitched a new idea to Salman Khan, which the Bollywood superstar really liked.

It is also reported that Atlee's substantial paycheck was a concern for Geetha Arts, owned by Allu Arjun's father, Allu Aravind.

Atlee is currently working on the script, and the film will be announced soon under the banner of Sun Pictures.

Shooting is expected to start next year, as Salman is currently busy with 'Sikandar', directed by A.R. Murugadoss, who is known for the Aamir Khan-starrer 'Ghajini'. 'Sikandar', which has booked an Eid

2025 release date, is expected to wrap up production by March 2025. Meanwhile, Allu Arjun's 'Pushpa 2: The Rule' has been postponed to a Diwali release due to some remaining VFX patchwork. With 'Pushpa 2: The Rule' shifting its release date, many Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi films have now booked the August 15 release slot.



## Anil Kapoor starts preparations for upcoming

Mumbai: Actor Anil Kapoor, who is gearing up to host the upcoming season of the reality streaming show 'Bigg Boss OTT', has begun preparing for his upcoming project 'Subedar'.

The actor took to his Instagram on Monday and shared a picture of his preparation. The image shows him holding an opponent by the neck, with the latter's back facing the camera, likely from a fight training session. In the caption, the actor wrote: "Abhi toh haath utha hi kahaan hai, Yeh toh bas Taiyari hai #Subedar Prep begins." Veteran actor Anupam Kher took to the comments section, and wrote: "Go for it, my friend."

Fans flooded the comments with fire and heart emojis. One user wrote, "Majnu bhai ke aage koi bol sakta hai kya?," while another commented, "Wow, so handsome."

'Subedar' is directed by Suresh Triveni and is set to stream on Prime Video. Meanwhile, 'Bigg Boss OTT' season 3, which is set to drop on OTT on June 21, marks Kapoor's first stint as a host.



## Kareena, Ayushmann in talks for Meghna Gulzar's crime thriller



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood stars Ayushmann Khurrana and Kareena Kapoor Khan are teaming up for the first time for an upcoming film directed by Meghna Gulzar of 'Talvar'.

As per the sources, the film is titled 'Daayra' and is a crime thriller. The film is reportedly based on the Hyderabad rape case.

A trade source said, "Meghna Gulzar is in advanced conversations with Ayushmann Khurrana and Kareena Kapoor Khan for the film."

The film, produced by Jungle Pictures,

is a hard-hitting film that warrants the presence of actors with the calibre of the cast she has decided upon.

Meghna has earlier got Alia Bhatt and Vicky Kaushal together for 'Raazi' and then Vicky and Sanya Malhotra for 'Sam Bahadur'.

All eyes will now be on 'Daayra' to see what magic Meghna creates with her stellar cast of Ayushmann and Kareena.

## More laughs ahead

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The makers of 'The Great Indian Kapil Show' (TGIKS) announced the second season of the celebrity comedy chat show on Monday. The ongoing season of 'The Great Indian Kapil Show' featured guests such as superstar Aamir Khan, Ranbir Kapoor and his family, cricketers Rohit Sharma and Shreyas Iyer, international pop icon Ed Sheeran, and many other icons from the entertainment industry.

Taking to social media, the makers shared a recap video of the ongoing season and announced the show's second season.

They wrote: "Entertainment ki baarish hogi do-bara, kyunki The Great Indian Kapil Show ka Season 2 aayega bas kuch hi mahino mein! Aur naye season ka wait karte hue Season 1 binge karlo! (The Great Indian Kapil Show's season 2 will arrive in just a few months! While you wait for the new season, binge-watch season 1)."

Talking about season two, the host of the show, Kapil Sharma, shared: "This has been a wonderful first season. There have been many firsts, and we will cherish those. We are grateful for all the love pouring in from across the globe."

"We promise not to keep our audience waiting for too long for the next season. Enjoy the finale episode with Kartik Aryan this weekend and stay tuned as we gear up for season 2," he added.

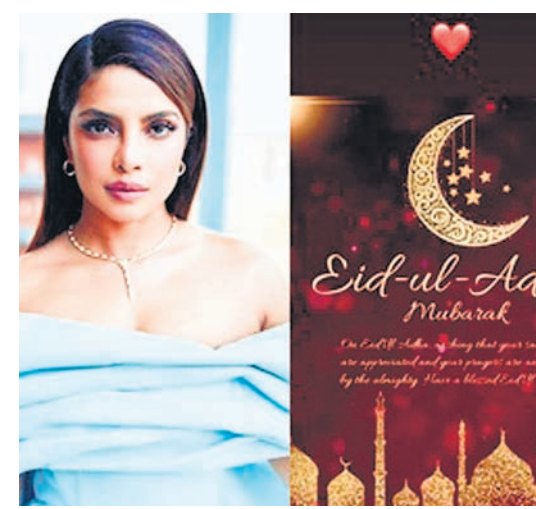
Tanya Bami, Series Head at Netflix India, said: "After a phenomenal first season, we're overjoyed to welcome Kapil and the gang back to Netflix for season 2. Kapil's ability to connect with audiences through his humour is remarkable, making him an iconic comedian in Indian entertainment."

The show features stellar performances by Sunil Grover, Krushna Abhishek, Kiku Sharda, and Rajiv Thakur. With Kapil's witty punches and Archana Puran Singh helming her beloved 'kursi' (chair), the show has captivated viewers worldwide.

The finale of the ongoing season is slated for June 22 on Netflix.



## Priyanka wishes fans on Eid-ul-Adha



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Priyanka Chopra has extended warm greetings on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha, wishing that everyone's sacrifices are appreciated and prayers are answered.

Taking to Instagram stories, the former Miss World, who has 91.3 million followers, shared a postcard featuring a crescent moon and a message that reads: "Eid-ul-Adha Mubarak... On Eid-ul-Adha, wishing that your sacrifices are appreciated and your prayers are answered by the Almighty. Have a blessed Eid-ul-Adha!"

The actress also included a red heart emoji in her post.

On the personal front, Priyanka is married to American singer and actor Nick Jonas. The couple tied the knot in December 2018 and welcomed their first child, a daughter named Malti Marie, via surrogacy in January 2022.

Meanwhile, on the acting front, Priyanka last appeared in the 2023 American romantic comedy-drama 'Love Again', co-starring Sam Heughan and Celine Dion. She also narrated the wildlife documentary 'Tiger', directed by Mark Linfield, Vanessa Berlowitz, and Rob Sullivan.

Priyanka's upcoming project is 'Heads of State', an action-comedy film directed by Ilya Naishuller, also starring Idris Elba and John Cena.

## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Nitanishi Goel