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NEET ROW: HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE FORMED UNDER EX-ISRO CHIEF FOR SMOOTH CONDUCT OF EXAMS

PURSUIT OF INNOCENCE

The committee will work under the Chairmanship of K. Radhakrishnan, former Chairman, ISRO and Chairman of BoG, IIT Kanpur. The ministry said that the other members include Dr. Randeep Guleria, Former Director, AIIMS Delhi. Prof. B J Rao, Vice Chancellor, Central University of Hyderabad. Prof. Ramamurthy K, Professor Emeritus, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Madras. Pankaj Bansal, Co-Founder, People Strong and Board Member- Karmayogi Bharat. Prof. Aditya Mittal, Dean Student Affairs, IIT Delhi. Govind Jaiswal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education.

Meanwhile, The Bihar Police detained six people from Jharkhand's Deoghar district in connection with the alleged irregularities in medical entrance exam NEET, an official said on Saturday. They were detained from a house near AIIMS-Deoghar in Devipur police station area on Friday night, he said.



Recommendations on reform in the mechanism of the examination process, improvement in data security protocols and structure and functioning of NTA, an official of the Ministry of Education said.

The Terms of Reference of the committee

include reform in the mechanism of the examination process, to analyse the end-to-end examination process and suggest measures to improve the efficiency of the system and to forestall any possible breach. To conduct a thorough review of the Standard

Operating Procedures (SOPs)/Protocols of the NTA, and suggest measures to strengthen these procedures/protocols along with monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance at every level.

It will also evaluate the existing data security processes and protocols of NTA and recommend measures for its improvement. It will also examine existing security protocols related to paper-setting and other processes for different examinations and make recommendations to enhance the robustness of the system. For Structure and Functioning of the National Testing Agency, committee will make recommendations on the organisational structure and functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA) for implementation of recommendations and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of functionaries at every level.

It will also assess the current Grievance Redressal Mechanism of the NTA, identify areas of improvement and make recommendations for enhancing its efficiency.

The Committee can co-opt any Subject Matter Expert to assist them.

GST rates changed for some products and services

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Finance Nirmala Sitharaman chaired pre-Budget consultations with finance ministers of states and Union Territories to take their views. It was followed by the 53rd meeting of the GST (Goods and Services Tax) Council on Saturday.

GST Council exempts services by way of hostel accommodation outside educational institutions up to ₹20,000 per person per month. However, the condition will be the student must have stayed in the hostel for a continuous period of 90 days. The condition has been introduced to prevent hotels from taking advantage of the exemption.

Purchase of railway tickets and payments for waiting room and cloak room charges have been exempted



from GST. Similarly, no GST will be levied on services provided like battery-operated vehicles and intra-railway services.

The GST council recommended waiver of interest on penalties on tax demand notice, and a uniform rate of 12 per cent on milk cans.

In the pre-Budget meeting, Sitharaman underlined the Centre's support to states through timely tax devolution and GST compensation arrears to boost growth.

She asked states to take advantage of the scheme under which the Centre gives 50-year interest-free loan to states for undertaking specified reforms.

Government Announces Rs 1 Per Kg Increase In CNG Prices

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a development affecting daily commuters and the transportation sector, the Indian government has announced an increase in Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) prices by Rs 1 per kilogram.

The new pricing structure came into effect at 6:00 a.m. on June 22, resulting in an immediate impact on various regions across the country, including New Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, and the National Capital Region (NCR). In Delhi, the

price has risen from Rs 74.09 to Rs 75.09 per kg, Noida, Greater Noida, and Ghaziabad. The price adjustment is expected to have a widespread impact on commuters who rely on CNG-powered vehicles, including auto-rickshaws, taxis, and personal vehicles.

The increase will likely result in higher transportation costs, which may subsequently affect daily travel expenses for millions of residents.

This is not the first time CNG prices have been raised in recent months.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre on Saturday said that it has formed a high-level committee under the former ISRO Chief which will make the necessary recommendations regarding the smooth and fair conduct of exams through the National Testing Agency (NTA) for NEET and other examinations.

"The committee will submit the report in two months and will make necessary recom-

NEW 'ANTI-PAPER LEAK' LAW: JAIL TERM, UP TO RS 1 CR FINE AS PUNISHMENTS

New Delhi: Amid the controversies surrounding the NEET and UGC-NET exams, the Centre has notified the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, passed in February to prevent paper leaks and cheating.

The stringent law came into effect on Friday.

- Under the law, any person or persons found guilty of leaking a paper or tampering with answer sheets will receive a minimum jail term of three years. This can be extended to five years with a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh. All offences under the Act will be cognisable and non-bailable.
- As per the new law, examination service providers who have knowledge about a possible offence but do not report it can be fined up to Rs one crore.
- During the investigation, if it is established that any senior official from the service provider had allowed or was involved in committing the offence, he will face imprisonment for a minimum of three years, which can go up to 10 years, and a fine of Rs 1 crore.
- If the examination authority or the service provider commits an organised crime, the jail term will be a minimum of five years and a maximum of 10, and the fine will remain Rs 1 crore.
- The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024 or the 'anti-paper leak' bill was first introduced in the Lok Sabha on February 5 and was passed a day later. The Rajya Sabha cleared the bill on February 9. President Droupadi Murmu approved the bill in the same month following which it became law.

Bridge over Gandak canal collapses in Bihar's Siwan

Patna | Agencies

A bridge over the Gandak canal collapsed in Bihar's Siwan district on Saturday.

The incident occurred just a few days after a bridge collapsed in the state's Araria district on June 18. The one-pillar bridge, connecting Pateda and Kanauli villages in the Maharajganj sub-division which was built 45 years ago, collapsed around 5 a.m.

"The bridge was constructed through public contribution. It collapsed due to the negligence of the district administration," said ohammad Naim, a villager.



"The state government should make alternate arrangements to connect the affected villages. Around 20,000 people will be affect-

ed by it. Shockingly, no one from the district administration came here to inspect the bridge," he said.

'Pratham Puja' to mark ceremonial beginning of Amarnath Yatra held

Srinagar | Agencies

To mark the ceremonial beginning of this year's Amarnath Yatra, 'Pratham Puja' was performed on Saturday.

J&K Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha, who is also the chairman of the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB), posted on his official X handle, "Today performed the 'Pratham Puja' to mark the ceremonial commencement of the Annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra. Sought Baba Amarnathji's blessings and prayed for the good health, progress, and well-being of all the people."

He said the holy pilgrimage to the Himalayan cave shrine situated at 3888 metres above sea level in Kashmir Himalayas has always been a symbol of communal harmony as local Muslims help and assist the Yatis to reach the cave shrine. In another comment, Manoj Sinha said, "It has been ancient tradition of J&K that people from all communities participate in this Yatra irrespective of their religion. I urge all enlightened citizens to come together to



welcome and serve the pilgrims coming from different parts of the country & abroad."

Commenting on the facilities the SASB will make available for the Yatis, the Lt. Governor said, "Officials of Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board & concerned depts are committed to provide better facilities & services for pilgrims. We are taking every possible measure to ensure the yatra is smooth, safe & hassle-free. We have brought in a qualitative improvement in the overall Yatra experience for devotees and there has been significant enhancement in essential facilities, infrastructure and security. This year Yatra will start from 29th June."

The 52-day-long Amarnath Yatra will start on June 29 and end on August 19 coinciding with the Raksha Bandhan and the Shravan Purnima festivals.

FORMER UNION MINISTER SURYAKANTA PATIL QUILTS BJP

Nanded (Maharashtra): Days after the party's poor performance in the Lok Sabha elections, former union minister Suryakanta Patil on Saturday resigned from the primary membership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "I have learned a lot in the last 10 years, I am thankful to the party," she said after quitting.

Patil, who had joined the BJP in 2014 after she parted ways with the Sharad Pawar led NCP, had sought the party's nomination during the Lok Sabha elections from Hingoli constituency in Marathwada but she failed to get the ticket.

During the seat sharing arrangement, the Hingoli seat was left to the Eknath Shinde led Shiv Sena. The Shiv Sena had lost the Hingoli seat to the Uddhav Thackeray led faction. Patil has represented the Hingoli-Nanded constituency four times as MP and once as MLA.

New Telecom Act: Centre can take control of telecom networks during emergency

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre on Saturday introduced the new Telecommunications Act, 2023 that will usher in the new era of connectivity from June 26, replacing century-old colonial laws.

The Section 20 of the 'Telecommunications Act 2023' stated that the central government of a state government will be able to take control of any telecommunications services or networks in times of emergency after the implementation of the Act. On the occurrence of any public emergency, including disaster management, or in the interest of public safety, "the Central Government or a State Government or any officer specially authorised in this behalf by the Central Government or a State Government can take temporary possession of any telecommunication service or telecommunication network from an authorised entity; or provide for appropriate mechanisms to ensure that



messages of a user or group of users authorised for response and recovery during a public emergency are routed on priority," according to the Sector 20 of the Act.

Any telecom player who wants to establish or operate telecommunication networks, provide

services or possess ratio equipment will have to be authorised by the government.

"The Telecommunications Act, 2023 aims to amend and consolidate the law relating to development, expansion and operation of telecommunication services and telecommunication networks; assignment of spectrum and for matters connected therewith," said the Department of Communication (DoT)

The Telecommunications Act, 2023 seeks to repeal existing legislative frameworks like Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and Indian Wireless Telegraph Act, 1933 owing to huge technical advancements in the telecom sector and technologies.

The Act also provides measures for protection of users from unsolicited commercial communication and creates a grievance redressal mechanism.

When it comes to the Right of Way (RoW) framework, public entities shall be obligated to provide right of way except in special circumstances.

CERT-In finds multiple bugs in 'Golang Go' that affect IBM's data management software

Mumbai | Agencies

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), which comes under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, has warned users of multiple vulnerabilities in the 'Golang Go' programming language affecting IBM Storage Copy Data Management software.

As per the CERT-In advisory, the multiple vulnerabilities -- 'arbitrary code execution vulnerability' and 'denial of service vulnerability' -- could allow an attacker to execute arbitrary code or cause a denial of service con-



dition on the targeted system.

The arbitrary code execution vulnerability exists in IBM software due to a flaw in Golang Go during the build on Darwin. "An attacker could exploit this vulnerability by building a specially crafted Go module. Successful exploitation of this vulnerability could allow an attacker to execute arbitrary code on

the targeted system," the cyber agency said.

On the other hand, the denial of service vulnerability exists in IBM Storage Copy Data Management due to a flaw in Golang Go which causes high CPU usage in the 'extractExtendedRCODE' function in the net module.

"A remote attacker could exploit this vulnerability by sending a specially crafted DNS message in response to a query," the advisory mentioned.

Successful exploitation of this vulnerability could allow an attacker to cause a denial of service condition on the targeted system.

4 dead, 12 injured in Gurugram factory blaze, owner arrested

Gurugram | Agencies

The Gurugram police have arrested the owner of GFO Research and Development Pvt Ltd's factory, where a massive fire broke out in the wee hours of Saturday, claiming 4 lives and leaving 12 others injured. According to police, the complainant in the matter claimed that the factory owner had stocked a large number of fireballs and flammable material inside the factory premises and they had requested the accused not to stock such material but the accused paid no heed to their concerns and the incident occurred. The accused has been identified as Sandeep, a resi-



dent of Gurugram's Rajender Nagar area.

The deceased have been identified as Kaushik, Arun, Prashant and Ram Avadh. Kaushik was an employee of GFO Research and Development Pvt Ltd, while Arun was employed with Technocrat Pvt Ltd and Ram Avadh was working there as a security guard.

According to the Gurugram Fire Service officials, the incident was reported at 2.24 a.m. Saturday, prompting the deployment of dozens of fire tenders to the site. The fire was brought under control by 10.00 a.m.

Officials suspect that the fire originated from a short circuit or leakage of some gas in the building.



BJP WORKERS PROTEST DELHI WATER CRISIS OUTSIDE JAL BOARD OFFICE, FACE WATER CANNONS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid the political tug-of-war on the water crisis, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers staged a protest outside the Delhi Jal Board office in Delhi on Saturday.

The police also used water cannons to disperse the people protesting the prevailing water crisis in the national capital.

BJP leader Shehzad Poonawalla attacked the AAP, saying that Haryana is sending enough water and the Supreme Court has also acknowledged this.

"AAP has been in power in Delhi for the last 10 years. They have the Delhi Jal Board, MCD. They have all the important departments. So are they protesting against their own government? The reality is that their own ally, the Congress Party, is now admitting that Haryana is sending more water. It is sending more than it has committed to send. The Supreme Court has also acknowledged this," the BJP leader said. "Today, instead of taking action against the water tanker mafia, they are again doing drama and demonstrations. The question is why are they



protecting the water tanker mafia? Is it because they are getting a commission on every water tanker?" Poonawalla added.

Meanwhile, Delhi's Water Minister, Atishi, sat on an indefinite hunger strike on Friday, alleging that the Haryana government is not releasing Delhi's share of water. She was accom-

panied by Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh and other members of the party at Bhogal, near Jangpura, where she sat on an indefinite hunger strike. Meanwhile, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's wife, Sunita Kejriwal, read a message from the Chief Minister, who is under judicial custody and said Arvind Kejriwal is hurt to see Delhi's

public suffering from water scarcity.

Sunita Kejriwal stated, "Kejriwal says that when I see on TV, the way Delhi people are suffering due to water scarcity, it hurts me. I hope Atishi's 'tapasya' will succeed and residents of Delhi will get relief. I wish all the best to Atishi, may God protect her."

J&K: Sangaldan-Reasi rail link to become operational by month end

Jammu | Agencies

The Sangaldan-Reasi rail link in Jammu and Kashmir is expected to be flagged off by the end of June, officials said on Saturday.

Officials said that the final inspection of the Sangaldan-Reasi section of USBRL, including the world's highest railway bridge over the Chenab River, will be conducted later this month.

"Regular train service will start by the end of this month or in the first week of July from Baramulla to Reasi. Only a 17 km long section from Reasi to Katra remains to be made operational, which will be done within six months," an official said.

A trial run of the MEMU train (Mainline Electric Multiple Unit) was conducted recently on the newly-constructed electrified line section (Reasi-Sangaldan), covering a route length of 46 km on the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project, at a speed of 40 kmph.

This was the first time that a full train crossed over the Chenab River bridge between Dugga and Bakkal stations. This bridge is the world's highest railway bridge featuring a central span of 467 metres at an impressive height of 359 metres, which is higher than the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

So far, 209 km out of the total 272 km of USBRL already stands commissioned. The



phases include the 118 km Qazigund-Baramulla section commissioned in October 2009, the 18 km Banihal-Qazigund section commissioned in June 2013, the 25 km Udhampur-Katra section commissioned in July 2014, and the 48.1 km Banihal-Sangaldan stretch commissioned in February this year.

Once the Reasi-Katra section becomes operational, the Kashmir Valley will be connected by the rail link with the rest of the country. Work on the project began in 1997 and it passes through some of the most difficult topography in the history of rail link laying projects in the world.

Once the USBRL becomes operational, it would not only be the realisation of the centuries-old dream of a rail link between the landlocked Valley and the rest of the country, but also an iconic marvel of engineering for which thousands of engineers, skilled and semi-skilled workforce spent decades.

SGPC files complaint against Instagram influencer for doing yoga in Golden Temple

Amritsar | Agencies

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on Saturday filed a police complaint against a woman Instagram influencer for doing yoga at Sri Darbar Sahib, also known as the Golden Temple Amritsar, here.

The incident sparked outrage among the Sikh community.

Also, the SGPC has taken action against three 'sewadars' or employees for duty dereliction in the Darbar Sahib 'Parikrama' by allowing the woman to do yoga exercises in the morning of June 21 that is observed as International Day of Yoga.

A marble walkway is known as the 'Parikrama' where pilgrims can take a circumambulation, offering prayers and paying their respects. SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhama said some people deliberately ignore the sanctity of the holy place. He said Sikh sentiments have been hurt by the act of the woman. He appealed to the 'sangat' that Sachkhand Sri Harmandir Sahib has great respect in the entire Sikh community and at the same time pilgrims, belonging to every religion and country, come here to pay obeisance with reverence.

An inquiry committee, constituted by the SGPC, questioned the 'sewadars' for dereliction of duty.



Pictures of Instagram influencer, Archana Makwana, while performing yoga went viral. Amid the uproar, she has issued a public apology, expressing regret.

Golden Temple General Manager Bhagwant Singh Dhangeria said Archana Makwana had posted her photos on her social media account. "After verifying through the CCTV cameras, it was found that she performed yoga exercises at 7.04 a.m. after entering the premises at 6.57 a.m. She spent almost an hour in the 'Parikrama' but she had not paid a reverence during her stay," he added.

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) is considered the 'Mini Parliament' of the religion.

Transcending seas and space, PM Modi and Sheikh Hasina launch futuristic India-Bangladesh partnership

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Setting a futuristic vision for bilateral cooperation in new areas, India and Bangladesh concluded 10 agreements following a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina at the Hyderabad House here on Saturday.

Turning the historic relationship between the two neighbouring countries into a transformational partnership, both leaders jointly agreed to the India-Bangladesh shared vision for the future, including enhanced connectivity, commerce, and collaboration for shared prosperity.

The vision document for a futuristic partnership between India and Bangladesh seeks to realise respective national development visions of having a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 and a 'Smart Bangladesh' by 2041.

Two other futuristic and forward-looking documents - 'Shared Vision for India Bangladesh Digital Partnership' and 'Green Partnership for Sustainable Future' - were also



agreed upon between the two sides.

MoUs on maritime cooperation and blue economy; space cooperation; railway connectivity; oceanography; and cooperation concerning military education in strategic and operational studies were also signed.

As many as three MoUs were renewed on cooperation in health and medicine, disaster management, and fisheries.

Both the PMs also agreed to intensify engagement in counter-terrorism, counter-radicalisation, and peaceful

management of the long land border.

With connectivity being one of the most significant pillars of the India-Bangladesh partnership, it was also decided to start a new passenger train between Rajshahi and Kolkata, while the trial run for a goods train on Bangladesh Railway from Gede-Darshana to Haldibari-Chilahati cross-border interchange point is planned for next month.

"This will also help sub-regional connectivity with Bhutan. We will also start a bus service from Kolkata to Chittagong," said Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra after the meeting between the two Prime Ministers. The two sides also exchanged an MoU on space technology that seeks to establish collaboration for the launch of a jointly-developed small satellite for Bangladesh on India's launch vehicle. In terms of bilateral partnership on river management, a joint technical committee has been formed to initiate discussions for the renewal of the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty of 1996.

Violence breaks out in Jodhpur, 40 detained

Jaipur | Agencies

Rajasthan Police have detained around 40 people in Jodhpur for allegedly pelting stones and engaging in arson during a clash, said officials on Saturday, adding that drones were keeping an eye in the affected area, which was currently calm.

The violence took place late Friday night in Jodhpur's Sursagar area, said officials, adding that around 200 accused have been booked in the violence-related cases.

A huge police force was deployed on Saturday to avert any untoward incident in Sursagar.

The clash started on a trivial issue which later took a serious turn. Stones were pelted, and a shop and tractor were set on fire.

Senior police officer Nishant Bharadwaj said that the dispute originated two days ago over the issue of constructing shops in Idgah. A few



people were against building these shops and this issue brought two communities face to face. However, the police intervened and placated

the issue. On Friday, one of the two communities started protesting when they saw a gate being constructed at the

site. They wanted the construction to be stopped which was not accepted by the other community members. Soon arguments erupted which then led to a clash.

The clash continued for three hours and the police had to resort to lathicharge at 1 a.m.

Later, the police identified those engaged in the violence and detained them. The administration deputed an ambulance, fire brigade and more police force at the location soon after. Police patrolling continued even on Saturday morning.

Jodhpur Police Commissioner Rajendra Singh said that the situation in Sursagar is now under control.

"Police teams are continuously patrolling the area. DCP Alok Srivastava and Sharad Chaudhary are keeping an eye on every situation. Police are also keeping an eye on Sursagar through drones. Police teams have been marching in different areas since night," he said.

Forest officer hacked to death in Karnataka, 5 arrested

Yadgir | Agencies

A forest officer was hacked to death by drunkards after they were asked to lower their voice in Karnataka's Yadgir district on Saturday.

Five people have been arrested in connection with the incident that occurred on June 5 at Motagi Bar and Restaurant in Shahapur town.

The deceased was identified as Mahesh Kanakatti, a forest officer from Shahapur.

The arrested accused are identified as Raju, Rekhun Naik, Tara Singh, Narasing and Prakash.

Kanakatti had gone to the restaurant, where the drunkards were yelling and creat-



ing a ruckus.

As Kanakatti asked the drunkards to lower their voice, an argument ensued during which they attacked him with a wooden log and kicked him.

As Mahesh became

unconscious, the accused

escaped from the spot.

Later, Mahesh succumbed to his injuries. The police, after verifying the CCTV footage, identified the accused and arrested them. Details are awaited.

Two booked for 'blackmailing' Prajwal's brother Suraj over 'false' sexual abuse charge

Bengaluru | Agencies

The Karnataka Police have filed an FIR against two persons for "blackmailing" Janata Dal (Secular) MLC Suraj Revanna by threatening him with a "false" case of sexual assault.

Suraj Revanna is the grandson of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda and younger brother of Shivakumar H. L. has filed a case against a JD(S) activist, who alleged that Suraj Revanna abused him sexually, and his kin at the Holenarasipura police station.

The complainant said the accused had gone to the Suraj Revanna's farmhouse on June 16 to request a job. As the accused did not get a job, he asked Suraj Revanna to give Rs 5 crore to him failing which he would file a sexual abuse case against the



leader. The complainant claimed that the accused later reduced the "extortion" amount to Rs 2.5 crore. The police have registered a case under IPC Sections 384 (extortion) and 506 (criminal intimidation) and 34 (criminal act by several persons). However, the accused, talking to mediapersons, said: "Suraj Revanna was impressed with me as I had organised a programme in my village. We shared the mobile numbers and after that, Suraj messaged me for a meeting. I was asked to meet him at his farmhouse, where I was sexually abused."

YSRCP's under construction central office demolished

Amaravati | Agencies

YSR Congress Party's under-construction central office in Tadepalli in Guntur district was demolished by municipal authorities in the early hours of Saturday over alleged illegal construction.

Authorities of Mangalagiri-Tadepalli Municipal Corporation (MTMC) began demolition around 5:30 a.m. using excavators and bulldozers.

The Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) had issued notice to the opposition party over the alleged illegal construction.

The YSRCP had approached the High Court on Friday, challenging the CRDA office. A party spokesperson claimed that the court had ordered a halt to any demolition activity and the same was conveyed to the CRDA Commissioner by the YSRCP's lawyer.

According to CRDA and MTMC officials, the YSRCP office was being built



on the land of the irrigation department. There were allegations that under the previous government of YSRCP headed

by Jagan Mohan Reddy, the land, which was being used for a boatyard, was taken on lease for a small amount.

There were also allegations that the construction was taken up without taking approvals from CRDA and MTMC.

Former chief minister and YSRCP president Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has condemned the action by the TDP-led government. In his post on 'X', he said Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had resorted to political vendetta. He said a dictator demolished YSRCP's central office with bulldozers, ignoring the orders of the High Court.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said through these acts, Naidu was giving a message about how his regime was going to be for the next five years. The YSRCP Chief, however, said the party would not bow before these threats and political vendetta. He vowed to fight on behalf of the people and appealed to all democratic forces in the country to condemn these acts of Chandrababu Naidu.

ED unearths Rs 300 crore mining scam in Telangana

Hyderabad | Agencies

Day after searches at the premises of BRS MLA Gudem Mahipal Reddy, his brother Gudem Madhusudan Reddy and the latter's firm, the Enforcement Directorate on Friday said that the accused illegally amassed around Rs 300 crore by sale of illegally excavated material.

The Central agency also revealed that the accused evaded a royalty amount of Rs 39.08 crore due to the government. The ED's Hyderabad Zonal Office conducted search operations on June 20 at 10 locations in and around Hyderabad in a money laundering case against Santhosh Sand & Granite Supply, a proprietary concern of Gudem Madhusudan Reddy. The accused firm was found to have excavated and transported an excess quantity of 11,98,743 CBM of building stone and road metal within the quarry lease permitted area and 10,11,672 CBM of material beyond the permitted area (on encroached government land admeasuring 4.37 Ha), thus illegally amassing around Rs 300 crore by its sale and also evading the royalty amount due to the government, it said.

lakh, various property documents - in the names of unrelated persons who are suspected to be 'benamis' of the accused, mobile phones, and bank locker keys were recovered and seized, the ED said in a statement, adding examination of the bank lockers is expected to reveal further incriminating evidence. The agency initiated its investigation on the basis of FIRs registered by Telangana Police against Santhosh Sand & Granite Supply, a proprietary concern of Gudem Madhusudan Reddy. The accused firm was found to have excavated and transported an excess quantity of 11,98,743 CBM of building stone and road metal within the quarry lease permitted area and 10,11,672 CBM of material beyond the permitted area (on encroached government land admeasuring 4.37 Ha), thus illegally amassing around Rs 300 crore by its sale and also evading the royalty amount due to the government, it said.



Maha govt to soon set up committee to address OBC community's issues: Eknath Shinde

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amid ongoing protests, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Friday made it clear that the OBC reservation will not be affected, and the government will not allow injustice to the OBC community. He said that the state government is positive regarding the demands of the OBC community. CM Shinde also said that the state government will soon set up a cabinet sub-committee for the coordination on the OBC community quota and discuss issues on the lines of a sub-committee established for the Maratha community reservation and related issues.



Mahajan and Atul Save, former minister Pankaja Munde, BJP legislator Gopichand Padalkar and former legislator Prakash Shendge. The meeting, which was also

attended by Deputy Maharashtra Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar, took place at a time when OBC leaders Ganesh Hake and Nagnath Waghmare have started an

indefinite fast, while a few OBC leaders have launched similar sit-in dharna at Pune, stating the OBC quota should not be disturbed while providing Kunbi certificates to the Maratha community. Shinde also assured that Kunbi certificates will be linked to Aadhaar cards to avoid any forgery. The government will take action against those who take and give false certificates. Bhujbal after the meeting, told the reporters that the Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis is in favour of the caste census. He said that OBC leaders urged the state government not to take any decision in haste with regard to inclusion of the "sage soyare" term in the Maratha reservation notification. The term "sage soyare" in Marathi means through birth relations and relations by marriage. Bhujbal further added that the debate should take place during the upcoming monsoon session.

Chhota Shakeel's brother-in-law & terror-funding accused dies in Mumbai hospital

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A terror-funding accused Arif Abubakar Sheikh alias Arif Bhaijaan, died during treatment following a cardiac arrest at a government hospital, here on Saturday, a lawyer said. Adv. M.B. Shaikh said that the accused Sheikh -- the brother-in-law of fugitive gangster Chhota Shakeel -- had been rushed to the Sir JJ Hospital late Friday night following breathlessness and related problems where he succumbed during treatment. A relative claimed at the hospital that Sheikh, 63, who was lodged at the Arthur Road Central Jail, was hale and hearty with no known health problems, but the jail and hospital authorities were not revealing anything about his condition. After completing the necessary formalities, Sheikh's body was handed over to his relatives for the last rites this afternoon. Sheikh and his brother Shabbir were nabbed by the National Investigation Agency in May 2023 in connection with a terror-funding case filed in February 2022 against the absconder mafia don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, Chhota Shakeel and others. They were accused of arms smuggling, narco-terror, money laundering, printing and circulating fake currencies, and acquir-



ing assets with ill-gotten wealth, among other offences. The duo was also charged with harbouring terror links with global outfits like Al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and others. Besides the Sheikh brothers, another associate Salim Qureshi alias Salim Fruit was arrested in August 2023 on suspicion that he had grabbed Dawood's mafia empire after the death of the latter's sister Haseena (Kaskar) Parker.

Pro-OBC quota activists suspend hunger strike after talks with Bhujbal-led delegation

Team Absolute | Jalna (Maharashtra)

A day after Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde assured that OBC reservation won't be affected and the government will soon set up a cabinet committee to address their issues, pro-OBC quota activist Laxman Hake on Saturday suspended his 10-day indefinite hunger strike after talks with a ministerial delegation led by NCP minister Chhagan Bhujbal. Hake, however, clarified that he has not totally cancelled his protest but suspended it following the government's move to partially accept his demands that the OBC quota would not be touched, it would take action against the issue of fake caste certificates and hold a debate on OBC issues during the monsoon session of the assembly starting on June 27.



Navnath Waghmare, who was also on a hunger strike, too suspended his protest. Hake and Waghmare were sitting on the hunger strike since June 13 seeking the recognition of Kunbis, which is an agrarian OBC group, as Marathas, thus making them eligible for a quota in government jobs and education. The duo were opposed to any attempt to dilute the OBC quota.

Bhujbal, who is the founder of the Samata Parishad, targeted the pro-Maratha reservation activist Manoj Jarange Patil and declared that his bullying will not work. "Reservation is not a 'garibi hatao' programme, it is meant to gradually bring the unjust society forward," he said. "The battle is not over. We are not afraid of anyone. Henceforth, if you (OBC) all

stay together, your reservation will last. Nothing will happen if you sit with your hands folded. "Henceforth, if the power of the people unites, the power of money will be defeated. We want reservation in the state assembly and Lok Sabha. The caste wise census should be conducted as Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has extended his support to the same," said Bhujbal. "We want to stand by Laxman Hake and Navnath Waghmare. Dalit and tribal communities are with you (OBCs). False certificates were issued in many places in the state. Action should be taken against those who gave false certificates. Fake documents will be checked once again. A case will be registered against those who give false documents," stated Bhujbal.

Atal Setu ramp repair work in full swing, to be completed tonight: MMRDA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) said on Saturday that the repair work on the approach ramp to the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), also known as the Atal Setu, is in full swing and will be completed by tonight. After a detailed inspection by the MMRDA's operation and maintenance teams, the work started on Friday night despite heavy rain and has continued since then in full swing. Built at a cost of Rs 17,840 crore, the six-lane bridge is 21.8 km long with a 16.5 km sea link connecting South Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. In the past couple of days, there was speculation that the Atal Setu had allegedly developed cracks following which Maharashtra Congress President Nana Patole went to the spot for an inspection on Friday. Meanwhile, the MMRDA has reiterated that "the cracks on the approach road from Ulwe (Navi Mumbai side) are minor and located along the edge of the



road". It added that the re-patch work on the cracks -- detected at three locations -- has been taken up without disrupting the MTHL traffic. The MMRDA also said that contrary to the rumours, the cracks are not on the MTHL bridge, but on the approach ramp towards Mumbai on the Navi Mumbai end. "The cracks on Ramp 5 are minor longitudinal cracks in the asphalt pavement and do not indicate any structural defects," the MMRDA said. The repair work has been taken up by

the Package 4 contractor (Strabag Infrastructure & Safety Solutions GmbH and Strabag AG. On Friday evening, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said in a post on X: "There is no crack on Atal Setu, nor is there any danger to Atal Setu. This is a picture of the approach road. But one thing is clear - Congress has made a long-term plan to create a 'rift' with the help of lies... Only the people of the country will defeat this 'darar' plan and the corrupt behaviour of the Congress..." After visiting the bridge on Friday, Patole claimed that barely six months after the Atal Setu was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi (on January 12), cracks have appeared on it and a half-kilometre stretch of the road on the Navi Mumbai side has sunk by around one foot. He pointed out that the government spent Rs 18,000 crore for the MTHL with loans, and "this is not development but sheer corruption, and the state government is filling its own pockets while playing with the lives of the people".

HSP's candidate moves HC against Shiv Sena's win in Mumbai LS seat

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The case of a Shiv Sena winner of Mumbai North West Lok Sabha constituency, has now landed before the Bombay High Court, lawyers said here on Saturday. Hindu Samaj Party's (HSP) Bharat K. Shah, through his lawyer Asim Sarode, has moved the high court, challenging the election of ruling Shiv Sena-MahaYuti candidate Ravindra D. Waikar by merely 48 votes. Shah (54) through his legal team of Advocates Asim Sarode, Vinaykumar Khattu, Shriya Awale, Balkrishna Nidhalkar and others made the Election Commission of India (ECI), District Election Officer, Director-General of Police and Waikar. "We have demanded a stay on the counting of votes held at the NESCO grounds on June 4 and an injunction on the declared result. We have sought that all records, documents, CCTV, etc should be checked properly. On June 20, we have written to the Lok Sabha Secretary-General not to administer the oath of office to Waikar given the serious complaints and irregularities in the counting process," Sarode told reporter. Reacting to the development, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said it was necessary as the MahaYuti had hijacked the election of



one Mumbai LS seat, and in the interest of democracy, constitution and transparency of the poll process. In the election petition - which is likely to come up for hearing on July 01 - Shah has alleged that the ECI failed to conduct the elections and the counting of votes in a free and transparent environment, thus raising huge doubts among the people. When the Shiv Sena (UBT) was romping ahead in multiple rounds, and even declared a winner at one point, however, Waikar insisted on a recount of the postal ballots and after a series of quick developments, he was declared the winner by just 48 LS votes. Shah has raked up the prime issue behind his defeat at the use of a mobile phone inside the

NESCO grounds where all types of phones were banned. In the HC plea Shah pointed out the use of the mobile phone of one Dinesh Gurav, appointed on a temporary basis for the ECI work, and later by Prajakta Waikar-Mahale and subsequently even by Mangesh V. Padilkar, reportedly a relative of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, when the counting of votes was progressing. "Is such a temporary appointment of Dinesh Gurav in the ECI's office correct, especially since he is from a private company," asked Shah, adding that when he made oral enquiries he was informed that the phone was handed over by the Tehsildar, though no names were provided. He questioned why Prajakta Waikar-Mahale did not raise objections when the Election Returning Officer Vandana Suryawanshi was using her phone barely two feet away. The petition contends that the Maharashtra Police did not perform their role within the framework of the law and delayed the handing over of the matter to the Vanrai Police Station after several hours. During the time of the 'delay' the whole sensitive situation was being allegedly handled by Mangesh V. Padilkar, who has also come under the police scanner.

Fadnavis calls Congress 'factory of fake news' after its claims on water supply rate hike

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who also holds the water resources portfolio, on Saturday slammed the Congress' claims that the state government has increased the water supply rates by 10 times. In a scathing post on X, Fadnavis denied Congress' claims as he called the party a "factory of fake news and fake narrative". "Congress is spreading the news that the Maharashtra government has increased the water supply rate by 10 times. But, who made this increase," asked Fadnavis. "On March 29, 2022, the Maharashtra Water Resources Regulatory Authority (MWRA) issued an order and accordingly the rate hike took place. This entire rate hike happened during the Maha Vikas Aghadi rule and now they are accusing us," Fadnavis said. In 2018, the rates for run-off and private pump irrigation were different. However, in 2022, flow-through rates were introduced instead of separate rates for private drawals. So it was increased from Rs 500 to Rs 5,000. "This sin belongs to the previous Maha



Vikas Aghadi government. Since the farmers should not be penalised, the work to suspend the rate hike is in its final stage. The proceedings will be completed next week," Fadnavis said. "I also request the media to check the fake narratives being spread by the opposition ahead of the Assembly elections. The people of the state should now decide which was the 'Sultani' government," he added.

Maharashtra Common Entrance Test pattern transparent: Commissioner

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Days after Shiv Sena leader Aaditya Thackeray demanded transparency in the recently conducted Maharashtra Health and Technical Common Entrance Test (MHT-CET) for engineering, Dilip Sardesai, the Commissioner of the State Common Entrance Test Chamber (CET Chamber), on Saturday claimed that the exam pattern is completely transparent and without human intervention. "Maharashtra is the first state in the country to make the admission process for professional courses computerized and centralized. This method has been adopted later by the Central government. This method is completely transparent and without human intervention," said Sardesai. He appealed to the students and their parents not to believe in rumours.



Sardesai said that the 2024 exam was conducted by the State Common Entrance Test cell for admission to

Engineering, Pharmacology and Agriculture Education courses at 169 examination centres. A total of 3, 30, 988 male students,

3,94,033 female students and 31 transgender candidates had registered online for this test. Of these registered candidates, 6,75,377 students appeared for the test. "There is no system of giving negative marks to the candidates if the answer to any question is wrong. The said result is declared by percentile method. No grace marks have been given to any candidate in the said examination result. If there are any objections or complaints to the parents, examinees regarding the question or answer under this examination, the objection registration facility was made available through an online system through the CET cell," said Sardesai. He stated that the objections registered by the candidates have been verified by subject wise experts and the answer sheets have been modified accordingly. The reports have been published on the website of the CET cell for the information of the candidates.

Man marries 17-year-old niece, rapes her; case filed

Team Absolute | Thane

Police in Maharashtra's Thane have registered a case against a 23-year-old man from Jalna district in the state for marrying his minor niece two years back, an official said on Saturday. The police also registered the case against his brother and the victim's father, he said. "Based on a complaint lodged by the girl, who is 17 years old and pregnant now, an FIR was registered on Thursday under provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act against the trio," the official at the Wagle Estate police station told

PTI. The case has been transferred to Mantha police station in Jalna district, as the crime took place in its limits, he said. The official said the accused are the girl's husband (23), who is her maternal uncle, his brother and the victim's father (43). Quoting the complaint, the official said the marriage was conducted on July 13, 2022 when the victim was only 15 years and five months old. Her father got her married to her maternal uncle. The marriage was solemnised at Mantha in Jalna, the complaint said. As per the FIR, the victim was subjected to repeated rape by her husband, following which she became pregnant, the official said.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Foreign portfolio investors bullish on Indian markets

Buoyed by the policy and reform continuity, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have altered their position in the equity market following the election results, injecting Rs 23,786 crore since June 10, industry analysts said on Saturday. There are three primary reasons for this positive inflow. "First, the continuity of the government assures ongoing reforms. Second, the Chinese economy is decelerating, as evidenced by a 12 per cent decline in copper prices over the past month," said Sunil Damania, Chief Investment Officer, MojoPMS. Third, certain block deals in the market have been eagerly taken up by FPIs. "However, these FPI inflows are concentrated in a select few stocks rather than being widespread across the market or sectors," Damania said. Till June, FPIs sold equity for Rs 11,193 crore. According to market experts, it is interesting to note that this net sell figure is composed of selling through the exchanges for Rs 45,794 crore and buying through the "primary market and others" for Rs 34,600 crore. FPIs are selling where valuations are high and buying where valuations are reasonable. Analysts believe that FPI inflows will remain constrained due to the high valuations currently commanded by the Indian equity market. Meanwhile, the Indian market initially continued its upward trend as concerns over election outcomes eased and global sentiment improved. With a coalition government in place, there is optimism that the upcoming budget will strike a balance between growth initiatives and populist measures, they noted.

Panchayat and Phulera: What Urban Indian Dreams Are Made Of

Arup K. Chatterjee

It'd be a cliché to recognise the recent phenomenon of filming "real" India for "real" Indians, if one were to go by that old adage that "India lives in its villages". Earlier this month, the third season of Amazon Prime's highly loved web series, Panchayat, premiered with great fanfare. Thus far, the series seems to have delivered on its promises, with its viewership only increasing. However, as some critics argue, the once-beloved "Phulera Gaon" of Panchayat has got embroiled in "a political maelstrom", challenging the show's earlier vibe, as journalist Vibha Maru puts it. She notes that the 'Phul' of Phulera has lost its lustre. Maru's observation of the fading Malgudi Days-like simplicity of Phulera and Phakoli Bazaar gains credence considering the growing reliance of OTT platforms on big data to cater to specific audience preferences and perpetuate certain aesthetics or predispositions.

What initially appeared as a timeless Indian tale of Abhishek (played by Jitendra Kumar), an IIM aspirant-turned-village secretary, and his earnest companion Vikas (Chandan Roy), supported by Brij Bhushan Dubey (Raghubir Yadav), Manju Devi (Neena Gupta), Prahlad Pandey (Faisal Malik), Rinki (Sanvika), Bhushan (Durgesh Kumar), Binod (Ashok Pathak), and others, has now evolved into a narrative encompassing social, political, and gender complexities unique to 21st-century suburban India. The question remains: how idyllic is the India that Panchayat portrays on screen, and how credible is the transformation of its fictional village to a potentially darker reality? Given the series' broad appeal, opinions naturally vary. Political scientist and Tata Institute of Social Sciences professor Ashwani Kumar suggests that Panchayat challenges "the endurable images of primordial rural reality in the classic Do Bigha Zamin (1953), Pather Panchali (1955) or Mother India (1957)". Instead, it presents a "delightful and seductive celluloid ethnography of vernacular cosmopolitanism in Indian villages". Steering clear of stereotypical, crude, or unrealistically utopian portrayals of rural life, Phulera in Panchayat offers a cinematic journey that Ashis Nandy describes as a "time travel to a potential self" within an Indian village, where genuine Indian experiences confront contrived, pseudo depictions of the village. Rural cultural entrepreneur and founder of banglanatak.com, Amitava Bhattacharjee, concurs on the theme of representative realism, noting that Panchayat authentically portrays rural life, striking a balance by showcasing both its charms and its challenges. Until the release of Season 3, these viewpoints largely encapsulated critical perspectives on the series. According to Bhattacharjee, until the previous season, Panchayat explored the daily lives of simple villagers, focusing on their interactions and challenges through "situational comedy", highlighting rural bureaucracy's absurdities and inefficiencies. The narrative centred on a city graduate's journey of getting used to village life. Bhattacharjee emphasised that the series' triumph lay not merely in its depiction of rural India but in revitalising a rustic genre devoid of guns, crime, and bloodshed. It almost reminded one of "the Doordarshan serials from many moons ago", says Mumbai- and Delhi-based author and entrepreneur, Shriti Tyagi. This sentiment is echoed by filmmaker and Al Jazeera journalist



Gautam Singh, who praises the series for its sharp portrayal of rural India's humour and authenticity, particularly in capturing the nuances of "purvanchali boli" or dialects from Eastern Uttar Pradesh, including the Ballia district. However, Singh cautions that no single show can fully capture the diversity of rural setting. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the larger political contexts shaping OTT series like Panchayat. Harish Wankhede, Professor of Political Science at Jawaharlal Nehru University, observes that a stylised urban perspective shapes new representations of rural and suburban India. He further adds that "there is a clear bifurcation between theatre-going viewership sensibilities and OTT aesthetics". In many of these ostensibly realistic portrayals of a newly mainstreamed rural India, caste complexities remain neglected, laments Wankhede. Rittvika Singh, Professor of English at IGNOU, further observes that OTT platforms cater to the interests of the social elite and have failed to address the issue of deeply entrenched caste dynamics. "The casual erasure of caste - given that all the main characters of the series hail from a particular caste - works as a tried and tested way of mainstream viewing to avoid dealing with difficult questions," she says.

This observation resonates with Jitendra Kumar's acknowledgement that OTT platforms attract a significant following among urban young adults, who eagerly wait to return home to their favourite web series after corporate work hours, where 'authenticity' becomes both a buzzword and a contested concept. Rittvika Singh observes that while Season 1 of Panchayat authentically portrayed rural life, its realism has waned since then. "What if," she questions, "the panchayat election is fought on caste lines (as it often is in reality)? Would the Pradhan have the same circle of associates if he weren't from a

privileged caste? Would he accept a secretary from a different caste? Imagining a comedy on screen that is not only emotionally but also politically aware of village social dynamics would be more intriguing." Bhattacharjee concurs, suggesting that Panchayat could have delved into caste dynamics, gender inequality, and economic disparities. Despite these evident shortcomings in its political narrative and the complex politics surrounding its consumption and incidental learning, the question, as Kumar advises, is this: should Panchayat become a victim of its success? The show deserves recognition for what it represents: an India that was not considered worthy of mainstream portrayal until a decade ago. Rather than solely interrogating Panchayat, one should consider what prompts the urban gaze to localise themes of frustration, aggression, and violence in smaller towns and the so-deemed "less civilised" parts of India, and why cities like Noida, Delhi, Bangalore or Mumbai are usually spared this treatment. There is a noticeable rise in the number of screenwriters and filmmakers from cosmopolitan cities dedicated to crafting exotic narratives of rural India, especially following the success of Anurag Kashyap's Gangs of Wasseypur (2012) duology. One might even link this new OTT trend to the political changes in India since 2014. However, correlation does not necessarily imply causation. Thus, while the spotlight on Phulera may seem too rose-tinted to serious critics, what if the medium itself is the message? Perhaps India's socio-political destinies are indeed quietly brewing in its villages and small towns.

international

S.Korea, US, Japan agree on close cooperation through 'timely' dialogue after Kim-Putin summit

Washington/New York | Agencies

South Korea, the US and Japan have agreed on close security cooperation through "timely" consultation after Russia and North Korea signed a new security treaty during a summit in Pyongyang this week, Seoul's top diplomat said.

South Korea's Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul made the remarks on Friday, commenting on his back-to-back phone calls with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, Yonhap news agency reported.

On Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un signed a "comprehensive strategic partnership" treaty that included an article calling for one side to provide military assistance to the other "without delay" in case of an armed invasion.



"In response to North Korea's threats, we agreed to strengthen the robust South Korea-US alliance and security cooperation among South Korea, the US and Japan, while closely working together to lead stern responses of the international community," Cho said in a meeting with reporters.

"I think that it is meaningful that we sent a strong message under close coop-

eration through timely consultation with the friendly countries of the US and Japan," he added.

Cho was in New York to attend an official UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting on cybersecurity that took place on Thursday.

Cho presided over the council meeting as South Korea holds this month's rotating UNSC presidency.

"As we have undertaken the UNSC presidency at this challenging juncture, we will make efforts to ensure that this role as the UNSC President will serve as an opportunity to expand the horizons of our diplomacy and enhance our standing as a global pivotal state," he said.

The government of President Yoon Suk Yeol has been pursuing the role of a "global pivotal state" to contribute more to tackling global issues in line with its growing national stature.

Bird flu outbreak at US dairy farms cause public health concerns

Los Angeles | Agencies

The ongoing bird flu outbreak at US dairy farms has heightened concerns among public health experts as more dairy herds have tested positive for the virus in recent months. The influenza A (H5N1) virus, commonly known as bird flu, is widespread in wild birds worldwide and has been circulating in US poultry since 2022, reports Xinhua news agency. However, the situation escalated in late 2023 when the virus is believed to have jumped from birds to dairy cows at a Texas farm. This was followed by a human infection in April linked to exposure to infected cattle. To date, three human cases of infection have been reported, bringing the total number of US H5N1 cases to four, including one case in 2022 linked to poultry exposure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The virus had been confirmed in at



least 115 dairy herds across 12 states as of Thursday, according to the latest tally posted on the US Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service website.

In a new study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), researchers found "small, detectable amounts of infectious (H5N1) virus remained in raw milk samples with high virus levels" when treated at 72 degrees Celsius for 15 seconds -- one of the standard pasteurisation methods used by the dairy industry, according to an NIH press release last week. The CDC noted that while the current public health risk is low, it is

watching the situation carefully and working with states to monitor people with animal exposures.

But public health experts have paid attention to the government's slow response and inadequate testing.

The World Health Organization considers bird flu a public health concern, as these viruses, including the H5N1 strain, can result in mild to severe illness and death and have the potential to mutate to become more contagious, says the organisation on its website.

While infections have been confirmed in cattle across the country, only 45 individuals have been tested for novel influenza A since March, with 550 under monitoring, according to the CDC's latest update on June 14.

Aside from the limited availability of bird flu tests, experts said the low trust of farm owners and farm workers towards the government also makes it difficult to detect potential cases.

UN chief voices 'profound concern' over escalating violence between Israel, Hezbollah

United Nations | Agencies

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has voiced "profound concern" over escalating violence and "belligerent rhetoric" between Israel and Hezbollah militants across the frontier with Lebanon.

Speaking to the press on Friday at the UN headquarters in New York, the UN Chief warned that one false move could trigger a catastrophe for the whole region and beyond, Xinhua news agency reported.

"One rash move -- one miscalculation -- could trigger a catastrophe that goes far beyond the border, and frankly, beyond imagination," he said.

He stressed that a widening of the conflict in the Middle East must be avoided. "Let's be clear: The people of the region and the people of the world cannot afford Lebanon to become another Gaza," he stressed.

The UN Chief noted that on both sides of the Blue Line, many people have already lost their lives, and



tens of thousands of people have been driven from their homes, with their livelihoods destroyed.

He urged both sides to urgently recommit to the full implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1701 and immediately return to a cessation of hostilities.

Adopted in 2006, the resolution set in motion a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern

Lebanon and the establishment of a demilitarised zone.

"The world must say loudly and clearly: immediate de-escalation is not only possible -- it is essential," Guterres said, declaring that "there is no military solution".

"It is time for reason and rationality. It is time for practical and pragmatic engagement by the parties to the diplomatic and political avenues available to them," he stressed, noting that the

cessation of hostilities and progress toward a permanent ceasefire is the only durable solution.

The UN Chief also stressed the need to protect civilians, ensure that children, journalists and medical workers are not targeted, and ensure the displaced can return to their homes. The United Nations is actively engaging to promote peace, security and stability, in line with resolution 1701, he said.

"UN peacekeepers, UNIFIL, are on the ground working to de-escalate tensions and help prevent miscalculation, in an extremely challenging environment," he said, adding that the United Nations fully supports diplomatic efforts to end the violence, restore stability and avoid even greater human suffering in the region.

"And we do so as we continue to press for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages and a real pathway to a two-state solution," Guterres concluded.

Heavy rain hits South Korea; govt activates counter-disaster team



Seoul | Agencies

Heavy rains pounded southern regions in South Korea on Saturday, including the southernmost resort island of Jeju, with the government initiating anti-disaster operations to brace for emergencies. Heavy rainfall of up to 150 millimetres was expected in Jeju over the weekend and as much as 50-100 mm in southwestern Gwangju city and the surrounding South Jeolla Province, according to the Korea Meteorological Administration (KMA).

The Gwangju regional weather agency said it issued heavy rain advisories for the entire Gwangju and South Jeolla regions starting at noon, reports Yonhap news

agency.

A heavy rain advisory is issued when rainfall is expected to exceed 60 mm in three hours or 110 mm in 12 hours.

The Ministry of the Interior and Safety said it activated the Level 1 operation of the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasures Headquarters to respond to the heavy rains.

The warning level has been elevated to "caution" from "attention", it said.

Interior Minister Lee Sang-min called for citizens to avoid visiting regions where the advisories have been issued and instructed related government agencies to proactively prepare for any potential damage.

Ukraine to start membership talks with EU next week: PM



Kiev | Agencies

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal has said that his country will start membership talks with the EU next week.

"On June 25, we will hold the Ukraine-EU Intergovernmental Conference, which will mark the formal start of negotiations on our accession," Shmyhal told a government meeting on Friday as reported by Xinhua news agency.

After the conference, Ukraine and the EU will launch detailed technical negotiations on dozens of different chapters of the future membership agreement, he said.

Earlier on Friday, the EU adopted the negotiating frameworks for accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, thus greenlighting the membership talks.

Ukraine was accepted as a candidate for EU membership in June 2022.

In December 2023, the EU leaders agreed to open accession talks with Kiev.



METRO PROJECT IN MADHYA PRADESH WILL BE COMPLETE BY 2027: CM MOHAN YADAV

► METRO TRAIN OPERATION WILL START BETWEEN INDORE-UJJAIN. CHIEF MINISTER'S DISCUSSION WITH UNION RAILWAY MINISTER VAISHNAV. TRAFFIC PLANS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED FOR BIG CITIES OF THE STATE WITH THE CONSENT OF PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Saturday reviewed the progress of metro rail work in two big cities - Bhopal and Indore and said that the project will be completed in the state by 2027. During the meeting with the State's Urban Development Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya, the CM gave necessary directions to the officials associated with the project. Later, he said work on the second phase metro from Karond to Subhash Nagar in Bhopal will start soon. The new phase of metro development, which will have eight stations, is expected to cost around Rs 1,500

crore. The foundation stone of this nine km long metro route was laid down by CM Yadav in March this year. Bhopal metro is under construction. The Chief Minister also informed that 40 per cent work of Indore rail metro project has been completed. "Entire rail metro project will be completed by 2027, and by 2031, more than 4 lakh people will travel in the metro every day," the Chief Minister said. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that according to the recent discussion with Union Railway Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnav, it has been agreed to run Vande Metro for various cities

in Madhya Pradesh. Vande Metro Circle Train in place of the old metro will be a great gift for the citizens. In cities where traffic pressure is increasing, it has been agreed to start the facility of circle train for integrated planning of metro train operations. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav also had discussions with the Railway Minister regarding the operation of Vande Metro, which runs at a higher speed than the speed of the metro train, the use of modern technology and benefiting industrial areas like Pithampur-Dewas. Regarding the use of narrow-gauge and other rail lines available in some cities of the state, Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that its survey and study should be completed so that

the rail tracks which are currently not in use can be used. There will be many public facilities at the metro station. This includes baggage check, passenger security check, drinking water, washroom, first aid, wheelchair, stretcher, manual call point, fire fighting equipment, lift, escalator, platform screen door, passenger route map, passenger information system, emergency stop plunger, emergency trip system, emergency help button, waiting bench. Similarly, the facilities available in the train include air conditioning, grab poles and grab handles, seating arrangements, guides, passenger announcements, cameras and mobile charging points, emergency communication system, emergency exit doors, smoke/fire detection. Special care will be taken of women and disabled people. There will also be a child care room. There will be facilities like call button, support staff, ramp from road to lift, touch path and wheelchair in toilets for disabled people. There will be arrangements for complete monitoring from the centralized control room. During the Assembly elections in November 2023, it was said that the metro project in Bhopal would be completed by mid-2024 and would be opened to commuters, however, the project got delayed.

Minister, top officials responsible for nursing college scam: MP LoP



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Umang Singhar on Saturday accused Minister Vishwas Sarang and top state officials of being responsible for the nursing college scam. "Vishwas Sarang, his OCD Mahendra Gupta, ACS Mohammed Suleman and some other officials are responsible for the scam in the nursing colleges. Their role should be examined,"

the LoP said. On Thursday, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav ordered the suspension of three officials, including Sunita Shiju, who was then in charge of the MP Nursing Colleges Registration Council. The LoP alleged that Minister Vishwas Sarang, who was the Medical Education Minister in former Shivraj Singh Chauhan's cabinet, along with the top officials are being shielded by the incumbent BJP government.

He said that earlier MP Nursing Colleges Registration Council used to function under the supervision of a representative body which was changed by the state government a few years ago. Over a dozen persons, including two CBI officials - who were part of the investigation, have been arrested in the past few weeks. The multi-layer case is being heard before the Madhya Pradesh High Court.

MP woman assaulted by men, seven arrested after video goes viral

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In a shocking video that has gone viral in Madhya Pradesh, a woman was seen being brutally assaulted by a group of men in the Dhar district as bystanders were busy filming the act instead of helping her. The video shows the helpless saree-clad woman being thrashed with sticks while three men hold her hands tightly. Around a dozen more surround her to prevent her from running away. Adjacent to the spot where the woman was attacked, the slogan 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' can be seen scribbled on the wall of a building in the video. The police swung into action after Dhar Superintendent of Police (SP) Manoj Singh watched the viral video and directed local area (Tanda police station) police to arrest the accused persons as



soon as possible. An intense search operation was carried out by several police teams. Seven accused were arrested from different villages, said officials on Saturday. "All seven persons, who have been made accused in the FIR lodged by the victim, have been arrested. They have been

booked under Section 307 of IPC and other relevant sections. We assure you that the accused will be punished as per the law," SP Manoj Singh told reporter. The reason for the attack was being probed, said sources, adding that the men were not known to her.

WITH SHIVRAJ CHOUHAN'S MOVE TO DELHI, SPOTLIGHT ON SON KARTIKEY CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Bhopal

With Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the former chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, making to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet and the switch to Delhi, political circles are abuzz about the possible rise of his son Kartikey Singh Chouhan. Chouhan, now Union Agriculture Minister, led a grand roadshow in Bhopal last Sunday. This was followed by a workers' gratitude conference in Bherunda, Sehore, on Friday amid huge buzz that the Minister's son, Kartikey Chouhan, might be fielded from the Budhni Assembly seat vacated by his father. In Bhopal, Chouhan's roadshow drew massive crowds, underscoring people's love for the leader. Supporters lined both sides of the streets, waved flags and cheered for him. In Bherunda, Sehore, at a workers' gratitude conference, to celebrate the historic victory of Chouhan in the Budhni Assembly, Kartikey Chauhan, along with his mother Sadhana Singh, thanked the people. Senior Chouhan addressed the gathering through video conferencing. Addressing the workers, Kartikey Chouhan highlighted the overwhelming support from the Budhni Assembly constituency, where his father secured a remarkable victory by 1.5 lakh votes. "The people of Budhni have consistently given their blessings to our leader, making Shivraj ji the



only leader whose election is fought by the people of the constituency. I bow at your feet," said the Junior Chouhan, an alumnus of the University of Pennsylvania Law School. The event was attended by several officials, including the BJP District President. Kartikey Chouhan used this platform to discuss various issues with the workers and reflect on the challenges faced during the 2023 elections. "Many fingers were raised, but we have given a befitting reply to the intellectuals. I do not see any difference between you, me and Shivraj ji. We all have many bodies and one soul," said the son. "In the 2024 elections, everyone put forward their views in the Vidisha parliamentary constituency meeting. The results came out, and we registered a victory by one and a half lakh votes," he proudly announced.

Shivraj Chouhan, popularly known as Mama (maternal uncle), expressed gratitude for the love and respect shown by the people. "It is because of your love and respect that I have reached here. I bow at your feet. Due to my busy schedule, I could not come, but I will definitely come next week. Development work will continue uninterrupted," he assured. Highlighting his father's enduring popularity, Kartikey Chouhan said, "Our leader was popular even as Chief Minister, and he became more popular when he was not the Chief Minister. After such a huge victory, today even the entire Delhi bows down. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, our leader Shivraj Singh Chauhan is counted among the biggest leaders in the country." Congress' Digvijaya Singh, who lost from Raghogarh in the just concluded Lok Sabha polls, made light of Junior Chouhan's remarks. "If Shivraj's popularity truly extends from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, BJP leaders should acknowledge this and consider promoting Shivraj to the position of Prime Minister," said Singh. Amid these celebrations, there is growing speculation that Kartikey Chouhan might be fielded from the Budhni Assembly seat, which was vacated by his father after being elected as a Member of Parliament. This potential move could further consolidate the Chouhan family's influence in the region.

Statewide campaign from 23rd to 25th June to maintain polio protection cycle

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla has said that in order to provide double protection to the children, arrangements have been made to give two drops of life to children aged 0 to 5 years in all the districts of the state. Deputy Chief Minister Shukla has called upon all citizens to administer polio vaccine to infants every time. Contribute to maintaining the country's victory over polio. "National Pulse Polio Campaign" is being organized in the state from 23 to 25 June 2024. The state-wide campaign will be launched by Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Prasad Shukla on June 23 at 9 am in the District Early



Intervention Unit (Jaiprakash Hospital Complex). A statewide campaign is being run from 23rd to 25th June to maintain the polio protection cycle. In the three-day campaign, polio drops will be administered to children aged 0 to 5 years in 27 thousand 371 polio booths. Along with this, 1,237 transit teams have been formed for polio drop campaigns in specific areas. 6,130 mobile teams have been formed for high risk areas and 455 for migratory areas. On the second and third day of the campaign, 27,271 teams will go door-to-door to administer polio drops to the left-out children. Arrangements for 1 crore 45 lakh polio doses have been made for the campaign in the state.

NEWS OF MP PSC 2024 EXAM PAPER LEAKED, COMMISSION DID NOT CONFIRM

Bhopal: The news of MP PSC 2024 exam paper to be held on Sunday has been leaked on Telegram channel. In this regard, OSD of MP PSC Ravindra Panchbhai said that the form is going viral, but there is no official confirmation in this regard. According to sources, a Telegram group named "MP PSC Paper Leak" has been created, in which it is being claimed that the MP PSC 2024 Pre Exam paper has been leaked. In this group, people are being asked to get the paper by paying money. However, the authenticity of this news has not been confirmed yet and it is also being considered fake.

Monsoon reaches Madhya Pradesh, heavy rain expected for next 5 days

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Monsoon has arrived in Madhya Pradesh, making the weather pleasant across the state. According to the Meteorological Department, heavy rain is expected for the next 5 days. During this period, people have been advised to remain alert and stay in safe places. Due to rain, there may be problem of waterlogging in low-lying areas, hence the administration has completed preparations. Citizens are advised to keep an eye on the website



of local administration and meteorological department for latest weather updates and advisories.

Disciplinary action will be taken against 6 inspectors for irregularities in nursing institutions

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Commissioner, Public Health and Medical Education have informed that disciplinary action will be taken against 6 inspectors of nursing institutions. He said that in the session 2021-22, a total of 10 nursing colleges were given recognition for the session 2021-22 in an irregular manner which was later canceled due to various reasons as it did not conform to the standards. Out of the above 10 nursing institutions, 8 nursing institutions were given recognition by the then Registrar contrary to the Recognition Rules, 2018, despite the adverse inspection report of the inspectors. The immediate registrar has been dismissed from service for

irregularities. The other two nursing institutions, Vaishnavi College, Indore and RDM Nursing College, Umaria, were given recognition on the basis of favorable reports of the inspectors. Which was later canceled due to various reasons as it was not as per the criteria. Under the Madhya Pradesh Nursing Educational Institution Recognition Rules, 2018 and amended rules 2019, 2020, 2021 under the Public Health and Medical Education Department, the process of issuing recognition to the nursing schools/colleges located in the state is taken by the Madhya Pradesh Nurses Registration Council. Before the year 2018, the recognition related proceedings were conducted by the Indian Nursing Council, New Delhi.

Various new facilities inaugurated at AIIMS Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Three new facilities were inaugurated on June 22, 2024, at AIIMS Bhopal by Shri Apurva Chandra (IAS), Secretary Health, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, in presence of Dr. Jaideep Mishra (ICAS), Additional Secretary and Financial Advisor, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, and Professor (Dr.) Ajai Singh, Executive Director & CEO, AIIMS Bhopal: 1. Centre of Excellence for Rare Diseases, AIIMS Bhopal 2. In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) Skill Lab 3. Matrix Assisted Laser Desorption Ionization-Time of Flight mass spectrophotometry (MALDI-TOF MS). With the starting of these facilities, AIIMS Bhopal has not only further expanded the scope of services that are being provided at the institute, but also reiterated its strong commitment to providing exemplary healthcare to the people of the region. A brief description of these facilities is as under: The CoE for Rare Diseases at AIIMS Bhopal aims to address the critical need for specialized healthcare facilities in Central India, par-



ticularly for genetic disorders prevalent in the region, such as sickle cell disease, thalassemia, and muscular dystrophy. With approximately 20% of the local population being tribal, there is a significant burden of these genetic disorders. In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) Skill Lab: The IVF Treatment Facility is expected to start very soon at AIIMS Bhopal, making it the first gov-

ernment facility offering IVF treatment in the state. The IVF Skill Lab is a training facility with several high-fidelity digital simulators that enable doctors to practice the various procedures required for infertility treatment and IVF, such as hysteroscopy, Ovum pick-up and Embryo Transfer as part of IVF training. These simulators are based on modern digital & AI technology and incorporate a wide vari-

ety of procedures and cases with varying difficulty levels for the trainees. This allows the doctors to practice the procedures several times safely on the simulator before performing on real patients. This is a very important aspect towards ensuring patient safety. Matrix Assisted Laser Desorption Ionization-Time of Flight Mass Spectrophotometry (MALDI-TOF MS): MALDI-TOF MS has emerged as a potential tool for microbial identification and diagnosis. It can identify pathogens, including rare microbes, within 15-30 minutes, in comparison to 18-24 hours with other automated systems. Visit to the 3-D Bioprinter Facility: After the inauguration of the various facilities, and a round of the AIIMS Hospital, the dignitaries and delegation of officials from MoHFW (GOI), visited the recently established 3-D Bioprinter facility at the Tissue Engineering Facility in the Department of Translational Medicine at AIIMS Bhopal, supported by Vardhaman Group under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. 3-D bioprinting is an advanced manufacturing process that creates three-dimensional biological structures by layering bioinks composed of living cells and biomaterials.



Justin Timberlake addresses arrest, says 'it's been a tough week'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor-singer Justin Timberlake addressed his recent arrest for the first time during his concert in Chicago on Friday evening.

"It's been a tough week. I know I'm hard to love sometimes, but you keep loving me right back," Timberlake told the United Center crowd, reports page-six.com.

Timberlake made these remarks during a message to his fans, emphasising that they've both been through "ups-and-downs and lefts-and-rights."

During his arrest, Timberlake voiced his concern that the traffic stop would "ruin the tour."

Timberlake is currently on his Forget Tomorrow World Tour, which kicked off in Vancouver, British Columbia, on April 29 and includes stops in more than 50 cities.

However, on Thursday, a music industry insider confirmed that the legal incident would not affect the ongoing tour and that he would "continue promotion for his album ('Everything I Thought It Was') as planned, which, of course, includes his tour dates."

His Chicago concert marked his first performance following his brief stint in jail. The 10-time Grammy winner was arrested in New York shortly after midnight on Tuesday while travelling back to his hotel from a dinner with friends.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Taylor Wily — known for his roles in Hawaii Five-0 and Forgetting Sarah Marshall — has died. He was 56. Hawaii Five-0 executive producer Peter M. Lenkov confirmed the news in several Instagram posts on Thursday, June 20. "T, as I told you many times, I fell in love with you at the first audition," Peter

wrote in one caption, alongside a video montage of memories with Taylor. "You came in with a towel on your head mopping up sweat, and I was smitten. You charmed me into making you a regular ... on the show ... and in my life. You were family. And I will miss you every day, brother."

Peter then revealed in his caption that he had just spoken to Taylor one week before his death. "PS: when we spoke last week, we laughed at

how right you were from Day 1. Five-0 was our dream job," the producer added. "And I was so lucky we got to share that magic together."

Peter followed up in a separate Instagram post by sharing a photo of both of them. The image was seemingly taken on the set of the drama series, "I am devastated. Heartbroken," Peter wrote, before adding, "I'll post some detailed feelings later. Just too hard right now."

'Hawaii Five-0' star was also a sumo wrestler Taylor Wily Dies at 56

Los Angeles | Agencies

Ben Affleck is well aware of his wife Jennifer Lopez's worldwide fame. While speaking with Kevin Hart during a new episode of the comedian's Peacock show, Hart to Heart, the 51-year-old Oscar winner pointed out that the 54-year-old "Jenny From the Block" hitmaker "really represents something important to people."

"[To me], people are like, 'Hey, I like your movie,' and then they're like 'AAHHHHH! J-LO!' It's amazing, you know what I mean?" Ben gushed over his wife, while describing fans' reactions to him and Jennifer.

However, being married to one of the most recognizable celebs in the business, Ben has encountered overwhelming crowds and photographers. During his interview, the Argo director recalled a time when he and Jennifer brought their respective kids to see a play in New York City. Ben shares his children, Violet, Seraphina and Samuel, with ex-wife Jennifer Garner, and J. Lo shares her twins, Max and Emme, with ex-husband Marc Anthony.

"We get out of the car, we were going to a play, and I was like, 'F**k it, baby, we're going to be late, we gotta walk a block and a half.' She was like, 'Alright,' she didn't say s**t," the Good Will Hunting actor said. "[I] get out with her, all the kids, through Times Square, and the s**t was, like, f**king bananas."

While remembering how many fans swarmed them, Ben noted, "I was like, 'Oh my God.' There was a lady, she was smoking weed, in a full purple skin-tight suit — she's a big, heavy lady — and she starts running backward filming, going 'J-LO!' Like a herald, that then gets everyone else, and then all the tourists



BEN AFFLECK IS WELL AWARE OF HIS WIFE JENNIFER LOPEZ'S WORLDWIDE FAME

JIMMY FALLON TREASURES BRACELET MADE FOR HIM AND GIVEN AS A GIFT BY EMMA STONE



Los Angeles | Agencies

Talk show host Jimmy Fallon revealed that he has treasured a bracelet gifted to him by actress Emma Stone, which she made for him during the pandemic. He flaunted the jewellery when she returned for another guest appearance on 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon', reports FemaleFirst.co.uk.

While showing the present to the audience, he pointed out how it was made with plastic letter beads, spelling out the message: "BRACELET FOR

JIMMY." The bracelet features green heart beads as well as green, yellow, and orange circular ones, and a single blue bead. Stone shared how she started making friendship bracelets long before her friend Taylor Swift made them trendy again with lyrics in a song on her 2022 album 'Midnights'.

The actress added to Jimmy: "Remember Covid, where everybody got a hobby? Where it was like, 'I'll make sourdough.' I was making bracelets, so, yeah, I had to send you one." Fallon shared that he keeps the bracelet in the same plastic bag it came in and said it had been signed and labelled by the actress.

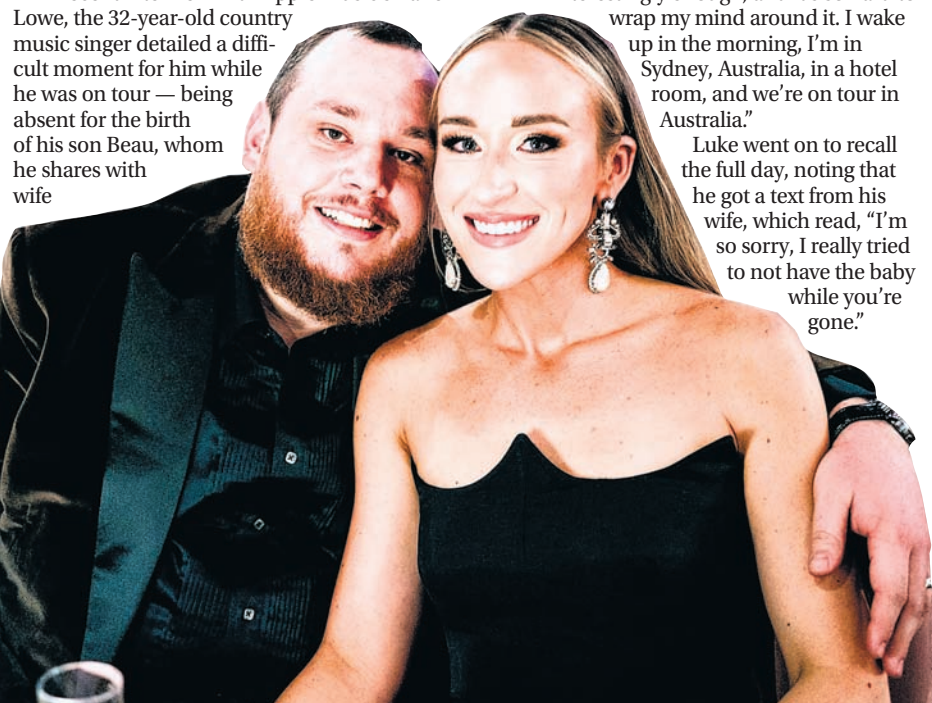
Luke Combs Tearfully Recalls Missing the Birth of His Second Son

Los Angeles | Agencies

Luke Combs puts his family above everything, including his career. During a recent interview with Apple Music's Zane Lowe, the 32-year-old country music singer detailed a difficult moment for him while he was on tour — being absent for the birth of his son Beau, whom he shares with wife

Nicole Hocking. "I'll never forget the craziest day, probably, in my life, close to it," the "Fast Car" artist began. "One of the best and one of the worst days in my life at the same time was, interestingly enough, and it's so hard to wrap my mind around it. I wake up in the morning, I'm in Sydney, Australia, in a hotel room, and we're on tour in Australia."

Luke went on to recall the full day, noting that he got a text from his wife, which read, "I'm so sorry, I really tried to not have the baby while you're gone."



JENNIFER LAWRENCE TO STAR IN HER OWN PRODUCTION 'THE WIVES'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Jennifer Lawrence will be starring in the upcoming film 'The Wives', a murder mystery, which she is set to produce. Joining Lawrence on the producing team is Justine Ciarrocchi, her partner at the duo's Excellent Cadaver production banner, as well as Tony and Independent Spirit Award nominee Jeremy O. Harris (Zola, Slave Play) and Josh Godfrey. Michael Breslin and Patrick Foley have penned the script for the project, which is described as being in development. The name of the director has not yet been unveiled, reports HollywoodReporter.com.

Plot details are being kept under wraps, but the film is being described as being partly inspired by the 'Real Housewives' franchise, focusing on the soap operatic and over-the-top theatrics of well-to-do women in areas ranging from Orange County to Miami to Atlanta. 'The Wives' will be co-produced by Apple Studios and A24. The two companies, along with Lawrence, previously teamed up on the 2022 drama 'Causeway'.

Lawrence, who was the world's highest-paid actress in 2015 and 2016, began her career as a teenager with guest roles on television. She had her first major role in the sitcom 'The Bill Engvall Show'. In 2008, she made her film debut with a supporting role in the drama 'Garden Party' and had her breakthrough playing a poverty-stricken teenager in the independent film 'Winter's Bone'. She then gained major stardom with films such as the 'X-Men' series, 'The Hunger Games' series, 'Silver Linings Playbook', 'American Hustle', the biopic 'Joy', 'Don't Look Up', and 'No Hard Feelings', among many others.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Maya Jama



T20 WORLD CUP

INDIA INCH CLOSER TO S-F, THRASHES BANGLADESH BY 50 RUNS

North Sound (Antigua) | Agencies

Left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav shined with a game-changing spell of 3-19, while fast-bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh picked two wickets each as India thrashed Bangladesh by 50 runs to claim their second Super Eight stage win in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium here on Saturday.

After vice-captain Hardik Pandya top-scored with an unbeaten 27-ball fifty and smashed four boundaries and three sixes in India making 196/5, their highest total in the competition, Kuldeep bowled a wonderful spell on a pitch having bounce and a bit of grip to leave Bangladesh in disarray. The rest of the bowlers produced another outstanding show, and the fielders backed them up very well to restrict Bangladesh to 146/8 and inch closer to the semi-finals.

India will confirm their semifinal spot if Afghanistan fail to beat Australia at St Vincent. Chasing 197 was always going to be an uphill task for a middling Bangladesh batting line-up.

Despite the stiff target, Tanzid Hasan began strongly by hitting four boundaries, followed by Litton Das smashing two boundaries. Pandya got the breakthrough for India when Litton couldn't control a pull shot on a wide outside off delivery and was caught at deep mid-wicket.



Tanzid was dropped on 24 by Rishabh Pant off Bumrah but was trapped lbw on the back leg by a stunning googly from Kuldeep. Towhid Hridoy was next to fall as Kuldeep got a leg-break delivery to turn in slightly and go past the attempted slog-sweep to trap him plumb lbw. Though Najmul Hassan Shanto and Shakib Al Hasan hit some boundaries, Kuldeep took out the latter by forcing him to mistime a loft to

cover. More success followed India as Bumrah deceived Shanto with an off-cutter sliced to short third man, followed by Arshdeep bowling a similar delivery to take out Jaker Ali.

Rishad Hossain impressed onlookers with his hitting abilities by smashing a four and three sixes, before giving a top edge on pull to extra cover off Bumrah, who finished with an economy rate of just 3.2 in another comprehensive win for India.

Brief scores

India 196/5 in 20 overs (Hardik Pandya 50 not out, Virat Kohli 37; Tanzim Hasan Sakib 2-32, Rishad Hossain 2-43) beat Bangladesh 146/8 in 20 overs (Najmul Hassan Shanto 40, Tanzid Hasan 29; Kuldeep Yadav 3-19, Jasprit Bumrah 2-13) by 50 runs

WTT Contender Lagos: Sreeja, Sutirtha, Ayhika script history in Nigeria, storm into semis

Lagos | Agencies

The No.1 ranked women's national player Sreeja Akula continued her dominant run in the WTT Contender Lagos as she beat young national compatriot Yashaswini Ghorpade 3-0 in the quarterfinals of the tournament. Alongside Sreeja, Sutirtha Mukherjee caused a huge upset as she beat defending Champion and world ranking number 8 Shin Yubin 3-2 to reach the semifinals.

Despite winning the first game 11-9, Sutirtha went on to lose the second and third games to fall 2-1 down (3-11, 9-11). Sutirtha, who is world-ranked 125, showed tremendous character to win the final two games with a score of 11-9 & 11-6 to complete the comeback.

Sreeja Akula and Sutirtha Mukherjee will be facing each other in the semifinals of the tournament. Irrespective of who progresses to the final, history will be made as it will be the first time that an Indian Singles player will play in the summit clash of a WTT Contender Event.

Alongside Sreeja and Sutirtha, Ayhika Mukherjee



also booked her place in the semifinals of the tournament with a 3-0 victory over Egypt's Farida Badawy to become the third Indian in the semifinals in what was a great day for the Indian contingent.

On the other hand, Manav Thakkar bowed out of the tournament against WR 34 and former World Championship medalist Lim Jong-hoon (2-3) in the quarterfinals of the tournament.

T20 World Cup: Harbhajan backs Indian team to bring title home, says 'boys are in great touch'

New Delhi | Agencies

Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh has backed the Rohit Sharma-led side to lift the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup and credited them for their consistent performance in the tournament so far. India are unbeaten in the tournament with four wins in five games as their final group-stage encounter against Canada was abandoned due to rain in Florida. India continued their momentum in the Super Eight stage with a convincing 47-run win over Afghanistan in Barbados.

Ahead of their clash against Bangladesh in Antigua on Saturday, the legendary spinner lauded the all-round contribution of players in the ongoing campaign. He asserted that if the Men in Blue continue to play with the same "determination", they will undoubtedly win their second T20 World



Cup title after 2007. "Our team has shown exceptional form in the T20 World Cup so far, with every player in the playing 11 contributing significantly. We have been playing our A-game ticking all the boxes. The boys are in great touch, and the confidence is high. If we continue to play with the same determination, intensity, and passion I do not doubt that we can get over the line and bring the World

Cup home for the first time after 2007," Harbhajan said on Disney+ Hotstar.

India are placed second in Group 1 with two points after one match. They need to finish in the top two to progress to the semifinals. If they win against Bangladesh, they will bolster their chance for the final. India will play their final Super Eight match against Australia in St Lucia on Monday (June 24).

Indian compound women's team secures hat-trick of gold medals at Archery World Cup

Antalya | Agencies

Top-ranked Indian compound women's team clinched the gold medal at the Archery World Cup Stage-3 on Saturday. The formidable trio of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Aditi Swami, and Parneet Kaur emerged victorious against sixth-ranked Estonia in a tightly contested final, triumphing 232-229.

Indian Compound Women's Team secures historic hat-trick gold at Archery World Cup. This victory marks a historic hat-trick of gold medals for the Indian team in the 2024 Archery World Cup series, having previously secured top honours in the stages held in Shanghai and Yecheon earlier this year.

At Stage 3 in Antalya, the Indian women's team began their campaign with a first-round bye in a field of just 10 countries. They then showcased their skill and determination by defeating El Salvador 235-227 and the host nation, Turkey, 234-227, to secure their place in the final. Against Estonia, the Indian archers maintained their composure and accuracy, sealing their third consecutive gold medal.

In contrast, the top-ranked Indian men's compound team, comprising Priyansh, Abhishek Verma, and Prathamesh Fuge, faced a more challenging journey. They narrowly missed out on a place in the final after a dramatic semifinal shoot-off against Turkey. Both teams were tied at 236, but Turkey edged out



India by shooting closer to the center in the shoot-off (30*-30). Despite the setback, the Indian men's team put up a valiant fight in the bronze medal match against France. In a closely fought contest, India fell short by a single point, losing 236-235, and finishing fourth in the tournament.

Murray to have back surgery before Wimbledon opener

New Delhi: Two-time Wimbledon champion Andy Murray will undergo a crucial back operation just nine days before the prestigious tournament begins on July 1.

This follows his unfortunate withdrawal from the Queen's Club Championships earlier this week, where a back injury forced him to retire after only five games against Australia's Jordan Thompson in the second round.

Murray's management issued a statement revealing the imminent procedure, while also leaving his Wimbledon prospects hanging in the balance. "Andy is having a procedure on his back tomorrow (Saturday). We will know more after this has taken place and will update further as soon as possible," said the statement.

The former World No. 1, who remarkably continues to compete with a metal hip, struggled visibly during his match against Thompson. He reported a disturbing weakness in his right leg and a loss of coordination, an issue that marks a departure from his usual left-sided back troubles.

"Like all tennis players, we have degenerative joints and stuff in the back but it's all predominantly been left-sided for me my whole career," Murray explained. "I have never had too many issues with the right side. So maybe there is something that can be done between now and then to help the right side."

This back surgery is not entirely new territory for Murray, who previously underwent minor back surgery in 2013. However, his current predicament follows a challenging period marked by injuries and recoveries. He recently returned to the court in May after nearly two months sidelined with an ankle injury, only to face another setback at the Queen's Club.



TENNIS: RUTUJA BHOSALE AND FANGRAN CLINCH DOMINANT VICTORY AT ITF W35 TAUSTE

New Delhi | Agencies

Indian tennis star Rutuja Bhosale, in partnership with China's Fangran Tian, won the doubles competition in the International Tennis Federation (ITF) Women's 35,000 (ITF W35) tournament in Tauste in Spain on Saturday.



The formidable duo secured the title with a straight sets triumph over the third-seeded pair, Alana Pamaby of Australia and Victoria Rodriguez of Mexico, with a final score of 6-2, 6-4.

From the very first serve, they exerted their dominance, quickly taking control of the match and never allowing their opponents a chance to recover. Their decisive victory highlighted their ability to remain composed under pressure and execute strategic plays at critical moments.

This victory marks Bhosale's third doubles title of the year, adding to her impressive wins at the W50 Wuning and W75 Fukuoka tournaments.

It is very easy to coach Cristiano Ronaldo: Paul Clement

New Delhi | Agencies

Cristiano Ronaldo has always been perceived as one of the best in the world but many believe that the striker is not an easy person to work with. Former assistant manager of Real Madrid Paul Clement has debunked all rumors and stated that "it is very easy to coach Cristiano Ronaldo."

"It was a privilege to share a dressing room with him, it is very easy to coach Cristiano Ronaldo. I cannot remember anybody who was a better professional; the demands he puts on himself, the aim for perfection, to improve every day," said Paul Clement to The Athletic.

Clement was a valuable part of Jose Mourinho's staff during his time at Real Madrid and went on to reveal how important a player of his capability is for any side.

"A player like Cristiano is always different but, with Jose, the team was always above everybody. There were moments when Cristiano scored goals, as he always did, but there were also moments when Jose and the team knew they needed to defend. And Cristiano was the first who defended, too. You have to make him see that, apart from all the goals he scores, there are other moments when you need to do certain tactical things," added Clement.

Cristiano Ronaldo joined Los Galacticos in 2009 and went on to produce perhaps the greatest stint by any player at the best club in the world. He played 438 games with the club and scored 450 goals and 131 assists whilst winning four UEFA Champions League trophy and two La Liga titles.

"After a game, it's 4 am and I turn around and there's Cristiano, pulling Pepe and Fabio Coentrao towards the main building: 'We're going for an ice bath.' It's 4 am and not only is he doing it, he's getting others to participate as well. It's ultra-professional. These are the things he does, over and over," he concluded.





Sonakshi will not convert to Islam after marrying Zaheer Iqbal



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ahead of Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal's wedding on June 23, the actor's father, Iqbal Ratansi, shared that the actress will not be converting to Islam and that the couple will reportedly have a civil marriage.

According to media reports, Ratansi shared that the wedding will include "neither Hindu nor Muslim rituals. It will be a civil marriage."

He also reportedly said in an interview that Sonakshi will not convert for sure, asserting that "religion has no role to play."

Quashing all rumours about Shatrughan Sinha being upset with Sonakshi's wedding plans, the veteran star finally made an appearance with Zaheer, who will soon be his son-in-law.

The two posed for the paparazzi, with Zaheer and Shatrughan first smiling and then posing outside the building.

Shatrughan also gave his blessings to his soon-to-be son-in-law.

After seven years of dating, Sonakshi and Zaheer will be getting married on Sunday, followed by a celebration at actress Shilpa Shetty's luxurious restaurant, Bastian, in Mumbai.

Several personalities, including Huma Qureshi and Ayush Sharma, are expected to join the couple on their special day.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan shared that he has lent his voice to a song in the Hindi version of "Kalki 2898 AD" and said that it is "tough for a non-singer," but "recordists today do unbelievable magic".

Amitabh took to his blog and shared details about the heavy costumes and prosthetics involved in the film. "With all the costume heavy and the prosthetics .. and make up for hours and hours for KALKI .. the trailer of which has been released today," Big B wrote.

The actor then spoke about the song he lent his voice to for the film, which also stars Kamal Haasan, Prabhas, and Deepika Padukone.

"And yes, the Hindi version - the song sung by moi... tough for a non-singer, but recordists today do unbelievable magic with their electronic equipment... and, BADUMBAAA, a song comes out. It's on YouTube and on my social media... Twitter, FB, and Insta."

The cine icon then went on to share a "learning" from "one of this generation," which includes his grandchildren Agastya Nanda, Navya Naveli Nanda, and Aaradhya Bachchan.

"Make a call on mobile, hear the bell ringing, but if it saying on the top 'calling'... the call is not going through. If it says 'ringing' then it is. Never knew about this at all... gosh I am such a dodo... know nothing at all... the learning graph is spiraling downwards."

Big B lent his vocal prowess for upcoming movie song

RITEISH DESHMUKH MAKES HIS OTT SERIES DEBUT

Mumbai: Actor-filmmaker Riteish Deshmukh is set to make his OTT series debut with 'Pill'.

The makers of the upcoming series dropped a motion poster on Saturday, giving a glimpse into the dark and corrupt world of pharmaceuticals.

The motion poster features a voiceover by Riteish, who is heard saying: "Is desh mein kis bimaari se kitne log marne hain, uska data hai humare paas. Lekin kharaab dawai ke wajah se kitne logon ka jaan jaa raha hai, uska koi data nahi hai (We have data on how many people die from various diseases in this country. But we have no data on how many lives are lost due to faulty medicines)."

The caption on JioCinema's Instagram handle read: "What's your medicine really made of? 'Pill', streaming from July 12 onwards, exclusively on JioCinema Premium." The show will air on July 21.

In other news, Riteish will also appear in 'Kakuda', a horror comedy co-starring Sonakshi Sinha and Saqib Saleem.

'Kakuda' is set in the curse-inflicted village of Ratodi in the Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh. In the film, every house in the district has two doors -- a normal-sized one and a smaller one.

The plot revolves around a peculiar ritual that requires the opening of the smaller door of each house every Tuesday at 7.15 p.m. Failure to comply invites the wrath of Kakuda, who punishes the man of the house.



'Nostalgia has a sweet aftertaste' Twinkle posts pictures with Bobby Deol

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Twinkle Khanna says she is thrilled to see actor Bobby Deol doing so well. The two made their Bollywood debut together in the 1995 film 'Barsaat'.

Twinkle took to Instagram and shared two sets of pictures. One from the present and the other, a throwback from their debut film 'Barsaat', which featured her and Bobby, who recently created waves with his portrayal of the menacing Abrar in the Ranbir Kapoor-starrer 'Animal'. "Kal and Aaj Kal. It's not just Pinky Masi who is a @iambobbydeol fan, I am as thrilled to see him doing so well. Nostalgia has a sweet aftertaste, and it was fun catching up and waving out at renditions of who we once used to be," Twinkle captioned the post, adding the song 'Humko Sirf Tumse Pyaar Hai' from the film to the background of the images.

'Barsaat' is a romantic action film directed by Rajkumar Santoshi. In 2001, Twinkle, the daughter of the late star Rajesh Khanna and Dimple Kapadia, featured in her last film, 'Love Ke Liye Kuch Bhi Karega', after which she quit acting and became an author.

Twinkle's husband, actor Akshay Kumar, is good friends with Bobby. The two have worked together in films such as 'Ajnabee' and 'Housefull 4'.

On the work front, Bobby, who became an overnight sensation with 'Animal', has a significant lineup of films set for release. He will next be seen in 'Kanguva', a fantasy action film directed by Siva.



Shriya Pilgaonkar joins jury for Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles 2024

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shriya Pilgaonkar says she is honoured to join the jury panel of the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA) for the Shorts category at the 2024 edition of the festival.

"I am honoured and thrilled to be invited as a jury member for the short film category at the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles 2024. I look forward to attending the festival in LA and watching these stellar shorts by emerging South Asian filmmakers," she added.

The actress said: "The atmosphere at film festivals is always creatively energising and deeply inspiring. I'm excited to meet and interact with diverse storytellers and performers, and to witness the incredible lineup of films at IFFLA."

The festival will commence on June 27 and conclude on June 30.

This year, the intriguing submissions in the Shorts Program include 'Hema' featuring Rajshri Deshpande, 'Last Days of Summer', and 'Lori', among others.

Additionally, the festival will close with 'Maharaja' starring Vijay Sethupathi and Anurag Kashyap. Gunet Monga and Karan Johar's 'Kill' starring Lakshya are some of the films from India at IFFLA 2024.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Chandrika Dixit, who gained fame as the "vada pav girl", has opened up about being called an "attention seeker" due to her disputes and videos related to her food cart in the National Capital.

When asked about what she would say to people accusing her of creating "drama" to gain attention, Chandrika told: "I am just keeping my point of view; there is nothing like that. I was running my cart two years ago too and could have done things to gain attention back then when I started and needed money..."

"If people think it is planned... then I want this to happen because I want to go really ahead in life," she added.

'Vada pav girl' Chandrika Dixit reacts to being called attention-seeker

Talking about joining 'Bigg Boss OTT 3', Chandrika said: "The opportunity I have got is big; I will do it well, and the reason for doing it is because of the hard work we are doing for our family... It is for a great future for my son. I think I will get help from this."

Chandrika, who reportedly earns Rs 40,000 per day, has no specific game plan for the show.

She said: "I will get to know inside only. I have no plans from before. I have always heard my elders say that never plan, as it never happens. So, I will do what I will face spontaneously."

"People think that Chandrika has a lot of attitude and fights a lot, probably they will get to know something else about me when they see me there."

Chandrika plans to treat the contestants to her homemade food.

"This will be my first priority because I love to feed people, and they will like the food I will make," she said.

What does she plan to do next?

"I will do everything that takes care of my business and my family... I have a small dream: I want to give my family and son a very comfortable life and also have some time for myself, where I don't have to think before spending money."

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Pooja Bhalekar