

# absolute india



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## SC asks NTA to admit if any irregularities found in NEET (UG) exam

# BE ADMISSIBLE

Earlier, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan accepted that there were some irregularities in some places. He has said that if the senior officials of NTA are also found guilty in this, then strict action will be taken against them. "Candidates and parents should be assured. The Central government has taken this matter seriously. There is a need for improvement in NTA, he said.



The NTA must admit and take corrective action to maintain public confidence in the conduct of competitive exams.

"Narendra Modi, as usual, is maintaining silence on the tampering with the future of more than 24 lakh students in the NEET examination. While fulfilling the responsibility of the opposition, we are committed to formulate such tough policies by strongly raising the voice of the youth from the streets to the Parliament and putting pressure on the government."

Rahul Gandhi

In response, the NTA said that no adverse opinion should be formed based on speculation unless it files a proper reply before the court. Granting two weeks to NTA to respond to the petition alleging various irregularities in the NEET (UG) exam, the Supreme Court ordered tagging of the plea with the pending batch of petitions, coming up for hearing on July 8.

On Sunday, two accused confessed their role in the question paper leak as per the Economic Offences Unit (EOU) of Bihar Police. The top court, last week, said that it would not pass any ex-parte CBI probe into the matter. However, it had asked the NTA to file its reply to the fresh petitions seeking a CBI/SIT probe into the allegation of paper leak within two weeks.

### NINE CANDIDATES TO BE QUESTIONED IN BIHAR

Patna: The Economic Offences Unit (EOU) of Bihar Police will question nine candidates in connection with the NEET question paper leak case in the presence of their parents in Patna on Tuesday.

According to an official, EOU has constituted a Special Investigating Team (SIT) to probe this case. The SIT will quiz them for the next two days. Earlier, Patna Police served notice to 11 candidates to join the probe. Two candidates will join the probe later on.

The SIT wants to know how their roll numbers and roll codes reached the solver gang. Patna Police had found the roll numbers and roll codes of the 11 candidates linked with a solver gang. When the case was transferred to EOU, it asked the NTA to provide the details on the 11 candidates. After receiving the details, the notice was served to these candidates to join the probe. The examination of NEET was held on May 5 but examination mafias obtained the question papers a day earlier. The case was cracked by the Patna Police by arresting 13 persons, including six examination mafias, four students and three parents. The EOU is preparing to take remand of four arrested candidates to know if there is any involvement of 11 suspected candidates. The 11 candidates, who will be questioned, are from different districts of Bihar and seven of them are girls. In the course of the investigation, EOU has asked for the original copy of the question paper received on the morning of May 5 from NTA. However, NTA has not yet sent the original copy of the question paper to EOU, which is affecting the investigation.

Meanwhile, a team of EOU will visit New Delhi to meet with NTA officials regarding this case.

## Stock markets at fresh record high, shares of defence companies surge

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Riding on defence sector stocks led by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, Mazagon Dock, Paras Defence and Cochin Shipyard, the Indian indices closed at a fresh record high on Tuesday.

Sensex gained 308 points to close at 77,301 points while Nifty reached 23,557, up 92 points.

During the day, shares of Paras Defence were locked in the 20 per cent upper circuit following two large deals.

Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) shares were up more than 6 per cent (329 points). Garden Reach and Bharat Electricals (BEL) also saw a surge in their stocks.

HAL has received an order from the Ministry of Defence for the procurement of 156 light combat helicopters (LCH). The tender is expected to be worth Rs 45,000 - Rs 50,000 crore with helicopters to be acquired by the Indian Air Force and Indian Army.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has set an ambitious target to export over Rs 50,000 crore worth of defence equipment by 2028-2029.

Market analysts said that the current upsurge in the industry's optimism stems



from Minister Rajnath Singh's plan to boost defence exports. Following a strong start, the Nifty remained within a range as the index formed another day of muted movement on the daily chart.

For the last few days, Nifty has been moving sideways on an intraday basis, but eventually, it has moved up above 23,500, according to market experts. The

BankNifty index finally broke out of the resistance mark of 50,200 and managed to close above it. "The bullish momentum is likely to continue, potentially driving the index higher towards the 51,000 mark. The undertone remains extremely bullish, and a buy approach is recommended with strong support at the 49,700 mark," said Kunal Shah from LKP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the National Testing Agency (NTA) to admit if any irregularities are found in the conduct of the NEET (UG) examination.

A vacation bench of Justices Vikram Nath and S.V.N. Bhatti remarked that even "0.001 per cent negligence" in the conduct of the NEET exam should be thoroughly dealt with and the matter should not be dealt with as adversarial litigation.

The apex court further flagged the ill consequences arising out of the situation where a candidate turns doctor after playing fraud on the system. It added that if there is a mistake,

## Built For Rs 12 Crore, Bridge In Bihar Collapses Before Inauguration

Patna | Agencies

A portion of an under-construction bridge collapsed in Bihar Araria today. The concrete bridge over the Bakra River, built after spending crores, came apart in seconds. Visuals showed the bridge, over the fast-flowing river, tilted on one side and a crowd gathered on the banks near the bridge, recording the moment it collapsed.

There are no reports of injuries. The bridge was constructed to ease the commute between Kursakanta and Sikti in the Araria district of Bihar. Built at Rs 12 crore, the bridge collapsed before its inauguration. Sikti MLA Vijay Kumar



said, "The bridge has collapsed due to negligence by the construction company's owner. We demand that the administration should conduct an investigation."

The collapsed portion washed away within seconds and the people started running toward safety. In another video, a few people

are standing dangerously close to the edge of the remaining portion of the bridge. While many people are standing under it.

A major part of the collapsed portion was built over the river. The section built on the banks of the Bakra River remains intact.

## 41 JORDANIANS DIE DURING HAJ PILGRIMAGE IN SAUDI ARABIA AMID SOARING HEAT

Cairo: At least 41 Jordanians have died due to heatstroke during the Haj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, Jordan officials said on Tuesday, as temperatures soared in recent days.

The authorities are following the procedures for burying the Jordanian pilgrims in Mecca who died due to heatstroke. Search operations are continuing for the missing pilgrims.

On Monday, Saudi authorities issued warnings to pilgrims to avoid the sun and urged them to postpone the rituals till after 4 p.m. (local time).

Islam's holiest city recorded 51.8-degree Celsius on Monday, while other nearby holy sites recorded 48-degree Celsius maximum temperature.

Some 1.8 million pilgrims took part in this year's Haj, one of the five pillars of Islam, which began in Mecca on Friday evening amid the blistering heat.

Buses and trains are used to help transport the many worshippers to the holy sites, but the large crowds and intense heat still pose a challenge for the pilgrims and law enforcement officers.

In recent decades, there have also been several major tragedies with hundreds of deaths due to crowding.

## Bengal train mishap: Death toll rises to 11, child succumbs to injuries

Kolkata | Agencies

The death toll in the Kanchanjunga Express-goods train collision in West Bengal's Darjeeling district has risen to 11, said officials.

Eleven-year-old Sneha Mondal, a passenger of the Kanchanjunga Express, was admitted to the pediatric intensive care unit of North Bengal Medical College & Hospital (NMCH) at Siliguri on Monday.

Officials said that since then the doctors had been trying their best to save her life. However, all their efforts on this count proved futile as she died around noon on Tuesday. With this the total death toll in the mishap has risen to 11, out of whom nine died on Monday only and the other two, including Sneha, on Tuesday.



Of the 11, the identities of eight deceased persons have been revealed while attempts are on to track the same for three others. The deceased persons include the loco-pilot of the goods train and the guard of

Kanchanjunga Express. Meanwhile, railway officials said that normal train services have resumed on the route where the mishap took place on Monday morning both in the 'up' and the 'down' sections.

## Congress worker washing Nana Patole's feet, leader blames it on BJP



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole kicked up a controversy after a viral video showed a party worker washing his feet. While the BJP accused him of "insulting" the workers of his party, Patole blamed the ruling party for lack of tap connection in the area which led the worker to wash his feet.

The incident took place on Monday when Patole visited Wadegaon to attend an event. The video of the incident, which went viral on social media, shows a worker pouring water on Patole's feet and cleaning them with his hands as the Congress leader exits the vehicle.

Several BJP leaders shared the video on their social media handles, accusing Patole of "insulting" his party workers.

Nana Patole later responded to the allegations, saying his feet got muddy after taking part in a procession of the holy symbolic footprints of Saint Gajanan Maharaj.

"I had gone to Akola to seek the blessings of Gajanan Maharaj at a ground where palkhi was kept during an ongoing yatra. The ground was muddy and my feet got soiled. So I washed my feet while our worker poured water on it. I do everything in broad daylight. I am not ashamed of anything," Patole said. "The worker was pouring water (on my feet). There was no tap - 'Har ghar mein nal, har ghar mein jal' (a reference to BJP's water guarantee). Otherwise I would have used water from the tap," he added. However, BJP MP Bhpender Yadav lashed out at Patole for defending his act. The BJP MP also demanded an immediate and unconditional apology from the Congress.

## Weather Contrast

HEAVY RAINFALL LIKELY IN BENGAL, ASSAM; NO RESPITE FROM HEATWAVE IN NORTH INDIA



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Even as northern India reels under scorching heat, the Met Office has predicted respite for the eastern and northeastern parts of the country, with heavy to very heavy rainfall likely to hit the region till June 20.

The IMD further said that the conditions are favourable for the advancement of the monsoon in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and also some parts of Bihar over the next 3-4 days.

"Isolated heavy rainfall is very likely in Odisha and Bihar during the next five days," the India Meteorological Department said.

The rain forecast amid the grueling heat wave conditions comes as a major respite for the people.

The weather conditions in the northeast have been attributed to a "cyclonic circulation" that lies over Assam at lower tropospheric levels.

However, the people in the North are unlikely to see respite from the searing heat anytime soon.

"No significant change in maximum temperatures is very likely over Northwest India during the next 24 hours," the Met Office said. It further said that heatwave to severe heatwave conditions are 'very likely' in most parts of Uttar Pradesh on June 18 and 19, and in some parts till June 20.

### 22 MORE SUCCUMB TO HEAT STROKE IN BIHAR

Patna: The severe heat waves and high humidity in Bihar claimed 22 lives in the last 24 hours, officials said on Monday.

With the Meteorological Department issuing an alert for heat waves for the next 72 hours, people have been urged to exercise caution.

Five patients died due to the heat wave in Sadar Hospital of Arwal district, 4 persons each in Chapra and Patna district, three each in Mohania of Kaimur district and Gaya, two in Arrah, and one in Aurangabad district. Among the fatalities was a truck driver who fell unconscious near the Didarganj toll plaza on the Patna-Bakhtiyarpur highway. The dead body of a man was recovered from Patna Sahib Railway station from the general bogey of the Kosi Express train. Police suspected that he might have died due to heat stroke. Meanwhile, in Kaimur, a former soldier's health deteriorated due to the heat wave and police admitted him to Mohania sub-divisional hospital where he died on Monday during treatment. Over 100 people have reportedly succumbed to the heat in the state so far.

## BJP has further strengthened itself in MP: CM Mohan Yadav

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday said that the BJP has further strengthened its position in the state and the same is evident with the party's performance in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections.

The Chief Minister made the remarks while chairing a review meeting on Lok Sabha poll results in Madhya Pradesh at the BJP headquarters here. "People have enormously supported the BJP and now it's the responsibility of the double-engine government to fulfil their aspirations," he added. Chief Minister Yadav appreciated state BJP chief V.D. Sharma for re-establishing the organisation. "Party has achieved a milestone (won all 29 Lok Sabha seats in the state) under his (V.D. Sharma) leadership, which has happened first time in Madhya Pradesh," he said.



The Chief Minister also appreciated the party's cadre in the state, saying that the ground-level workers have taken the double-engine government's works deeper, which is why the BJP received more than 60 per cent of votes. The BJP has won all 29 Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh while in the Assembly elections held in November last year, the party had won 163 out of 230 seats.



# POWER DEMAND IN NORTH INDIA AT RECORD HIGH AMID SCORCHING HEAT WAVE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The demand for electricity in India's northern region scaled its highest-ever peak of 89 GW amid the scorching heat wave on Monday, the Ministry of Power said on Tuesday.

"The Northern Region of India has been experiencing high demand conditions due to a prevailing heat wave since May 17 this year. Despite these challenging conditions, the highest ever peak demand of 89 GW in the Northern Region was successfully met on June 17," according to a Power Ministry statement.

This achievement was made possible by importing 25 to 30 per cent of the region's power requirement from neighbouring regions. All utilities have been advised to maintain a high state of alert and minimise forced outages of equipment, the official statement explained.

In response to the increased demand and to ensure adequate power availability across the country, the Ministry of Power said it has



implemented a series of measures to meet the highest-ever peak demand of 250 GW during this ongoing summer season.

As part of the measures, directions have been issued for imported coal-based plants to continue the generation support during the high-demand period.

Minimum planned maintenance

of generating units has been scheduled during this period to keep up the high level of power generation.

All power generating companies (GENCOs) have been advised to keep their plants in healthy condition to ensure full capacity availability for optimal operation of various generation sources.

Adequate coal stocks are being

maintained at coal-based thermal stations.

Hydropower stations have been advised to conserve water during solar hours and dispatch maximum generation during non-solar hours to ensure power adequacy at all times.

Gas-based power plants have been directed to provide grid support. Additionally, around 860 MW of additional gas-based capacity (non-NTPC) has been tied up through competitive bidding specifically for this summer. Furthermore, approximately 5000 MW of NTPC gas-based capacity has been instructed to be ready for immediate operation as per system requirements, the statement added.

Any un-requisitioned or surplus power available with generating stations is to be offered in the market.

States can also tie up with other states having surplus capacity via the PUSH P portal.

According to the IMD forecast, heat wave conditions in North-West India are expected to abate from June 20.

# PM Modi attends 'Ganga Aarti', offers prayers at Kashi Vishwanath temple



Varanasi | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday evening performed Ganga Pujan and attended the Ganga Aarti at the Dashashwamedh Ghat. A huge crowd was present

there to welcome the Prime Minister, for whom the Ghat had been well decorated and illuminated. This was the fifth time PM Modi attended the Ganga Aarti.

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were also present at the

event. Earlier, as the Prime Minister's convoy moved from one venue to another, a mini road show of sorts was held as people came out in large numbers to welcome the leader with chants of 'Modi Modi' and showering of flower petals.

# Ex-Andhra CM Jagan Mohan Reddy calls for using ballot papers

Amaravati | Agencies

Joining the ongoing debate over the possibility of hacking Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday called for using ballot papers.

"Just as justice should not only be served but should also appear to have been served, so should democracy not only prevail but must appear to be prevalent undoubtedly," he said in his post on 'X'.

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president mentioned that almost every developed country is using ballot papers.

"In electoral practices across the world in almost every advanced democracy, paper ballots are used, not EVMs. We too must move towards the same in upholding the true spirit of our democracy," he said.

Jagan Mohan Reddy, whose party suffered crushing defeat in the recent simultaneous Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, is another Indian politician to join the debate following tech billionaire Elon Musk's call to eliminate EVMs.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had Sunday termed the EVMs in India a "black box". "EVMs in India are a 'black box', and nobody is allowed to scrutinize them. Serious concerns are being raised about transparency in



our electoral process," the Congress MP wrote on X. "Democracy ends up becoming a sham and prone to fraud when institutions lack accountability," he added. Rahul Gandhi also cited news reports that the winning candidate in Mumbai North West Lok Sabha was using the phone which was connected to EVMs. Former chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, Sam Pitroda also said that the EVMs can be manipulated. "I have spent 60 years in the forefront of electronics, telecom, IT, software, complex systems and a lot more. I have studied EVM system carefully and believe that it is possible to manipulate. The best approach is the traditional paper ballot count as castes," he said in a post on 'X'.

# Himachal give one-time relaxation for recruitment of 1,226 constables

Shimla | Agencies

The Himachal Pradesh Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu, on Tuesday, gave approval to give one-time relaxation for one year in the upper age limit to candidates appearing for the recruitment of 1,226 posts of constable in the Police Department.

Now, the general candidates between the ages of 18 to 26 years, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Class, Gorkhas and distinguished sports persons from 18 to 28 years, and Home Guards between 20 and 29 years will be eligible for the recruitment.

The Cabinet also decided to create and fill more than 6,630 posts in various government departments, including 6,297 early childhood care and education tutors in the Education Department.

It was decided to create and fill 200 posts of medical officers in the Health and Family Welfare Department.



Besides, the Cabinet also gave its nod to fill 22 posts of Professor, Associate Professor, and Assistant Professor in various medical colleges, which include three posts of Professor and two posts of Associate Professors in Dr Yashwant Singh Parmar Government Medical College

in Nahan. It was also decided to create eight posts of Casualty Medical Officer in the Medical College in Tanda and five posts of Assistant Professor in the Medical College of Chamba, along with supporting staff.

It also gave consent to create 84 posts of various categories in the

Himachal Pradesh Administrative Tribunal.

A Cabinet Sub-Committee, under the chairmanship of Industries Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan with Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Anirudh Singh, Public Works Minister Vikramaditya Singh and Technical Education Minister Rajesh Dharmani as members, was also set up to suggest guidelines for streamlining the operations of homestays and boost tourism.

It was also agreed to form a Cabinet Sub-Committee to recommend resource mobilisation under the Chairmanship of Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri with Agriculture Minister Chander Kumar, Industries Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan, and Technical Education Minister Dharmani as its members.

The Cabinet also reviewed the situation of forest fires, drought, water scarcity, and monsoon advancement in the state.

# Fresh refugee influx in Mizoram from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts

Aizawl | Agencies

Around 30 more refugees comprising nine families took shelter in Mizoram from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of southeast Bangladesh during the last two days, officials said here on Tuesday.

Officials said that the new arrivals have been given refuge at Vathuampui Village in southern Mizoram's Lawngtlai District.

According to officials, with the latest influx, the total number of Bangladeshi refugees taking shelter in Mizoram has risen to 1,901, comprising 505 women and 810 children.

Majority of the Bangladeshi refugees are sheltered in 12 camps, while some have been living with their relatives and friends.

The majority of these refugees belong to the Kuki-Chin community, primarily the Bawm and Pang tribes, who fled due to conflict between the Bangladesh army and the Kuki-Chin National Army (KNA), fighting for greater autonomy for tribals in the CHT.

After the ethnic trouble started in CHT, the tribals started taking shelter in Mizoram from November 2022.

In addition to Bangladeshis, around 34,000 refugees including 10,905 women and 12,844 children from Myanmar are now sheltered in all 11 districts of the border state.



tribes of the border state.

The Myanmar refugees fled to Mizoram after the military coup in the neighbouring country on February 1, 2021, and the subsequent civil war. Mizoram is also providing shelter to around 9,000 Kuki-Zomi-Hmar tribals who were displaced after the ethnic strife began in the neighbouring Manipur in May last year.

# MERCEDES RUNS OVER COURIER AGENT NEAR PUNE GOLF CLUB

**Pune:** In yet another accident involving a luxury car, a Mercedes car fatally ran over a courier delivery agent near the Pune Golf Club area on Tuesday evening, police said.

The incident occurred around 3 p.m. when the courier agent, identified as Kedar Chavan, 41, was riding on his motorcycle near the Golf Club.

Local CCTV footage showed Chavan's motorbike losing balance and falling on the road, and before he could react, the Mercedes, coming from behind, ran over him, before halting.

The luxury car sported a sticker of the Serum Institute of India, 'Vaccine Manufacturer, Essential Services' on its windshield, but it was not clear who was at the wheel.

Chavan, who died on the spot, was a resident of Pune's Padmavati area. He worked for the EV Courier Services and was en route from Swargate to deliver a packet at the Pune Airport.

The Pune police, which rushed to the spot, seized the Mercedes, detained its driver, identified as Nandu A. Dhawale and sent him for a medical test as it launched an investigation into the accident.

Tuesday's accident comes exactly a month after a speeding Porsche driven by the drunk, minor son of a prominent realtor, crashed into two IT professionals killing them instantly in the nearby Kalyani Nagar area, on May 19, sparking a nationwide furore.

# Speeding truck mows down 5 women farmers in Solapur

Solapur | Agencies

At least five women farmers were mowed down while two others were critically injured after a speeding truck ran over them on the Karad-Pandharpur highway in Solapur, the police said on Tuesday.

The tragedy occurred at around 4.15 p.m. when the seven women farm workers were returning to their homes in Phatfal village in the Sangola area after completing their day's work, Inspector Bhimrao Khandale told reporter from the accident spot.

As the women waited on the roadside for a state transport bus to Phatfal, a truck loaded with coal suddenly came speeding on the highway and ran over them near Bandgarwadi village before crashing to a halt some distance away.



On hearing the screams, other farmers and villagers rushed to the spot and informed the Sangola police.

They also got hold of the truck driver and handed him over to the police, who arranged for an ambulance to shift the injured women to a hospital in Pandharpur.

Khandale said that a huge crowd of angry villagers had gathered at the accident spot, demanding stringent action

against the truck driver. "We have shifted the injured to the Pandharpur hospital, and removed the bodies from the spot which is being cleared for traffic movement," said Khandale.

As per preliminary information, the truck driver reportedly lost control while negotiating a bend on the road and rammed into the women waiting for a bus on the roadside.

# K'taka HC grants bail to Bhavani Revanna in kidnap case

Bengaluru | Agencies

Karnataka High Court on Tuesday granted anticipatory bail to Bhavani Revanna, mother of Prajwal Revanna, the arrested JD(S) ex-MP and prime accused in the sex video scandal.

Bhavani Revanna had filed an anticipatory bail petition in a kidnap case linked to the sex video scandal.

The bench headed by Justice Krishna S. Dixit passed the order and also restricted her entry into the Mysuru and Hassan districts.

The victim in the kidnap case hails from the Mysuru district and Hassan is the native district of Bhavani Revanna.



The bench stated that Bhavani Revanna had answered 85 questions asked by the police and, hence, the argument of Bhavani Revanna's non-cooperation to the probe can't be accepted.

She need not give the answers that the police want from her, the bench stated. Bhavani Revanna is

presently appearing before the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in connection with the kidnap case of a maid, who allegedly suffered sexual assault at the hands of Prajwal Revanna and her husband JD(S) MLA H.D. Revanna. MLA Revanna was jailed in connection with the case and is out on conditional bail.

# Rental price growth slows down 50 pc in top cities as housing supply surges: Report

Mumbai | Agencies

A surge in housing supply resulted in a nearly 50 per cent drop in rental price growth in top cities in the second quarter this year (to date) -- registering a 2-4 per cent quarterly rise which is down from 4-9 per cent in the first quarter this year, a report showed on Tuesday.

With more new supply entering the markets, a highly speculative residential rental spike is coming to a halt, according to the latest Anarock data.

The top seven cities are set to deliver nearly 5.31 lakh new units in 2024 while in 2023, these cities saw about 4.35 lakh units being delivered.

This denotes a 22 per cent annual supply increase this year if delivery schedules remain on track.

"In India, the second quarter of most years typically sees rents increase more than in other quarters due to the commencement of the new academic year and the employment of new staff," said



Santhosh Kumar, Vice Chairman, Anarock Group. This year, declining rental value growth coincides with substantial new housing supply entering these markets, he added.

Average rents for a standard 1,000 sq feet 2-BHK

accommodation in Bengaluru's Whitefield rose by 4 per cent in Q2 -- from Rs 32,500 a month in Q1 to Rs 35,000 a month in Q2 (to date).

In Q1 2024, the quarterly jump against Q4 2023 was doubled at 8 per cent for the same flat in Bengaluru.

In Noida Sector 150, the average rent rose by a mere 4 per cent -- from about Rs 24,000 per month in Q1 to approximately Rs 25,000 a month in the current quarter. The quarterly hike stood at 9 per cent in Q1 against Q4 2023.

Sohna Road in Gurugram and Dwarka in Delhi saw their respective quarterly rents increase by 3 per cent and 2 per cent in Q2 2024; in Q1 2024, the hikes stood at 4 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively, the report showed.

Mumbai Metropolitan Region's (MMR) key markets Chembur and Mulund saw average rents rise by just 2 per cent against the preceding quarter (Q1 2024). In Q1 2024, they rose by over 4 per cent against Q4 2023.



# Chhatrapati scion leads farmers' march against Nagpur-Goa 'Shaktipeeth Expressway'

Team Absolute | Kolhapur

Congress MP Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj here on Tuesday led a massive farmers' protest march, organised by all political parties, to the district collectorate to voice strong opposition to the proposed Nagpur-Goa Shaktipeeth Expressway.

The procession included Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs and state legislators from the ruling MahaYuti and opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance, besides independent farmers' leaders who marched from Dasara Chowk to the collector's office.

Thousands of affected farmers joined the protest from the 12 districts through which the planned Rs 86,500 crore, 802 km long inter-state (Maharashtra-Goa) expressway would slice through, in what is billed as Deputy Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis' pet project.

Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj said: "Wherever the farmers are, I shall be with them."

He said he would raise their concerns with the government on the expressway.



"The farmers are strongly opposed to this project. We support them fully. We shall meet the collector and discuss the issue," he told mediapersons in the march.

Earlier, ruling Bharatiya Janata Party MP Ashok Chavan also said that if the farmers are not in favour of the expressway, then it should not come up by sacrificing their agricultural lands. The 802-km long Shaktipeeth

Expressway -- longer than the 701-km long Mumbai-Nagpur Samruddhi Expressway -- would cut through huge tracts of fertile agricultural lands in Hingoli, Nanded, Parbhani, Osmanabad and Beed districts.

It would link major pilgrimage centres and shrines en route with an expected boost to religious tourism and local development, though the farming community is apprehensive.

The expressway will connect three Shaktipeethas -- Mahalaxmi, Tuljabhavani and Patradevi, two Jyotirlingas at Aundha-Nagnath and Parli-Vajinath, major temples at Mahur, Tuljapur, Pandharpur, and other major Hindu shrines en route.

Setting in motion the project, the state and district authorities have initiated the process of land acquisition for the mega-project recently, the aggrieved farmers told mediapersons.

When completed in the next four to five years, the proposed Shaktipeeth Expressway will zip through 12 districts of Maharashtra and one in Goa and comprise 26 interchanges, 30 tunnels, 48 bridges plus eight railway crossings.

# Palghar horror: Man clobbers woman with wrench on street, people click videos

Team Absolute | Palghar

In a horrific incident, a man was seen badgering a woman with a wrench on a major road in Vasai town as people watched and clicked videos, police said here on Tuesday. The broad daylight killing on a busy thoroughfare in Gauraipada took place this morning after which the man sat beside the victim's bloodied body, incessantly mumbling something.

On getting information, a team from Waliv Police Station rushed to the spot, took the man into custody, and shifted the woman's body to a nearby hospital.

The alleged killer was identified as Rohit Yadav, 29, and the deceased was Aarti Jadhav, 22, according to the police.

As per a preliminary probe, the couple, residing in adjoining Nalasopara town, was in a relationship for over two years, but Rohit suddenly suspected that she may be two-timing him.

This resulted in a huge quarrel between them and Rohit quietly nursed a grudge against her.

This morning (June 18), she left her home to work in a private company in Vasai where the enraged Rohit accosted her at Gauraipada and demanded an explanation for her wayward behaviour.

As she walked away, Rohit badgered her



on the head, repeatedly with an iron wrench he was carrying and knocked her down on the road, in a pool of blood.

He moved a couple of steps, and then returned to check if she was alive, and again hit her with full force in the neck till she breathed her last there.

After that, he sat beside her on the road, muttering things like: "Kyun kiya mere saath aisa (why did you do this to me)".

Sporting a pink top and blue leggings, Aarti had completed her higher secondary education (Class 12) and recently taken up a job.

Though one passerby attempted to intervene, Rohit roughly pushed him away, but shockingly, other pedestrians and shopkeepers merely kept watching the horror on the road, clicked videos and uploaded them on social media, with none daring to come forward and stop the man or help the woman.

# Fast-track pending Palghar airport proposal, says Aditya Thackeray to Centre

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray on Tuesday urged the new NDA government at the Centre to prioritise the long-pending proposal for an airport in the tribal district of Palghar, and renaming of the airports in Navi Mumbai and Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar.

In a letter to the Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, Thackeray said that the proposals were sent nearly five years ago by the Maha Vikas Aghadi government which was in power from November 2019 - June 2022.

"Sir, I write to you, seeking your intervention on an issue that is truly simple, yet due to the malice of the BJP towards Maharashtra, has been pending for the past 4 years. Two airports were renamed by the MVA government during its term, and the proposals were



sent to the Union government thereafter," said Thackeray Jr. to Minister Naidu, of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

Aditya Thackeray has expressed hope that with the inclusion of N. Chandrababu Naidu's TDP into the NDA, people are looking at inclusive voices in governance and believe that democracy will

be protected.

The Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar (formerly, Aurangabad) was renamed as 'Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Airport, and the airport coming up in Navi Mumbai was named the 'D.B. Patil International Airport', said the former state minister.

"Repeated requests were

made to implement the same, but the earlier BJP government, which has been anti-Maharashtra, did not pay heed to the requests made by the MVA government and the citizens of Maharashtra," claimed Thackeray Jr.

Thackeray pointed out that the government had also begun work for an airport in the Palghar district, that could be a third airport for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, thereby supporting the region and west coast of India, both in passenger and cargo traffic.

"This proposal too, despite repeated requests, was ignored by the BJP... You representing a strong regional force and understanding sentiments and emotions of states, would hopefully take up our requests and give honour and respect to the state of Maharashtra," he said in the letter.

# Nana Patole's feet-washing act by party worker caught on camera, BJP tears into Congress

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole has found himself in the firing line after a video of his feet-washing act by a party worker landed on social media, evoking strong criticism from netizens.

In the viral video, the Maha Congress president can be seen getting his mud-stained feet and leg washed by a party worker. He is also not seen showing any reluctance while the latter bows down before him to wash his feet with water.

The incident reportedly happened in Wadgaon of Akola district on Monday, where he went to attend his birthday celebration, organised by a party worker. While returning from the event, his feet got soiled with mud. While the party worker washed his feet with water, it was recorded on camera by someone in the crowd. The disgraceful and distasteful conduct by the senior Congress leader has also left the party red-faced and is inviting diatribes from the BJP.

The BJP launched a scathing attack on the Congress party and its Maharashtra unit chief for brazen abuse of power and also accused it of promoting a 'feudal



mindset'. BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawala, taking to X handle wrote, "Congress has a nawabi feudal shehzada mindset. They treat the public and workers like ghulam and themselves as kings and queens."

He also pointed out that such a disgraceful act was happening when the party was in Opposition and added one can imagine what will happen when they are in power.

"Nana Patole and Congress must apologise for insulting the public," he demanded.

Under fire Nana Patole, when confronted by the newsmen for 'forcing workers into slavery', said that he comes from a farming community and he harbours no such intentions.

"Thank you for giving publicity," he said in taunting remarks while accusing the BJP of making a mountain out of molehill over the controversy.

# Drunk Engineering student runs over 7 on footpath, 2 dead

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Two women were crushed to death on Monday after a car allegedly driven by a drunk engineering student in Dighori area of Nagpur ploughed into a group of people sleeping on a footpath, a police official said.

Seven persons, including four children, were injured in the accident that took place at 12:40 am, the Wathoda police station official added.

"The victims are part of a family that sells toys and lives on the footpath. The Hyundai Verna driver Bhushan Lanjewar, along with five other occupants, all of whom were drunk, fled the scene. Lanjewar was held later on the basis of CCTV footage," the official said.

The official identified the dead as Kantibai

Gajod Bagdiya (42) and Sitaram Babul Bagdiya (30), while the injured include Kavita Sitaram Bagdiya (28), Balku Sitaram Bagdiya (8), Hasina Sitaram Bagdiya (3), Sakina Sitaram Bagdiya (2), Hanuman Khajod Bagdiya (35) and Vikram Bhusha Hanuman Bagdiya (10).

"The injured have been admitted in Government Medical College & Hospital. As per Rajendra Babul Bagdiya (34), who escaped unharmed, the family had come to Nagpur eight months ago and were asleep on the footpath after dinner. He has told police the vehicle first hit them and inflicted more injuries when the driver reversed it," the official added.

Lanjewar has been charged under sections of the Indian Penal Code and Motor Vehicles Act, the Wathoda police station official said.

# Mumbai film-maker Vinod Ganatra conferred Nelson Mandela Lifetime Achievement Award

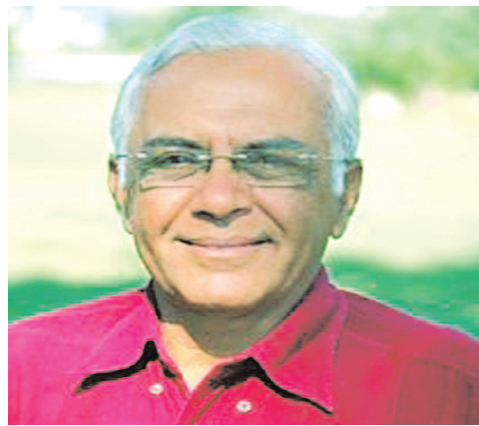
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Globally-acclaimed film-maker Vinod Ganatra has become the first Indian to be conferred the prestigious 'Nelson Mandela Lifetime Achievement Award' of South Africa for his contribution to films, an official said here on Tuesday.

Ganatra, a well-known film-maker and editor from Gujarat, now based in Mumbai, was honoured with the coveted award at the ongoing 7th Nelson Mandela Children's Film Festival, for his immense contributions to the world of cinema for kids. Ganatra has already bagged 36 national and international awards, including the 'Janakinath Gaur Award' from Doordarshan for his children's programme, 'Baingan Raja'.

He became the only Indian film-maker to receive the 'Liv Ullmann Peace Prize', in Chicago, for his Gujarati film, 'Harun-Arun'.

Ganatra has been invited to serve on the jury of over a 100 national, regional and international film



festivals world over in the past three decades.

He has edited/directed more than 400 documentaries and news reels, produced 25 multilingual television programmes for children and youth.

Acting in the children's film movement, he was the Founder-Director of the 'Ahmedabad International Children Film Festival' and Jury of Culture Cinema Film Festival (C2F2) and KidzCINEMA an international children's film festival, both in Mumbai.

Ganatra catapulted to world fame and picked up a string of awards for his debut, feature 'Heda-Hoda (Blind Camel)', followed by 'Lukka-Chhuppi (Hidden-Seek)', which created a record for being the first children's film entirely shot at the highest altitude in Ladakh.

He followed it up with another Gujarati film, 'Harun-Arun' themed on the India-Pakistan border in Gujarat which premiered at the 26th Chicago International Children's Film Festival.

For 12 consecutive years, Ganatra has served on the Board of the UNESCO's 1995-founded International Centre of Films for Children Kamp; Young People, and is an honorary member there at present.

# Marathas Will Seek Quota In Other Backward Classes Category: Activist

Team Absolute | Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar

Activist Manoj Jarange on Tuesday claimed the agitation by Other Backward Classes activists for protecting their quota was "vindictive" and asserted Marathas would seek reservation under the OBC category.

Speaking to reporters here, Jarange also claimed the OBC agitation will help the Maratha community members to forget their differences and unite for their reservation demand. Activists Laxman Hake and Navnath Waghmare have been sitting on a hunger strike at Wadigodri village in Jalna district since June 13, seeking an assurance from the government that the OBC quota will not be affected in view of the Maratha reservation demand. In February this year, the Maharashtra legislature unanimously passed a bill providing 10 per cent reservation for the Marathas in education and government jobs under a separate category Jarange has been demanding implementation of the draft notifica-



tion that recognises Kunbis as "sage soyare" (blood relatives) of Maratha community members and a law to identify Kunbis as Marathas. Kunbi, an agrarian group, falls under the OBC category, and Jarange has been demanding that Kunbi certificates be issued to all Marathas, thus making them eligible for quota benefits. On June 13, Jarange suspended his indefinite fast over the Maratha quota and set a deadline of one month before the Maharashtra government to accept the community's demands. Speaking to reporters at a private hospital in Chhatrapati

Sambhajnagar where he is undergoing treatment, Jarange on Tuesday said, "The ongoing agitation (of OBCs) is vindictive. We will not intensify our agitation or make it bigger because of them, but we will take reservation from the OBC category and that too from the current quota of 50 per cent." He said the OBC activists were agitating even as they have reservation. "Then how much should we fight when we don't have any? This agitation (of OBCs) will help the people of Maratha community to forget their differences and unite for quota," he said. "We have given one month (to the government) to fulfil our demands and there is no scope for any difference between the OBC and Maratha communities," Jarange said. Hake and Waghmare have said they are not against the reservation for Marathas, but it should not disturb the OBC quota. The OBC activists have been demanding scrapping of the government's draft notification that recognises Kunbis as "sage soyare" (blood relatives) of Maratha community members.

# Woman Reverses Car Off Cliff, Falls 300 Feet, Dies

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A woman died after she reversed her car off a cliff and fell 300 feet into a gorge in Maharashtra. The incident was captured on camera by the woman's friend who was making a video of her learning how to drive.

In the video, 23-year-old Shweta Deepak Surwase, is seen in the driver's seat as her friend Suraj Sanjay Mule, 25, records a video of her. The two friends had travelled from Aurangabad to Sulibhanjan Hills on Monday afternoon.

Around 2 pm, Surwase got into the car and began slowly reversing it, the video shows. The car is still 50 metres away from the cliff. However, as she continues backing up, the car's speed increases and her friend warns her to slow down. "Clutch, clutch, clutch", he shouts as the car's engine revs. He runs to stop her but the car falls into the gorge, killing Surwase.



According to witnesses, the car rolled down the 300-foot high cliff and fell into a gorge. Visuals showed the mangled remains of the vehicle in the gorge. The friends were visiting the

Dattatreya temple in Sulibhanjan. During the rainy season, the Sulibhanjan hills are thronged by tourists who arrive in large numbers to enjoy the picturesque scenery.



EDITOR'S SPECS

## Eating junk food can fuel anxiety

**E**ating junk food like a samosa or burger when feeling stressed out can actually elevate anxiety levels, researchers said on Monday. When under stress, people tend to turn to high-calorie food for solace. The study by researchers at University of Colorado at Boulder found that in animals, a high-fat diet disrupts resident gut bacteria, alters behaviour and influences brain chemicals in ways that increase anxiety. Lead author Christopher Lowry, a professor of integrative physiology at CU Boulder, said that to think that just a high-fat diet could alter expression of these genes in the brain is extraordinary. "The high-fat group essentially had the molecular signature of a high anxiety state in their brain," Lowry added in the study published in the journal *Biological Research*. Throughout the study, the researchers assessed the animals' microbiome, or gut bacteria. When compared to the control group, the group eating a high-fat diet gained weight. But the animals also showed significantly less diversity of gut bacteria. The high-fat diet group also showed higher expression of three genes involved in production and signaling of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which is associated with stress and anxiety. While serotonin is often called a "feel-good brain chemical," certain subsets of serotonin neurons can, when activated, prompt anxiety-like responses in animals. Lowry suspects that an unhealthy microbiome compromises the gut lining, enabling bacteria to slip into the body's circulation and communicate with the brain via the vagus nerve, a pathway from the gastrointestinal tract to the brain. Not all fats are bad, and healthy fats like those found in fish, olive oil, nuts and seeds can be anti-inflammatory and good for the brain, said researchers.

# NEET MESS: A REMINDER THAT LETHARGY CAN BE COSTLY

Meeta Sengupta

**T**he National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) this year has caused so much chaos and despair that the Supreme Court and the Union Minister have both had to step in. The situation is complex, and so many things seem to have gone wrong that a resolution for a few students may affect thousands of others. Mistakes happen, but accusations of malpractice are not new for India's examination systems. The National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts NEET and other examinations, certainly has reasons to take a deeper look at its systems and processes.

While many risks cannot be anticipated in mass examinations, when things go wrong - even if accidentally - the accountability lies with the testing authorities. It is their job to deliver assessments that are fair, valid, reliable and timely. That is the golden rule of all assessments.

The NTA itself is a young organisation, but it has no dearth of excellent advice. It has venerable advisors and leaders. However, examination operations are a tough arena, and examination operations at scale are even more challenging. Delivering high-quality examination and assessment processes requires at least one of two things: either deep experience that comes from having done it again and again for so many years that all flaws have been refined over time, or a rigorous analytical exercise to anticipate even the most unlikely of risks that can derail not just the examination but also the lives of an entire group of students.

This cannot be just theoretical. The agency must assure itself and its governing authority of flawless and fair examinations by showing evidence of mock tests, surprise checks, managing multiple abilities, dealing with mistakes at centres, and, of course, multiple and almost obsessive scenario-building and testing. Scale-testing is not just about conducting smooth examinations, but also about ensuring that the processes and systems are refined to extremely high quality standards. The NTA now will certainly be telling itself to adopt a quality-first approach, such as, say, Six Sigma methods, in addition to its current systems. Given the situation currently, the agency cannot deny that it has much ground to cover.

In addition to building more practice exercises and a quality focus, there are a few other things that the NTA must reflect upon. The first of these is a set of principles that can guide quick, on-site resolution of problems. If a test paper has started 10 minutes late, the solution must be along the same lines: minutes for minutes. Unless there's a security breach, there is no reason to resolve a problem measured in minutes with grace marks. Similarly, multiple scenarios must be generated and assessed with the help of the invigilation community to develop even more effective guidelines for testing centres.

The challenge of centralisation must be met head-on, where the decisions that are to be made at a testing centre are clear, as are the actions for which the centre head will be held accountable. A delay at a centre cannot be delegated upwards, nor can a mix-up of papers. Other problems, such as the accusation of leaks, are rightly being raised at the most senior levels.

One must recognise that the NTA and its predecessor organisations have wide experience in delivering reliable examinations. At the same time, one must also recognise that though such operational excellence is hard-won, it's not static. It is a constant and dynamic uphill struggle. One cannot rest thinking that a problem or its resolution is final. High-stakes



operations need to be improved constantly, or authorities will find themselves facing crises in arenas they thought they had under control.

The NTA brought with it great hopes of next-generation assessments, and with that, a much higher reliance on technology. While progress is being made, there are many other options that technology can enable. One example is individually generated question papers for a fully online centre. Once a question bank is prepared, then question papers can be algorithmically generated for individual students where even if a question is common across papers, it is possibly a different question number. These papers will thus test the same thing, even though they are not identical. Another, even simpler way would include changing the variables in a problem, say, where one student gets a question about 50 widgets, and another works with 30. This way, the methods are the same, but the answers are not - and cheating is, thus, pointless. This also eliminates the possibility of paper leaks.

Every system, especially when new, will have its own challenges and problems. But this is where the agency must learn from its global partners and its own experience to build new checks and balances.

Technology plays another major role in building transparency, and that comes via data analytics. There is already a great deal of data processing involved in exam assessments. A few simple metrics can help weed out problems if made transparent on a timely basis. For example, one of the goals of the NTA is to provide accessible centres. A metric measuring the distance a candidate travelled would provide much-needed transparency, and any centre that has students travelling exceptional distances would stand out as an outlier. Such

transparency itself would flag outliers, who would certainly not want to attract attention if their intent is mala fide. Data analytics that asks smart questions can thus act as a shield for the reputation of the agency and protection for the students.

Some other technology solutions may include centralised proctoring on camera in examination rooms across the country, with algorithms marking out unusual patterns to a team of supervisors. While a lot of such mechanisms already exist, adding a layer of verification, such as visibility, can help further. The discussions should span the range of ethics to effectiveness and must be done at the seniormost levels of the assessment community.

Finally, and possibly most fundamentally, building much more capacity in assessments is important. This includes various areas, such as assessment design, scaled examinations, examination operations, testing for skills versus testing for knowledge, standardisation practices using advanced statistics, and much more. India has very few specialists in these areas currently, even though they constitute explicitly stated aims of the NTA.

Even the best of systems recognise and work for continuous improvement to remain the best. However tedious or stressful, high-quality testing is paramount to sustain both the reputation of the system and the futures of lakhs of students.

(Meeta Sengupta is a board member, advisor and mentor on leadership, governance and futures for education and skills. The views expressed are personal.)

## international

## Nikhil Gupta produced in US court, pleads not guilty in 'murder plot'

Arul Louis | New York

**N**ikhil Gupta, who has been accused of being involved in a 'murder-for-hire' plot against a Khalistani separatist, has told a federal court here that he is not guilty.

Appearing before Magistrate Judge James Cott on Monday, he made the "not guilty" plea through his lawyer Jeffrey Chabrowe.

This was his first appearance before a US court after he was extradited on Friday from the Czech Republic.

Outside the courtroom, Chabrowe told reporters that the case is a "complicated matter for India and the US" and there should be "no rush to judgment".

"We will pursue his defence rigorously," he said.

He added that information will come out that will call into question the prosecution version.

Assistant Federal Prosecutor Ashley Nichols told the court that Gupta is



charged in the murder-for-hire plot.

Cott ordered to keep him in custody till the next court date on June 28, when a conference on the case is scheduled.

Chabrowe did not ask for bail while reserving the right to ask for it later.

According to the indictment -- the chargesheet -- Gupta, who also uses the name "Nick", is accused of participating in a plot 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.

Designated as a terrorist by the Indian government, Pannun leads the organisation called Sikhs for Justice which is conducting what it calls a "referendum" on Khalistan among Sikhs.

Gupta, a slightly-built 52-year-old, entered the courtroom dressed in black pants and a sweater and sat beside his lawyer at the defence table.

He and his lawyer talked before the proceedings began, at one point both of them laughed during their conversation.

When the hearing was over, the marshals escorting him made him take off the sweater and give it to his lawyer because he was not allowed to have it.

He was left with the T-shirt he wore underneath.



## IDF received warnings before October 7: Israeli public broadcaster

Tel Aviv | Agencies

**I**sraeli military intelligence sounded clear warnings regarding a pending attack more than two weeks before Hamas launched its attack from the Gaza Strip on October 7 last year, according to Kan, the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation.

Plans to attack military bases and settlements and to take up to 250 hostages, including women and children, were set out in a document distributed within the Gaza Division of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on September 19, the Kan report said.

The report came from the highly regarded Unit 8200, an IDF unit responsible for collecting intelli-

gence, but had been ignored by senior officers. The worst-case scenario being considered was that a few dozen terrorists could enter Israel at three points.

A Kan military correspondent said, "The security system at the time was working towards pacification of the Gaza Strip, by means of improving living conditions for the civilian population, work permits for Palestinians and the lifting of restrictions on goods."

The IDF had relied on the border defences reaching deep into the ground, but everything had collapsed on October 7, the correspondent reported. Senior officers in the Gaza Division had dismissed the warnings.

## Eight dead in hospital fire in Iran



Tehran | Agencies

**E**ight people have died in a fire at a hospital in Iran, according to media reports.

The fire broke out in a hospital in the city of Rasht near the Caspian Sea in the north of the country, the state news agency IRNA reported on Tuesday.

According to initial findings, the dead were patients in an intensive care unit. Dozens of fire-fighters were deployed, as the head of the emergency services in the city said in an interview with state television.

The cause of the fire is being investigated. Around 140 patients had been rescued, the report said. There was concern that there could be more victims.

## 11 dead, over 60 missing in shipwrecks off Italian coast

Rome | Agencies

**T**wo shipwrecks occurred on Monday off the Italian coasts, killing at least 11 migrants, while another 66 remain missing, the Italian authorities said.

A search and rescue operation by Italy's coast guard is ongoing in the Mediterranean as of late on Monday, hours after two migrant boats encountered problems near the Italian coasts, Xinhua news agency reported.

A merchant ship in the area conducted the initial rescue after launching an SOS call as it discovered a wooden sailboat in distress some 120 miles (193 km) off the coast of Calabria in southern Italy.

The merchant ship rescued 12 people and assisted them until an Italian coast guard vessel arrived. One woman died shortly after dis-



embarkation due to severe medical conditions, according to the Coast Guard.

"Searches for possible survivors of the shipwreck of the sailing boat continue," the Coast Guard said in a statement.

The Coast Guard specified that two Italian patrol boats and an ATR42 aircraft were currently involved in the search, and another patrol ship with medical teams on board would soon join them in the area. As of Monday evening, no more survivors have been found.

The 66 people who are

rescue ship with the German aid group Resqship found 10 migrants dead and managed to save 51 others on board a boat in distress off the waters of Malta, not far from Lampedusa, Italy's southern-most island.

The survivors were mainly from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, and Syria, according to Rai News 24. The ship was ordered by the Italian Interior Ministry to dock in Lampedusa, where survivors would receive assistance.

Migrants travelling by boat through the central Mediterranean Sea face dangerous conditions and high mortality rates due to weather conditions and poor-quality vessels. Nearly one thousand people have died or disappeared crossing the Mediterranean so far this year, and 3,155 in 2023, according to the United Nations' International Organization for Migration.

feared dead include 26 minors, according to local media citing sources among medical staff.

According to the survivors' statement, the sailing boat departed from Turkey last week, carrying migrants and refugee seekers from Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Afghanistan.

Italian prosecutors have launched an investigation into the shipwreck, the latest in a long string of deadly incidents involving economic migrants and refugees attempting to reach Europe via the Mediterranean.

In an earlier incident, a

## Putin set to arrive in North Korea in rare trip amid deepening concerns about military cooperation

Seoul | Agencies

**R**ussian President Vladimir Putin was set to make his first visit to North Korea in 24 years on Tuesday for talks with leader Kim Jong-un in a highly symbolic trip showing off their ever-tightening relations amid deepening concerns about military cooperation.

Putin will "pay a state visit" to North Korea for a two-day trip at the invitation of the North's leader, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported in a one-sentence dispatch Monday. The Kremlin made a similar announcement.

It will mark Putin's first trip to North Korea since July 2000, when he met with former North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, the late father of the current leader. It also comes nine months after Kim travelled to Russia's Far East in September last year for a summit with Putin, reports Yonhap news agency.

Since then, the two nations have been



bolstering military ties and expanding the scope of cooperation in various fields, with the North supplying Russia with ammunition for its war in Ukraine in exchange for aid and suspected technological assistance for its space programme.

Putin will arrive in Pyongyang on Tuesday evening and sign "important" documents with the North's leader Wednesday, Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov was quoted as telling reporters by Russia's news agency TASS.

"Several documents will be signed ... and this can be said about a comprehensive strategic partnership treaty," Ushakov said, adding that if it is signed, it would "outline prospects for further cooperation" between the two nations. Later Tuesday, Russia's TASS news agency reported that Putin ordered the signing of a comprehensive strategic partnership treaty with North Korea. It did not provide further details.

Experts said Putin's trip will likely pave the way for deeper military cooperation between the two nations beyond arms transactions at a time when North Korea and Russia are voicing their solidarity against the US.

Pyongyang is accused of providing weapons and munitions to Russia for use in Moscow's war in Ukraine in return for Russia's suspected technical assistance in the development of North Korea's spy satellite program and economic assistance.



## OPERATION OF 369 FULLY EQUIPPED CM RISE SCHOOLS STARTED IN THE STATE - CM DR. YADAV

▶ ALL ESSENTIAL FACILITIES WILL BE PROVIDED TO GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS. CM DR. MOHAN YADAV LAUNCHES 'SCHOOL CHALEN HUM ABHIYAN 2024'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has said that the state government has started operating 369 CM Rise schools with full facilities in the state. World-class buildings, smart classes, digital teaching, free vehicle facility, exposure visits as well as other modern resources will be provided to the students in these schools. There will be no shortage of any kind in other schools also. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is ensuring that excellent education is provided in 416 schools of the state under the PM Shri Scheme. These facilities will be extended to other schools also. The students of the state will move forward on the path of achieving high goals in their lives by taking inspiration from great men. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav was speaking at the



inauguration of the School Chale Hum Abhiyan 2024 in the state.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav lit the lamp and inaugurated the state-level program organized at Government Subhash Higher Secondary School of Excellence. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav also viewed the exhibition of paintings made by the students. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav welcomed the newly admitted students to the school by applying tilak and gifting them books. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav honoured the students of government schools who will take admission to IIT in JEE Advanced

in the year 2024 under the Super-100 scheme, Pawan Rai of village Salichauka district Narsinghpur, Sheetal Singh of village Raksahaklan district Rewa, Sahil Pal of village Atrar in Satna district and Raviraj Vishwakarma of Bhopal.

The state will be at the forefront of implementing the provisions of the National Education Policy even at the school education level

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that all necessary facilities will be provided to government schools. Along with providing education, these schools

are also important centers to inspire and provide experience to live a successful life. Under the leadership and guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, all the systems of the country are improving. The positive impact of the implementation of the National Education Policy implemented in this sequence will be reflected in our present generation. Madhya Pradesh has been a leader in the country in implementing the National Education Policy in higher education. Madhya Pradesh will remain ahead in the country by implementing the provisions of the National Education Policy in the field of school education on priority. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that along with the operation of the school, it is necessary to think about the environment of the school and to improve it. Schools should provide such an environment and guidance to students, so that they can move towards achieving their goals with moral values while acquiring the best knowledge and education even in difficult circumstances. Citing the example of Lord Shri Krishna, he said that Shri Krishna acquired proficiency in various sciences and arts based on his talent and ability in Gurukul and also presented the best example of friendship to the world.

## Now everyone's eyes are on Shivraj's assembly constituency Budhni

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After the resignation of former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan from Budhni Assembly seat, now everyone's eyes are on the possible candidate and the upcoming by-election.

In the recently held Lok Sabha elections in the state, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan has been elected from Vidisha parliamentary constituency. He was also elected as MLA from Budhni in the 2023 assembly elections. Any person can be a member of only one house. Therefore, he has resigned from the membership of the Assembly.

It has been decided to hold by-elections after the resignation of the Union Minister. The question is, who does BJP make its candidate from here in the by-elections? Many leaders are staking their claim on this seat. Budhni assembly constituency comes under Vidisha parliamentary constituency and both are considered strongholds of BJP.

Earlier, Kamlesh Shah, who was the MLA from Amarwada assembly constituency of Chhindwara in the state, had left Congress and joined BJP. Now voting is to be held there also on July 10. BJP has once again made Kamlesh Shah its candidate, while Gondwana Republic Party has also declared its candidate. Congress has not yet declared its candidate.

BJP has released the list of 35 star campaigners for the campaign of Amarwada assembly constituency. Congress has



appointed two in-charges for Amarwada. Apart from this, two in-charges have also been appointed for Budhni.

Overall, after the Lok Sabha elections, the round of by-elections is starting in the state. While the election schedule has been declared in Amarwada, the election schedule for Budhni assembly constituency may also be declared in the coming days. Apart from this, Congress MLAs from Vijaypur and Bina have taken membership of BJP. At present he has not resigned from the membership of the Assembly. After his resignation, elections are certain to be held there also.

## BJP candidate Kamlesh Shah filed nomination from Amarwada.

Team Absolute | Chhindwara

BJP candidate Kamlesh Shah filed nomination papers for the by-election in Amarwada assembly constituency of Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh. Many BJP leaders including Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and State President Vishnu Dutt Sharma were present on this occasion.

Voting is to be held in Amarwada assembly constituency of Chhindwara on July 10. BJP has made Kamlesh Shah its candidate from here. BJP candidate's nomination papers were filed by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and party's state president Vishnudutt Sharma. Chhindwara MP Vivek Bunty Sahu and Monica Shah Batty were also present on this occasion.

While discussing with reporters, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said that BJP has registered a big victory in the Lok Sabha elections in Chhindwara. Now BJP will register victory in the by-election of Amarwada Assembly also. State President Vishnu Dutt Sharma said that just as Lord Indra is raining rain, in the same way the people of Amarwada will also rain votes on BJP. Chhindwara is the bastion of beneficiaries of Prime Minister Modi's pub-



lic welfare schemes. Madhya Pradesh is the bastion of beneficiaries of government schemes. This is the reason why history has been made in Chhindwara in the Lok Sabha elections, will register a historic victory in Amarwada Assembly also.

Let us tell you that during the Lok Sabha elections, Kamlesh Shah, who was the Congress MLA from Amarwada, had joined the BJP. After that he also resigned from the membership of the Assembly. Now by-elections are going to be held in this area. Gondwana Republic Party has announced its candidate. At the same time, Congress has not been able to decide its candidate yet.

## Scam worth crores in NEPA Mill

▶ CONTRACTOR'S SON MADE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER, 27 LAKHS SPENT ON VIGILANCE OFFICER'S BUNGALOW

Team Absolute | Indore

Due to nepotism, corruption worth crores of rupees has taken place in Neapanagar Paper Mill of Burhanpur. Now the situation is such that the company management does not even have the funds to distribute salaries. Regarding the matter, the union has demanded from the government to investigate the scam from central agencies.

In fact, Asia's first paper mill in Neapanagar, located near Burhanpur, was established as a private industry on 25 January 1947 as Nepa Limited. The country's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru dedicated it to the country on 26 April 1956. This facto-



ry once had the capacity to produce 88,000 tonnes of paper. Currently, this company has reached a loss of more than Rs 100 crore. The company's officials sacrificed it for corruption worth crores of rupees. Today the conditions of the mill are such that the waste material is purchased at higher prices and then the paper made is sold in the market at lower prices. A similar case happened with a newspaper, in which a big order was given to NEPA Limited. Some officials colluded and sold the paper to other institutions at lower prices. There was a lot of corruption in this. There has been major corruption in selling parts (brass and copper) of the company's old machines. The

union demanded an investigation by the central agency to investigate corruption. Till now no agency has investigated the scam. Despite the scam worth crores of rupees, this company is somehow running. Once more than 7000 workers used to work in the company, today there are 400 workers who do not have funds to pay salaries.

Contractor's son Vikas Reddy was made the finance officer in the company. Vacancy was issued as per order. Nepotism is prevalent in recruitment. If investigation is done, many people will be found who are getting huge salaries sitting at home without even going to the company. There is no money for the workers, while the administrative officers are getting their salaries on time. Some people of the company told Lalluram.com that if the files of Vikas Reddy of the Finance Department are investigated, then big corruption can be exposed. Media personnel are not allowed to shoot inside the factory. The company has made

such strict rules that if someone makes a video from inside and releases it, then action is taken against him.

In fact, the Central Government has sent Vineet Kumar to the Vigilance Department of the company as Chief Vigilance Officer. Whose salary of Rs 2 lakh per month is paid on time. Similarly, Rs 27 lakh has been spent so far on the bungalow. The company faces shortage of funds to pay salaries to the workers.

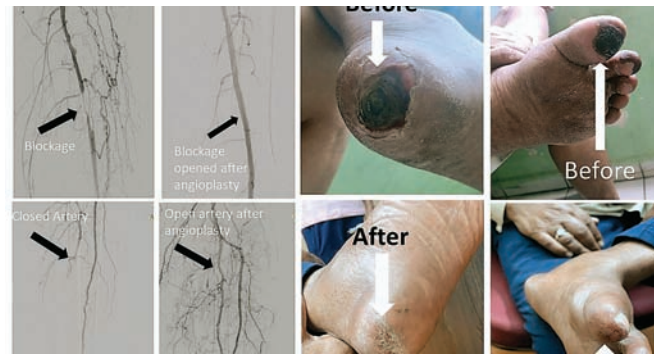
The company has its own power generating plant. A scam worth crores has also taken place in this plant. A new thermal plant was constructed by removing the old thermal plant, but the old thermal plant was sold in the market at throwaway prices. After this, a new thermal plant was built, which probably has more capacity than the old plant, but coal scams are continuously taking place in it too. Recently, the company bought bad coal and then sold it at a loss on the same night, defrauding the company of crores of rupees.

# Interventional Radiology Saves Patient from Losing His Leg at AIIMS Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Professor (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director, AIIMS Bhopal, always takes up new challenges and inspires doctors to provide better health to people. In a recent case, the Vascular and Interventional Clinic at AIIMS Bhopal has successfully saved a 70-year-old male patient from undergoing a foot amputation, thanks to advanced interventional radiology techniques. The patient, suffering from severe toe and heel gangrene with unremitting pain, had been recommended for foot amputation due to worsening symptoms despite extensive wound and medical management.

Referred to AIIMS Bhopal for a specialized evaluation, the patient underwent a comprehensive angiographic investigation which revealed multiple blockages in the leg arteries—a condition known as Critical Limb Ischemia (CLI). CLI is a severe, life-threatening disease commonly seen in patients with chronic diabetes, hypertension, and chronic renal failure, characterized by the deposition of atherosclerotic plaques causing significant arterial blockages. The patient received interventional treatment, specifically leg angioplasty, at the Interventional Radiology Treatment Centre at AIIMS Bhopal. This



minimally invasive procedure allowed the medical team to open the blocked leg arteries without the need for major surgery. The patient experienced immediate pain relief and significant improvement in wound healing, leading to his discharge the day after the procedure. Over the following months, with ongoing wound care management, the patient's wounds healed almost completely, ultimately saving him

from amputation.

This successful intervention was performed by a dedicated team of endovascular specialists and interventional radiologists, including Dr. Rajesh Malik, Professor and Head of the Department of Radiology, and Dr. Aman Kumar, Associate Professor and Interventional Radiologist. Their expertise and timely intervention highlight the critical role of interventional radiology in managing and treating CLI. Executive Director and CEO of AIIMS Bhopal, Prof. (Dr.) Ajai Singh, congratulated the interventional radiology team for their remarkable efforts in the Amputation Prevention Drive. He emphasized the importance of raising awareness among healthcare workers and the public about CLI and the available treatment options at AIIMS Bhopal. "Timely diagnosis and minimally invasive endovascular treatments are crucial in restoring blood flow, alleviating pain, promoting wound healing, and reducing the risk of amputation," stated Dr. Singh.

AIIMS Bhopal continues to lead the way in advanced medical treatments, offering hope and improved quality of life to patients suffering from critical conditions like CLI. This achievement underscores the institution's commitment to excellence in healthcare and innovative treatment solutions.

## 13-YR-OLD GIRL JUMPS FROM 14TH FLOOR IN INDORE, DIES

Bhopal: A schoolgirl of Class 7 died after she allegedly jumped from a 14-story building in Madhya Pradesh's economic city Indore on Tuesday. The deceased identified as 13-year-old Anjali Sharma had left her home for school.

Police said the CCTV camera installed at the entry gate of the high-rise building shows the girl entering the society.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that the girl left her home for school, but she went to a high-rise located in the way and jumped from the building. Further investigation is underway," said Tareesh Soni, Town Inspector.

Security guards and some other society members took her to a hospital but she was declared dead on arrival, Soni said, adding that parents of the victims would be interrogated. The unfortunate incident was reported on the very first day as schools in Madhya Pradesh opened on Tuesday.

## Account hacked by stealing the mobile phone

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Teacher Dhaniram Ladiya, father Ramchand Ladiya, aged 60 years, resident of Saivatika Colony, Bhopal Road, has given a written application to the Superintendent of Police complaining about his stolen mobile phone and withdrawal of about Rs 85 thousand from his bank account through his mobile phone.

According to the information, Dhaniram Ladia, teacher, resident of Bamhori Rengwan Hall, resident of Saivatika Colony, had gone to the vegetable market in Tilakganj on Sunday, June 16, where his mobile was stolen, which was also reported by



him in the Kotwali police station on June 17, 2024. He told that Paytm app was downloaded in his mobile, after the mobile was stolen, about Rs 85 thousand was withdrawn from his account. After taking out the bank statement, it was found that the money had

been withdrawn several times. He has requested to trace the stolen mobile and money. Ladiya has also informed that mobile phones of other people were stolen and money was withdrawn from their mobiles.

## No order, the Commissioner informed to the Principal Secretary, houses will not be built by cutting trees, an alternative place will be searched

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The government has canceled the plan to build bungalows for ministers and MLAs by cutting 29 thousand trees in Bhopal. Madhya Pradesh Housing and Infrastructure Development Board has issued an order saying that the proposal has been canceled and an alternative location is being examined. A huge candle march was taken out here in the evening.

Earlier on Monday afternoon, Urban Administration and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya gave this information on social media. 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.



A letter has been issued, which the Commissioner of Madhya Pradesh

Housing Board has written to the Principal Secretary, Housing and

Urban Development Department. It has been said that in view of the shortage of employee housing, a preliminary project was prepared and presented at the government level under the Densification Policy-2022 to replace the dilapidated and unusable houses of 1250 quarters, Bhopal. Considering environmental protection and the existing trees in the area, the proposed project has been rejected after thorough consideration and instructions have been given to examine other alternative locations. It was also directed that while preparing the alternative proposal, extensive discussions should be held with environmentalists, local public representatives and citizens at the initial stage itself. As per instructions, following the instructions given after presentation, the earlier proposal has been canceled and an alternative site is being examined.



# Lisa Snowdon admits she went through a 'dark time'

Los Angeles | Agencies

**L**isa Snowdon admits she went through a 'dark' time as she dropping two stone during a five-year weight loss battle while dealing with menopause. The presenter who frequently discusses her struggle with menopause, claimed she 'lost herself' when she first started experiencing symptom in her mid-40's, reports [dailymail.co.uk](https://www.dailymail.co.uk). Speaking to Closer Magazine, the former Britain's Next Top Model host admitted that she didn't recognise herself at the time as the perimenopause and menopause had such an impact on her confidence.

She revealed: 'I had days so dark that I thought, "If this is what my life looks like, then I can't do it", I felt so lonely and confused. I didn't recognise myself.'

'The perimenopause and menopause have such an impact on your confidence and I lost myself for a little while.'

The star went on to explain how she was her 'heaviest' in 2018, however, HRT (hormone replacement therapy) helped ease many of her symptoms.

She also revealed that she went on to lose two-stone after focusing on exercise and eating the right foods for her mind and body.

She admitted to Closer that she had 'no grip' on her cravings before and revealed she started 'listening to her body.'

It comes after Lisa revealed in 2021 that she was prescribed anti-depressants after experiencing low moods and anxiety as a result of early menopause.



Los Angeles | Agencies

**Jimmy Fallon exclaims 'Sat Sri Akal' as Diljit Dosanjh teaches him Punjabi**

**A**ctor-singer Diljit Dosanjh gave talk show host Jimmy Fallon a masterclass in Punjabi. Fallon took to Instagram and shared a behind-the-scenes reel from "The Tonight Show", where Diljit appeared as a guest. The clip, titled "Learning how to speak Punjabi with Diljit Dosanjh," showed Fallon repeating what the 'Lover' singer was saying. "Punjabi aa gaye oye," said Diljit, and Fallon repeated.

Diljit then said "Oye," which Fallon hilariously repeated.

The 'Jatt and Juliet' star continued with "Sat Sri Akal," and Fallon repeated it correctly, prompting Diljit to say "Wow!"

The reel was captioned "Sat Sri Akal." Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas commented, "It's the oye for me," while award-winning producer Guneet Monga simply commented, "Punjabi."

Fallon also shared another video where the two were seen swapping gloves, with Diljit's track 'Born to Shine' playing in the background.

The 40-year-old star made his debut on the show, performing his chart-topping hits, including 'Born to Shine'.

## WHOOPI GOLDBERG RECOUNTS HOW SHE ACCIDENTALLY ATE CAT TREATS AT 2 A.M.

**Los Angeles:** Oscar-winning actress Whoopi Goldberg accidentally ate cat treats in the middle of the night, mistaking them for pretzels. Goldberg shared the incident on 'The View': "I got home. Perhaps I was a little more jet-lagged than I realised. I was not high. I had nothing to drink."

"It is two in the morning and there are these wonderful pretzels called Dot's Pretzels, which I love. So sometimes, you know, when you get a bag of Dot's Pretzels, they're broken in half."

She explained that her daughter, Alex Martin, was partially to blame for the confusion, according to [femalefirst.co.uk](https://www.femalefirst.co.uk).

"So my kid decided that she was to leave some cat treats on the other side of my bag so that if the cat wanted some treats, she could get up there and get some because I wasn't going to get up."

"But this daughter of mine put a bag of cat treats right next to the Dot's! So at 2 a.m., you know what's coming..."

Goldberg talked about feeling a bit disoriented because of her jet lag. She said: "I reach over and pour some Dot's into my hand and put them in my mouth. I'm chewing. (These may be) a little stale!"

Asked if she thought they were simply a new flavour, she said: "No, no. I just poured some more in because maybe I thought, you know, bed your mouth and you're like, 'What is this?'" So, I pour some more. 'Why do these taste so bad?' My eye finally kind of opened a little bit, and in



## Ian McKellen lands in hospital after falling off stage during performance

London | Agencies

**V**eteran Hollywood star Ian McKellen was hospitalised after falling off stage during a performance at the Noel Coward Theatre in London's West End.

McKellen reportedly lost his footing during a battle scene, reports [BBC.com](https://www.bbc.com). The audience had to evacuate from the theater, and the evening show was cancelled.

A representative for the theater shared that McKellen will "make a speedy and full recovery" and that the 85-year-old actor is "in good spirits," reports [Variety.com](https://www.variety.com).

"Thank you to our audience and the general public for their well wishes following Ian's fall during this evening's performance of 'Player Kings'," reads the statement.

"Following a scan, the brilliant NHS team has assured us that he will make a speedy and full recovery, and Ian is in good spirits. The production has made the decision to cancel the performance on Tuesday, June 18, so Ian can rest."

"Those affected will be contacted by their point of purchase as soon as possible tomorrow. Thank you to doctors Rachel and Lee, who were in the audience, and to all the venue staff for their support."

McKellen plays John Falstaff in 'Player Kings', which is a production of William Shakespeare's 'Henry IV, Parts One and Two.'

It began its 12-week run on the West End in April.

After navigating a fight scene involving two other characters, McKellen apparently fell off the front of the stage.

According to the BBC, "As the house lights came up, the actor cried out, and staff rushed to help." An audience member speaking to the BBC described the incident as "very shocking," adding, "As far as I saw, he was conscious because he was asking for assistance."



## 'Seinfeld' actor Hiram Kasten dies at 71 after prolonged illness

Los Angeles | Agencies

**A**ctor Hiram Kasten, best known for his role in 'Seinfeld', has passed away at the age of 71.

The news was posted on his official Facebook page. His obituary, which described him as "a truly charming guy," revealed that he passed away on Sunday, reports [Mirror.co.uk](https://www.mirror.co.uk). Kasten had been battling multiple illnesses for seven years, including prostate cancer and a lifelong struggle with Crohn's disease. In the last six months, the comedian and actor revealed to those closest to him that he was terminally ill. As per [Mirror.co.uk](https://www.mirror.co.uk), he received an outpouring of love and frequent Zoom calls from his friends, which his wife Diana said "prolonged his life for at least another two months, allowing him to laugh with his peers." Throughout his life, Hiram was an iconic figure in the New York City and New Jersey comedy scenes. He began his stand-up career in 1978 when Jerry Seinfeld passed

him at an audition at 'The Comic Strip'.

He became a staple in the comedy scene, entertaining audiences throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Speaking of his unforgettable comedy style, his obituary reads, "He channelled the greats in his demeanour onstage, always dressing for the occasion. With his open-collared shirts and natty sports jackets, always with a pocket hanky billowing forth, he stood out among his peers. He was the 'missing link' to another generation of comedians he watched as a child on TV. He emulated Alan King, Jackie Gleason, and Jerry Lewis."

Hiram was also a talented actor, known for his beloved role on the hit sitcom 'Seinfeld'. He played Michael, Elaine Benes' co-worker, in three episodes. He also appeared in numerous other hit television shows, including 'Curb Your Enthusiasm', 'Saved By the Bell', 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air', 'Everybody Loves Raymond', and 'My Wife and Kids'.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Hailey Bieber



## Chess: Arjun Erigasi wins Stepan Avagyan Memorial title

New Delhi | Agencies

Grandmaster (GM) Arjun Erigasi, India's highest-rated chess player, came up with yet another domineering performance to clinch the Stepan Avagyan Memorial 2024 crown in Jermuk, Armenia, with a round to spare.

The 20-year-old chess player from Telangana defeated Russian GM Volodar Murzin in 63 moves in the eighth and penultimate round to take his six points with four wins and as many draws. He now has an unassailable lead of 1.5 points over three players tied for second spot in a strong 10-player field.

The victory also helped Arjun jump to a career-high live rating of No. 4 as he has so far added 9 points from the eight rounds to reach a total of 2779.9 ELO points. He now trails Norway's Magnus Carlsen, Hikaru Nakamura of the United States and his compatriot Fabiano Caruana in live ratings.

"This has been a fantastic tournament for me as I have been able



to make the most of my opportunities. These tournaments are never easy as the level of competition is very high but I am happy with the way I played and clinched my second title of the year," said Arjun.

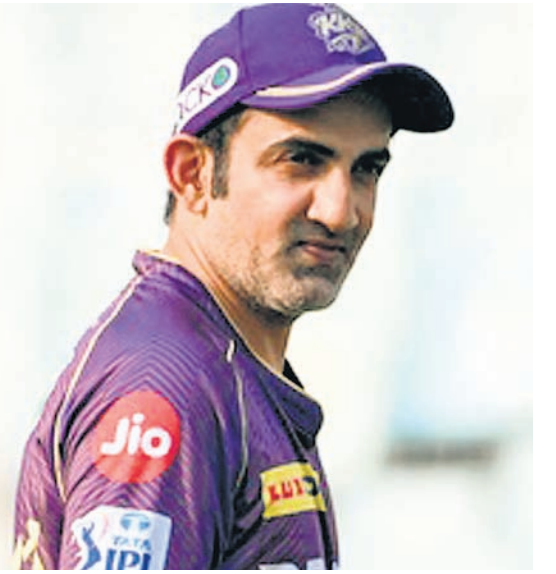
Arjun, who has been challenging himself to play more open tournaments to take on a variety of opposition, has been in fine form this year. He bagged the Menorca Open crown in April, finished second in the TePe Sigeman Chess Tournament in May and also finished joint-fifth in the Sharjah Masters Open tournament.

Against Murzin, Arjun pounced on his Russian opponent's error in the rook and minor piece endgame and his title was guaranteed once USA's GM Samuel Sevian had to settle for a draw against local GM Manuel Petrosoyan. In the final round of the tournament, Arjun will face Petrosoyan and will be looking to score a win and close the gap over the third-placed Caruana (2795.6 ELO points) in the live ratings.

## BCCI to interview Gambhir for head coach role in Mumbai : Sources

New Delhi | Agencies

Former India cricketer Gautam Gambhir is set to appear for an interview for the men's cricket team head coach position in Mumbai with BCCI secretary Jay Shah and other officials, say sources. "Gauti (Gautam Gambhir) will be travelling today to Mumbai around 12 pm for the interview at BCCI Headquarters. It is almost confirmed that he is going to be the next head coach as the BCCI has agreed to the terms he presented for the head coach. The new head coach of the men's cricket team will soon be revealed. The meeting is scheduled between 2-4 pm," source privy to BCCI told IANS. Gambhir put up a few demands in front of the BCCI for the head coach position such as full command on the team, separate teams for white-ball and red-ball, which IANS understands that the BCCI has already accepted and is keen



to appoint him for the role. The BCCI officially invited applications for the India head coach's post with May 27 set as the deadline.

As per the job description, the new India men's head coach would be for all three formats from July 2024 till

December 2027. Dravid's original contract as India's head coach began after the 2021 T20 World Cup in November and had come to an end with the 2023 ODI World Cup at home and was extended till this year's T20I spectacle.

## 'Won't tolerate disrespect towards family', Rauf clarifies on a viral video of his fight with a fan

New Delhi | Agencies

After a video of Pakistan bowler Haris Rauf indulging in a heated argument with a fan outside his hotel in Florida went viral on social media, the pacer clarified the incident stating, that he "won't tolerate disrespect towards family."

While taking a stroll across the city with his wife, Rauf argued with the man. It seemed like the Pakistani pacer heard something that he didn't agree with or enjoy. A few individuals prevented Rauf from attacking the man as he went towards him.

Even Rauf's wife attempted to stop him, but the talented pacer managed to get out of her hold. The man and Rauf yelled at each other a few times, but the onlookers did a fantastic job of keeping them from hitting each other.

"I decided not to bring this up on social media, But now that the video is out, I feel it is necessary to address the situ-



ation. As public figures, we are open to receiving all kinds of feedback from the public. They are entitled to support or criticise us. Nevertheless, when it comes to my parent and my family, I will not hesitate to respond accordingly. It is important to show respect towards people and their families, irrespective of their professions," Haris Rauf wrote in a statement posted on 'X'.

Hasan Ali too came in support of Rauf and urged fans

to promote love, peace, and respect for the game.

"I've seen a video circulating online about Harry @HarisRauf14 and I urge all my dearest cricket fans to remember that criticism can be constructive without being hurtful. Let's keep the debate respectful and considerate of the players' families. Let's promote love, peace and respect for the GAME. We all want Pakistan cricket to rise, love you all," Hasan Ali wrote on 'X'.

## T20 World Cup: Skipper Rohit eyes 'something special' from Team India in Super 8

Barbados | Agencies

India captain Rohit Sharma expressed his excitement and optimism as the team gears up for the Super Eight stage of the T20 World Cup 2024. Speaking ahead of their first match against Afghanistan, Rohit emphasised the team's collective ambition to make a significant impact in the tournament.

India, having cruised through the group stage unbeaten, secured victories against Ireland, Pakistan, and the USA. Their final group-stage match against Canada was abandoned due to rain, leaving them at the top of Group A with an unblemished record.

The Indian team arrived in Barbados days ahead of their Super Eight opener to acclimate and focus on their preparations.

In a video released by the BCCI, Rohit highlighted the team's eagerness to excel. "There is real keenness in the group to go and do something special. It clearly shows that everyone wants to make a difference and we take our skill sessions quite seriously.



There is something to achieve in every skill session that you do."

Acknowledging the challenges of the upcoming schedule, the Indian skipper noted the team's readiness to tackle the demands of the Super 8

stage. "Once we play the first game, we are going to play the next two in 3-4 days. It is going to be a little hectic but we are used to all of this. We travel and play a lot so that is not going to be an excuse."

Speaking on the importance of focusing on their skills and strategies, especially given their familiarity with the local conditions, Rohit said, "We will look to focus on our skill and what we need to do as a team. We have played a lot of games here. Everyone understands what they need to do. Everyone is looking forward and are excited at the same time."

India's Super Eight campaign kicks off on June 20 with a match against Afghanistan at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados. This will be followed by a clash against Bangladesh in Antigua two days later, and they will conclude the Super 8 stage with a match against Australia in St Lucia on June 24. All matches are scheduled to start at 8 PM (IST).

Match Schedule for India in Super Eight stage:  
June 20: India vs Afghanistan at Kensington Oval, Barbados  
June 22: India vs Bangladesh at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, Antigua  
June 24: India vs Australia at Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium, St Lucia

## Male golfers Shubhankar Sharma, Gaganjeet Bhullar qualify for Paris Olympics

New Delhi | Agencies

India's number one male golfer Shubhankar Sharma and compatriot Gaganjeet Bhullar have qualified for the Paris Olympic Games and will be teeing off for the country at the prestigious Golf National course in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, in the French capital in August.

Shubhankar's berth in Paris was confirmed after the International Golf Federation (IGF) revealed its Olympic qualification list of 60 men and women golfers for the Olympic Golf tournament, scheduled between August 1-4, 2024. Shubhankar, whose Official World Golf Ranking is 222, qualified with an Olympic rank of 48 paving the way for a Games debut for the Chandigarh lad.

He will be joined by Gaganjeet Bhullar who qualified with an Olympic rank of 54 and who will also be making his Olympic debut. Aditi Ashok and Diksha Dagar will be representing India in the women's tournament.

Shubhankar, the 27-year-old Indian,



who recently signed as Brand Ambassador of Roundglass Sports, is a two-time winner on the DP World Tour (formerly the European Tour) and has eight career titles to his name. He will be seen in action next at the KLM Open in Amsterdam and the Italian Open this month, which are both part of the DP World Tour. Sharing his thoughts on the moment, Shubhankar Sharma said, "It's a privilege and honour to represent India at the Olympics. It's a dream come true obviously. I have been preparing for this day for a while now, and am planning my schedule for the European Tour, accordingly. We have a very good and experienced team of Gaganjeet, Aditi, Diksha and myself.

"We have depth and experience behind us. All are playing solid golf at the moment, on our respective tours too, and that's a good sign. If Olympic week turns our way, any medal is possible for both Men and Women's Teams. Personally speaking, my game is trending in the right direction and I am keyed up to deliver," he said.

## EURO 2024: FRANCE'S MBAPPE MAY MISS REMAINING GROUP STAGE GAMES FOLLOWING NOSE INJURY: REPORT

Dusseldorf (Germany) | Agencies

France are facing the prospect of their skipper Kylian Mbappe missing the remaining Group Stage matches after he suffered an injury to his nose during their match against Austria in the Euro 2024 at the Merkur Spiel Arena, here on Monday night. The match saw the two-time Euro winner edge past their opponents with a 1-0 scoreline.

The game saw Mbappe suffer an injury after the French forward hit his nose on Austria defender Kevin Donsa which saw the France captain having to be subbed off. According to a report in The Guardian, Mbappe might miss the remaining two games in the group stage and will only be available for the side's games in the knockout stages.

The French football federation confirmed in a statement that the striker has broken his nose and will be returning to the National team base camp and surgery is not needed

as of now.

"Kylian Mbappe suffered a broken nose during the second part of the Austria-France held this Monday in Dusseldorf. The captain of France was treated first by the medical staff and Dr. Franck Le Gall, who diagnosed him with a nose fracture.

Mbappe will receive treatment in the next few days, but he will not undergo surgery in the immediate future. A mask will be made for him so that the number 10 of the French national team can prepare for his return to the competition after a period dedicated to treatment," read the statement posted by the French Federation.

France have a huge game against table toppers the Netherlands in their next game on Saturday, June 22 (IST). Mbappe's availability for the important game is in serious doubt and his situation will be closely monitored over the next week to determine his chances of playing against Poland in the final Group E fixture.



## T20 WORLD CUP

## 'DISAPPOINTED WITH BATTING', ADMITS HEAD COACH TROTT AFTER AFGHANISTAN'S LOSS TO WI

Gros Islet (St Lucia) | Agencies

Though Afghanistan advances to the Super 8 stage of the T20 World Cup 2024, but head coach Jonathan Trott expressed his disappointment with team's batting in a huge loss to West Indies in their final group-stage match.

Despite a promising start to the tournament with three consecutive wins, Afghanistan's campaign hit a bump with a heavy 104-run defeat to the West Indies on Tuesday.

Afghanistan's journey through Group C was marked by impressive victories

over Uganda, and Papua New Guinea, and a significant win against New Zealand, which knocked the Kiwis out of the tournament. The team's early success saw them topping the group table with a robust net run rate, securing their place in the Super 8 alongside the big names of world cricket.

Reflecting on the recent defeat to West Indies, Trott highlighted the team's struggles with both batting and bowling. "All right, areas we need to work on, and just being able to pull-overs



back. If we don't start an over well, being able to get out of an over and try and stop that," Trott said during the post-match press conference.

The loss served as a wake-up call for the Rashid Khan-led side, emphasising the need to tighten their bowling and bolster their batting depth.

"Today we had two overs in total that went for 60 runs, and that swings the game massively. That takes a lot of pressure off the next 18 overs, so though that's the reality, that's the black and white

of the game. And yeah, with batting, I'm disappointed, and we couldn't have got a bit closer," he said.

Afghanistan's first Super 8 encounter is set against a formidable Indian side on June 20, at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados. Historically, Afghanistan has struggled against India in T20Is, with Men in Blue securing a clean sweep in a three-match series earlier this year.

India have shown consistent form, winning three consecutive matches before their final group game was abandoned due to inclement weather in Florida.

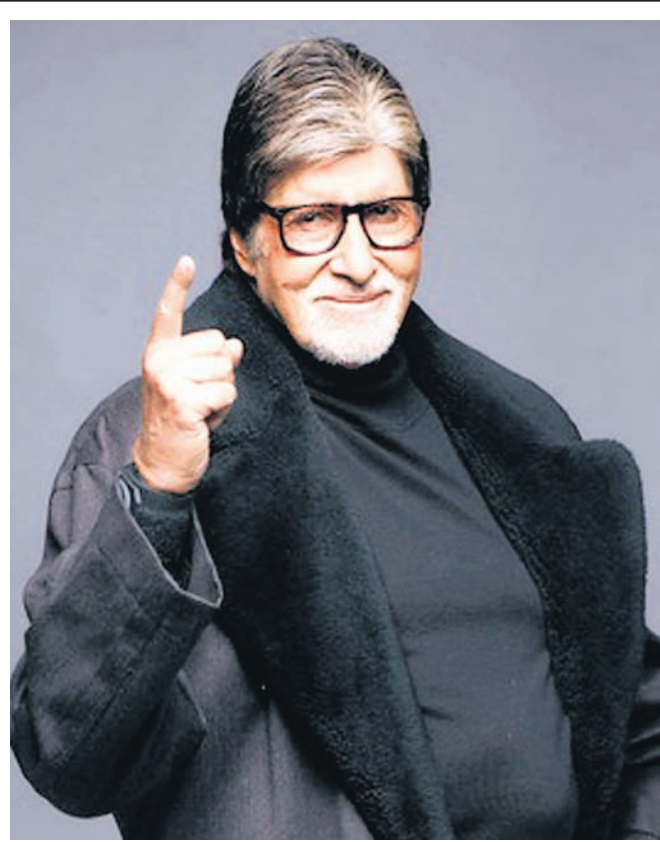


## Veteran actress Sonam Khan, 'Vada Pav Girl' Chandrika Dixit confirmed for 'Bigg Boss OTT 3'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran actress Sonam Khan, who is known for her roles in Hindi films such as "Tridev" and "Vishwatma", is set to appear in the third edition of 'Bigg Boss OTT'. Joining her will be the viral "vada pav girl" Chandrika Dixit, from the national capital. A source close to IANS revealed that Sonam Khan, actress Cheshta Bhagat and Nikhil Mehta, previously seen on 'Temptation Island', Chandrika Dixit, television actress Sana Sultan, and content creator Vishal Pandey will be participating as contestants in the show.

Hosting the third edition of 'Bigg Boss OTT' will be Anil Kapoor, who has taken the hosting baton from Bollywood superstar Salman Khan. The digital version of the reality show, a spin-off from the main Bigg Boss series, first premiered in August 2021 with Karan Johar as the host. The winner of the inaugural season was Divya Agarwal. The second season aired in 2023, with Salman as the host for the first time in the OTT version. Elvish Yadav emerged as the winner, with Abhishek Malhan as the runner-up.



## Big B recalls how his mother made clothes with 'limited means' for protection against winter

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan reminisced about how his mother, Teji Bachchan, made clothing with "limited means" to protect him from the cold during "winter in the North."

"In the age of young... in the winter of the North... Mother in her limited means made clothing to protect us from the cold," wrote Amitabh, who was born in Allahabad, now known as Prayagraj, in his blog.

Describing the clothing his late mother made, he said it was blanket-like. "It was rough, blanket-like - for that was what was available at the means of limitation... it was such a discomfort to wear it... but it was insisted... and Mother was not disobeyed... the pant was most in discomfort," he said.

The cine icon revealed that he would complain to his mother that the pants were uncomfortable. "We would complain: 'Maa bahut gadhta hai! But we had to bear it... until one fine day a solution occurred... before wearing the 'gadhta hua patloon', I would wear the cotton pyjama that used to be our night dress... and then wear the pant over it... no one knew, and the gadna band!' he wrote.

He added: "Now, with the advent of superior quality... superior warmth protection... there is only remembrance... the discomfort, details itself more on whether it is keeping with the latest social wear, fashion etc..."

"And yes by the prayers and blessings of the elders the limited means, converted to a mere 'means'..."

Now, he said, the comfortable wear is his "pyjama."

"And at 82... the most wearable wear and with the comfort of the self is indeed the 'pyjama'... the 'chudi daar' the 'salwar'... Soft, gentle on the body... and conditioned for ventilation."

However, the "pyjama" has a shortcoming.

He shared: "It's only shortcoming is the 'nada'... shortcoming is now a cliché, for the showing outside beyond the confines of the top, the 'kurta' was moment of great mirth tease and laughter: 'Aye tera naara dikh raha hai' and convulsive laughter."

"BUT... now they tell me, the showing of the 'nada' is fashionable!"

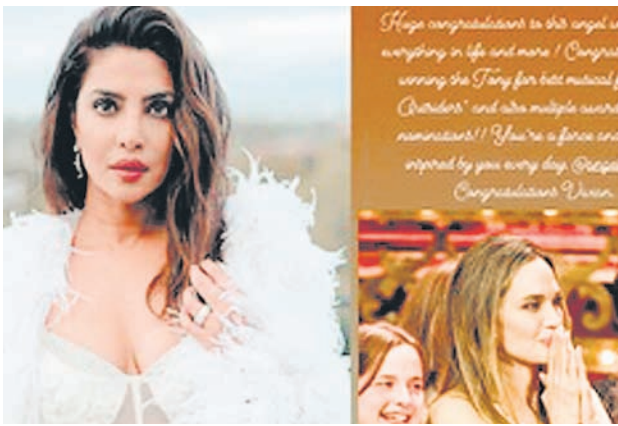
## Priyanka Chopra declares she is inspired by 'angel' Angelina Jolie

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas congratulated Hollywood star Angelina Jolie, who won her first Tony Award for her production 'The Outsiders', and her daughter Vivian.

Priyanka shared a candid picture of Jolie and her daughter on her Instagram stories as "The Outsiders" won the Tony Award for Best Musical.

"Huge congratulations to this angel, who deserves everything in life and more! Congratulations on winning the Tony for Best Musical for 'The Outsiders' and also for multiple awards and 12 nominations! You're a force, and I'm so inspired by you every day. @angelinajolie Congratulations, Vivian," Priyanka wrote. The Outsiders' is a 2023 musical told from the perspective of 14-year-old Ponyboy Curtis. It is set in Oklahoma during the 1960s and follows the conflict between two rival gangs, divided by their socioeconomic status. Vivian is one of the six children shared by Jolie and her ex-husband, Brad Pitt. The actress filed for divorce from Pitt in 2016, citing irreconcilable differences.



## Alka Yagnik reveals she has 'rare hearing loss' due to viral attack

Mumbai: Veteran Bollywood singer Alka Yagnik has revealed that she has been diagnosed with a "rare hearing loss" due to a viral attack, and hence she was missing in action.

Alka Yagnik, one of the most prominent singers of the 1990s in Bollywood, took to Instagram and shared the news.

She posted a picture of herself and wrote: "To all my fans, friends, followers, and well-wishers: A few weeks ago, as I walked out of a flight, I suddenly felt I was not able to hear anything."

The singer, who began her career singing bhajans for Akashvani (All India Radio) at the age of six and debuted with the song for the 1980 film 'Payal Ki Jhankaar', said that she mustered some courage in the weeks following the episode.

"I want to break my silence now for all my friends and well-wishers who have been asking me why I'm missing in action. It has been diagnosed by my doctors as a rare sensory neural nerve hearing loss due to a viral attack..."

She added, "This sudden, major setback has caught me completely unawares. As I attempt to come to terms with it, please keep me in your prayers." Yagnik also shared a word of caution for young singers and fans. "For my fans and young colleagues, I would add a word of caution regarding exposure to very loud music and headphones." Yagnik added: "One day, I wish to share the health perils of my professional life. With all your love and support, I am hoping to recalibrate my life and come back to you soon. Your support and understanding will mean the world to me in this critical hour." The 58-year-old singer is known for her iconic songs such as 'Ek Do Teen', 'Choli Ke Peeche', 'Chamma Chamma', 'Khush Rahne Ko Zaroori', 'Jai Maa Kali', and 'Yeh Bandhan To', to name a few.



## SONAKSHI-ZAHEER WEDDING DECOR TO BE IN SHADES OF IVORY AND WHITE

Mumbai | Agencies

Actress Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal are set to make their relationship official on June 23. Ahead of their big day, it has been revealed that the decor for the couple's special event at the venue, Bastian - At The Top, will be in shades of ivory and white.

A source told that while the details of the menu and dinner spread for the special day are being kept under wraps, the theme for the celebrations will be in shades of ivory and white.

The source also revealed that arrangements are being made to accommodate close to 100 paparazzi in the lobby at the venue.

Previously, the audio invite for the couple's wedding went viral. The invitation featured a photograph of the couple amid snow-capped mountains. The picture gave the impression of a magazine cover and had multiple texts that read, "We're making it official! (Finally)!" They also clarified that the "rumours were true."

The message commenced with a voice-over by Sonakshi, "To all our hip, tech-savvy, and jasoos friends and family who managed to land on this page, hi". Zaheer then added in the audio invite, "For the last seven years that we have been together, all the love, joy, laughter, and many, many adventures have led us to this very moment."

The audio message alternates between the voices of Sonakshi and her beau. Sonakshi concludes by saying, "The moment where we go from being each other's rumoured girlfriend and boyfriend."



## Hrithik Roshan-headlined Kargil War film 'Lakshya' to be re-released in cinemas on 20th anniversary

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As their film 'Lakshya' celebrates its 20th anniversary in Hindi cinema on Tuesday, actors Amitabh Bachchan, Hrithik Roshan, and Preity Zinta shared that the movie is set to return to the big screen to celebrate this milestone. Hrithik took to X and shared a video featuring moments from the film, which was released in 2004. "Come, relive the journey of a film that ignited countless dreams and inspired generations. Celebrating 20 years of Lakshya, back in cinemas on June 21. #20YearsOfLakshya," he



wrote. Megastar Amitabh Bachchan and actress Preity Zinta, who starred opposite Hrithik in the film, also shared the same video with the same caption.

'Lakshya', a coming-of-age war drama, was directed by Farhan Akhtar and produced by Ritesh Sidhwani. The film tells the story of Karan Shergill, an aimless, lazy young man and the son of a wealthy businessman from Delhi, who joins the Indian Army and matures into a battlefield hero. Over the years, the film has gained cult status. Talking about his upcoming projects, Hrithik will next be seen in 'War 2', which also stars Jr. NTR and Kiara Advani.

## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Shehnaaz Kaur Gill