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Shyam Benegal, director of award-winning films like Nishant and Manthan, dies at 90

Acclaimed director Shyam Benegal has died at the age of 90. The director has made several award-winning films in his career which include Ankur, Bhumika, Manthan and Nishant. The filmmaker's daughter Pia Benegal confirmed the news of his death to Hindustan Times on Monday evening.



- ❖ His films were marked by a degree of realism and social commentary, and helped in the Indian parallel cinema movement in the 1970s and 1980s.
- ❖ He has won multiple National Awards for movies including, Bhumika: The Role (1977), Junoon (1978), Arohan (1982), Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero (2004), Manthan (1976), and Well Done Abba (2010).

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ସେ କୁବେଇବା, ଦ ମେକିଂ ଅଫ୍ ଦି ମହାତ୍ମା, ନେତାଜୀ ସୁଭାଷ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ବୋଷ: ଦି ଫରଗଟେନ ହିରୋ, ମଣ୍ଡି, ଅରୋହନ, ଖେଳକମ ତୁ ସଜନପୁର ଭଳି ଅନେକ ମହାନ ଚଳଚ୍ଚିତ୍ର ନିର୍ମାଣ କରିଛନ୍ତି ।
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'No comment': India on Bangladesh's extradition request for Sheikh Hasina

India on Monday confirmed receiving an official request from the interim Bangladesh government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, seeking extradition of deposed prime minister and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina to Dhaka.

- ❖ The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal disclosed the development and said that currently New Delhi has no comment to offer on this matter. "We confirm that we have received a note verbale from the Bangladesh High Commission today in connection with an extradition request.
- ❖ Currently, we have no comment to offer on this matter," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said during a media briefing.



Earlier in the day, Bangladesh's de facto Foreign Minister Touhid Hossain said his office in Dhaka that the country has sent a diplomatic note to India's Foreign Ministry for Hasina's extradition.

- ❖ "We have sent a note verbale to the Indian government saying that Bangladesh wants her back here for the judicial process," Hossain told reporters in Dhaka.
- ❖ Hasina, 77, fled to New Delhi from Bangladesh on August 5 following massive protests that toppled her 16-year regime. Currently, she faces many court cases over the deaths, including some on charges of crimes against humanity.
- ❖ Hasina and her close aides are already facing arrest warrants by the Dhaka-based International Crimes Tribunal and the Yunus government has sought help from internal police organisation Interpol for her arrest.
- ❖ Earlier today, Bangladesh Home Adviser Jahangir Alam said his office sent a letter to the foreign ministry to facilitate the ousted premier's extradition from India. "We have sent a letter to the foreign ministry regarding her extradition.
- ❖ The process is currently underway," he told reporters. Alam said an extradition treaty between Dhaka and New Delhi already exists and Hasina could be brought back to Bangladesh under it.

India signs \$350 million loan agreement with ADB to expand manufacturing sector

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$350 million policy-based loan under the second subprogram of Strengthening Multimodal and Integrated Logistics Ecosystem (SMILE) program.

- ❖ The SMILE program is a programmatic policy-based loan (PBL) to support the government in undertaking wide-ranging reforms in the logistics sector in India. The programmatic approach comprises two subprograms, which aim to expand India's manufacturing sector and improve the resilience of its supply chains.

- ❖ The program establishes and operationalizes a comprehensive policy framework to enhance logistics efficiency through
 - (i) strengthening the institutional bases for multimodal logistics infrastructure development at the national, state, and city levels;
 - (ii) standardizing warehousing and other logistics assets to strengthen supply chains and incentivize greater private sector investment;
 - (iii) improving efficiencies in external trade logistics; and
 - (iv) adopting smart systems for efficient and low emission logistics. The collaboration between the Government of India and ADB reflects a shared commitment to fostering growth and innovation in the logistics sector, supporting India's broader economic development goals.

Donald Trump has picked Indian American entrepreneur, Sriram Krishnan as Senior White House Policy Advisor on Artificial Intelligence

Donald Trump has picked Indian American entrepreneur, venture capitalist and author Sriram Krishnan as Senior White House Policy Advisor on Artificial Intelligence. In an official statement where he announced many other appointments, the president-elect said, "Sriram Krishnan will serve as the Senior Policy Advisor for Artificial Intelligence at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy."

- ❖ Trump added, "Working closely with David Sacks, Sriram will focus on ensuring continued American leadership in A.I., and help shape and coordinate A.I. policy across Government, including working with the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. Sriram started his career at Microsoft as a founding member of Windows Azure."

- ❖ Krishnan studied at SRM Valliammai Engineering College in Kattankulathur, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu. He began his career at Microsoft, where he contributed to the development of Windows Azure, working on its APIs and services.
- ❖ He is the author of the book Programming Windows Azure for O'Reilly. Krishnan joined Facebook in 2013, where he played a significant role in scaling the company's mobile app download ads business.
- ❖ He later also worked at Snap. Krishnan worked at Twitter (now X) until 2019, where he collaborated with Elon Musk on restructuring the platform. He became a general partner at Andreessen Horowitz (a16z) in 2021. Later in 2023, he led the firm's first international office in London.

Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav releases India State of Forest Report 2023

Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupendra Yadav released the 'India State of Forest Report 2023 (ISFR 2023)' at Forest Research Institute, Dehradun. The ISFR has been brought out by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) on a biennial basis since 1987.

- ❖ FSI conducts an in-depth assessment of the country's forest and tree resources based on the interpretation of remote sensing satellite data and field-based National Forest Inventory (NFI), and the results are published in the ISFR. The India State of Forest Report 2023 is the 18th such report in the series.



According to the report, India's total forest and tree cover spans 827,357 square kilometres, accounting for 25.17% of the country's geographical area. Additionally, the total forest cover has increased by 1,445 square kilometres compared to the 2021 assessment.



- ❖ According to the Forest Survey of India (FSI), forest cover refers to all land that has a tree canopy density of more than 10 per cent and spans over an area of one hectare or more, regardless of the type of ownership or legal status. Together, the forest and tree cover amount to 8,27,357 sq km or 25.17 per cent of India's geographical area.

Here are the key findings:

The forest and tree cover of India is 8,27,357 sq km, which is 25.17% of the geographical area of the country, consisting 7,15,343 sq km (21.76%) as forest cover and 1,12,014 sq km (3.41%) as tree cover.

- ❖ As compared to the shape-file based assessment of 2021, there is an increase of 1,445 sq km in the forest and tree cover, which includes 156 sq km increase in the forest cover and 1289 sq km increase in tree cover.
- ❖ Top four states showing maximum increase in forest and tree cover are Chhattisgarh (684 sq km) followed by Uttar Pradesh (559 sq km), Odisha (559 sq km), and Rajasthan (394 sq km). Top three states showing maximum increase in forest cover are Mizoram (242 sq km) followed by Gujarat (180 sq km), and Odisha (152 sq km).

Change in No Detention Policy: Standard 5th and 8th Students Can be Failed

The Centre has scrapped the 'no-detention policy' for classes 5 and 8 in schools governed by it allowing them to fail students who do not clear the year-end exams, according to officials. Following the amendment to the Right to Education Act (RTE) in 2019, at least 16 states and two Union Territories have already done away with the 'no-detention policy' for the two classes.

- ❖ According to a gazette notification, after the conduct of regular examination, if a child fails to fulfil the promotion criteria, as notified from time to time, he shall be given additional instruction and opportunity for re-examination within a period of two months from the date of declaration of results.
- ❖ "If the child appearing in the re-examination fails to fulfil the promotion criteria again, he shall be held back in fifth class or eighth class, as the case may be.
- ❖ "During the holding back of the child, the class teacher shall guide the child as well as the parents of the child, if necessary, and provide specialised inputs after identifying the learning gaps at various stages of assessment," the notification said.
- ❖ However, the government has clarified that no child shall be expelled from any school till completion of elementary education.
- ❖ According to senior Ministry of Education officials, the notification will be applicable to over 3,000 schools run by the central government including Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navaodyala Vidyalayas and Sainik Schools. "Since school education is a state subject, states can make their decision in this regard.
- ❖ Already 16 states and 2 UTs including Delhi have done away with the nodetention policy for these two classes.
- ❖ In July 2018, the Lok Sabha passed a bill to amend the Right to Education (RTE) Act, which aimed to end the 'no detention policy' in schools.

- ❖ The amendment introduced regular exams for Classes 5 and 8, with a provision for students who fail to have a re-examination opportunity within two months. In 2019, the Rajya Sabha approved the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, which sought to remove the 'no detention policy' for up to Class 8 to improve learning outcomes.
- ❖ The bill granted state governments the discretion to either continue or abolish the policy, allowing them to hold students back in Classes 5 and 8 if they fail their year-end exams.

Rajasthan to spend Rs 100 cr annually on one-district-one-product policy

Rajasthan plans to spend Rs 100 crore annually on the one-district-one-product (ODOP) policy for local artisans, farmers, manufacturers and entrepreneurs. The policy was launched some days ago and it is inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Vocal for Local" vision, said an official of the state industries department.

- ❖ ODOP will also benefit workers, traders and exporters in the state's 50 districts. The ODOP initiative targets to foster balanced regional development across all districts of the state.
- ❖ The idea is to select, brand and promote one product from each district of the state to enable holistic socioeconomic growth across all regions.

About Rajasthan

- ❖ Capital – Jaipur
- ❖ Chief Minister – Bhajan Lal Sharma (replace Ashok Gehlot)
- ❖ Deputy Chief Minister – Diya Kumari and Premchand Bairwa
- ❖ Speaker of Rajasthan Assembly – Vasudev Devnan
- ❖ Governor – Haribhau Bagade

National Rifle Association Of India to host ISSF Junior World Cup 2025

India will host the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) Junior World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun 2025. This will be the third top ISSF event to be held in the country after the senior World Cup in Bhopal in 2023 and the season-ending ISSF World Cup Final earlier this year, reinforcing India's stature as one of the sport's top destinations in the world.



- ❖ This will be the ninth top level Shooting championship to be held in India over the past decade but the first ISSF Junior World Cup.
- ❖ Before this India had hosted to continental championships and six ISSF competitions, including two World Cup Final competitions besides four senior ISSF World Cups.

Former SC Judge Justice Madan Lokur appointed chairperson of U.N. Internal Justice Council

Former Supreme Court judge Madan B Lokur has been appointed as chairperson of the United Nations Internal Justice Council (IJC). Lokur has been appointed for a 4-year-tenure ending on 12th November 2028. In a communication to Justice Lokur.

- ❖ Justice Madan Lokur retired as a judge of the Supreme Court on 31 December, 2018, after a tenure of more than 6 years.
- ❖ The General Assembly of the UN established the IJC as part of the new internal justice system to help ensure independence, professionalism and accountability in the administration of the UN's justice system.



Recent Appointment in Foreign

- ❖ Director of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) – Kash Patel
- ❖ Chairman of International Cricket Council (ICC) – Jay Shah (replace Greg Barclay)
- ❖ DG of World Trade Organization (WTO) – Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (reappointment)
- ❖ President of Asian Development Bank – Masato Kanda; 11th (replace Masatsugu Asakawa) effect from 24 Feb 2025
- ❖ Secretary General of Interpol – Valdecy Urquiza (Brazil's Federal Police Commissioner)
- ❖ Chairperson of 77th Session of WHO Regional Committee – JP Nadda

India clinches U19 ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup Title

In Women's Cricket, India clinched the inaugural Under-19 ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup title at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, after defeating Bangladesh by 41 runs in the final.

- ❖ Chasing a target of 118, Bangladesh were bowled out for a modest 76 runs in just 18.3 overs. For India, Aayyushi Shukla claimed three wickets, while Parunika Sisodia and Sonam Yadav took two wickets each.

Earlier, India, batting first, scored 117 for seven in their allotted 20 overs. Gongadi Trisha was the top scorer with a solid 52 runs off 47 balls. For Bangladesh, Farjana Easmin shone with the ball, picking up four wickets. The tournament, which began on 15th December, featured six of the best teams from the continent vying for the title. India, led by Niki Prasad, remained unbeaten throughout the competition.



Ashwini Vaishnaw confers 69th Ati Vishisht Rail Seva Award 2024

Union Railway and Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw conferred the 69th Ati Vishisht Rail Seva Award 2024 to 101 employees and officers for their exceptional contributions to the Indian Railways.

- ❖ The 101 awardees have been selected across various categories, including innovation leading to improvement in productivity, revenue generation, safety, improvement in operation, security, project completion, and sports.
- ❖ In addition to the individual awards, 22 Shields have been presented to the best-performing Railway Zones in various categories, recognizing their outstanding achievements and contributions to the overall performance of the Indian Railways.



Jaishankar receives 'Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi' award for leadership

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was awarded the Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi National Eminence Award for Public Leadership by the South Indian Education Society (SIES).



Recent Award

- ❖ Bhutan's royal honour – Renowned Indian educationist Arun Kapur
- ❖ Jamsetji Tata Award by Indian Society for Quality (ISQ) – Kiran Mazumdar
- ❖ J C Daniel Award for 2023 – J C Daniel Award
- ❖ Social Security Good Practices at Asia-Pacific forum in Saudi – EPFO
- ❖ 3rd PSU Transformation Award under the "Innovative Product Development" category – Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI)
- ❖ Aster Guardians Global Nursing Award 2024 – Nurse Maria Victoria Juan (from Philippines)

World Basketball Day



World Basketball Day, celebrated on 21 December, honors one of the most popular sports globally. This date is significant as it marks the birth anniversary of Dr. James Naismith, the inventor of basketball.

- ❖ Dr. Naismith first introduced basketball in December 1891 while teaching at the International YMCA Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts. The global significance of basketball was officially acknowledged by the United Nations General Assembly on August 25, 2023, through the adoption of resolution A/RES /77/324.

- ❖ This resolution declared December 21 as World Basketball Day, celebrating the sport's ability to bring together people from all walks of life.

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