



90% of India, entire Delhi in 'danger zone' of heatwave impacts: Study

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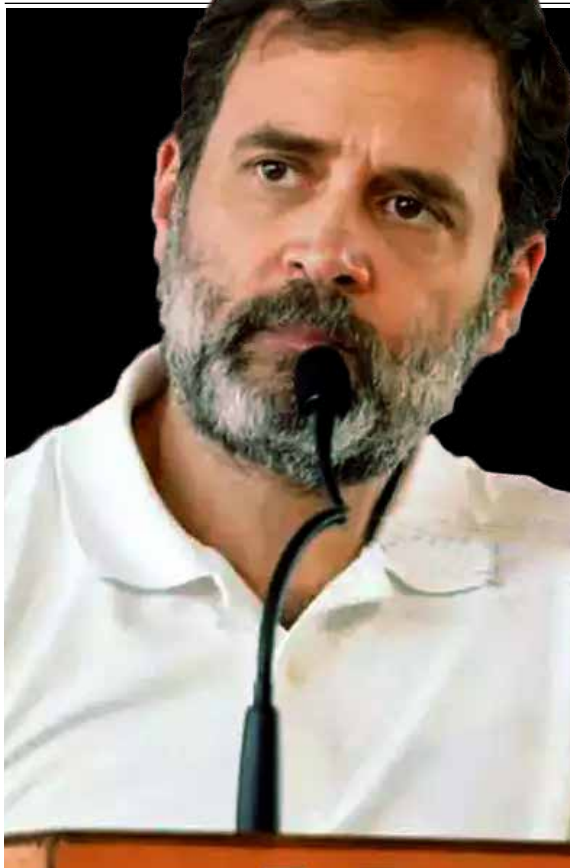


Afternoon

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Statements made only for seeking political gain, says Surat Court on dismissing Rahul Gandhi's appeal

A Surat court on Thursday rejected Rahul Gandhi's plea seeking a stay on his conviction in the 2019 criminal defamation case on the 'Modi surname' remark. Former Wayanad MP will now have to appeal in Gujarat High Court or Supreme Court against the Surat court's order.

Additional sessions judge Robin P Mogera cited Gandhi's stature as an MP and former chief of the country's second-largest political party and said he should have been more care-

ful. He cited prima facie evidence and observations of the trial court and said it transpires that Gandhi made certain derogatory remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi apart from comparing the people with the same surname with thieves.

Mogera said the surname of the complainant in the case, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lawmaker Purnesh Modi, is also Modi. "...the complainant is [also an] ex-minister and involved in public life and such defamatory remarks would have certainly

harmed his reputation and caused him pain and agony in society," he said. The judge said, "In this case, by uttering defamatory words viz comparing persons having [the] surname 'Modi' with thieves would definitely have caused mental agony and harm the reputation of [the] complainant, who is socially active and dealing in public." He further added, "When the defamatory matter affects each and every member of an ascertainable class or group each of them or all of them could set the law in motion."

He added, "After attributing defamatory statements against the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the accused did not stop there and further commented 'Why do all thieves have the common surname of 'Modi'? It is submitted that the defamatory statements were made by the accused and he had the knowledge that it would harm the reputation of 'Modi' surname holders and such statements were made only with a view to earning a political gain." ANI

Rahul Gandhi: Democracy is ruled by the rule of rulers?

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

In a massive setback for Rahul Gandhi, a court in Gujarat rejected his request to pause his conviction in a defamation case over his 2019 "Modi surname" remark. Criminal defamation law in India is tricky and not in the interest of people. Indian parliament should amend this law and make it relevant to the present day. His punishment is one of the more bizarre incidents. In India till date no one has ever been punished with the highest provision of 2 years for defamation. There is nothing to be surprised if the Surat Session court also upholds Rahul's conviction, sending him to jail. The conviction of Rahul Gandhi

must bring to the forefront the ridiculousness that is 'criminal defamation'.

In some way the court found Rahul's offence to be the rarest of the rare. We don't even know what was the assessment of damage done to the aggrieved party/plaintiff? Generally most defamation lawsuits result in punishment in tokenism or in financial compensation. In my view the severity of crime or quantum of punishment should have a direct correlation with the damage done tangible as well as intangible.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 02

Editoritis

No tangible damage was done to Purnesh Modi, a BJP MLA who filed the case. Secondly in his lawsuit he claimed that Rahul hurt the sentiment of 13 crores Gujarati.

The main issue here is the hate that is broadcasted against Gandhi family is not allowing blind people to think of democratic values. Politics must have an edge and it should not be at the cost of people's welfare.

The judge also quoted the Supreme Court as saying that decisions to pause conviction should be exercised with caution and "not in a casual and mechanical manner... that will shake public confidence in the judiciary".

Rahul Gandhi: Democracy is ruled by the rule of rulers?

▶▶▶ PAGE 1

Here in this case no tangible damage was done to Purnesh Modi, a BJP MLA who filed the case. Secondly in his lawsuit he claimed that Rahul hurt the sentiment of 13 crores Gujarati. How come the entire Gujarati community could be the aggrieved party? Incidentally Judge Robin Paul Mogera, who is hearing Rahul Gandhi's appeal for staying his conviction in the Surat Session court in the Modi surname defamation case, was Union home minister Amit Shah's lawyer in the 2006 Tulsiram Prajapati fake encounter case.

Many BJP followers are supporting the Emergency, and if that is the case, what they imposed on the emergency is wrong, and then the BJP is also doing wrong. When a person calls an Italian bar dancer in the media news, do the people accept it and not the statements of Rahul Gandhi? The main issue here is the hate that is broadcasted against Gandhi family is not allowing blind people to think of democratic values. Politics must have an edge and it should not be at the cost of people's welfare.

No doubt that the ruling party is enjoying absolute majority, but does this mean that every person who has voted should support this absolute anarchy in the hands of the majority. If the wrong is done, it is the people who have to oppose it. Rahul Gandhi had requested that his conviction be paused pending his appeal against a court order sentencing him to two years in jail. The trial court, said the Congress leader, had treated him harshly, overwhelmingly influenced by his status as an MP.

The judge also quoted the Supreme Court as saying that decisions to pause conviction should be exercised with caution and "not in a casual and mechanical manner... that will shake public confidence in the judiciary". Public confidence is already shaken these days. I am not a Congress party or Rahul Gandhi supporter but somewhere I strongly feel, BJP should answer the questions raised by Rahul Gandhi instead of misusing power to put him behind jail.

Gandhi's Lok Sabha seat Wayanad in Kerala is vacant and

due for by-elections. Had that the court paused the conviction today, his disqualification as an MP could have been reversed. The Appellant was not an ordinary person and was a sitting MP, connected with public life. The Congress leader argued that the sentence was excessive and contrary to law, and that if the order was not suspended, it would cause "irreparable damage" to his reputation. He also said he was sentenced in a way that he would be disqualified as a parliamentarian. Here we all should know the very purpose of all this drama was to disqualify him and choke his voice, so that he will be deterred from questioning. The Representation of the People Act, 1951 contains certain conditions under which a person is liable to be disqualified as an MP/MLA if he is convicted in any case with a sentence of 2 years or more. He will also be disallowed from contesting elections for a period of 6 years from his day of release (in this case, which would be 2 year's sentence + 6 = 8 years from conviction). Post this sentence of 2 years, by law, he stands disqualified as an MP. This is the legal aspect and I feel that there has been no procedural discrepancy here.

The furore over this case is due to the fact that Rahul Gandhi is the leader of the opposition. Politics is playing its part here, propagating the possibility that the ruling party is trying to crush the opposition through constitutional bodies (the Surat Court, in this case). Secondly, there is the criticism of the judgement itself that has been unusually harsh.

Vaidehi Tapan

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Letters to the Editor

This is the failure of the government

It is common for people's feeling that the 'Maharashtra Bhushan' award fuels a new controversy every time. In the ceremony of awarding the 'Maharashtra Bhushan' award to Appasaheb Dharmadhikari, a major accident occurred due to a heatstroke. After this accident, the government woke up and announced the rules. But this is belated wisdom, it has to be said. While planning a program like this, the government should have kept a strict eye on it. The government cannot shirk its responsibility.

Uday Waghvankar

Welcome move by UGC

In a recent statement, UGC urged all university rectors to allow students to write exams in their native language, even though the courses are taught in English. It discusses the promotion of NEP 2020 and the regular use of mother tongue in educational institutions. According to the notice, the NEP emphasizes the importance of teaching the students' native language. It emphasized the importance of optimizing communication in all languages for better cognitive performance and the development of learners' holistic personalities. The announcement also promotes the teaching and learning of the native language at higher education institutions across the country. Pupils from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds in particular will benefit from this. It is therefore vital to support and encourage such initiatives.

Vijaykumar H K

The joyous festival of Eid

Eid-ul-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan. All Muslim countries celebrate Eid as a sign of unity and values. Starting the day with namaaz and a sweet dish called 'sheer khurma', men, women and children wear new clothes, while women along with their new outfits, also wear bangles and apply mehendi. The children receive blessings and gifts from elders called Eidi. Being happy and thankful to the Almighty, we should not forget the people who are not celebrating Eid such as policemen, housemaids and gate keepers who do not get leave from their employers. We should share our happiness with them too, as Eid is all about sharing happiness and joy.

Jubel D'Cruz

Drug trafficking

Anti-Narcotic Cell of Pune Police Crime Branch of Pune City Police have arrested two people who came to sell drugs in Kondhwa area. Drugs worth Rs 46 lakh have been seized from them. Drugs include brown sugar and Catha edulis fertilizer from Yemen. The anti-narcotics squad arrested a man in Yemen who was selling the drug catha edulis fertilizer and foreign-made cigarettes. Items worth Rs 5 lakh 56 thousand 640 including Catha Idulis fertilizer and foreign made cigarettes were seized from him. Officials said that Khat was banned in India after multiple cases in which fliers from Africa and the Middle East were found in possession of the drug. According to the statistics of the action taken by the crime branch of Pune in the last 3 years, the increasing trend of drug consumption is immediately noticeable. For that, there is a need to curb the sale of drugs. Drug trafficking money is being used for terrorism around the world. Even the intelligence agencies do not disagree about this. For that, the central government should give free rein to the investigation agencies for this action.

Aparna Jagtap

Building a Career in Cricket

The transition from school to college and then to actual career-building will not be as fair, nice and safe as you might expect, particularly at a time when the world is rapidly moving towards a greater degree of automation with each passing day. You should quickly adapt to the changing times in order to match up to the tasks. Nevertheless, planning should start at the early stages so as to seize the opportunities as and when they come and the youngsters should keep learning to be productively engaged with society. Building a career in sports is the best option for children to survive on a competitive field.

The message is simple — if you dream of becoming a professional sportsperson, you should have earned some national visibility by 16 or you are most likely competing out already! Harsh as it sounds, this is usually a family decision — a high level of mentorship is needed for a young kid to live the life of strict nutrition, fitness and practice regimes that sports demands and then to survive the emotional highs and crashing lows of professional wins and losses. Of course, you can just be a sports hobbyist and running, playing sports in community clubs and participating in amateur tournaments while you hold down your day job.

Cricket used to occupy a back seat in terms of preferences as a career or money making option. But as of now cricket is being pursued as a career. We all know that a cricket player's career is limited. But within that span, he can earn money which an I.A.S Officer, a doctor or an Engineer can not think of during his lifetime. When we used to play cricket in our childhood, it had to be restrictive and selective. No parents would have ever allowed their kids to play cricket neglecting studies. The parents would rather love to see their children as an IAS, Doctors or an Engineer. Cricket used to occupy a back seat in terms of preferences

as a career or money making option.

Indian cricketers were emerging in the National horizon due to sheer talent or may be influence of being so and so of former cricketers/officials of National repute. The talented guys had to toil hard to meet their both ends without any support, parents' wrath and the risk of neglecting studies. In comparison with two decades back, the ever growing popularity of cricket in India has changed the scenario completely today. Cricket is being pursued as a career. We all know that a cricket player's career is limited. The follow up like the star tag, the glamour always adds to subsequent guaranteed engagements which may be in advertisements, endorsements, politics and even in Bollywood. Besides, the money generated by a cricketer during his limited career will be more than enough to venture in to business propositions after the career.

No surprise, the cricket fever with the youngsters in the country is increasing the number of cricket coaching institutes. Crowded summer coaching camps are seen in every nook and corner of the country. And India is reigning No-1 in ODI ranking in the World. India has become the new home of World cricket. So, If you got trio of talent, passion and luck by your side, maybe you can be a part of bleed blue and play for the country. To be an International player you want to start the preparations from age 14 or at least 16. Ravi Ashwin has become an International star after he had graduated. So if you want to shine after 21 you need to have special skills. But you can make it to 1st division/ Ranji if you can really work hard.

If you make it big, there is tremendous earning potential as a cricketer. In recent times, a large amount of money has been put into the game and even players who play domestic cricket can earn significant sums of money if they participate in

the various T20 tournaments held around the world, such as IPL in India and Big Bash in Australia. In England, top cricket players earn anywhere between £250000 to £400000. Meanwhile, in India, top cricketers are paid in Crores of rupees by the BCCI. Cricket players also earn additional money if they are signed on by T20 clubs to participate in domestic leagues. Most cricketers also earn significant amounts of money through sponsorships. However, first class cricket players do not earn as much as international players.

The level of competition in the world of cricket has increased drastically over the last few years, ever since more money has been made available to players. However, at the top level, there is always room for exceptional people. However, only the top thirty or so players in every country come into contention of making it into the final playing eleven in each team. Competition is extremely fierce, and one really has to stand out in terms of talent, determination and luck to make it.

Cricketing is a viable career option in the ten test match playing countries. These are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, England and West Indies. Within India, you can get selected from any part of the country that is home to a first-class cricket team. However, it is often easier to get noticed if you are from a bigger city. Hence, competition there can be more intense. To succeed you will have to work really hard and that makes you a tough test player of test to withstand pressure situations and perform at the highest level.

- C.K. Subramaniam

Columnist

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No postal letters will be entertained
(The views expressed are authors' own.)

Gautam Adani meets Sharad Pawar in Mumbai



Industrialist Gautam Adani met Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar at the latter's residence here on Thursday amid the Opposition's demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Adani-Hindenburg issue.

The meeting, held at Pawar's residence Silver Oak in south Mumbai this morning, lasted for nearly two hours, sources said. Earlier this month, Pawar had come out in support of the Adani group and criticised the narrative around the US short seller Hin-

denburg Research's report on the conglomerate.

Taking a position at variance from senior ally Congress, Pawar had said he favoured a Supreme Court committee to probe allegations against the Adani group since the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would have a majority in the JPC based on numerical strength in Parliament and this would lead to doubts on such a probe.

The NCP supremo had later said although his outfit does not agree with the demand of anti-BJP parties for a JPC probe into allegations against the Adani group, it will not go against their stand for the sake of Opposition unity.

Judgment in Jiah Khan suicide case expected on April 28

Almost ten years after she was found dead at her home, a special CBI court here is likely to pass its judgment on April 28 in the Bollywood actor Jiah Khan suicide case in which her boyfriend and film star Suraj Pancholi has been charged for abetment.

Special CBI Judge AS Sayyad on Thursday heard the final arguments of both sides and reserved his judgment in the case. Jiah (25), an American citizen, was found dead at her Juhu home here on June 3, 2013.

Police later arrested Suraj on the basis of a six-page letter, purportedly written by the Bollywood starlet, and booked him for "abetment to suicide".



The case was reassigned to a special CBI court in 2021 after the sessions court said that it did not have the jurisdiction over the case as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had probed it. Jiah's mother Rabia Khan, a key prosecution witness in the case, told the court that she believed

it to be a case of murder and not suicide.

The Bombay High Court had last year dismissed her petition seeking a fresh investigation into the case. During her deposition, Rabia had told the CBI court that Suraj used to subject Jiah to physical and verbal abuse.

2008 Malegaon blast Validity of sanction to prosecute cannot be decided in piecemeal manner: court

The validity of sanction to prosecute under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) can be decided only after taking into consideration entire evidence, the trial court in the 2008 Malegaon blast case said on Thursday.

The special court for National Investigation Agency (NIA) cases made the observation while



disposing of the plea of an accused. The court, however, said the accused can raise their grievances about the sanction to pros-

ecute during final arguments.

Under the UAPA, no court can take cognizance of any offense without the sanction of the Union government. Sameer Kulkarni, one of the accused, had submitted that he could not be tried under the UAPA as the deposition of the sanctioning authority showed that the sanction was invalid.

Sunstroke deaths Maha govt sets one-member probe committee



Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Thursday appointed a one-member committee to probe the deaths of 14 persons in the Maharashtra Bhushan award event held in Kharghar in Navi Mumbai on April 16.

The deaths were caused by sunstroke and other health complications as several lakh people converged on the sprawling International Corporate Park to watch social activist and reformer Appasaheb Dharmadhikari being given the prestigious award.

Additional Chief Secretary

(Revenue) Nitin Keer is the sole member of the committee, which will look into the facts of the incident and recommend steps to be taken while organising such functions, a statement from the chief minister's office (CMO) said.

The committee will submit its report to the state government in a month's time, the CMO statement added. The formation of the committee comes amid severe criticism of the state government for organising an event on such a grand scale amid the scorching summer and without adequate arrangements.

Actual death toll in Kharghar tragedy is between 50 and 75 but Maha govt hiding figures claims Raut

Even as the death toll due to sunstroke at an award function in Navi Mumbai stood at 14 so far as per the official figures, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Thursday claimed that 50 to 75 people have died in the tragedy, and accused the Maharashtra government of hiding the real number of the deceased.

Talking to reporters, Raut said he interacted with the workers of his party with Uran, Shrivardhan, Roha and Mangaon talukas in Raigad district, who told him that the actual number of the people who died at Kharghar is bigger than what the government has announced.

Accusing the state government of hiding the real number of fatalities, Raut said, "If you look



at the total figure from all the villages (from the talukas in Raigad) then minimum 50 and maximum 75 people have died. 'Khoke sarkar' (a term the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena uses to mock the Eknath Shinde-led government) people have reached their homes and suppressed the voice of family members."

"This is a cruel government and it has no right to be in power. The government should immediately resign," the Rajya Sabha member alleged.

Nation

90% of India, entire Delhi in 'danger zone' of heatwave impacts: Study



The heat index (HI) is a measure of how hot it feels to the human body, taking into account both temperature and humidity. The climate vulnerability index (CVI) is a composite index that uses various indicators to account for socioeconomic, livelihood, and biophysical factors. The researchers accessed a publicly available dataset on state-level climate vulnerability indicators from the government's National Data & Analytics Platform to classify severity categories. They then compared India's progress in SDGs over 20 years (2001-2021) with extreme weather-related mortality from 2001-2021. The study showed that more than 90 percent of India is in the "extremely cautious" or "danger" range of heatwave impacts through HI, otherwise considered "low" or "moderate" vulnerability through CVI. States that were categorized as "low" in CVI rankings were found to be in "danger" HI categories, indicating that heatwaves put more people at extreme climate risk across India than estimated by CVI.

Heatwaves in India are becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change, with over 90 percent of the country in the "extremely cautious" or "danger zone" of their impacts, according to a new study. The study, conducted by Ramit Debnath and colleagues at the University of Cambridge, also revealed that Delhi is particularly vulnerable to severe heatwave impacts, despite its recent state action plan for climate change failing to reflect this fact. It suggested that heatwaves have

impeded India's progress towards achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) more significantly than previously thought, and that the current assessment metrics may not fully capture the impacts of heatwaves linked to climate change on the country.

To assess India's climate vulnerability and the potential impact of climate change on SDG progress, researchers conducted an analytical evaluation of the country's heat index with its climate vulnerability index.

Border dispute between Assam-Arunachal ends; both states sign MoU

Assam and Arunachal Pradesh governments on Thursday signed a boundary agreement here in the national capital in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah ending 51-year border disputes along the boundaries of both northeast states.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu at the North

Block office of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

Assam shares an 804 km long boundary with Arunachal Pradesh. "Since 1972 to till date the border dispute between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh could not be resolved. Nearly 800 km boundary dispute has been ended today," Amit Shah said after the MoU was signed between the two states.

Speaking to ANI after signing the MoU, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa

Sarma said, "The signing of an MoU between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh today to settle an inter-state boundary dispute will prove to be a milestone. This will bring peace and development to the Northeast region."

"The border dispute was settled today by signing the MoU between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. This is a historic movement for both states," said Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu.

5 soldiers die as Indian Army's vehicle catches fire in JK's Poonch

Five soldiers died after a vehicle of the Indian Army caught fire in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch on Thursday.

According to the Defence PRO, "Today, at about 1500 hours, one vehicle of Indian Army, while



moving from Bhimber Gali to

Sangiot in District Poonch (J-K), caught fire. In this tragic incident, Five Soldiers of the Indian Army have lost their life."

The reason behind the fire is yet to be ascertained. Further information is awaited.

2002 Gujarat riots: Ahmedabad court acquits all accused including BJP's Maya Kodnani in Naroda Gam case



A special court in Ahmedabad on Thursday acquitted all 68 accused, including BJP MLA Maya Kodnani, in the 2002 post-Godhra riots, Naroda Gam case, which killed 11 people from the minority community.

Eleven persons were killed in communal violence in Naroda Gam area of Ahmedabad city on February 28, 2002, during a 'bandh' called to protest the Godhra train burning, in which 58 passengers, returning from Ayodhya, were killed.

Along with Kodnani, other prominent accused involved former Bajrang Dal leader Babu Bajrangji and Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Jaydeep Patel.

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ni Realty Get Dual Certificate In AI & Machine Learning TechGig Every Indian Should Get This Incredible Rs.1999 Smartwatch GenFit Watch On April 16, the court of principal sessions Judge SK Baxi had fixed April 20 as the date for the verdict in the case and had also directed the accused to remain present in the court.

Notably, all the accused in the case are currently out on bail. Out of the total 86 accused in the case, 18 died in the intervening period. Around 182 prosecution witnesses were examined during the trial. Apart from rioting and murder, Kodnani, 67, was also charged with criminal conspiracy and attempted murder in the Naroda Gam case.

It is pertinent to note that Union Home Minister Amit Shah had also appeared as a defence witness for Kodnani in September 2017.

BJP wants to make India "Banana Republic": Mehbooba Mufti on court order on Rahul Gandhi

After the Surat court rejected Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's plea seeking a stay on his conviction in the 2019 criminal defamation case, Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party (JKPDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti on Thursday attacked the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alleging that the ruling party at Centre wants to make India a "Banana Republic".

"Today is the black day in the democracy of India as the main Opposition leader is being treated like this. BJP wants to make India a Banana Republic," said Mufti said.



A Surat court on Thursday rejected Rahul Gandhi's plea seeking a stay on his conviction in the 2019 criminal defamation case on the 'Modi surname' remark.

World

SpaceX's Starship rocket explodes after launch



Elon Musk's SpaceX Starship rocket exploded and failed to reach orbit, moments after it was launched from South Texas on Thursday, New York Times reported.

Minutes after taking off from a launch pad in South Texas, the rocket appears to have exploded above the Gulf

of Mexico. Although the spacecraft was unable to enter orbit, this failure was not fatal.

Elon Musk, the company's founder, had tempered expectations prior to the launch stating that it might take several tries for Starship to be successful at this test flight, which was intended to reach speeds high

enough to enter orbit before crashing down in the Pacific Ocean close to Hawaii.

Recently, the first launch of SpaceX's Starship was called off at the last minute on Monday after a pressurisation issue arose in the first stage, reported CNN.

The scheduled launch of the most powerful rocket ever constructed has been scrubbed after engineers could not troubleshoot a pressurization issue with the massive Super Heavy booster in time. Engineers tried to troubleshoot a pressurization issue with the massive Super Heavy booster. But they couldn't quite figure it out in time, and today's launch has been scrubbed, reported CNN.

Pak foreign Min Bilawal Bhutto to attend SCO meeting in Goa

Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari will visit India this May for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Goa, officials said on Thursday.

Bhutto-Zardari will lead the Pakistani delegation to the meeting of SCO Foreign Ministers (CFM) scheduled to held on May 4-5 in Goa, according to Pakistan's Foreign Ministry.

Pakistan Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch during a weekly presser on Thursday stated that Bhutto-Zardari is attending the SCO-CFM meeting at the invitation of Exter-



nal Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

"Our participation at the meeting reflects Pakistan's continued commitment to the SCO charter and process and the importance that Pakistan accords

to the region in its foreign policy priorities," the spokesperson said.

Bilawal will be the first foreign minister to visit India after a gap of nearly 12 years, reported Business Recorder.

In 2011, then Pakistan foreign minister Hina Rabbani Khar had visited India. India has formally sent invitations to all members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) including Pakistan and China for the upcoming foreign ministers' meeting.

Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov are also likely to participate in the meeting.

It's time to invite Ukraine into alliance: Zelenskyy tells NATO

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday said that North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) faces no obstacle in inviting Ukraine to join the military alliance, Al Jazeera reported.

He said that it was time for NATO to invite Ukraine to join the military alliance. Zelenskyy's remarks came during NATO Sec-

retary-General Jens Stoltenberg's first visit to Kyiv since the conflict between Russia and Ukraine started in February last year.

He called on the military alliance to take a decision as the majority of people in NATO nations and most of the people in Ukraine support Kyiv's NATO accession.

"I am grateful for the invitation to visit the summit, but it is also important for Ukraine to

receive the corresponding invitation," Zelenskyy said as per the Al Jazeera report.

"There is not a single objective barrier to the political decision to invite Ukraine into the alliance and now, when most people in NATO countries and the majority of Ukrainians support NATO accession, is the time for the corresponding decisions," he added.

China takes racist potshot at India on population



As India surpassed China's population on Wednesday to become the most populous country in the world, the spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign ministry, Wang Wenbin, took a sharp dig at New Delhi saying that while assessing a country's demographic dividend, it is also important to look at not just its size but also quality.

Responding to media queries on India overtaking China as the world's most populous country by the middle of this year, the Chinese spokesperson said it is the talent resources that matter the most.

"When assessing a country's

demographic dividend, we need to look at not just its size but also its quality. Size matters, but what matters more is talent resources. Nearly 900 million of the 1.4 billion Chinese are of working age and on average have received 10.9 years of education," Wang Wenbin said.

Notably, the UN world population dashboard stated that India now has 1428.6 million people, surpassing the Sino population, which is currently at 1425.7 million. This is for the first time that India has topped the United Nations' list of most populated countries, ever since the UN began collecting population data in 1950.

Indian climber Anurag Maloo rescued after 3 days from Mt Annapurna, critical

The 34-year-old Indian who went missing on Monday while attempting to climb Mount Annapurna in Nepal has been rescued but is in critical condition, expedition organisers said on Thursday.

The mountaineer Anurag Maloo had gone missing since the afternoon of April 17 after falling into a deep crevasse on Annapurna, which is the 10th highest mountain in the world.

"Maloo is currently at Manipal Hospital under doctors' supervision," Mingma Sherpa from Seven Summit Treks told ANI over phone from Kathmandu.

"He has been taken to the hospital in critical condition, but he is still alive," Sudhir, his brother said.

A search operation to locate Maloo, a resident of Kishangargh in Rajasthan's Ajmer district was underway since Monday.

"Search operation is on. He fell into a crevasse while return-



ing from Camp IV this afternoon," Mingma Sherpa, the Chairman of Seven Summit Treks had told ANI on Monday.

Maloo was descending from Camp III when he fell into a crevasse at around 6,000 metres and went missing, the expedition organiser said.

The mountaineer had last year successfully ascended Mount Ama Dablam, in the Eastern Himalayan range in Nepal and was planning to stand atop Mount Everest, Annapurna and Lhotse this season.

He was also on a mission to climb all 14 peaks above 8000 meters and 7 summits to create awareness and dive action towards achieving the UN Global Goals #ClimbingForSDGs.

India Wins at Olympiad of Kizomba Dance

Elvis Mascarenhas & Namrata Wittke win accolades

Recently it has been a moment of pride for India on the international dance platform of Kizomba dance. Mumbai based dancer and dance teachers the supremely talented Elvis Mascarenhas and his gorgeous dance partner Namrata Wittke recently won the Olympiad of Kizomba. The event was held in Paris where Kizomba and Semba dancers from all over the world took part and the dancing duo Elvis and Namrata made Indian flag fly high by winning the coveted title.

Post their win they were invited to Spain for workshops and shows and now the twinkle toed couple is back to Mumbai. I spoke to the super excited jodi about their Kizomba dance journey, excerpts from the interview:

Tell me about your training in Afro Latin dances and how it all started?

We started our Latin dance journey in 2009, for five long years we learnt under the guidance of Kaytee Namgyalat his dance school 'Salsa India' where we both trained in various Latin styles. Then to further enhance our skills we went to New York in 2014 where we trained for 6 months again in all the Latin styles from some of the best names in the business. Later we moved back to Mumbai and started our own dance company called Rare Grooves Dance Co. Post that we have been travelling every year internationally to upgrade and do teachers training courses and we make sure we always come back and spread the knowledge in Afro Latin styles the right way. We must admit that we have been extremely fortunate to have had the great opportunity to train with some of the best teachers in the world of Kizomba Semba. Some of our favourites have been names like Bonifacio, Carla Andrade, Tony Viser, Mestre Petchu, David Campos and Eddy Vents. For Salsa of course our very first teacher Kaytee from Salsa India, Eddie Torres the Mambo king NY, Huracan Dance company, Afrocosul and Stevie Insua.

What made you choose Kizomba in particular?

Kizomba dance comes under a wide umbrella of African dancing genre originating in Angola. The music of course of what attracted us first to learn the dance and the connection it involves. We find music of Kizomba absolutely infectious and mesmerising and yes that is what got us pulled into

the dance as well and now we are totally crazy for this dance form.

What went in the preparing for the world championship?

Preparing for the Olympiads of Kizomba/ Semba in Paris took a lot of hard work. First we had to qualify the Asia qualifiers held in Delhi by Muxima India Festival to finally represent at the world stage. Consistent practice, upgrading with teachers, listening to the music, training our bodies was a few things we had to work on for a few months. But since we consistently train whether competition or not that helped us be at a good level to compete with the creators of the dance form.

You have participated in many other championships please tell more about it?

Yes, we participated in the Salsa World Summit in Miami 2018. Elvis won the Solo Rising Star Championship for Salsa Solo category and Namrata won second runner up in freestyle. Elvis has won many other reputed championships in street styles representing India in the top 4 at Juste Debut Paris in 2017. Each time we win a dance championship it motivates us to get even better for the next one, for us dance is like a drug the more we drown into it the more we want it.

How did it feel representing India at an international platform and how did the world react to an India win a Latin championship?

It was an extremely surreal and overwhelming experience. Especially owning to the fact that we were the first ever Asians to represent at the world

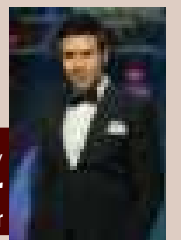


stage in this category. I don't think the Angolans and Europeans were even aware of the fact that this style was being danced in India and to win it was whole different surprising experience. We were immensely appreciated by renowned dancers and teachers from all over the world, so at the end it was totally worth all the effort and hustle we put into preparing for it.

For those who do not really know what Kizomba and Semba dance is all about here are some facts about it: Kizomba is a dance and musical genre that originated in Angola in 1984, Kizomba means "party" in Kimbundu, a Bantu language spoken by the Ambundu in Angola. Semba has been danced in the 1950s in Angola. In the 1990s, when the actual Kizomba music got more and more popular, Angolan Semba dancers started to adapt their Semba steps according to the tempo and flavour of the Kizomba beats. The Kizomba dance is an essentially a couple

dance from, in which the torso and right arm of the leader will guide the follower across the dance floor. It is the goal to synchronize perfectly as a couple with the music and express it through elegant footwork, smooth body movement and attitude, called Ginga (for women) and Banga (for men). Kizomba is known for having a slow, insistent, somewhat exacting yet sensuous rhythm as the result of electronic percussion. It is danced accompanied by a partner, very smoothly, slowly and sensuously, and with neither tightness nor rigidity. There are frequent simultaneous hip rotations coordinated between dance partners, particularly in the quieter refrains of the music.

Interview by
Sandip Soparkkar
Ace Dance Choreographer



Entertainment

K-pop group ASTRO member Moonbin passes away

The popular K-pop boy group ASTRO member Moonbin passed away on Wednesday at the age of 25. The actual reason behind his death is still unknown. Taking to Instagram, the ASTRO group shared an official statement in their local language confirming the news of Moonbin's death.

The official statement (roughly translated in English) reads, "This is Fantagio. First of all, we would like to express our apologies for bringing you such sad and heartbreaking news. On April 19, ASTRO member Moonbin suddenly left us and became a star in the sky. Although it cannot be compared to the grief of the bereaved family who lost their beloved son and brother, the ASTRO members, as well as our fellow Fantagio artists and executives, are deeply mourning the deceased in great sadness and shock." As per several reports, the ASTRO member was found dead at his residence by his manager who informed the police.

"It is even more painful to deliver the sudden news to the fans who have supported Moonbin and sent him generous love. We are more heartbroken because we know the heart of the deceased who always loved and thought of his fans more than anyone else. We earnestly ask you to refrain from speculative and malicious reports so that the bereaved family who is deeply saddened by the sudden sad news can mourn the deceased," the statement further read. The ASTRO group enjoys a massive fan following on social media with over 5 million followers on Instagram. ANI



Kajal Aggarwal celebrates her son Neil's first birthday, shares adorable picture

Actor Kajal Aggarwal celebrated her son Neil's first birthday on Wednesday. Taking to Instagram, Kajal shared an adorable picture which she captioned, "And just like that our sunshine boy is (the big 1 !!!! @neil_kitchlu."

In the picture, Neil could be seen sitting inside a basket in a yellow outfit. A numerical foil balloon can be seen tied to the basket. Soon after she dropped the post, her friends and fans swamped the comment section with red heart emoticons and happy birthday wishes to her son.

Actor Rakul Preet Singh commented, "Omg what a cutieeeeeee." Another user wrote, "Happy Birthday Champ." "Happy 1st birthday little Neil ! Hope you enjoy your baby hand & feet castings we made for you," a user commented. A user wrote, "How cute." Kajal Aggarwal and Gautam Kitchlu welcomed their baby on April 19, 2022. Announcing the birth of their baby, Gautam shared a post on his Instagram handle and captioned it as, "Our hearts are full and we are full of gratitude. Thank you everyone for your love and blessings". Meanwhile, after welcoming her firstborn into this world, Kajal, revealed that she and her husband Gautam Kitchlu have named their baby boy Neil. ANI

Diljit Dosanjh, Diplo enjoys "Chai time", check out video

After creating history by performing at Coachella 2023, singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh on Thursday enjoyed "chai time" with American DJ-record producer Diplo. Taking to Instagram, Diljit shared a video enjoying tea and feeding laddo to Diplo.

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American-Indian rapper Raja Kumari wrote, "This is all we ever wanted and needed." Diplo attended Coachella 2023 and had absolutely fun witnessing Diljit's performance filled with Punjabi beats. ANI

