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## RAHUL GANDHI ASSURES FARM LEADERS TO PRESSURISE GOVT FOR MSP GUARANTEE



The farmer leaders said that Rahul Gandhi has also expressed solidarity with them against the 'atrocities' of the Haryana government. Notably, farm bodies Samyukt

Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha recently announced to launch a fresh stir to push for a legalisation on MSP guarantee.

### SC MULLS FORMATION OF EXPERT PANEL TO RESOLVE GRIEVANCES OF PROTESTING FARMERS

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday mulled the formation of an expert panel to find a solution to the grievances of protesting farmers.

During the hearing of a plea moved by the Haryana government against the decision of the Punjab and Haryana High Court ordering the removal of barricades at the Shambhu border, a bench, headed by Justice Surya Kant, told the government to take some steps to reach out to the farmers and suggested sending a neutral umpire. Observing that there exists a trust deficit between the stakeholders and adjourning the hearing for next week, the top court asked the Centre and state governments of Haryana and Punjab to suggest individuals who can be included in the expert panel. In the meantime, it ordered the state governments to maintain a status quo at the site of protests.

On July 10, the Punjab and Haryana High Court had directed to "at least" open the Shambhu border between Punjab and Haryana within a week. In its order, a division bench of Justices G.S. Sandhawalia and Vikas Bahl asked the Punjab as well as Haryana government to ensure that the highway is restored to its original glory and open to one and all for the convenience of the public. "The State of Punjab shall also ensure that the demonstrators gathered in their territory are also duly controlled as and when the situation so requires," ordered the high court, asking all the Kisan Unions to maintain law and order.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delegation of twelve farm leaders from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Karnataka met Congress MP Rahul Gandhi in the Parliament complex on Wednesday and shared their concerns over the need for a Minimum Support Price (MSP) guarantee for crops.

The Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha assured them that a legal guarantee for MSP was their right.

Later, speaking to the press, Rahul Gandhi said the Congress and the

INDIA bloc allies will raise the issue of MSP in the Parliament, and also put pressure on the government on the same. "We have mentioned in our manifesto about a legal guarantee for MSP, which can be implemented without any hassles," he told media-persons. "During the meeting, we decided that we will discuss the matter with the INDIA bloc partners and then start putting pressure on the government to frame a law on MSP," he said. Earlier, Rahul Gandhi claimed that the farmer leaders were not allowed entry to the Parliament complex. It was only after he walked out of the House that the farmers were let in.

## Statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji killing Afzal Khan to be installed at Pratapgad Fort

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Days after the Maharashtra government brought back Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's 'Wagh Nakh' (tiger claws) from London's Victoria and Albert Museum for three years and put it on display at Satara, it announced on Wednesday that an 18-foot statue of the Maratha warrior king showing how he tore open Afzal Khan's belly will be installed at the base of iconic Pratapgad Fort in the district.

Afzal Khan was a 16th-century commander of the Adil Shahi dynasty, who was killed by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in a battle of bravery and astuteness.

A statue commemorating Afzal Khan's killing by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj



will be soon installed at the base of the Pratapgad Fort. The statue will be unveiled within a month as the work is now in the final stages. It will be a symbol of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's bravery," said Minister of Skill Development, Mangal Prabhat Lodha.

He was speaking on the occasion of Shiv Pratap Day, which is celebrated every year at the Pratapgad Fort to

mark Afzal Khan's killing by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Lodha said the battle of Pratapgad was fought on November 10, 1659, which is still admired by the followers of the Maratha warrior king.

"Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had invited Afzal Khan, who had made a move for self-governance, to Pratapgad for a discussion. When Shivaji Maharaj came to the canopy erected at the foot of Pratapgad, Afzal Khan attacked him.

"However, Shivaji Maharaj took out the stomach of Afzal Khan with the tiger claws and thereby repelled the 'Adilshahi' attack on 'Swarajya'. This story of the battle of Pratapgad is still being told to the new generation by the followers of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj," Lodha said.

## KAMALA HARRIS TRUMPS DONALD AMONG INDIAN-AMERICANS

Washington | Agencies

Kamala Harris, the presumptive Democratic nominee for the post of US President, has a 19 percentage point lead over her Republican rival Donald Trump in favourability ratings among Indian Americans, according to internal polling by the Harris campaign.

The findings were released on Wednesday in a memo from Harris campaign chair Jen O'Malley Dillon on the overall state of the presidential race at this juncture.

It included polls on a whole range of issues. The outcome on Indian Americans was part of the polling among Asian Americans, which also include those of Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Filipino descent.

The poll was released internally on July 10, 11 days before President Joe Biden ended his campaign under pressure from Democrats and endorsed Harris to take the top spot on the ticket. She is not the de facto nominee of the party.

The poll measured the favourability ratings of Biden, Trump, Harris, and Nikki Haley, the former US Ambassador to the UN who is also of Indian descent like Harris, among Asian Americans. A combined total of 54 per cent Indian Americans said they have a "very favourable" to "somewhat favourable" impression of Vice



President Harris, which was 19 percentage points more than Trump's 35 per cent. She also beat Haley by 21 percentage points but came a shade behind her boss, Biden, who at 55 per cent surpassed her by a solitary percentage point.

The head-to-head match between Biden and Trump showed a remarkable decline in support for the former among the community.

Only 46 per cent of them said they would vote for President Biden if elections were held at the time of the survey, while 29 per cent said they would vote for Trump. As many as 20 per cent either refused to answer, or were not decided yet.

That is a precipitous fall from 2020, when 72 per cent of Indian Americans surveyed by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a think-tank, said they will vote for Biden in a pre-poll survey,

while 22 per cent said they will go with Trump. This fall is likely a reflection of the general lack of enthusiasm for a second term for Biden even though he is liked and seen favourably.

The Harris campaign internal poll showed that 55 per cent of Indian Americans said they planned to vote for Democratic candidates in the US Senate race and 52 per cent for Democratic candidates running for the House of Representatives.

The Republican party has made some headway in the community with 29 per cent of them planning to vote for Republicans running for the Senate, and 31 per cent for Republicans in the race for the House. The population of Indian Americans in the US is between 4.16 million and 4.4 million, accounting for roughly 1.4 per cent of the US population of more than 333 million.

Only 2.62 million Indian Americans are US citizens of which 1.9 million are registered voters, which is 0.82 per cent registered voters in all of the country. These numbers may seem to make the community look inconsequential numerically, but that is not accurate.

Virginia, a once solidly Republican state, is now reliably Democratic because of its sizable population of Indian Americans and others of foreign descent living and working along the state's northern region abutting Washington.

## Labourer Digs Up A Fortune, Uncoveres Rs 80-Lakh Diamond In Madhya Pradesh

Panna | Agencies

A labourer found a 19.22-carat diamond in a mine in Madhya Pradesh's Panna district on Wednesday which could fetch about Rs 80 lakh or more at the government auction, officials said.

Raju Gaud said when he set out in the morning to dig mud and sift through it, a daily routine in monsoon months for the past ten years, he hadn't imagined he would strike a fortune.

"I hope the amount earned (after the auction) will reduce my financial hardships and take care of my children's education," Gaud said.

The labourer said he exulted after finding the precious stone in a leased mine at Krishna Kalyanpur and promptly deposited it with the government



authorities. The gem-quality diamond will be put for sale in the next auction, said Anupam Singh, an official from the Panna diamond office. District Collector Suresh Kumar said the 19.22-

carat diamond Gaud uncovered in a shallow mine could fetch Rs 80 lakh or more in the auction. The gemstone would be put up for open bidding at the next diamond auction, the collector said.

He has been taking small mines on lease during the rains for the past ten years in the hope of getting lucky someday. Gaud said he took the mine, where he found the diamond, on lease about two months ago. "I have deposited it at the Government Diamond Office. I'll spend the money on my children's education and buy farmland," he said.

Officials said the raw diamond would be auctioned and the proceeds would be given to the labourer after deducting government royalty and taxes. The Panna district, located in MP's Bundelkhand region, is estimated to have diamond reserves of 12 lakh carats.

### Unexpected Camaraderie

## Sonia Gandhi, Jaya Bachchan break barriers with smiles

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A video on Wednesday captured a significant moment: Sonia Gandhi and Jaya Bachchan engaged in a jovial conversation in Parliament, sharing laughter and signalling a potential thaw in their relationship.

As opposition party leaders exited the Rajya Sabha proceedings and gathered outside, Sonia Gandhi's convoy reached there and she emerged from her vehicle. Congress leader Rajeev Shukla, a Rajya Sabha member from Chhattisgarh, warmly greeted her upon her arrival. Moments later, Sonia Gandhi exchanged words and laughter with Derek O'Brien of Trinamool Congress and Jaya



Bachchan, a veteran Rajya Sabha member representing the Samajwadi Party and wife of Bollywood legend Amitabh Bachchan.

Their interactions, captured on camera, portrayed a moment of camaraderie, although the details of their conversation remained undisclosed.

## Bengal Assembly passes resolution on scrapping of NEET

Kolkata | Agencies

Motion moved by the ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal Assembly demanding scrapping of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and restoration of the previous system of individual state governments conducting such examinations, was passed in the House on Wednesday.

With this, West Bengal became the second state after Tamil Nadu to pass a

motion demanding scrapping of NEET.

The development came in the wake of the recent NEET paper leaks that took place in the country.

Earlier, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had sent a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi raising the same demand.

Now, after passing the motion in the House, the Treasury Bench officially recorded its reservations about NEET.

According to West Bengal

Education Minister, Bratya Basu, his party has always been against NEET with its all-India nature.

He said that his party had been resisting the move since it was against the federal structure of the country.

However, the Leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly pointed out that the ruling party in a state whose leaders were neck-deep in the cash-for-school job case were not raising questions and moving on the issue.

## INDIA SUCCESSFULLY TESTS PHASE 2 BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENCE SYSTEM

Balalore | Agencies

India on Wednesday successfully flight-tested Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defence System from off the Odisha coast, the government said in a statement.

The test demonstrated India's indigenous capability to defend against ballistic missiles of 5,000 km class, it said.

"The Target Missile was launched from LC-IV Dhamra at 1620 hrs mimicking adversary Ballistic Missile, which was detected by weapon system radars deployed on land and sea and activated the AD Interceptor system," it said.

"The Phase-II AD Endo-atmospheric missile was launched from LC-III at ITR, Chandipur at 1624 hrs. The flight test fully met all the trial objectives validating complete network centric warfare weapon system consisting of Long Range



Sensors, low latency communication system and MCC and Advance Interceptor missiles," it added.

The performance of the missile was monitored from the flight data captured by range tracking instruments deployed at various locations, including an onboard ship, the statement said.

The Phase-II AD Endo-atmospheric missile is an indigenously developed two-stage solid-propelled ground-launched missile system meant for neutralising many types of enemy ballistic missile threats in the altitude bracket of endo to low exo-atmospheric regions, it said.

A number of state-of-the-art indigenous technologies developed by various DRDO labs have been incorporated into the system, it said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the successful flight test has again demonstrated the country's ballistic missile defence capability.



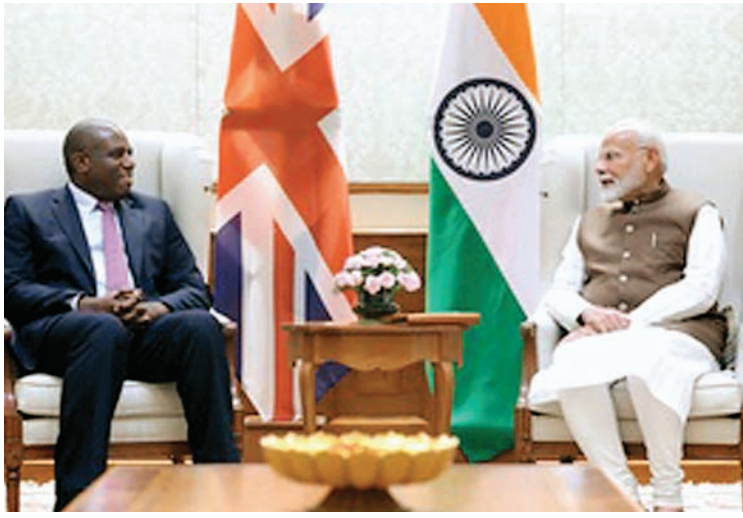
## WELCOME DESIRE TO CONCLUDE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL FTA, PM MODI TELLS VISITING UK FOREIGN SECRETARY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Wednesday as both countries continue to unlock the full potential of their growing partnership in diverse fields.

"A pleasure to meet UK FS David Lammy. Appreciate the priority accorded by PM Keir Starmer to broaden and deepen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Remain committed to elevating the ties. Welcome the bilateral Technology Security Initiative and the desire to conclude a mutually beneficial FTA," PM Modi posted on X after the meeting. Visiting India in his very first month as Foreign Secretary, Lammy called India as the "emerging superpower of the 21st century", the largest country in the world with 1.4 billion people and one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

"An honour to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The UK and India share a unique living bridge that enriches both our countries. We are working together to accelerate climate



action while creating opportunities for British and Indian businesses," he wrote in his reply to PM Modi's post on the social media platform Wednesday evening.

Lammy also called on External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar as both held bilateral discussion on strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and an early conclusion of a mutually beneficial India-UK Free

Trade Agreement (FTA).

This is the first high-profile visit from London after the formation of Labour Party government under the leadership of British PM Keir Starmer, earlier this month.

"Our Free Trade Agreement negotiations is the floor not the ceiling of our ambitions to unlock our shared potential and deliver growth, from Bengaluru to Birmingham. We have

shared interests on the green transition, new technologies, economic security and global security," the UK Foreign Secretary said before his arrival in the Indian capital.

He also underscored the importance of the Living Bridge between the UK and India, highlighting that it represents the 1.7 million people with Indian heritage that have made their home in the UK and make an exceptional contribution to British life.

Earlier in the day, the UK Foreign Secretary met business leaders to emphasise how both countries are working together on shared ambitions such as cutting-edge science to encourage innovation, boost trade, and improve the livelihoods of working people in both countries.

The government led by Keir Starmer remains keen on harnessing and unlocking the true potential of the UK-India partnership, asserting that it will not only deliver prosperity for the people of India and the UK but also for the rest of the world.

Lammy will travel to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting in Laos on Thursday, which will also see participation of EAM Jaishankar.

## Manmohan Singh's Budget revolutionised how India looks at economy: Congress

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress said on Wednesday that former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Budget in the 1990s revolutionised the country's outlook towards its economy.

"Manmohan Singh's Budget revolutionised how India and the government looked at the economy," Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said in a short video posted X remembering the 33rd anniversary of Manmohan Singh's Budget on July 24, 1991.

"No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come'. These historic words of Victor Hugo were quoted by Manmohan Singh on July 24, 1991, while presenting his first Budget. Today marks the 33rd anniversary of that landmark budget," the Congress spokesperson said.

He also said that Manmohan Singh as the Finance Minister presented a 'historic' Budget 33 years back.

"We were going through a balance of payment crisis wherein our foreign reserves could have catered for our needs only for two weeks," he said. The process of economic reforms by Manmohan Singh crystallised reforms through various policy announcements and radical decisions wherein the industrial policy was completely radicalised barring for 18 sectors, Khera said. "The



Licence Raj was abolished in all industries. Import tariffs were reduced, export subsidies were done away with, FERA was amended, and a lot of measures were taken to attract FDI to ensure that new investment comes in and creates job opportunities for our youth," the Congress spokesperson said. He also said the middle class has been completely ignored in the Budgets presented by the NDA government. "The current NDA government has given nothing to the middle class," Khera said.

He also said that economic reforms had basically started to take place in the 1980s when the country was led by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

"We are now reaping the benefits of the reforms which began in the 1980s," Khera said. He also said that the '80s was a revolutionary era in which Rajiv Gandhi, who had a vision, launched several missions to take the country forward into the 21st century.

## India rises in global passport index, allows visa-free access to 58 nations

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India has been ranked at 82nd spot on a global passport index, allowing Indians visa-free entry to 58 countries, including popular destinations like Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

According to the latest ranking by the UK-based Henley Passport Index, India's passport now ranks at an improved 82nd spot. The ranking is based on data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

The Henley Passport Index is a global ranking of countries according to the travel freedom allowed by those countries' ordinary passports for their citizens.

Singapore was ranked the leader on the passport index, reclaiming its title as the world's most powerful passport in the latest ranking. "The city-state also sets a new record score, with its citizens now enjoying access to 195 travel destinations out of 227 around the world visa-free. France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Spain drop to joint-2nd place, each with visa-free access to 192 destinations," according to the Index.

An unprecedented seven-nation cohort, each with access to 191 destinations without a prior visa -- Austria, Finland, Ireland,



Luxembourg, Netherlands, South Korea, and Sweden -- now sit in 3rd place on the ranking.

The UK was in fourth place along with Belgium, Denmark, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland, despite its visa-free destination score falling to 190. "The US, on the other hand, continues its now decade-long slide down the index, dropping down to 8th spot, with access to just 186 destinations visa-free," said the Index. According to IATA, airlines will connect nearly 5 billion people over 22,000 routes on 39 million flights in 2024, and the air cargo transported will reach 62 million tonnes, facilitating an \$8.3 trillion in trade. "Our industry expects to record revenues of almost \$1 trillion this year. Expenses, however, will also be at a record high of \$936 billion. Net profit will be \$30.5 billion," said IATA Director General, Willie Walsh.

## IIT-Bombay study calls for stringent policies to restrict vehicular pollution in India

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Stringent policies to restrict vehicular pollution are imperative to tackle the problems of increasing urban air pollution -- a major health concern -- in the country, said Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay researchers in a study on Wednesday.

Emissions from motor vehicles are major contributors to urban air pollution in India. The longer time vehicles spend on the roads leads to a large amount of fuel being burned, thus resulting in more pollution.

However, the polluting characteristics of all vehicles are not the same as some vehicles release disproportionately higher amounts of pollutants. The study investigated factors determining the characteristics of high-emitting vehicles, also known as super-emitters.

"Until now, there has been no study in India that has examined the share of super-emitters in real-world vehicular fleets. The previous studies assumed their share based on literature from other countries or secondary data. The motivation was to reduce uncertainty in the emission estimation from real-world vehicular fleets," said Sohana Debbarma, a researcher who conducted the study.



The researchers explained that super-emitters were vehicles that were either old, poorly maintained, over-loaded heavy-duty vehicles or all of them. They release significantly higher amounts of pollutants compared to other vehicles in the fleet.

According to the IIT-Bombay study, for light-duty vehicles (vehicles that weigh less than 3,500 kg such as cars, two-wheelers, three-wheelers, and light commercial goods vehicles), the age of the vehicles and the maintenance of the engine potentially determines whether the vehicle is a super-emitter.

In the case of heavy-duty vehicles (vehicles that weigh more than 3,500 kg, such as buses and

trucks), the overloading condition, along with the age and maintenance of the vehicles, contribute to the disproportionately high pollutant emissions.

For the study, the team set up their pollutant-measuring equipment at the entry and exit of the Kamshet-I tunnel located on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway.

Along with exhaust emissions (resulting from incomplete combustion of fossil fuels), non-exhaust emissions (resulting from brake wear, tyre wear, road surface wear, and resuspension of road dust) were also collected. The traffic data was collected using high-definition video cameras and the vehicle registration numbers data (collected manually).

The study collected data over two weeks. The researchers identified super-emitters through manual inspection based on the video surveillance records of the traffic passing through the tunnel.

"Vehicles that emitted a visible plume of smoke or appeared to be overloaded were identified as super-emitters. It was also validated using the information on the age of the vehicles and type of emission technology: Bharat Stages (BS) - II, III, and IV (the study was conducted in 2019 when there were no BS VI vehicles) and the type of fuel (petrol, diesel, and CNG)," the team said.

## 'You are a woman, you don't know anything': Bihar CM to RJD MLA amid Assembly ruckus

Patna | Agencies

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday sparked a fresh controversy when he made a disparaging comment on a woman MLA amid aggressive protests by the opposition members in the Assembly.

His outburst came as the opposition legislators were protesting on the issues of reservation and the special status of Bihar, and were not letting him speak. A visibly upset CM then bust out at RJD's Rekha Devi, saying, "You are a woman, you do not know anything."

Soon pandemonium broke out and the opposition legislators, particularly those from the RJD, Congress, and Left parties raised slogans, like "Nitish Kumar Hai Hai".

Earlier, as the House assembled at 11 a.m., the opposition members started protesting in the House, demanding the state's amended



reservation laws be put in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution, to safeguard it from legal challenges.

CM Nitish Kumar attempted to address the issue, but could not as the opposition continued to protest

aggressively.

He urged the opposition to sit and listen to the government's stance, suggesting that the opposition would appreciate the efforts of the government if they understood the reason-

ing behind them.

The opposition leaders continued to chant slogans, specifically targeting him, saying, "Chief Minister Hai Hai". In response, the CM said, "You are saying Hai Hai to me, then Hai Hai to you too."

This remark elicited laughter from the Assembly members. Despite the brief moment of humour, the opposition remained resolute and moved to the well of the House and continued their protest, demanding special status and the reinstatement of the 65 per cent reservation policy.

Speaker Nand Kishore Yadav expressed his displeasure over the aggressive protests by the opposition members. He even ordered the removal of Congress MLA Munna Tiwari, which resulted in a physical altercation between the marshal and the MLA. The marshal, acting on the Speaker's instructions, then forcibly removed a poster from Munna Tiwari's hand.

## Poornima College of Engineering is now autonomous college

Jaipur | Agencies

Poornima College of Engineering (PCE) Jaipur, a pioneer in engineering education, has been granted autonomous status by the University Grants Commission (UGC). This status, valid for the next 10 years, has become effective from the current academic session, which will have many benefits in terms of academic quality. RTU Vice Chancellor Prof. S.K. Singh issued a letter of intent for autonomous status to the college representatives.

The special fact is that some time ago the college was also given A+ grade by NAAC, which is a stamp of its academic quality. These two achievements in the 25th year of the establishment of the college make Poornima College one of the top colleges at the national level.

Dr. Mahesh Bunde, Principal and Director of Poornima College of Engineering, said that after getting autonomous status, the college will start courses at its own level. The main focus will be on designing new employment-oriented UG and PG courses and syllabus while focusing on the skills required for the



current industry. With this status, the college will be able to get funding from UGC, which will be used to further improve the academic excellence of the institute. Now the college will also be able to conduct examinations at its own level. It is worth mentioning that in the Quality Index Value (QIV) of colleges affiliated to RTU, Poornima College of Engineering has been ranked second in the state for the last seven years. This QIV is given on the basis of placements, NAAC and NBA accreditation, faculty qualification, paper publications, faculty-student ratio, in-time degree, infrastructure of these colleges and results of students and activities for their development.

## Delhi court issues summons to YouTuber Dhruv Rathee in defamation suit

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court has issued summons to YouTuber Dhruv Rathee in a defamation suit filed by BJP leader Suresh Karamshi Nakhua.

Nakhua, an official spokesperson of BJP Mumbai, sought Rs 20 lakh in damages from Rathee for referring to him as a part of "violent and abusive trolls" in a video posted on YouTube. Issuing notice to Rathee, social media platform X and Google, District Judge Gunjan Gupta of the Saket Court posted the matter for further hearing on August 6.

In his suit, the BJP leader said that false accusations made by Rathee on cyber space have caused irreparable loss of his personal and professional reputation and led to his defamation.

Rathee, in the alleged defamatory video, claimed that the Prime Minister had hosted violent and abusive trolls like Nakhua and others at his official residence.



## B'desh objects to Mamata Banerjee's 'offer' to shelter refugees amid civil unrest

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Bangladesh government has raised strong objections to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's recent remarks on the situation in the neighbouring country with the High Commission of India.

During the Martyr's Day event of the Trinamool Congress on July 21, Mamata Banerjee said that in the wake of the escalating violence in Bangladesh, she would keep the doors of the state open for people in distress from the neighbouring country and offer them shelter.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud was quoted by local broadcaster Somoy TV as saying, "With due respect to the West Bengal Chief Minister, with whom we share a very warm and close relationship, we want to make it clear that her remarks have a lot of scope for creating confusion. Therefore, we have sent a note



to the Government of India." Taking strong objections to

Banerjee's remarks, the Bangladesh government called them provocative,

"spreading false elements concerning the internal affairs of Bangladesh".

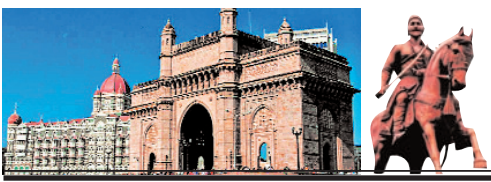
The Bangladesh government also said that it is trying to bring normalcy to the country, and such remarks by the Chief Minister were misleading.

"I should not be speaking on the affairs of Bangladesh since it is a sovereign country and whatever needs to be said on the issue is the subject matter of the Centre.

"But I can tell you this, if helpless people come knocking on the doors of West Bengal, we will surely provide them shelter," Banerjee said at the 'Martyrs Day' rally last Sunday.

She also said that there is a United Nations resolution to accommodate refugees in regions adjacent to those in turmoil.

However, the Bangladesh government said that the situation mentioned by Banerjee with reference to the United Nations resolution does not prevail in the country.



# HUGE RESPONSE TO MAHA GOVT'S LADKI BAHIN YOJANA, OVER SIX LAKH REGISTER DAILY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The MahaYuti government is expecting the registration of eligible women under the much-ambitious Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana to cross 2.50 crore by the end of August 31.

As per the latest information available, one crore women have been registered with a daily registration crossing six lakh. The highest record of daily registration so far is 8.13 lakh reported last week. The scheme was launched on July 1 and the government hopes to directly deposit the financial aid of Rs 3,000 for July and August in the bank accounts through DBT of eligible beneficiaries on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan on August 19.

The scheme, which was announced by Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Ajit Pawar in the additional budget for 2024-25 in the run-up to the upcoming Assembly election, aims to make women financially independent and self-reliant. The government proposes to give monthly financial assistance of Rs 1,500 (Rs 18,000 annually) to women of the age group of 21 years to 65 years. Those women, whose family income is Rs 2,50,000 annually, are eligible to get the benefits.

Maharashtra Minister of Women and Child Welfare Aditi Tatkare said, "The initial glitches with regard to



server errors during registration through an app have been removed. The women are registered independently or through Aganwadi Sevikas and also through Setu Service Centres. The annual outgo for the implementation of the scheme will be Rs 46,000 crore though the initial allocation of Rs 10,000 crore has been made to the Department of Women and Child Welfare. The government is quite bullish over the response from the women as the registration may cross 2.50 crore by the end of August 31 and considering the error of 10 to 15 per cent the eligible women will get aid for July and August together

on the occasion of Rakshabandhan." She added that of the registered women as many as 60 per cent are married while 5 per cent are widows. She said Unmarried Single Women (If there is only one in the family), married, widowed, divorced, abandoned and destitute will be entitled to take benefit of the scheme. Besides, women from outside Maharashtra after marriage have also been included. Further, Tatkare said that there have been no complaints relating to demand for money from the government employees and Talathis from the women for registration. Already,

two Talathis have been suspended and the Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has announced stern action if irregularities are found during registration and also in the implementation of the scheme.

She said that as registration is picking up through Narishakti Doot App, the government is in the midst of launching a special portal for registration which is expected in a month and a half.

Tatkare strongly defended the launch of Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana refuting the opposition's charge of election 'jumla'.

"The prevalence of anaemia among women in Maharashtra is more than 50 per cent. Also, according to a labour force survey in the state, the employment percentage of men is 59.10 per cent against 28.70 per cent of women. Considering this fact, the government thought that there was a need to improve the financial and health conditions of women. The government is implementing a slew of schemes for making women financially self-reliant and also to improve their health and nutrition. However, less participation of women in the labour force impacts their financial freedom and therefore the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana has been launched to make the women financially independent," she explained.

# Maha to fund laser sound & light show at Kargil War Memorial in Drass

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ahead of the July 26 Silver Jubilee celebrations of the nation's victory in the 1999 Kargil War, the Maharashtra government has decided to finance a laser sound & light show at the iconic Kargil War Memorial (KWM) in Drass, Ladakh, official sources said here on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Drass on Friday to pay homage to the martyrs and heroes of the historic India-Pakistan war at the KWM on behalf of a grateful nation.

Hoping to create an everlasting impression at the KWM, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has written an official letter to Indian Army Lt. Gen. Hitesh Bhalla and expressed willingness to fully fund the new attraction there, estimated to cost around Rs 3 crore.

CM Shinde has reiterated his commitment of October 2023 (to the then Lt. Gen. Rashmi Bali), to support the project, comprising the sophisticated laser equipment and its operations on behalf of the Indian Army.

However, after October 2023, the proposal apparently



got stuck in procedural hassles, though it was intended for completion and formal inauguration coinciding with the Silver Jubilee commemorations, an official said.

Now, it has been fully cleared by the state government and awaiting the green signal from the Centre as per the Indian Army's recommendation, which is expected shortly, after which the state administration will hand over the cheque to the KWM authorities.

One of the key persons associated with the project, Pune NGO Sarhad Founder-President Sanjay Nahar assured that "Maharashtra will make it a reality in the 25th year of the Kargil War, as Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are very dear to the people of this state."

Given the extreme weather conditions in Drass, which is billed as the second-coldest region on the planet, the world-class laser sound & light show will be an indoor affair with a capacity

of 500 and provide glimpses of the valour plus determination of Indian soldiers who defended the region against Pakistan's insurgence, between May-July 1999.

"The show will cover the examples of bravery and shining moments of our jawans as they re-captured from enemy control strategic areas like Mushkoh Valley, Kaksar, Chorbat, Turtuk, plus the Tiger Hill, Tololing, Batra Top and other unnamed mountains plus the high-ways, during the two-month-long 'Operation Vijay', as it was code-named," Nahar said.

Expressing firm commitment to the project, CM Shinde has promised to witness the KWM show once it is operational - probably within four-five months after the funding, even as the state bought a plot of land and prepares to build a Maharashtra Bhavan in Srinagar in a couple of years.

In fact, Maharashtra had earlier given Rs 3 crore for the Trishul War Memorial in Leh and the proposed laser sound & light show will be the second major contribution by the state.

# Tremors shake Sangli residents, no casualties

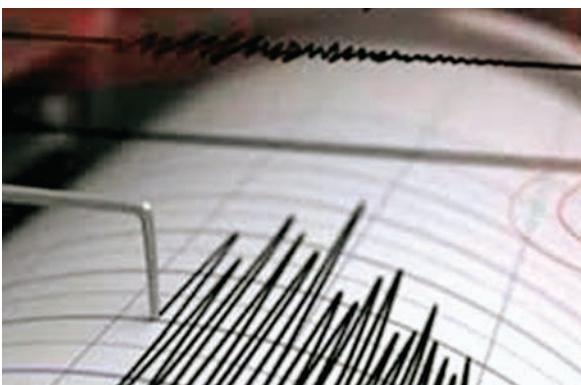
Team Absolute | Sangli

Thousands of villagers in Warnali and surroundings in Maharashtra's Sangli district were shaken in their sleep when mild tremors, measuring 3.0 on the Richter scale, jolted them awake early on Wednesday, officials said here.

The officials said that the tremors were experienced at around 4.47 a.m. for several seconds in Warnali in the Miraj taluka.

The tremors were also felt in Warnali's vicinity of more than 8 km, including the Chandoli Dam, which is overflowing with water being discharged.

There are no reports of any casualties or damage



due to the pre-dawn mild earthquake in the rain-battered region of western Maharashtra.

More details are awaited, said an official of the district disaster management authority. On July 10, Hingoli

and parts of the Marathwada-Vidarbha region were rocked by tremors measuring 4.5 on the Richter Scale, and panicked people had run out of their homes, but there was no damage or casualties.

# Indian Navy rescues critically injured Chinese mariner off Mumbai coast

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Braving challenging weather conditions, the Indian Navy on Wednesday successfully evacuated a critically injured Chinese mariner from Bulk Carrier Zhong Shan Men, 200 nm (approximately 370 km) from Mumbai.

The Indian Navy said that its Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in Mumbai received a distress call on Tuesday night from the bulk carrier, requesting immediate evacuation of a critically injured 51-year-old mariner who had suffered heavy blood loss.

Responding to the medical emergency, a Sea King helicopter was launched from the Indian Navy Air Station Shikra at



0550 hours on Wednesday.

"Challenging weather conditions with winds over 45 knots and heavy rolling of the ship were compounded by non-availability of continuous deck. The patient was successfully airlifted from the bridge wing of the vessel and transported back to the air station and subsequently shifted to hospital for further medical management," the Indian Navy spokesperson posted on X.

Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Samrat was also diverted to render assistance.

"The safe and timely evacuation of the patient was a result of joint operation coordinated by MRCC (MBI) with the Indian Navy," the spokesperson mentioned.

# Zomato Delivery Agent's Rs 500 Mumbai Slum Room Tour Is Viral, Internet Reacts

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Zomato delivery agent's life in a Mumbai slum went viral after Pranjoy Borgoyary shared a video on Instagram. Borgoyary, who migrated from Northeast India, lives in a cramped room with another person for a mere Rs500 per month. The video, which garnered over 4.5 million views, showcased the tight living conditions and Borgoyary's positive spirit, even as he cared for a kitten.

Touched by his story, a viewer named Khushi anonymously paid his rent for three months. This act of kindness highlights the outpouring of support Borgoyary received online. Comments ranged from admiration for his work ethic to wishes for better living condi-



tions. The video also sparked a conversation about Mumbai's high cost of living. Borgoyary's struggle exemplifies the financial burden faced by many, even for basic housing. Beyond cramped quarters, Borgoyary battles health issues that strain his family's resources.

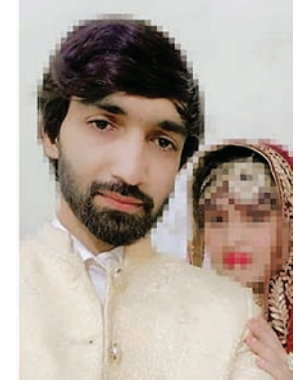
Despite these challenges, Borgoyary remains passionate. An aspiring singer and footballer, he shares music covers online, showcasing his determination and dreams. Social media users further fueled his motivation, suggesting he try modelling and comparing him to K-pop stars. Borgoyary's story serves as a testament to human kindness and the power of social media. Even in difficult circumstances, support and encouragement can be found.

# Thane Woman Forged Docs To Meet Pak Man She "Married Online", Claim Cops

Team Absolute | Thane

A woman from Thane, Maharashtra, who recently returned from Pakistan, is under police investigation. Authorities allege that she may have used false documents, including a forged name and Aadhaar card, to obtain a Pakistani visa to meet a man she married "online" this year.

The case of Nagma's return from Pakistan came to the police's attention after she came home on July 17 but on her documents, Nagma Noor Makhsood Ali was Sanam Khan Rukh, the cops claimed. In 2021,



Nagma/Sanam connected with Babar Bashir Ahmed from Pakistan's Abbottabad through Facebook. Soon, they fell in love and exchanged numbers. She

applied for a Pakistani visa which was rejected.

In February 2024, she married Babar "online" and applied again for a visa but in her documents, the woman's name was mentioned as Sanam, the cops claimed. She came back last week on July 17.

The woman's mother, who lives in Thane, has refuted the police's claim and said in 2015, the woman changed her name after she separated from her husband and changed the name of her children as well.

The police have neither detained the woman nor arrested her but have launched an investigation.

# IMD issues orange alert for Mumbai and Thane, red alert for Palghar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday, while sharing Maharashtra rains update, issued an orange alert for Mumbai and Thane. A red alert was issued for neighbouring Palghar district.

The IMD stated that heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places were very likely in Mumbai and Thane.

According to the IMD's latest weather bulletin, "Heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places with extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places were very likely in Palghar."

A similar alert was issued for Raigad, Pune and Satara districts in Maharashtra.

Earlier, the IMD had on Tuesday predicted moderate to heavy rains in Mumbai on July 24.

According to the IMD's



weather bulletin on Tuesday evening, moderate to heavy rains in city and suburbs were very likely and there was a possibility of very heavy rain at isolated places in city and suburbs on Wednesday.

The IMD had earlier said, "Occasional gusty winds reaching 50-60 kmph were very likely." The weather department had stated that the maximum and minimum temperatures were likely to be around 28 degree Celsius and 24 degree Celsius respectively.

Mumbai has been witnessing moderate to heavy rainfall since last week. On Tuesday, the city woke up to overcast

skies and light rainfall at several places.

On Monday, as Mumbai rains continued to batter the city, with some areas receiving up to 34 mm of rainfall in just an hour in the morning, caused a deluge in low-lying pockets of the city affecting local train services for an hour during the morning peak hour.

As a precautionary measure, three teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) were deployed to handle any emergency situations.

The IMD had on July 22 issued a red alert for Maharashtra's Raigad district and predicted heavy rainfall in the district.

In view of heavy rains in Mumbai and several parts of Maharashtra, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had on Sunday asked officials to be on high alert.

# Controversial IAS Officer Puja Khedkar's 'No Show' At Training Academy

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Trainee IAS officer Puja Khedkar, who has come under the scanner for alleged irregularities in her selection for civil service, was to report at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie on Tuesday, but she did not show up.

Khedkar faces a criminal case against her "misrepresenting and falsifying facts" in her application for civil service. The 34-year-old, it is alleged, manipulated her identity to appear for the all-India exam multiple times. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has issued a show cause notice to cancel her selection, and she may also be barred from taking the exam again. Delhi Police have now filed a case against the young officer and probe is on.

"UPSC has filed a complaint with Delhi Police against Puja Manorama Dilip Khedkar for misrepresenting and falsifying facts to obtain extra attempts in the UPSC examinations, beyond the prescribed limit. Consequently, a case has been registered under the relevant sections of the law, and investigation has been taken up in Crime Branch," Delhi Police have said. On July 16, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) in



Mussoorie -- the apex training institution for IAS officers -- put Puja Khedkar's training on hold in the aftermath of serious allegations against her. She was also asked to report back to the academy by July 23 i.e. Tuesday. Khedkar, it is learnt, did not report to the academy, citing personal reasons.

Khedkar hit headlines after Pune collector Dr Suhas Diwase wrote to Maharashtra Chief Secretary Sujata Saunik, flagging several demands by the

young officer that she is not entitled to during her two-year training. Khedkar had allegedly asked for perks like an office, staff and a government vehicle. It was also found that she used the Maharashtra government tag and red-blue beacon in her private Audi car. Khedkar was then transferred from Pune to Washim.

The selection of Puja Khedkar for the civil service came to light after it was found that she had ranked 821 in the merit list. It was learnt that she had availed of exemption for OBC non-creamy lawyer and multiple disabilities. It was found that she did not appear for the mandatory medical check-up at AIIMS and that the UPSC had cancelled her selection. Later, a private facility's medical report was accepted, clearing the path for the selection.

Her eligibility for relaxed selection criteria as an OBC candidate from the non-creamy layer also came under the lens. Khedkar's father Dilip Khedkar is a former Maharashtra government officer, who is now facing a corruption case and has been suspended twice in the past over related charges, including extortion. Puja Khedkar's mother Manorama Khedkar, a sarpanch, is also in trouble after a video showed her brandishing a gun and threatening a group of people. She has been arrested in an Arms Act case.



EDITOR'S SPECS

HOW NEW CAPITAL GAIN PROPOSAL HELPS INVESTORS SAVE TAX?

The proposal to remove indexation benefit in the long-term capital gain calculation in the Union Budget 2024-25 will ultimately be beneficial to investors, the Centre has said. As Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's proposal sparks debate, Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra during a media interaction explained how it is beneficial to investors. Malhotra said, "If a person had purchased a property for Rs 20 lakh in 2005 and that property is sold for Rs 2 crore today and if indexation is included, then the capital gain on it would be around Rs 1.40 crore. If a 20 per cent long-term capital gains tax is imposed on this, the tax would be around Rs 28 lakh. As per the new proposal, the total capital gain on this transaction will be around Rs 1.80 crore. Now long-term capital gains tax is imposed at 12.5 per cent, and a total tax of Rs 22.5 lakh will have to be paid." He further said that the government has removed indexation, and long-term capital gain on the property has been reduced from 20 per cent to 12.5 per cent. Most people will benefit from this, he said. The government has given big relief in personal income tax in the Budget that was presented in Parliament on Tuesday. The tax has been reduced to 10 per cent on income of up to Rs 10 lakh. The standard deduction has been increased to Rs 75,000, which was earlier Rs 50,000.

HARE KRISHNA CULTURAL CENTRE JAIPUR; FOR HAPPY LIFE

Lalit Sharma

India is a land of spirituality and various exquisite cultures and subcultures. Its glorious cultural practices are welcomed and respected all over the world. Spirituality and service towards mankind is in the roots of the country. People are God conscious here and since ages India is invariably imbibing the values and cultures historically in the society.

Hare Krishna Movement Jaipur, works on the same principle of awakening God Consciousness in people. Srila Prabhupada, Founder Acharya of worldwide Hare Krishna Movement said, "We are trying to give human society the opportunity for a life of happiness, good health, peace of mind and all good qualities through God Consciousness."

Srila Prabhupada wanted to establish a big Krishna Balamandir & Cultural Centre in Jaipur. In his letter dated July 13, 1975 to Sri Mavir Prasad Jaipuria ji, a very famous and prominent gentleman in Jaipur, he mentioned:

"So this Krishna Balamandir Vrindavan temple is being visited by many devotees to the extent of 500-1000 per day. You are Jaipur, so you can help me in completing such an institution in Jaipur also. So I want to open a replica of Krishna Balamandir temple in Jaipur. I am sending separately copy of pictures of our Krishna Balamandir temple in Vrindavan. I wish that you have some land in Jaipur and help us in constructing a duplicate temple like Vrindavan."

This letter is inspiration for us to build this beautiful temple & Cultural Centre in Jaipur. To bring people in more proximity with God, Hare Krishna movement Jaipur is bringing an incredible and state of the art Temple and Cultural Centre, Hare Krishna Cultural Centre, in Jagatpura Jaipur.

This grand Hare Krishna Cultural Centre is being built in 6 acres of land on Hare Krishna Marg, Jagatpura and expected to totally cost around Rupees 150 Crores. Already 50 Crores has been spent. This project is likely to be completed by March 2027 and work is progressing at a brisk pace.

PURPOSE OF HARE KRISHNA CULTURAL CENTRE:



We strongly believe that temple is not just a place of worship. It is a place where people of all caste, colour, and creed and of different age groups can come and get benefit from the knowledge given in Vedas, Puranas, Ramayana and Mahabharata etc.

Hare Krishna Cultural Centre is meant to bring transformation in the society through temple centered welfare activities. This centre will create good vibes, uplift body-mind and soul and be instrumental in inculcating good values in the society. It will also invoke God consciousness and give good exposure to our rich heritage and culture.

Hare Krishna Cultural Centre will specifically showcase the rich tradition and heritage of Rajasthan. Hare Krishna Cultural Centre is committed and dedicated to rejuvenate the spirituality in the society and to serve the human kind by enlivening the consciousness of Supreme Lord.

TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE:

The temple architecture will be a blend of modern and traditional Rajasthani architecture. It will have Architectural elements found in many traditional temples and historic monuments of Rajasthan.

Modern architectural elements like glass, GRC, Composite materials, Foam Casting, Light weight concrete etc. will also be used.

Hare Krishna Cultural Centre will be designed with eco-friendly materials and sustainable practices. For example: solar panels

for energy, rainwater harvesting for water requirements, and waste reduction measures.

The temples in Rajasthan are also known for their use of vibrant colours. The exteriors and interiors of Hare Krishna Cultural Centre will be decorated with colourful murals, frescoes, and paintings, which add to the overall beauty and grandeur of the centre.

The doorways and pillars of Hare Krishna Cultural Centre will be highly ornate, with intricate carvings and designs. These elements serve as important architectural features and help to distinguish this centre from other buildings.

To turn this Cultural Centre into "A Green Heaven", important plants such as Drumstick, Neem, Shesham, Peepal, Bargad, Chandan (Sandalwood), Kadamb, Rudraksh, Kalpavriksh, Ashwagandha, Parijata, Aloe Vera, Meswak and many more are being planted throughout the campus.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE TEMPLE:

- Exhibits where the timeless message and values will be presented using animation, light and sound shows etc.

- Largest Kaman chatri with a span of 30 Metres (100 feet) making it the largest in the world.

- The Mayur dwar will showcase 108 peacock motifs in the form of painting, stone sculpture, and glass inlay work.

- The temple hall will be able to accommodate 3000 people simultaneously.

- Temple will have six grand entrances with elephant Hauda doors / stairs.
- A museum that displays artefacts, paintings, sculptures, and other exhibits that depict the history and culture of India.

- Harinam Japa mandap for world peace where visitors and pilgrims can chant 108 times Hare Krishna maha mantra before entering the temple.

- A Yagna shala where various Vedic sacrifices and yagnas will happen for world peace.

- Krishna Lila Expo showcasing various lilas and pastimes of Lord Sri Krishna using animatronics and latest technology.

- Theatre of Performing arts with a seating capacity of 800 people that will be used for various cultural events such as plays, musical concerts, and dance performances.

- A library that houses books, manuscripts, and other documents related to the history, religion, and culture of India.

- Grand kitchen to support annadan and charitable feeding activities.

- A cafeteria that serves traditional Rajasthani cuisine. The cafeteria will provide an opportunity for visitors to experience the local cuisine and enjoy the unique flavours of Rajasthan.

- Srimad Bhagvatam and Bhagavad Gita Expo Hall

- A meditation and yoga centre. This will be an opportunity for visitors to connect with their inner selves and experience peace and tranquility.

- Multi-level car parking facility to park 700 cars at a time. This will provide a convenient place for people to park their vehicles while visiting this centre.

These unique features will make the temple cum cultural centre in Jaipur a one-of-a-kind destination that provides a holistic experience of the rich cultural heritage of Rajasthan. It will also be a popular destination for pilgrimage and spiritual tourism.

Soon we will have 300 artisans, stone sculptors, masons, marble laying specialists etc working in the site.

international

THOUSANDS OF GAZANS ON MOVE AGAIN, FOLLOWING ISRAEL'S EVACUATION ORDERS: UN

United Nations | New York

After recent evacuation orders, Gazans abandoned shelter in parts of the north and the south, moving so quickly that some left without belongings, UN humanitarian workers said.

It was not the first time many of them were displaced. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said on Tuesday that more civilians fled parts of Khan Younis following Monday's evacuation order issued by Israeli authorities and the subsequent intensification of hostilities in that area, Xinhua news agency reported.

OCHA added that humanitarian colleagues monitoring population movements reported about 150,000 people left areas in Khan Younis.

The office is concerned about the short interval between dropping leaflets ordering people to leave and the escalation of military operations, posing significant risks. The warning was about an hour before hostilities. Many civilians were seen on the move without any belongings.

"The immediate escalation of hostilities in the area also resulted in many people being trapped in the evacuation area," OCHA said.

"These included people with reduced mobility and family members supporting them."

The humanitarian workers said that each evacuation order profoundly disrupts people's lives, with many forced to move into areas with little or no infrastructure and very limited access to shelter, health, sanitation or other life-saving humanitarian assistance.



OCHA said the area designated for evacuation on Monday included two primary health centres, two medical points, a dozen food distribution points and eight cooked meal provision points. These have all ceased operations, with only one community kitchen still operational for those left behind.

The office also said that different parts of Salah ad Din Road have seen security incidents, including gunfire. Parts of the road, a key route for humanitarian goods, were included in Monday's evacuation directives. This forced humanitarian supplies to be rerouted to the Coastal Road, which is not a viable alternative due to congestion.

The World Health Organisation reported that

Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis is coping with an influx of patients following hostilities. Some medical supplies delivered last week for 10,000 patients were diverted to treat mass casualty victims.

OCHA also said displacement continues from the northern Gaza Strip southwards and from the Al-Bureij area of Deir al Balah amid continuing hostilities.

Humanitarians said they continue doing everything possible to provide healthcare, child protection services, cash assistance and essential items.

The UN office added that two marked UN Children's Fund (Unicef) vehicles were hit with live ammunition while waiting at a designated holding point near the Wadi Gaza checkpoint.

Unicef said the cars were en route to reunite five children, including a baby, with their father. It's the second such shooting incident involving UNICEF cars in the past 12 weeks.

The UN Relief Agency for Palestinians (UNRWA) suffered a similar incident on Sunday.

OCHA said there were no injuries in either incident. "We strongly reiterate that humanitarian workers are protected under International Humanitarian Law and must never be targeted," OCHA added.

Unicef also reported it managed to transfer some water pipes to the north to provide water to the Jabalya area. It's a reminder that people in Gaza are surviving with only a quarter of the water supply they had before the conflict started on October 7.

UK to close migrant barge amid Labour govt asylum overhaul

London | Agencies

The contract for the Bibby Stockholm barge, which has been used by the previous Conservative-led government to house asylum seekers off the coast of Dorset in southwestern England, will not be renewed from the end of January 2025 as part of the Labour government's overhaul of the asylum system.

"The Home Secretary has set out plans to start clearing the asylum backlog and making savings on accommodation which is running up vast bills for the taxpayer," said the Minister for Border Security and Asylum Angela Eagle on Tuesday.

"We are determined to restore order to the asylum system, so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly; and ensures the rules are properly enforced," she added.

Ending the use of the Bibby Stockholm forms part of the expected 7.7 billion



pounds (\$9.94 billion) of savings in asylum costs over the next 10 years, the Home Office claimed.

The three-storey barge to house asylum seekers began to be put into use in August 2023, despite opposition from lawmakers and human rights groups. Subsequent tests on the barge confirmed the presence of a deadly strain of legionella bacteria in its water system, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Labour government has vowed to overhaul the asylum system.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer scrapped the Tory government's controversial Rwanda Scheme of deporting asylum-seekers to Rwanda immediately after he assumed office. He is also working on setting up a new Border Security Command to "smash the gangs" that have been fueling the illegal crossings of the English Channel.

18 KILLED AS PLANE CRASHES IN NEPAL

Kathmandu: Eighteen people were killed after a plane crashed during take-off at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) in Kathmandu on Wednesday, local media reported.

The incident occurred around 11 a.m. when the Pokhara-bound plane of Saurya Airlines crashed shortly after taking off from the runway, TIA spokesperson Premnath Thakur said, The Kathmandu Post reported.

Of the 19 on board the plane, 18 bodies have been recovered, Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) said.

Plane's Captain Manish Shakya was rescued and rushed to hospital, according to the police, The Himalayan Times reported.

Eyewitnesses said shortly after take-off, the plane plunged to the ground and exploded in a ball of fire.

Firefighters, Nepal Police, and Nepali Army are conducting the rescue operation. Details are awaited.

SCHOOLS SHUT AS RIVER OVERFLOWS IN MYANMAR'S DELTA REGION

Yangon | Agencies

A total of 61 schools have been closed due to river overflow in Yekyi and Thabaung townships of Myanmar's Ayeyarwady region, also known as the delta region, media reports said on Wednesday. Of them, 36 basic education schools are in Yekyi township and 25 in Thabaung township. Most of them have been closed since July 22 due to Ngawun River overflowing in the townships, the reports said.

Official daily Myanmar Alinn, citing an education official from Thabaung township, said that 21 basic education schools in the township were closed on July 22, while four others were closed on July 23, Xinhua news agency reported. The closures are scheduled to last



until July 26, with missed school days to be made up on upcoming Sundays.

The country's Department of Meteorology and Hydrology reported that the water level of Ngawun River in Thabaung town was one foot above the warning mark on Wednesday.

The weather bureau has advised residents living near riverbanks and in low-lying areas in the town to take precautionary measures.

Climate activists paralyse air traffic at German airport

Berlin | Agencies

Climate activists temporarily brought air traffic at Cologne/Bonn Airport in western Germany to a complete standstill on Wednesday.

Five members of the 'Last Generation' had entered the airport grounds through a fence and glued themselves to the runway. According to the airport operator, further delays and flight cancellations are to be expected during the course of the day despite the removal of the protesters, Xinhua news agency reported.

The police have filed criminal charges for violation of the Assembly Act, dangerous interference with air traffic, and trespassing.



The government has just passed a tougher penalty for obstructing air traffic, which is pending parliamentary approval, with prison sentences of up to two years instead of a fine.

With the action, the climate activism group was trying to put pressure on the German government to sign

a 'Fossil Fuel Treaty' with international partners, a joint agreement to phase out fossil fuels by 2030, the 'Last Generation' said on social media platform X.

As an election promise, the country's governing parties in 2021 declared their intention to phase out coal by 2030. However, the plan has

so far only been adopted for the most populous federal state, North Rhine-Westphalia, with experts doubting it is to be implemented in time.

At the international level, the Group of Seven (G7) countries, including Germany, agreed for the first time at the end of April on a common time frame for the complete phase-out of coal, aiming for implementation by the mid-2030s.

The 'Last Generation' has been polarising in recent years with road traffic blockades that caused much resentment among the population. At the beginning of 2024, they changed their strategy, shifting to "increasingly confront those responsible for climate destruction directly in future".



## CM DR. YADAV WILL HAVE DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH LEADING INDUSTRIALISTS OF SOUTH INDIA

Invest Madhya Pradesh roadshow will be held in Coimbatore today. Dialogue to be held for investments in M.P.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav is making continuous efforts to promote investment and employment in the state. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav will inaugurate the "Interactive Session on Investment Opportunities in Madhya Pradesh" in Coimbatore on 25 July 2024. So far, more than 700 investors and entrepreneurs have registered for this session. This event is part of the Road-to-GIS series of "Invest Madhya Pradesh: Global Investors Summit" to be held in February 2025. Earlier, Chief Minister Dr. Yadav had interacted with investors and industrialists in the roadshow in Mumbai.

A positive environment is being created for the Global Investors Summit to be held in February 2025 through regional industrial conclaves, road shows, and interactive sessions in major industrial centers of the country. In these events, investors and industrialists are being made aware of the resources of various sectors of Madhya Pradesh, available opportunities, skilled workforce, posi-



tive initiatives of the government, developmental approach, and supportive environment.

The objective of this program is to make investors aware of investment

opportunities in Madhya Pradesh and to motivate them to participate in the progress of the state. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav will also hold one-to-one discussions with investors and

discuss the state's 'One-District-One-Product' (ODOP) scheme. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav will lay special emphasis on the state's skilled workforce, abundant resources, and favorable industrial environment.

This program to meet industrialists for investment is being organized in Coimbatore, the major industrial center of South India after Mumbai, which is famous for its textile, engineering, and information technology sectors. Efforts will be made to attract investors in key sectors like PM Mitra Textile Park, IT Park, Textile and Garment, Engineering and Information Technology.

Representatives of M/s Best Corporation and M/s Craftsman will share their experiences from Madhya Pradesh. Officials of the Industrial Policy and Investment Promotion Department will give a presentation on investment opportunities in various areas of Madhya Pradesh. In the interactive session, industrialists will be given detailed information about investment opportunities in the state through a short film focused on 'Advantage Madhya Pradesh'.

## 'Upset' BJP minister meets CM, party says all is well

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh BJP Minister Nagar Singh Chouhan, who was upset after being divested of the key Forest and Environment portfolio, has met Chief Minister Mohan Yadav after meeting the party's central leadership in Delhi.

Chouhan, a four-time tribal MLA who is now left with the Scheduled Caste Welfare portfolio, had said he would quit the ministerial post and serve the people of his community, adding that his wife Anita Nagar Singh Chouhan, who is a first-time Lok Sabha member, might also quit as an MP.

On Sunday, Nagar Singh Chouhan was divested of the Forest and Environment portfolio which was allotted to Raminvas Rawat, a six-time Congress MLA who switched sides to the BJP on April 30. On Tuesday, Nagar Singh Chouhan visited Delhi to meet the party's central leadership to sort out the difference. However, the central leadership did not intervene and asked the state leadership to handle the situation.

Sources told reporter that Chouhan, who is considered a close aide of former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, also met him during his visit to Delhi.

However, before returning to Madhya Pradesh, the Minister shared a couple of videos



on his social media handles and introduced himself just as an MLA from Alirajpur.

Another twist in the story came after the tribal leader along with state BJP Chief V. D. Sharma and General Secretary (Organisation) Hitanand Sharma visited Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's residence at midnight on Tuesday. On Wednesday, the BJP shared the photographs and a video on its social media handles, showing them all laughing during the meeting at the Chief Minister's House. The BJP leaders also claimed things have been settled down in the party. Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Vishwas Sarang responding to Chouhan's issue claimed there was no difference within the party and blamed Congress for playing politics. "This issue has been resolved. Congress was trying to politicise the issue in the name of tribals," Sarang told reporter.

V. D. Sharma and Nagar Singh Chouhan refrained from making any statement on this matter.

## Budget will establish new dimensions of development, Congress has a habit of talking without thinking: Vishwas Kailash Sarang

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Vishwas Kailash Sarang, Minister of Cooperation, Sports and Youth Welfare Department in Madhya Pradesh Government, gave his response to the budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. On Congress criticizing the budget, he said that the opposition party is talking without thinking.

Speaking to IANS, Vishwas Kailash Sarang said, "Congress has a habit of talking without thinking, what is the seriousness of the budget? The budget of the Modi government is for the welfare of the country, which will develop a new dimension on the development front. Will do."

On the case of Nagar Singh Chauhan, Minister Vishwas said, "That case has been closed. Nagar Singh Chauhan is our worker. Congress is only trying to do politics on this matter. It is the habit of Congress to make the issue of force. Administration on Guna case. The police have taken prompt action. The accused have been jailed, such incidents will never get protection in Madhya Pradesh.

While giving his reaction on the budget, Madhya Pradesh Congress President Jitu Patwari had said that despite giving 29 MPs to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Madhya



Pradesh has been cheated. It is shameful that apart from Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, even Union Ministers like Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Jyotiraditya Scindia could not protect Madhya Pradesh.

Jitu Patwari had also said that oppression of tribals continues under BJP rule. The tribals gave full support to BJP, but they are treated with second class treatment. BJP also wants to do politics by playing with the sentiments of the sisters of Madhya Pradesh.

Describing Chief Minister Mohan Yadav as the biggest devotee of Charvak, he said that Mohan Yadav has got into the habit of taking loans.

## HEAVY RAIN IN MADHYA PRADESH INCREASES PEOPLE'S TROUBLES

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Due to active monsoon, heavy and heavy rains are continuing in large parts of Madhya Pradesh. This rain has increased the problems in many areas. Traffic is being disrupted and many families are trapped in rain water.

Not only this, the water level in rivers and drains has also increased. Monsoon is active in large parts of the state and the Meteorological Department has also issued an alert of heavy rain in more than 20 districts of the state.

If we look at the situation of the last 24 hours, the water level of Bargi, Tighra, Indira Sagar and many other dams of the state is also rising rapidly. Due to this, gates had to be opened to drain the water. Due to rain, many areas of Katni have been flooded and



people are not able to come out of their homes.

Similarly, in Chhatarpur district on Tuesday evening, more than 50 people were trapped due to rise in the water level of Dhasan river. To rescue

them safely, SDRF and police launched an operation and in an operation that lasted for several hours, the people trapped on the island were rescued safely. The lower settlements of Tikamgarh district are also filled with water. Due to heavy rains in Jabalpur too, many colonies of Dhanwantari Nagar, Garha, Gangasagar, Madan Mahal and Ghamapur areas have been flooded. According to the Meteorological Department, monsoon is active in the state, a trough line has emerged from here. Also, a low pressure area has formed and the cyclone has turned into circulation. Due to this, there is a possibility of heavy rain in many areas in the next 24 hours. And after two days, the present system will become weak. Apart from this, there is a possibility of heavy rain in the northern part of the state on July 29 and 30.

## 48 SHEPHERDS AND LABORERS STRANDED ACROSS THE RIVER DUE TO FLOOD, RESCUED

**Chhatarpur:** 48 shepherds and laborers who had crossed the river got trapped due to sudden flood in Dhasan river near Kutora village of Ghuwara area of Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh.

It is being told that there is a temple at an island like place on the river, where construction work was going on. At the same time, many laborers had crossed the river to graze their cattle. Suddenly the Dhasan river came into spate. A total of 48 people got stuck at an island-like place across the river.

The matter was informed to the district administration. After which the rescue team reached the spot around five in the evening. After a lot of hard work, 30 laborers and shepherds were rescued and brought safely to the other side of the river. Currently, rescue operation of 18 people is being conducted.

Rescue operations are being carried out continuously by the NDRF team. Apart from Bada Malhara SDM Prashant Aggarwal and SDOP Rohit, administration and NDRF team are present on the spot. These days heavy rains have caused havoc in Madhya Pradesh. Heavy rains were seen in Jabalpur, Khajuraho, Dhar, Bhopal, Betul, Guna, Gwalior, Indore, Khandwa, Shivpuri, Ujjain, Damoh, Mandla, Narsinghpur, Nuaogaon, Rewa, Sagar, Tikamgarh, Umaria and Balaghat of the state, which disrupted normal life.

## More than Rs 14 thousand crore for railway facilities in Madhya Pradesh

► CHIEF MINISTER DR. YADAV EXPRESSED GRATITUDE TO PRIME MINISTER MODI AND RAILWAY MINISTER VAISHNAV

way facilities provided to Madhya Pradesh and the provision of an amount of Rs 14 thousand 738 crore. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav have taken care of the interests of Madhya Pradesh.

Development work of 80 railway stations is going on in Madhya Pradesh. For this, an amount of Rs 81 thousand crore was sanctioned, due to which this work is going on and in the



recently presented budget, apart from this, provision of Rs 14 thousand 738 crore is important for the development of railway facilities in Madhya Pradesh. The citizens of the state will benefit from the development of new railway facilities and railway stations. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav has expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Railway Minister Vaishnav on behalf of the citizens of the state.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has thanked the Central Government for the rail-

## Sensation after two dead bodies were found in the big pond of Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

One or two dead bodies were found in the big pond of Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, on Wednesday morning. The deceased have not been identified and the bodies of both have been sent to the hospital for post-mortem.

According to the information received, the dead bodies of a couple were found in the big pond on Wednesday morning. Based on this, the relief and rescue teams reached the spot and took out both the bodies.

It is likely that the couple had fallen into the water just a few hours ago. It could not be confirmed whether he had committed suicide or was the victim of an accident. Relief and rescue teams took out the bodies of both and sent them to the hospital for post-mortem.

The age of both is said to be between 30 to 35 years, but they have not been identified yet. It is also not confirmed as of now when both



of them died. But looking at his dead body it seems that he had died only a few hours ago.

Police are identifying both of them and are also finding out where they were residents of. It is feared that there could be a love affair between the two.

## "GRAMEEN PATH ROSHAN YOJANA" TO CONNECT YOUTH WITH SKILL DEVELOPMENT

**Bhopal:** Madhya Pradesh State Open Education Board has launched "Grameen Path Roshan Yojana" to link skill development with employment. Under this scheme, unemployed youth educated up to class 10th in the age group of 18 to 45 years have been given free training for setting up rooftop solar plants. One youth in each village of Shujalpur area of Shajapur district has been provided loan from the bank to install a 10 kW rooftop solar plant on the roof of their houses.

The electricity produced from this plant is deposited in the power grid through On-Grid Net Solar Meter. LED street lights are operated at night with the electricity deposited. One such 10 kilowatt on-grid solar system has been installed in Tapka Basantpur village which produces 40 to 50 units of electricity per day and sends electricity to Central Region Power Distribution Company through the grid. 20 LED street lights have been installed in Tapka Basantpur village, which operate at night with the electricity generated by solar and sent to Central Region Power Distribution Company.

The youth selected in "Grameen Path Roshan Yojana" have been given training by Udyam Learning Foundation of Bengaluru. For the scheme, the State Open School Education Board has provided an amount of Rs 1 crore as the first installment to the Directorate of Public Instructions. The School Education Department is planning to expand it.

## Chief Minister Dr. Yadav launches "Agradoot Portal"

► AGRDOOT PORTAL WILL PROVE THAT 'INFORMATION IS POWER' DISSEMINATED. INFORMATION RELATED TO SCHEMES WILL BE EASILY TO CITIZENS. CHIEF MINISTER SENT THE FIRST MESSAGE OF RAKHI GIFT TO LADLI BEHNAS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, Madhya Pradesh government is making better use of the communication revolution to reach out to the citizens with transparency and to send information related to the schemes to the beneficiaries. Today Chief Minister Dr. Yadav has launched the 'Agradoot Portal' prepared by the Department of Public Relations in Mantralaya. Agradoot Portal is a unique initiative in itself, giving meaning to the mantra of "Information is Power". This is the first time that such an innovative initiative has been taken by the Department of Public Relations of any state for the convenience of the citizens and to provide



them with quick information.

At the launch, Chief Minister Dr. Yadav sent his first message to the Ladli Behnas. This message is about transferring Rs 250 to the accounts of Ladli Behnas on 1st August as a

shagun for Rakshabandhan.

**What is Agradoot Portal?**

The Agradoot portal prepared by the Department of Public Relations of the Government of Madhya Pradesh is an innova-

tive initiative to disseminate information to the target group in a single click. Through the Agradoot portal, information can be delivered to the target audience of the state through a single click. After three-tier review through the portal, the message will be shared on the popular mobile messaging app - WhatsApp, and multimedia messages (graphics, text, links, videos) can also be shared simultaneously. Besides, information can be easily delivered to the citizens.

**Features of Agradoot Portal**

Agradoot Portal is an innovative initiative in the field of information revolution. This will allow the targeted citizens to be reached in less time. Information dissemination, wide communication, use of a comprehensive database, dissemination of information through WhatsApp, single click-based, user-friendly, three-tier approval process will be completed in less time.

**Information can be separated category-wise**

The information required by the citizens of the state can be filtered from the Agradoot portal. Messages or information can be sent by dividing them category-wise, such as age, gender, caste, religion, occupation, disability, district/local body/area, and selecting them.



# Celine Dion to return to stage with Paris Olympics opening ceremony

Los Angeles | Agencies

Legendary singer-songwriter Celine Dion, who has been battling a rare neurological condition called stiff-person syndrome, is expected to make her return to the stage at the Olympic Games. The singer is rumoured to be taking to the Paris Olympics stage during the opening ceremony on Friday, reports Variety. It will mark the pop legend's first performance since halting her touring schedule and stepping away from the spotlight after being diagnosed with Stiff Person Syndrome in December 2022.

As per Variety, the singer arrived in Paris at the Royal Monceau Hotel near the Champs-Elysees, where Lady Gaga, another potential opening ceremony headliner, is also staying. Specific details about Dion's performance are being kept under wraps. The Canadian singer teased that a comeback may be imminent in an April interview with Vogue France, in which she said: "I've chosen to work with all my body and soul, from head to toe, with a medical team. I want to be the best I can be. My goal is to see the Eiffel Tower again."

She also said that she was working every day to get stronger. She told Vogue France: "For four years I've been saying to myself that I'm not going back, that I'm ready, that I'm not ready... As things stand, I can't stand here and say to you: 'Yes, in four months,' she said. "I don't know... My body will tell me."

It turns out that she may indeed be performing in front of the famous Parisian landmark, as the opening ceremony will take place in the shape of a nautical parade along the Seine, culminating near the Trocadero, facing the Eiffel Tower.

The ceremony, which will take place outside of a stadium for the first time in history, will showcase Paris' iconic locations and bring together 3,500 actors, dancers and musical performers.



# Rihanna revealed her new summer fashion plans

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rihanna gave fans a peek at her panties in a new Instagram video, posted on Tuesday, July 23. The singer, 36, posted a clip of herself out on a seemingly impromptu photoshoot on a city street. Throughout the clip, Rihanna chats with her videographer, who compliments her looks, and she shared her latest fashion goals for the season, including with her underwear.

At one point in the clip, the cameraperson panned down to show Rihanna wearing a set of black sneakers, and the "Work" popstar admitted that she had color-coordinated them with her underwear. "My panties match my converse," she said. The person filming responded, "Let's see!" RiRi then turned around and lifted up her skirt to show off a black thong underneath.

Rihanna's whole outfit was pretty stylish. Besides the black shoes and matching panties, Rihanna sported a blue, long-sleeve button-down, which was mostly open, showing off a black lacy bra underneath. The person filming similarly complimented that, and she responded that it was one of her own. "Savage. Have you heard of it?" she quipped. Rihanna also wore a brown, checkered skirt, some large glasses, and carried a tiny Louis Vuitton bag.

In the caption, Rihanna revealed that she'd originally planned on getting abs over the summer, but instead, she was going to focus on underwear and footwear. "Since I clearly won't be achieving my six pack til next summer, I switched my summer goal to matching my shoes to my panties!" she wrote.



# Paris Hilton is taking her fans back in time

Los Angeles | Agencies

Paris Hilton is taking her fans back in time. The heiress, 43, teased a brand new single called "Chasin'" in an Instagram Post on Tuesday, July 23. Paris announced the upcoming track with a funny video of herself sitting on a couch and taking a call on her "That's Hot-line." As she took an inaudible call, she advised the caller to go check out her new song.

In the video, Paris was seated on a couch in a luxurious house, wearing a hot pink outfit. She was petting one of her chihuahuas while a stack of books sat next to her. There were also a few items that looked like perfume bottles from the early 2000s on the table in front of her.

As Paris has slowly been making her return to music, she kept up the tradition of collaborating with newer artists. Her previous singles have featured Sia and alternative popstar Rina Sawayama. Who is the featured artist on the track, you ask? It's not Charli XCX, Sabrina Carpenter, or Chappell Roan. Instead, she opted to work with "All About That Bass" pop singer Meghan Trainor. At the end of the clip, the "Like I'm Gonna Lose You" singer could be heard singing what is presumably the song's chorus, and it sounded like par for the course of Meghan's neo-retro pop sound that she's cornered the market on.

The clip also made reference to Paris' sponsorship deal with Motorola. Paris answered her call on the 2024 version of the company's Razr brand, which was a staple of the Y2K era and the aughts. While they've taken a more smartphone approach to the phone, anyone who came of age during that time will surely recognize the company's logo.



# Brittany Mahomes Shares Pregnancy with Baby No. 3

Los Angeles | Agencies

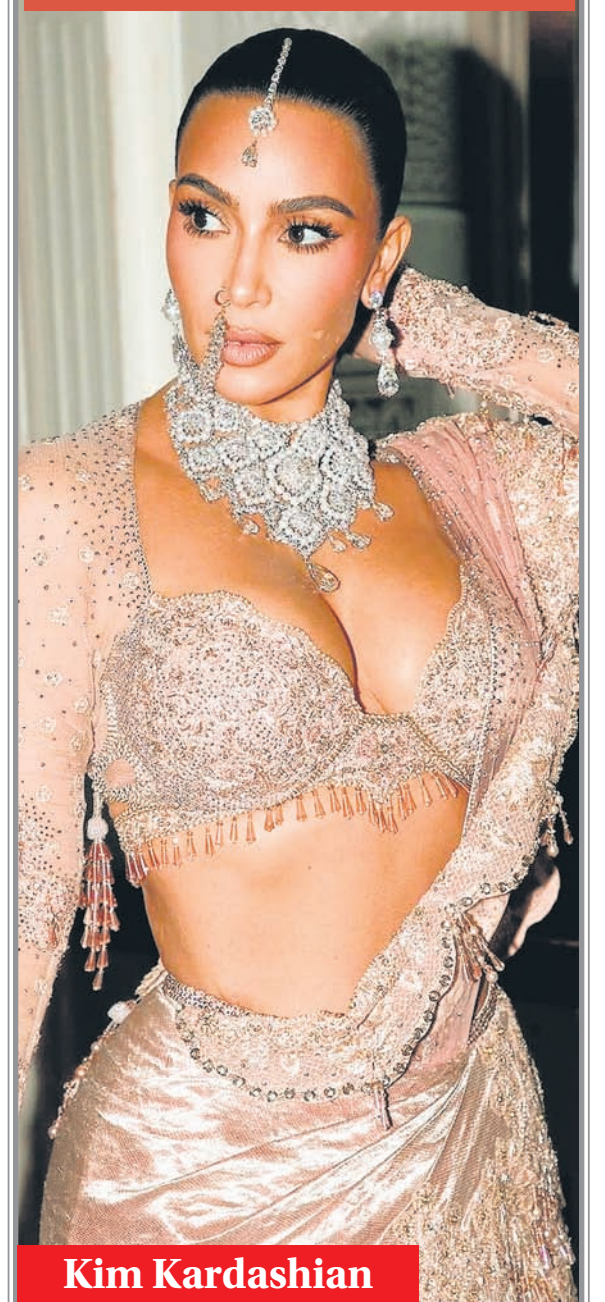
Brittany Mahomes is finding that pregnancy the third time around doesn't necessarily mean things get any easier. On Tuesday, July 23, the Kansas City Current co-owner, 28, posted a photo to her Instagram Stories detailing the challenges she's faced throughout her pregnancy. Brittany and her NFL star husband Patrick Mahomes, 28, are expecting their third baby together.

Brittany posted a makeup-free selfie, writing, "Good morning, just me and my skin that's losing its mind." "This pregnancy has been the hardest on me," she admitted, before revealing she's experiencing "sickness, exhaustion, and now skin" problems. To address the final issue, Mahomes said she got an "amazing facial," which she hopes will help clear up her skin.

The Sports Illustrated Swimsuit rookie and the Kansas City Chiefs quarterback, announced they are expecting a third child earlier this month. The pair, who wed in 2022, also share daughter Sterling Skye and son Patrick "Bronze" Lavon Mahomes III, who is now 20 months old.

In a celebratory joint Instagram post on Friday, July 19, the couple revealed that their third child is going to be another girl.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Kim Kardashian

# 'Bridgerton 4' to focus on Benedict Bridgerton's love story

Los Angeles | Agencies

The fourth season of the popular streaming show 'Bridgerton' will focus on the love story of Benedict Bridgerton, a perpetual bachelor. Benedict, who is essayed by Luke Thompson, has taken a backseat in recent seasons but will now be the next Bridgerton sibling to find their soulmate, reports Variety.

The season will follow the events of Julia Quinn's third 'Bridgerton' novel, 'An Offer From a Gentleman,' which sees Benedict searching for a "lady in silver" he meets at a masquerade ball who turns out to be a low-born woman named Sophie Beckett.

As per Variety, in the 'Bridgerton' Season 4 logline that accompanied the announcement, Netflix confirmed that Benedict's love interest is still that woman. It read: "The fourth season of 'Bridgerton' turns its focus to bohemian second son Benedict (Luke



Thompson). Despite his elder and younger brothers both being happily married, Benedict loath to settle down — until he meets a captivating Lady in Silver at his mother's masquerade ball."

When Variety spoke with new

'Bridgerton' showrunner Jess Brownell about the season 3 finale in June, she teased Benedict Bridgerton as the season 4 lead and broke down the decision to reveal his pansexuality during Colin (Luke Newton) and Penelope's (Nicola Coughlan) season which is based on the fourth 'Bridgerton' book, 'Romancing Mister Bridgerton,' and swapped places with Benedict's story for the TV series.

"I knew that people out there had a feeling Benedict might be queer," Brownell said. "And personally, it made sense to me. He's not just open-minded, it's that he seems like the type of person who wouldn't be as concerned with gender, someone who might be more fluid and pansexual. He's really attracted to someone's spirit. And so it felt like we should make sense of those pieces that were in Seasons 1 and 2. That was what we were attempting to do with his storyline."





## Carlsen, Anand, Nakamura among top icon players for Global Chess League season 2

New Delhi | Agencies

Global Chess League has unveiled a stellar lineup that includes world No.1 Magnus Carlsen, five-time world champion Vishwanathan Anand, and Hikaru Nakamura. The chess showdown is slated to take place from October 3 to 12 at Friends House in London. Five-time world champion Carlsen, who also featured in the first season of the Global Chess League, will continue to play for Alpine SG Pipers in the second season. "The first season in Dubai was a fantastic experience. Chess has been an individual sport, but the concept of a team setting introduced by the Global Chess League is very exciting and refreshing. I look forward to playing again with the Alpine SG Pipers," said Carlsen. One of the world's most popular and dynamic players Nakamura, will play for the new team American Gambits. Anish Giri will

make his debut in the second season with PBG Alaskan Knights as the Icon player. Joining as an Icon player for American Gambits, Nakamura, said, "I followed the Global Chess League in its first season and was hooked to the format. It is an exciting opportunity not only for the top players, but also for fans as they get to pick a team with their favorite players to cheer on. I am excited to be a part of American Gambits team, and I look forward to meeting my teammates in London." Grandmaster Giri, who has been signed up as the Icon player by PBG Alaskan Knights, said, "The unique format of the Global Chess League takes the competition to a higher level. I am sure that the fans will tune in to see the exciting battles between teams comprising top men and women chess players. I am delighted to play in my debut season with PBG Alaskan Knights, and I am looking forward to the exciting times ahead." Returning in the Icon player role



for Ganges Grandmasters is the five-time world champion, Vishi Anand. As the Icon player of the first season's finalists, Mumba Masters, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave will continue to lead from the front for the team.

In the second season, Ian Nepomniachtchi will be the Icon player for the Triveni Continental Kings. Viswanathan Anand, the icon player for Ganges Grandmasters, said, "The inaugural season was a huge success with some very exciting matches. Chess is widely played across the world, and the game being televised in this unique format will only add to its popularity. I believe that fans who tune in will get to see intense battles between teams playing chess at their highest level. I am excited to be back playing for Ganges Grandmasters." Grandmaster Ian Nepomniachtchi, in his new role as the Icon player for Triveni Continental Kings, said, "After an exciting launch season, I am glad to be a part of the second season of the Global Chess League. Playing for the winners of the first season, Triveni Continental Kings, makes it even more special, and I am looking forward to play some exciting matches in London."

## Real Madrid become first football club to exceed 1 bn euros in revenue

Madrid | Agencies

Real Madrid have become the first football club to cross 1 billion euros in revenue with a net profit of 16 million euros in the year 2023-24. The board of directors of Real Madrid CF has formulated the annual accounts for the 2023-24 financial year in a meeting held on Tuesday. Revenue for the 2023/24 season, excluding players transfers, reached to 1.073 billion euros, which is 27 per cent more than the previous year, according to the data available on the club's website. "Operating income (before disposal of fixed assets) for the 2023/24 financial year reached 1,073 million euros, representing an increase of 230 million euros (27%) compared to the 2022/23 financial year. In this financial year, despite the stadium not yet being fully operational, the Club has managed to exceed the 1 billion euros mark for operating income before disposal of fixed assets, a figure not previously achieved by any football club," it said in a release. The club closes the 2023/24 financial year with a profit after tax of 16 million euros, 32%



higher than the previous year (12 million euros). Moreover, it maintained a financial situation with a net worth of 574 million euros. Real Madrid's contribution to tax and social security revenues in the 2023/24 financial year has amounted to 277.1 million euros. The amount of investment recorded in the 2023/24 financial year was 270 million euros, including the financial costs capitalised during the construction period. Thus, the accumulated investment up to 30 June 2024 amounts to 1,163 million euros. In the sporting arena, the first football team has won the Champions League title, the sixth in the 2014-2024 period, as well as the Spanish League and Super Cup titles.

## PARIS OLYMPICS: COCO GAUFF TO MAKE HISTORY AS YOUNGEST U.S. FLAG BEARER AT OPENING CEREMONY

New York | Agencies

Women tennis player Coco Gauff will carry the U.S. flag at the Paris Olympic Opening Ceremony on Friday, becoming the youngest American to get this honour. Gauff, 20, was selected by her fellow U.S. Olympic team members, making her the first tennis player to serve as a U.S. flag-bearer at either an opening or closing ceremony. Joining her will be NBA star LeBron James, named the male flag-bearer on Monday. Gauff, born in March 2004, will surpass the record previously held by Cindy Nelson, an Alpine skier who served as flag-bearer for the U.S. at the Opening Ceremony of the 1976 Winter Games. Ranked a career-high No. 2 in the world in singles,



Gauff has won her first Grand Slam titles in both singles and doubles over the past year. At the U.S. Open last September, she became the youngest American to win a Grand Slam singles title since Serena Williams claimed her first title at 17 in 1999. Furthermore, at the French Open this past June, Gauff teamed with Czech Katerina

Siniakova to capture the women's doubles title, becoming the youngest woman to win a Grand Slam in both singles and doubles in 19 years. She made the Tokyo Olympic team at age 17 but was forced to withdraw five days before the opening ceremony after testing positive for Covid-19.

## Sub-jr Men, Women East Zone Hockey: Jharkhand, Odisha, Manipur win league matches

Guwahati (Assam) | Agencies

Hockey Jharkhand and Hockey Association of Odisha secured wins in the women's category, while Hockey Association of Odisha and Manipur Hockey registered victories in the men's category on Day 1 of the 2nd Hockey India Sub-junior Men and Women East Zone Championship 2024 at Maulana Md. Tayabullah Hockey Stadium. Hockey Jharkhand took on Assam Hockey in the first match of the day and won 18-0 in the Women's category. The goalscorers for Hockey Jharkhand were Sandeepa Kumari (3', 16', 34'), Pushpa Manjhi (8', 11', 59'), Pushpa Dang (12', 22'), Sushmita Guria (14', 47', 49', 57'), Shruti Kumari (23', 28', 42'), Sewani Kerketta (44'), Rejina Kullu (46') and Ankita Lakra (58'). In the second match of the day in the Women's category, the Hockey Association of Odisha took on Hockey



Bengal. Odisha won the game 15-0. Ashika Sadam (3', 60'), Eleena Burh (11'), Priyanka Minz (14', 15', 41', 43',

60'), Sonima Goud (21', 32', 53'), Sanjana Kujur (29'), Sanjana Kiro (47', 54'), Sweety Kujur (56') and were the goalscorers. Meanwhile, in the men's category, Odisha thrashed Bengal 13-0. For Hockey Association of Odisha, Salman Lakra (2', 27'), Mandeep Kerketta (20', 21', 35', 54', 57'), Arman Soreng (33'), Ranjit Kerketta (39'), Sanjeet Raj Lakra (41'), Subodh Lakra (45', 52') and Leslan Minz (51') were the goal-scorers. In the second match in the Men's category, Manipur Hockey took on Hockey Bihar. Manipur Hockey won the game 7-1. For Manipur Hockey, Akojiam Malemnganba (6'), Nishi Saikhom Singh (33'), Gerik Ningombam Singh (40'), Lisham Max Singh (48', 50'), Lanthoiba Okram (51') and Athokpeem Milan (56') got on the scoresheet. At the same time, for Hockey Bihar, Navin Nikhil Kumar (46') was the lone goal scorer.

## Interim coach Jayasuriya calls for discipline in Sri Lankan cricket team

Colombo | Agencies

Ahead of the white-ball home series against India, newly appointed interim head coach Sanath Jayasuriya calls for discipline within the Sri Lankan team, including enforcing proper haircut and the removal of piercings. Addressing the media, former skipper Jayasuriya admitted instilling discipline in current players is important, specially to maintain cricket as "the gentlemen's game". "We did basic disciplining. We are expecting discipline in general, and I am only an interim coach during my tenure. I want that discipline," said Jayasuriya, who has been appointed as a temporary coach for the series against India and Sri Lanka's tour of England in September. "Our cricket-loving public love these cricketers, and they are watching them and there are young cricketers who are looking up to senior cricketers. They like to learn from them. If they do well it would help the younger generation of cricketers as well. It was on this backdrop we introduced these changes. We want to maintain cricket as the gentlemen's game," he added. Backing Jayasuriya's attempt to discipline the



young cricketers, country's Sports Minister Harin Fernando, earlier stressed the need for modesty and discipline among cricketers representing the country and argued that humble behaviour could mitigate most of the criticism cricketers face after match losses. "If the team had been more humble and their attitudes had shifted, the people of Sri Lanka would not have been so critical of match losses. People have a deep love for cricket" the Sports Minister had said. Jayasuriya also stressed that Sri Lanka should get the best advantage from the absence of three experienced players; Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who have announced their retirement from the shorter format after T20 World Cup last month. "They are not in the team, which is a loss to the Indian team, and we should take maximum advantage of it," he said. "Rohit, Virat and Jadeja are the best players in the world. With their talent, the cricket they played, we all know where they stand," Jayasuriya said. The three T20Is will be played on July 27, 28 and 30 at Pallekele International Stadium followed by three ODIs, starting from August 2 in Colombo.

## PARIS OLYMPICS: TOP BRITISH OLYMPIAN DUJARDIN WITHDRAWS OVER 'ERROR OF JUDGEMENT'

Paris | Agencies

One of Team GB's biggest Olympic stars and a clear medal hope, equestrian Charlotte Dujardin has withdrawn from the Paris Olympic Games at the last moment after what she has described as "an error of judgement." The 39-year-old, who has three gold medals and six in total in equestrian events, withdrew after the release of a four-year-old video of her in a training session, reports Xinhua. "A video has emerged from four years ago which shows me making an error of judgement during a coaching session. Understandably, the International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI) is investigating, and I have made the decision to withdraw from all competition - including the Paris Olympics - while this process takes



place." "What happened was completely out of character and does not reflect how I train my horses or coach my pupils, however there is no excuse. I am deeply ashamed and should have set a better example in that moment," explained the rider in a statement. It was not immediately clear what the video showed. Dujardin won individual and team gold medals at the 2012 London Olympics an individual gold and a silver in Rio and two bronze medals in Tokyo. She said she was "sincerely sorry for her actions and devastated to have let everyone down."

# Paris Olympics: Mirabai Chanu eyeing historic second medal in another lone ranger effort

Mumbai | Agencies

One of the four individual Indian athletes hoping for a repeat of their success from the Tokyo Olympics and win back-to-back medals, weightlifter Saikhom Mirabai Chanu is the lone weightlifter representing the country in the Paris Olympic Games. Being the only one from India in her sport in Paris, Mirabai will be carrying the weight of the expectations of 130-odd crore people. But lifting weights comes easy for the 29-year-old from Nongpok Kaching in Imphal East district of Manipur. Being a lone ranger for the country in top competitions is also not new for Mirabai as she was also the only Indian weightlifter in Tokyo. Mirabai made history in the re-scheduled Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in 2021 when she

won the silver medal in the 49 kg weight class, becoming the second Indian weightlifter to win an Olympic medal. She is also the most successful Indian lifter at the Olympics and the second one after Karnam Malleswari in 2000 to win an Olympic medal. Now Mirabai, who will be competing in the third Olympics after the 2016 Rio Olympics and 2020 Tokyo, will be hoping to become the second Indian woman sports person to win back-to-back medals in the quadrennial Games after shuttler PV Sindhu (2016, 2020). However, the path to the podium in the women's 49kg class is extremely tough, and Mirabai, who became the World Champion in his weight class in 2017, the first Indian to win. China's Hou Zhihui, the gold medalist at Tokyo, is the run-away leader with a total lift of 200kg while the rest of the field has recently lifted



in the range of 180 to 190kg. However, Hou did not have a smooth qualifying route for Paris, grabbing the quota place in the last minute, overtaking her teammate Jiang Huihua with her final lift at the 2024 IWF World Cup held in Phuket, Thailand, which was the last qualifying event for the Olympics. Hou, who set a world record in the snatch category at Phuket by lifting 97 kg, is ranked well clear of three of her top contenders - Mirabai, Surodchana Khambao from Thailand, and Jourdan Delacruz from the United States. Mirabai's strong point is clean and jerk, in which she held the World Record at 119 kg. Thus she will have to do a very good snatch to then capitalise on her performance in clean and jerk to get into medal contention. She has a personal best of 203 kg (88 kg in Snatch and 115 kg in Clean & Jerk) which she lifted in the 2020

Senior National Weightlifting Championships. She improved her performance in clean and jerk to lift 119 kg in the 2020 Asian Weightlifting Championship in Tashkent, where she achieved a total of 205kg. It will also be tough for Mirabai in Paris on another count -- injuries. Since winning the silver medal in Tokyo, Mirabai has struggled with injuries -- the hip injury she suffered at the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023 being the latest setback for her. That injury suffered in October 2023 had kept Mirabai out for five months. Though Mirabai, who won gold medals in back-to-back Commonwealth Games in 2018 and 2022, has recovered from that injury. She has participated in only one event this season, the IWF World Cup in Phuket, where she finished 12th with a combined lift of 184 kilos.



# FRENCH MUSEUM ISSUES GOLD COINS IN HONOUR OF SHAH RUKH KHAN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Grevin Museum in the French capital has honoured Bollywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan with its set of customised gold coins.

The Grevin Museum at Paris is a wax museum located on the Grands Boulevards on the right bank of the Seine river.

A paparazzi shared the update on Instagram with a photo of the coin featuring SRK's likeness. This makes SRK the first Bollywood actor to have gold coins in his name at the museum.

Meanwhile, SRK has been earlier immortalised in wax statues in the US, the UK, Germany, France, Czech Republic, Thailand, India, Singapore and Australia.

Meanwhile, on the work front, SRK bailed out the struggling Hindi film industry in 2023 with his consecutive blockbusters like 'Pathaan', and 'Jawan'. While in 'Pathaan' he played the role of the titular spy, he played a cop who doubles up as a vigilante in 'Jawan'.



## Couple of producers have not paid me, that is cheating only : Akshay Kumar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Actor Akshay Kumar, who can be seen in the recently released theatrical film 'Sarfire', has spoken up on the criticism of him churning out movies one after the other.

The actor has been questioned time and again for doing four films a year and his passion for work has often been misunderstood as a greedy motive to make money. During a conversation with Mamearth, Akshay said: "I have been told why I do four films a year, and

that I should do only one film. If I just do one film, what should I do on other days?"

"Many people tell others they work too much, lucky are those people who get work. In this day and age, so many people don't get work, they are unemployed, but at least let the ones who are getting work, work."

The superstar also shared that he has been professionally cheated by a few producers.

"I detach from a person if someone cheats me. I go quiet and take a side path. I have been cheated professionally, a couple of producers have not paid me, that is cheating only," the actor said.

## Saira Banu shares anecdotes about her co-star Manoj Kumar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran actress Saira Banu, who is known for sharing anecdotes from her life and about her late husband, the cinema icon Dilip Kumar, penned a heartwarming note for Dadasaheb Phalke Award winner and Padma Shri Manoj Kumar.

On Wednesday, the actress took to her Instagram and shared a bunch of throwback monochromatic pictures featuring herself, Dilip Kumar and Manoj Kumar.

The actress penned a long note in the caption and recollected how her husband and Manoj would often bond over kites and different kinds of omelettes.

She wrote: "Soon after my first film, I received so many offers amongst which was 'Shaadi'. Here for the first time, I played opposite Manoj ji. I was a very shy youngster and I had this peculiar habit of really being awkward on the sets while doing romantic numbers. Manoj ji is very understanding he would quietly just move away from the set while my solo shots were being filmed. We were both people of very few words but worked comfortably together."

She shared that her husband was Manoj's idol: "They were close and would always venture to make different types of omelettes, fly kites, and indulge in 'Sher-O-Shayari!'"

She then shared a "big joke" about Dilip and Manoj starring together in 'Aadmi'. During the making of the film, Manoj started to assume the gestures associated with Dilip Kumar. After which Dilip Kumar laughingly told Manoj: "Yaar tu meri tarah shots kar le, main kuch aur tareeka nikalta hoon (you take the shots the way I do, I'll think of something else)."

Saira then walked down memory lane and explained how she became a part of 'Purab Aur Paschim' despite her and Dilip Kumar's decision about her not working in films after their marriage. She continued: "Sahib and I had decided that I would not be continuing with my film career after our Shaadi but behold! I had signed 'Purab Aur Paschim' before marriage, wherein I played a Westernised young girl against Manoj ji. Manoj ji declared that he would shelve his project if Sahib did not allow me to work on it. Later on, in the film I was unwell and Sahib told Manoj ji that we will never misunderstand if he replaces me, but Manoj ji committed that he would rather shelve the film than replace me. I will always respect him for this magnanimous gesture." The actress also shared that Manoj's wife Shashi once told her if a bumble bee came into the bedroom, Manoj would go under the bed sheet and ask her to drive out the insect.

She shared another story from the sets of 'Balidaan' when Manoj and she were shooting in China Creek.

She shared: "Both of us were running away from the Daaku who was approaching us on a horseback and we were running away barefoot in the flowing water handcuffed to each other."

"As the camera came on, the Bandit was whipping away in the air in pursuit of us and Manoj ji was supposed to grab the whip and stand in front of me to protect me like He Man, instead of this when the shot started Manoj ji quickly ran behind me instead of protecting me. What a laugh! In the later, years Manoj ji remained close to our family," she concluded.



I love enjoying my favourite Indian cuisine : Iulia Vantur

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress-singer Iulia Vantur, who is celebrating her birthday on Wednesday, has shared that she likes to indulge in biryani and homemade sweets on her special day. The actress told that for her, celebrating her birthday with family and friends is a cherished tradition. She said: "Their love and support mean the world to me, making every moment unforgettable. I love enjoying my favourite Indian cuisine, especially indulging in biryani and homemade sweets, and simply being at home with my loved ones."

She further mentioned that these intimate gatherings fill her heart with joy and remind her of what truly matters. "We always end up singing and dancing, making music together, and creating beautiful memories. These moments make my day so special. Here's to more beautiful moments together," she added. Recently, Iulia performed along with international stars Jason Derulo and Shae Gill in Dubai at the Coca-Cola Arena. The actress had earlier shared that when she went for AP Dhillon's rehearsals at the Coca-Cola Arena, in Dubai, she wrote in the air, 'One day I will perform here, signed Iulia Vantur'. Her good friends witnessed this and soon, she received a call telling her "See, it's happening."

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Kriti Kharbanda



## Rohit Shetty says he will never make parallel, art-driven cinema

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood director Rohit Shetty, who is known for his commercial entertainers, has said that he is happy in his space of mainstream commercial cinema, and won't make a move to explore the middle-of-the-road kind of cinema in future.

Rohit, who frequently collaborates with Bollywood superstar Ajay Devgn, has blockbuster after blockbuster to his credit. He has a successful franchise like 'Golmaal' in which he allowed the audience to explore the comic side of Ajay for the first time in 2006, who was previously known for his intense roles. He also has the cop universe to his credit with films like 'Singham', 'Singham Again', 'Simmba', 'Sooryavanshi' and the upcoming 'Singham Again'.

He has also collaborated with Bollywood icon Shah Rukh Khan twice for 'Chennai Express' and 'Dilwale' both of which were highly successful commercially.

When asked if in future he would like to change his line of cinema, and explore a more intense or art-driven cinema, Rohit told: "I'm happy in the kind of space I'm working in. Jis tarah ki films main banana hoon, I really enjoy putting them together. These demarcations of commercial cinema or arthouse cinema are given by the audience and the critics."

He further mentioned: "It's not our job as filmmakers to make these demarcations, cinema is cinema. You make the kind of cinema that you identify with. Cinema is more than 100 years old now, and there's a space for every kind of filmmaker to tell their story. That's the beauty of cinema."