

# absolute india

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## RBI HIKES REPO RATE BY 40 BPS ON INFLATION WORRIES, EQUITIES PLUNGE

# ECONOMICAL JOLT

Indian equity benchmarks on Wednesday plunged sharply and settled in the red after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a hike in repo rate. Following the RBI announcement, the Sensex declined 1,307 points, or 2.29 per cent, and settled at 55,669 points, whereas Nifty fell 392 points, or 2.29 per cent, to 16,678 points. All the sectoral indices too declined in the intra-day trade.

▶ **REPO RATE IS THE RATE AT WHICH THE CENTRAL BANK LENDS SHORT-TERM FUNDS TO BANKS. THE RBI HAS CUT THE REPO RATE BY 250 BASIS POINTS SINCE FEBRUARY 2019 TO HELP REVIVE THE GROWTH MOMENTUM. THE MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE HAS BEEN ON A PROLONGED ACCOMMODATIVE STANCE TO SUPPORT THE GROWTH.**

▶ **ALSO, THE CASE RESERVE RATIO HAS BEEN HIKED BY 50 BASIS POINTS TO 4.5 PER CENT.**

▶ **THE MOVE WAS TAKEN IN ORDER TO CONTAIN INFLATION.**

▶ **THE ONGOING GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS ARE PUSHING INFLATION HIGHER IN MAJOR ECONOMIES BESIDES THE CRUDE OIL PRICE ALSO BEING VOLATILE AND ABOVE \$100 PER BARREL.**



cash reserve ratio by 50 basis points. The decision was taken by the monetary policy committee (MPC) in an off-cycle meeting with the central board held May 2-4. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the decision was taken in view of rising inflation, geopolitical tensions, high crude oil prices and shortage of commodities globally, which have impacted Indian economy. The RBI cautioned that the economy faces global spillovers risks from geopolitical tensions, elevated commodity prices and moderating external demand. "The decision today to raise repo rate may be seen as reversal of rate action of May 2020. Last month, we had set out a stance of withdrawal of accommodation. Today's action needs to be seen in line with that

action," Das said. "I would like to emphasise that the monetary policy action is aimed at containing inflation spike and re-anchoring inflation expectation," he said, adding that "high inflation is known as detrimental to growth".

This was the first hike in policy rate since August 2018, which would increase the cost of borrowing for corporates as well as individuals. The latest surprise hike completely reverses the Covid-support off-cycle rate cut in May 2020. RBI also decided to remain accommodative while focussing on withdrawal of accommodation to ensure inflation remains within target going forward. In his address, the RBI Governor noted that high inflation is expected to remain high as spillovers from global wheat shortages are impacting domestic wheat prices, even though domestic supplies remain comfortable. Due to the Russia-Ukraine war, edible oil prices may firm up as major producing countries have imposed export restrictions, he said.

Retail inflation hit nearly 7 per cent in March and held above the upper end of the RBI's target band of 2-4 per cent for the third month in a row.

The RBI's off-cycle move also comes ahead of a widely-expected 50 basis points hike by US Federal Reserve later on Wednesday.

## REASSESSMENT NOTICE UNDER UNAMENDED INCOME TAX ACT WILL NOT BE DEEMED INVALID: SC



**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday said that reassessment notices, issued under the unamended Section 148 of the Income Tax Act, on or after April 1, 2021, will not be deemed to be invalid.

A bench of Justices M.R. Shah and B.V. Nagarathna said: "Instead of quashing and setting aside the reassessment notices issued under the unamended provision of IT Act, the High Courts ought to have passed an order constraining the notices issued under unamended Act/unamended provision of the IT Act as those deemed to have been issued under section 148A of the IT Act as per the new provision section 148A."

Various high courts had decided in favour of the assesses by quashing several reassessment notices issued by the department under Section 148, noting that the reassessment notices were bad in law in view of the amendment by the Finance Act, 2021.

The top court modified various high court orders, which quashed the reassessment notices issued under unamended Section 148 on or after April 1, 2021.

The top court judgment is likely to ensure it is not overburdened with around 9,000 appeals by the Finance Ministry, as it used its powers under the Constitution's Article 142 to avoid any further appeals by ministry.

The top court judgment came on a clutch of appeals where various high courts had ruled in favour of the assesses.

## India falls in World Press Freedom Index ranking

The report described India as "one of the world's most dangerous countries for the media" due to "terrifying coordinated campaigns" of hate and murder on social media, targeting of women journalists, and "deadly reprisals by criminal groups or corrupt local officials". The union government said it does not agree with the views and country rankings listed in the World Press Freedom Index since it's published by a "foreign" NGO.

**Team Absolute |** New Delhi

India is ranked 150 out of 180 countries when it comes to freedom of the press, according to the 2022 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders. The index was published on May 3, which is also World Press Freedom Day. India ranked 142 in both 2020 and 2021.

Press freedom is in "crisis" in India, the report on the index noted, with "violence against journalists, the politically partisan media and the concentration of media ownership". The "fairly progressive" media was impacted "radically" after Modi came to power, it alleged, and "Indian journalists who are too critical of the government are subjected to all-out harassment and attack campaigns by Modi devotees". Reporters Without Borders accused the Modi government of waging a

"guerrilla war of lawsuits against media outlets whose coverage of the pandemic contradicted official statements".

It also pointed out the issue of legacy media houses depending on government ads to survive. "At the national level, the central government has seen that it can exploit this to impose its own narrative, and is now spending more than 130 billion rupees (5 billion euros) a year on ads in the print and online media alone. Recent years have also seen the rise of 'Godi media' (a play on Modi's name and lapdogs) - media outlets such as Times Now and Republic TV that mix populism and pro-BJP propaganda."

Norway is ranked no. 1 in the index, followed by Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Portugal and Costa Rica.

The bottom ranks, from 175 to 180, are held by China, Myanmar, Turkmenistan, Iran, Eritrea and North Korea.

## Study confirms airborne transmission of coronavirus

**Hyderabad |** Agencies

A collaborative study by a group of scientists from the CSIR-CCMB, Hyderabad and the CSIR-IMTech, Chandigarh, with hospitals in Hyderabad and Mohali has confirmed the airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2. The study has been published in the Journal of Aerosol Science.

The exact mechanism of spread of coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 has remained elusive. Earlier thought to spread by surfaces, epidemiologists found that countries where people wore masks in the pandemic were affected less severely. However, quantitative evidence that shows the infectious coronavirus particles in air was lacking.

The scientists analysed the coronavirus' genome content from air samples collected from different areas occupied by Covid-19 patients. These



included hospitals, closed rooms in which only Covid-19 patients spent a short period of time, and houses of home-quarantined Covid-19 patients.

They found that the virus could be frequently detected in air around Covid-19 patients and that the positivity rate increased with the number of patients present in the premises. They found the

virus in ICU as well as non-ICU sections of hospitals, suggesting that patients shed the virus in air irrespective of the severity of infection. The study also found viable coronavirus in air that could infect living cells, and these viruses could spread over a long range of distance. Scientists still suggest wearing face masks to avoid the spread of coronavirus.

## MUMBAI RECORDS 117 NEW COVID CASES, HIGHEST DAILY COUNT SINCE FEBRUARY 24

This is the second consecutive day that Mumbai's daily cases have gone into 3 digits.

**Mumbai:** In its highest daily case count in over two months, Mumbai reported 117 fresh Covid cases today, making up the majority of coronavirus cases recorded in Maharashtra in the last 24 hours. Reporting zero deaths and a 1.66 per cent positivity rate, Mumbai currently has 642 active cases and has administered 7,035 Covid tests in the past 24 hours. Maharashtra overall reported 188 cases and zero deaths. There are presently 1,049 active cases in the state, showed official data.

Prior to today, the city last reported its highest one-day tally on February 24, when it logged 119 cases. This is the second consecutive day that the country's financial capital has witnessed its daily cases running into three digits. On Tuesday, the city logged 100 new cases. Mumbai is seeing a marginal rise in cases as the nation overall also witnesses an uptick in Covid cases.



## 'Can't shut our eyes'

SC ON CENTRE'S STAND THAT PREZ SHOULD DECIDE PERARIVALAN MERCY PLEA

**Team Absolute |** New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday did not agree with the Centre's submission that court should wait for the President to take a call on the mercy plea of Rajiv Gandhi assassination convict A.G. Perarivalan. A bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and B. R. Gavai said that it will place the matter for hearing and the decision of the President would not have any bearing on it, and it will examine the issue raised by the petitioner.

Pointing out to the Centre's counsel that the question was whether the Governor had the authority to refer the mercy plea to the President, it noted that under Article 161 of the Constitution, the Governor was bound by the aid and advice given by the Tamil Nadu Council of Ministers. In September 2018, the Council of Ministers of Tamil Nadu had recommended Perarivalan's release.



The Tamil Nadu Governor had referred the Perarivalan's mercy plea to the President for a decision. The bench said the Governor had no authority to transfer the mercy plea to the President.

Noting Perarivalan had already served close to 30 years in prison, the bench said in the past, the court had passed judgments in favour of life convicts who have served over 20 years of their sentence and there cannot be any discrimination in this

case. Justice Rao told the Centre's counsel: "We cannot shut our eyes to something that is happening against the Constitution. We have to follow our Bible, the Constitution... If you are not willing to consider these aspects, we will consider ordering his release." The bench emphasised that the state government has asked for his release and the Governor is bound by the state's advice under Article 161, and the President has no role under this provision.

## PAK TUNNEL DETECTED NEAR INTERNATIONAL BORDER IN JAMMU

**Jammu |** Agencies

A Pakistani tunnel has been detected near the International Border (IB) near the Chak Faquira border outpost in the Samba sector of Jammu, officials said on Wednesday.

"On Tuesday, a special tunnel checking exercise was carried out in the AOR (Area of Responsibility) of Chak Faquira border outpost by the BSF. During the exercise, a freshly dug-up tunnel was detected," sources said.

"Based on our inputs obtained through interrogation of terrorist associates involved in the Sunjwan encounter two days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jammu last month, we could identify the pick-up point of terrorists after crossing over from Pakistan in Samba district. This tunnel has been detected today after a long search of two weeks. Possibility of another such tunnel can't be ruled out," the sources in the security set-up added.



## 70% Indian workers feel burnt out as more colleagues quit in past year

▶ **EMPLOYEES FEEL LIKE MUCH OF THEIR WORKDAY IS EATEN UP BY TASKS THAT CAN BE AUTOMATED.**

▶ **ABOUT 91 PER CENT OF INDIAN RESPONDENTS CONSIDER THAT INCORPORATING AUTOMATION, INCLUDING TRAINING ON AUTOMATION, COULD HELP THEIR ORGANISATION ATTRACT NEW AND RETAIN EXISTING TALENT.**

▶ **NEARLY 86 PER CENT OF RESPONDENTS IN INDIA SAID THEIR ORGANISATIONS OFFER EMPLOYEES ACCESS TO AI OR AUTOMATED TOOLS, HIGHEST IN ANY REGION.**

Monotonous tasks are amplifying employee unhappiness and uncertainty and they would welcome new processes and technologies such as automation to allow them to focus on work that matters, according to the report by UiPath, an enterprise automation software company. More employees around the world are burnt out by having to take on more work due to colleagues resigning and various monotonous tasks.

**Bengaluru |** Agencies

Seven in 10 office workers in India are under increased pressure at work due to more and more colleagues resigning in the past year, the highest in any region, a new report showed on Wednesday. Alarmingly, 74 per cent of Indian and 68 per cent of global respondents reported that they do not know what their responsibilities are anymore, because things at work have changed so much since their coworkers quit.

While 73 per cent of Indian respondents say they are interested or could be swayed into looking for



a new job in the next six months, about two in five say they are currently

applying for another job, or have had interviews with another

company in the past six months. Local office workers are motivated to seek a new position due to increased pressure on work/life balance, spending too much time on administrative tasks and a lack of employee recognition.

Nearly 96 per cent of Indian respondents say they feel exhausted at the end of a workday at least one day per week.

They are frustrated by tasks like research to improve existing products and services, drafting and responding to emails, creating new products and services and scheduling calls and meetings, the report found.



## AT INDIA-NORDIC SUMMIT, MODI DISCUSSES MULTILATERAL COOPERATION IN POST-COVID RECOVERY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday participated in the second India-Nordic Summit in Denmark, where discussions were held on multilateral cooperation in post-pandemic economic recovery, climate change, sustainable development, innovation, digitalisation, and green and clean growth.

The summit, with his counterparts Mette Frederiksen (Denmark), Katrin Jakobsdottir (Iceland), Jonas Gahr Store (Norway), Magdalena Andersson (Sweden), and Sanna Marin (Finland) provided an opportunity to review the progress of the India-Nordic relations since the 1st India-Nordic Summit, which was held in 2018 in Stockholm. Discussions were also held on cooperation in maritime sector with a focus on sustainable ocean management. Modi invited Nordic companies for investing in the Blue Economy sector, especially in India's Sagarmala project. He also invited the sovereign wealth funds of the Nordic countries to invest in India.

India's partnership with the Nordic region in the Arctic region was discussed and he noted that India's Arctic Policy provides a good framework for expansion of India-Nordic cooperation in the region.



The leaders also held discussions on regional and global developments.

During the Summit, the Prime Ministers pledged to continue to deepen cooperation between the Nordic countries and India and focused their discussions on key issues related to international peace and security, including the conflict in Ukraine, multilateral cooperation, green transition and climate change, the blue economy, innovation and digitalisation. The Prime Ministers reaffirmed the importance of free trade as a driver for achieving inclusive growth and realising the Sustainable

Development Goals. The Nordic Prime Ministers reiterated their strong condemnation of the unlawful and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine by Russia, and expressed their serious concern about the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

Unequivocally condemning civilian deaths in Ukraine, they reiterated the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities. They emphasized that the contemporary global order has been built on the UN Charter, international law and respect for sovereignty and the territorial integrity of states.

They discussed the destabilizing effect of the conflict in Ukraine and its broader regional and global implications. Both sides agreed to remain closely engaged on the issue.

The Prime Ministers affirmed their strong commitment to multilateralism and international cooperation. The leaders agreed that pressing challenges such as tackling climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, biodiversity loss and increasing food and energy insecurity across the world required international cooperation, a collective response and global solidarity.

India and the Nordic countries were committed to doing so and to working together in multilateral fora to promote international cooperation and promote human rights as well as equal opportunities for all people without prejudice.

## NCR lodged against Atishi, Raghav Chadha for 'derogatory' remarks against BJP

**Delhi Police have filed a Non-Cognizable Report (NCR) against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders Raghav Chadha and Atishi for allegedly calling the BJP a party of 'thieves', 'uneducated' and 'hooligans'.**

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The NCR accessed by IANS was filed with the cyber police station under Section 500 of the IPC by the IT head of Bhartiya Janta Yuva Morcha, Abhishek Dubey, who accused the AAP leaders of misleading the people and defaming the saffron party.

Speaking with IANS, Dubey said that it was Raghav Chadha who tweeted against his party, while Atishi also tweeted derogatory words and levelled baseless allegations and hence he decided to lodge a case against them.

"People could be misled after reading their tweets. They also tried to tarnish the image of our party. I will also file a defamation case against both of them before the concerned court," Dubey said.

The police said that after receiving the



complaint, they took legal opinion and deemed it a fit case for lodging an NCR.

## Mamata not invited for Amit Shah's programme at Victoria Memorial

KOLKATA | Agencies

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has so far not received any invitation for the official programme of Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the Victoria Memorial here on Friday evening.

Shah is coming here for a two-day state visit on Thursday. Before returning to Delhi on Friday night, he is scheduled to attend an official programme at the iconic Victoria Memorial.

Although Governor Jagdeep Dhankar has been invited to attend the programme, no such invitation has been sent to the Chief Minister till Wednesday evening.



Senior Trinamool Congress leader and MLA Tapas Roy pointed out that as per the protocol, the Chief Minister should be invited at a government programme where the Union Home Minister would be present.

"But expecting political courtesy from the BJP and the current Union govern-

ment is a waste of time," he added.

Reacting to Roy's comments, BJP national vice-president Dilip Ghosh said that even the Chief Minister does not show any courtesy of inviting BJP Lok Sabha members and MPs at government programmes in their respective districts.

## Won't allow any census until caste headcount is done, says Tejashwi

PATNA | Agencies

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Wednesday said that his party will not allow any census in Bihar until caste headcount is done.

"BJP is an anti justice party in the country. Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai has denied in writing that the caste based census will not take place in the country. In that context, we will not allow any census to take place in Bihar," Yadav said.

"The caste based census' resolutions have been passed twice in the Bihar Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha). Even a delegation of all parties led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had met Prime Minister Narendra Modi to press for the demand of caste-based census," Yadav said.

Responding to his statement, BJP OBC Morcha's National General Secretary Nikhil Anand said: "Central government must investigate the scam of Rs 5,500 crore done by UPA in the name of caste census in 2011."



"The 2011 caste census conducted during the UPA government was a scam. Centre should inves-

tigate that caste-based census and punish the culprits who cheated the OBCs of India," Anand said.

"Those who are demanding caste census should first ask Congress why they continuously betrayed OBCs since independence. Is Tejashwi Yadav aware of this shameful fact. Will he demand an inquiry into the 2011 caste census scam of UPA in which RJD was a partner?" Anand said.

Anand said that there was a detailed debate in the Parliament in 2010 regarding the conduct of caste census in 2011.

Those blaming the BJP should read the documents from the records of Parliament and hear what BJP leaders Arun Jaitley, Sushma Swaraj, Gopinath Munde and others had said on the issue. After the said debate in the House, the UPA government agreed to conduct the caste census, Anand said.

"In 2011 the caste census conducted by UPA showed 4,28,000 caste lists in the country and it had more than 10 crore errors," he said.

## Another drug haul at Hyderabad Airport, heroin worth Rs 11.53 crore seized

HYDERABAD | Agencies

In yet another major drug haul at Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Customs officials seized heroin worth Rs 11.53 crore from a Tanzanian national.

The Customs officials said 1,389 kg of heroin was seized from the male passenger who arrived from Johannesburg via Abu Dhabi on April 26.

The passenger purged 108 capsules containing the contraband heroin over a period of six days.

The passenger was arrested and remanded to judicial custody. Further investigation is on, the officials said.

This is the fourth seizure of heroin at Hyderabad in less than two weeks. Eight kilogram cocaine worth Rs 80 crore was seized from two passengers by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) late on May 1. The contraband was seized in two separate cases. A male Tanzanian national, travelling from Cape Town to Hyderabad on a business visa and a lady passenger from Angola, with itinerary Angola - Mozambique - Lusaka - Dubai - Hyderabad on a tourist visa were arrested. A total of eight kg of cocaine, each passenger carrying 4 kg, were seized



from the passengers from the packets concealed in the false bottom of their trolley bags.

Earlier, the Hyderabad Customs along with DRI had seized 1,157 grams of cocaine worth Rs 11.57 crore from a Tanzanian national. The passenger had arrived at Hyderabad Airport from Johannesburg via Dubai on April 21. A total of 79 ingested capsules were recovered over a period of 5 days. According to DRI, the instances of smuggling drugs through air have increased with easing restrictions on air travel and increased passenger traffic.

## RAPE ACCUSED UP POLICE SHO ARRESTED FROM PRAYAGRAJ

Lucknow: UP Police SHO Tilakhari Saroj, the main accused in the rape of a minor girl in Pali police station in Lalitpur district, has been arrested from Prayagraj, officials said on Wednesday.

The SHO had been absconding after the victim's family lodged a complaint.

The state government had suspended Saroj and the entire staff of Pali police station had been sent to lines.

ADG, Law and Order, Prashant Kumar said that strict punishment will be ensured for Saroj and five other accused persons in the case. The 13-year-old girl had been lured to Madhya Pradesh by four boys of her village. She was gang-raped and then left back to her village. When the girl went to the Pali police station to lodge a complaint against the boys, she was detained and raped by the SHO.

## Will welcome PK if he joins JD-U, says Bihar Minister

PATNA | Agencies

Bihar Minister Jama Khan on Wednesday said that he will welcome Prashant Kishor if the poll strategist, who has been hinting at a political career, joins his Janata Dal-United (JD-U).

Khan said that Kishor was associated with the party in the past and his personal relation with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is also well known. "We would welcome Prashant Kishor if he comes to our JD-U. If he joins the JD-U, the party will become stronger in Bihar and other states too. He worked with the party in the past and he is



having good relations with our Chief Minister Nitish Kumar," he said.

Earlier, Nitish Kumar refused to comment on PK, saying that he has nothing to do with it.

Kishor, in a series of tweets on Monday, hinted at starting a new innings from Bihar.

"My quest to be a meaningful participant in democracy and help shape pro people policy led to a 10 years rollercoaster ride.

"As I turn this page, time to go to the Real Masters. The people to better understand the issues and to path to Jan Suraj - People good governance starting from Bihar," he said. Following his tweet, the BJP and the RJD had expressed sharp reactions. Deputy Chief Minister Tar Kishore Prasad, of the BJP, said: "Prashant Kishor has no base in Bihar if he starts his own political party. He is unnecessarily talking like this to attract media attention."

## Rahul shifts to resort near Kathmandu after controversy

KATHMANDU | Agencies

After the controversy over his appearance at a Kathmandu-based nightclub, senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has shifted to a resort nearby Kathmandu valley.

Gandhi, who arrived in Kathmandu on Monday evening to participate in a marriage function of his Nepali friend, Sumnima Udas, was earlier staying at a five-star hotel in Kathmandu.

After the marriage ceremony was over, Rahul and some other guests attending the wedding of Udas, shifted to Lakhuri Bhanjyang-based lavish resort, the Terrace Resort, on Tuesday, two security officials confirmed to reporter. Terrace resort is located on the outskirts of the Kathmandu valley and is famous for sightseeing of the majestic Himalayas that also provide organic food to its guests. The resort is owned by the Sherpa family whom Sumnima got married into on Tuesday evening. Rahul's Kathmandu visit has courted controversy after he was seen



with a woman in a Kathmandu-based nightclub on Monday night. A video went viral in India and lots of comments were pouring in. Some even criticized that the woman, who was seen with Rahul at the nightclub, was the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Hou Yanqi.

"How one can imagine that a diplomat joins with the leader of a foreign nation in a third country at midnight," security sources said, adding that this was baseless rumour and there was no truth in it. She could be someone from

the family of the bride's side, an official added.

After Rahul's visit was dragged into controversy in the Indian media, now Nepal Police has deployed some security personnel in plain clothes for his security.

It is said that Rahul and some of his Indian friends, who arrived to attend the marriage function of Sumnima, will stay in Kathmandu until Friday. The Udas- family has organised a reception on Friday evening at a five-star hotel in Kathmandu.

## Kokilaben Hospital gets 3rd da Vinci robot, notches 4,500 robot-assisted surgeries

**The Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital (KDAH) on Wednesday acquired its third da Vinci Robotic Surgical System, making it the only hospital with three such robots, and also completed 4,500 robot-assisted surgeries, an official said here.**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The KDAH was among the first in the country to introduce the da Vinci Robotic Surgical System in June 2012 and it has now completed over 4,500 robot-assisted surgeries across specialities for adult-paediatric urology, gynaecology, bariatric and ENT, plus cancer.

It has also become the first hospital in the country to achieve 2,600 robot-assisted surgeries for patients with prostate, kidney and urinary bladder cancer with minimally invasive surgeries.

"Robotic surgery represents the next era of surgical innovation with many advantages over traditional open surgery. It makes difficult urological procedures easier and safer with more precise surgery, less blood loss or infections, quicker recovery and reduced hospital stay," said Yuvaraja T.B., Head of the KDAH Robotic Surgery department, and Consultant, Uro-Oncology.



KDAH Executive Director and CEO Santosh Shetty said that they had realised the potential of robotic surgery in helping patients at an early stage and were among the first to bring it to the country 10 years ago.



"We ensured that our surgeons are specially trained in diagnosing and treating various conditions using advanced robotic technologies and our foresight has benefited thousands of patients as they are cost-effective and recognised



by health insurance companies," Shetty said.

Robotic surgery is not an automated process but is remote-controlled by a human surgeon, using minimally-invasive approach. Robotic surgery is performed through small incisions with extreme precision, particularly in hard-to-access parts of the body, with a computer providing a digital interface between the surgeon's hands and the surgical instruments, besides providing improved visualisation with a magnified hi-definition 3-D image. Named after renowned Italian inventor and painter Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), the da Vinci system was developed using technology pioneered by NASA and the Scripps Research Institute and was approved for surgical use in 2000. Today, there are more than 6,500 da Vinci robots installed in 67 countries with over 55,000 trained surgeons, who have performed over 10 million procedures using this system.



### CURFEW LIFTED IN KHARGONE CITY, ALL RESTRICTIONS WITHDRAWN



Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Milind Dhoke told reporters on Wednesday that the administration on Wednesday convened a peace committee meeting where the decision of withdrawing all prohibitory orders was taken.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

24 days after it was imposed following violence during a Ram Navami procession on April 10, the administration in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone lifted the curfew with immediate effect on Wednesday evening, an official confirmed.

According to him, the prohibitory orders and all other restrictions were also removed. "The administration on Wednesday convened a peace committee meeting, which was attended by the representatives of all the communities. It was decided with consent of all that the prohibitory orders issued on April 10 should be withdrawn immediately," Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Milind Dhoke told reporters after the meeting. "The pro-

hibitory orders under CrPC (Code of Criminal Procedure) 144 have ended from today itself. All the restrictions and curfew have been withdrawn. The situation that prevailed before April 10 has been restored," he later added.

Earlier in the day, the administration had announced to relax the curfew for 11 hours - from 6 am to 5 pm. On Tuesday, the curfew was in place for 24 hours and citizens were asked to celebrate Eid-al-Fitr and Akshaya Tritiya festivals at home.

Curfew was clamped in Khargone after the violence on April 10, during which shops and houses were damaged, vehicles torched and stones hurled. Since April 14, the local administration has been relaxing the curfew for some hours.

### Politics in Madhya Pradesh Has Always Been Nationalist, Politics Was Never Based On Regionalism Here: Chouhan

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan Released Books of Senior Journalist and Eminent Political Analyst Girija Shankar  
Speakers Expressed Their Views on the Released Books "Sankaleen Rajniti-Madhya Pradesh" and "Chunavi Rajniti-Madhya Pradesh"



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the politics of Madhya Pradesh has never been individualistic. The voices of nationalist politics have always been vocal in Madhya Pradesh. Here politics was never based on regionalism. Madhya Pradesh has a tradition of two-polar politics. Chouhan was addressing the release programme of two books of eminent political analyst Girija Shankar, "Sankaleen Rajniti-Madhya Pradesh" (Contemporary Politics-Madhya Pradesh) and "Chunavi Rajniti-Madhya Pradesh" (Electoral Politics-Madhya Pradesh). Chouhan

said that in the books of Girija Shankar, there is a realistic description of all the political situations of the state. The books go ahead with a detailed and meticulous analysis of all the events after the formation of the state. The precise description of political parties and political personalities presented by the author impresses with depth and breadth. The present and future generations greatly need analysts and scholars like Girija Shankar. His books are useful for the people active in the political world, researchers, journalists and those who are interested in the politics of the state in general and are helpful in developing a deeper understanding about the scenario of the state.

Chouhan said that Girija Shankar's impartial approach, writing and creativity give him a special place. As described in the verses of Gita, Girija Shankar remains full of enthu-

siasm while remaining free from attachment, without expectation, forbearing and away from pride, having a simple personality, who is balanced in every situation. He also has the power to keep everyone coming in contact with him energized.

Former Union Minister Suresh Pachauri said that there is political rivalry in Madhya Pradesh but there is no political enmity. The decency of behaviour in politics is the heritage of the state, decency also exists in the process of transfer of power after elections. Girija Shankar's books have saved the political developments of the state for the coming generations.

These books will prove to be useful handbooks for political researchers and those who are active in politics.

He presented the details of the creation journey of books. Journalist Manoj Kumar conducted the program.

### A DOZEN ARRESTED IN TRIBALS MURDER: 6 OUT OF 12 ACCUSED FROM SHRI RAM SENA, BAJRANG DAL

PS INCHARGE KURAI, SEONI CONFIRMED 3 GOONS OF BAJRANG DAL AND 6 GOONS FROM RAM SENA WERE ARRESTED IN CONNECTION TO THE LYNCHING OF 2 TRIBALS OVER SUSPICIONS OF COW SLAUGHTER.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A day after two tribal men were lynched to death by a mob for alleged cow smuggling in Seoni district police has arrested a dozen right wing activists for the crime. The tribal community also protested on Wednesday by blocking roads and demanding justice as well as strict action against the accused.

A video going viral on Twitter shows a crowd of tribals standing with one person lying flat on the road as a mark of protest.

Speaking to media, Kurai police station in charge said that 12 persons have been arrested so far. "Six of them were earlier arrested and now

six more are arrested," the official said. He further added that three of them belonged to the right-winged organisation Bajrang Dal while six of them belonged to Shri Ram Sena organisation and the remaining three were not affiliated with any organisation.

The accused were booked under Section 147 (Punishment for rioting), 148 (Rioting armed with a deadly weapon), 149 (If an offense be committed by any member of an unlawful assembly, every other member of such assembly shall be guilty of the offense), 302 (Murder), 330 (Voluntarily causing hurt to extort confession or information, or to compel restoration of property), and 325 (Voluntarily causing grievous hurt) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

According to the information received here, some people reached Simaria village under Kurai police station in Seoni district after coming to know of alleged cow smuggling in the area.

They started beating those who were allegedly involved in the act. Two people were killed and one person received serious injuries in the incident, which took place on Monday night. In protest, members of the tribal community blocked the road on National Highway 44, demanding justice.

### CONSUL GENERAL OF SINGAPORE CALLS ON CM CHOUHAN



Bhopal: Consul General of Singapore, Xiong Ming Fung called on the Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at the residence office. During the meeting, discussions were held regarding skill upgradation of youth of the state for employment at global level, training in various fields and educational exchange. Chouhan said that Global Skill Park is being developed only with the cooperation of Singapore. A decision in this regard was taken in Singapore itself. Chief Minister said that the state government is working towards ideally developing Global Skill Park. It is a matter of happiness that Madhya Pradesh has strong relations with Singapore. In future also this relationship will continue to grow positively with mutual cooperation.

### CHIEF MINISTER CALLED ON BY WOMEN OF SHGS



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was called on by the women of Maa Narmada, Ganesh and Radha self-help group and workers of Maa Sakshi Machhua Samooh of Sehore district at his residence office today. Chouhan was informed by the women of the groups about the activities and marketing arrangements conducted by them. Chouhan said that to make the activities of self-help groups more job oriented, arrangements would be made to provide necessary training at the local level.

### CHIEF MINISTER CALLED ON BY GOI SECRETARY JOSHI



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was called on by Union Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Manoj Joshi at his residence office. Chouhan discussed about the ongoing urban development programmes in the state, the projects being run under the Prime Minister Urban Housing and the innovations being done in the cleanliness campaign. Principal Secretary Urban Development and Housing Manish Singh and Bhopal Collector Avinash Lavania were also present.

### Students studying Sanskrit will start getting scholarship from July: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that scholarship is being arranged for students studying Sanskrit as an incentive. It should be ensured that students start getting scholarship from the month of July. The scholarship will be operated from the portal. Chouhan was addressing the ministers before the meeting of the Cabinet at Mantralaya on Wednesday.

Chouhan wished and congratulated everyone on peaceful celebration of the festivals of Akshaya Tritiya, Parshuram Jayanti and Eid with full enthusiasm and

gaiety. Chief Minister informed about the decision taken regarding the welfare of the students and priests studying Sanskrit language on the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya and Parshuram Jayanti. Chouhan said that all the posts of Sanskrit teachers would be filled.

So far 1900 posts have been filled, recruitments are being made on the remaining posts. Till the time teachers are not recruited, arrangements will be made for guest faculty.

The Chief Minister said that by recruitment to the posts of Sanskrit teachers, youth would be attracted towards Sanskrit language

and would also be inspired to adopt Sanskrit teaching as a career. Chouhan also directed to hold a meeting of the course committee to include Parashuram Charitra and Geeta Saar in the education curriculum.

He said that the people of the general category living below the poverty line would be given the benefit of all the government schemes including Sambal Yojana.

Chouhan also informed about the honorarium to be provided to the priests of the temple. After the Chief Minister's address, the meeting of the Council of Ministers began with the song Vande Mataram.

### CM PLANTED SAPLINGS OF MOULSHREE AND KARANJ

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Moulshree and Karanj in the Smart City Garden in the memory of senior social worker Brijesh Lunawat along with his family members and friends. Along with Chief Minister the workers of Saket Vikas Jan-Kalyan Samiti Ratan Bhattacharya, Prakash Shrivastava, Ashok Verma and Anil Vani also planted a sapling of Gulmohar.

Chouhan while remembering Late Brijesh Lunawat said that his good deeds and memories will always remain alive in the minds of all of us. It is noteworthy that Brijesh Lunawat passed away last



year due to corona infection. On the occasion of plantation, his wife Smita Lunawat, daughter Kumari Muskan

Lunawat, brother Shailesh Lunawat, nephew Sarthak Lunawat and friends were present.

### 12th Senior National Women Hockey Championship-2022 in Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

For some time, people of Bhopal have been witness to excellent performance in men's hockey. In this sequence, now from May 6 to 17, the best female hockey players of the country will spread the magic of their hockey stick in Bhopal. The 12th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship-2022 will begin at Major Dhyan Chand Hockey Stadium.

In this championship, 27 teams of the country will showcase their skills.

Besides hosts Madhya Pradesh, teams from Chandigarh, Bihar, Haryana, Assam, Bengal, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Tripura, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Arunachal Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Telangana, Odisha and Himachal Pradesh will participate in the 12th Hockey India Senior Women's National Championship.

### CM Pays Tribute to Maharaja Chhatrasal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid homage to Maharaja Chhatrasal on his anniversary and paid floral tribute by garlanding his portrait in the auditorium at the residence office.

Maharaja Chhatrasal was born in 1649. He was a great warrior of the Middle Ages, who defeated the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb in battle and established his kingdom in Bundelkhand and attained the title of



'Maharaja'. The life of Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela was spent fighting for the establishment of the independence of Bundelkhand. He faced attacks till the end of his life. Chouhan has tweeted by quoting inspiring lines which are said about Bundelkhand Kesari, the great warrior, Maharaja Chhatrasal, on his anniversary- "It Yamuna, Ut Narmada, Ut Chambal, Ut Tons. Chhatrasal son Lan ki, Rahi na Kahu ko Hauns."

## Chief Minister Chouhan chairs Cabinet meeting Revised administrative approval of irrigation projects worth more than Rs. 572 crores

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the Cabinet meeting held at Mantralaya today under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, revised administrative approval was granted to three irrigation projects worth Rs. 572 crore 76 lakh. In this, revised administrative approval was granted to Sonpur Medium Irrigation Project, with an irrigation capacity of 7 thousand hectares, costing Rs. 181 crore 80 lakh, Bham (Rajgarh) Medium Irrigation Project, costing Rs. 301 crore 41 lakh Rabi irrigation capacity of 7,900 hectares and Surajpura Medium Irrigation Project, costing Rs 89 crore 55 lakh with annual irrigation potential of 4205 hectares.

The Cabinet gave approval of Rs 148 crore 43 lakh 2 thousand for 108 feet high multi-metal statue and pedestal work of Acharya Shankar at Omkareshwar.

The Cabinet decided to continue the scheme of giving short term crop loans to farmers at zero percent interest rate through cooperative banks in the year 2021-22. In the scheme, the base rate for the year 2021-22 has been kept at 10 percent as in the previous year and the due date of Kharif 2021 season has been kept as April 15, 2022 and Rabi 2021-22 as June 15, 2022. One percent (general) interest subsidy for all farmers taking short-term crop loans in Kharif and Rabi seasons under the fixed base rate of 10 percent as per last year and 4 percent (additional) interest subsidy incentive to farmers who repay the loan till the prescribed due date will be given by the state government.

The Cabinet has given revised administrative approval of Rs 171 crore 39 lakh in place of the administrative approval of Rs. 127 crore 5 lakh issued earlier under the approved project for increase in MBBS seats in Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Medical College, Jabalpur from 150 to 250.

The Cabinet approved the financial provision of 33 educational posts and 62 non-teaching posts for the Institute of



Mining Technology, Singrauli, proposed by the Technical Education, Skill Development and Employment Department, thus creating a total of 95 posts and expected recurring expenditure. Recurring expenditure is about Rs.6 crore and non-recurring expenditure is likely to be Rs.76 crore 56 lakh per year on the scheme.

Mukhya Mantri Viduyt Bills Rahat Yojana -2022 was ratified to provide relief to consumers from the low income group in the state who have been facing difficulty in paying their electricity bills following the Corona outbreak and to motivate these consumers to pay their electricity bills by resolving the deferred arrears of their bills. The process of giving benefits to the beneficiaries under the scheme will continue in the distribution centers. The benefits of the scheme will be reflected in the bills to be released after April 1, 2022. The number of benefited consumers will be around 88 lakhs. The amount of bills to be waived will be around Rs.5334 crores. To take advantage of the scheme, eligible consumers will have to submit an application in the prescribed format by the electricity distribution company. Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India (MNRE) has implemented the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha and Utham Mahabhiyan (KUSUM) scheme to meet the energy needs of the farmers of the country, mainly irrigation needs and to provide opportu-

nities for income generation by making use of the resources available with them. In the component feeder solarization of Kusum-C in the state, all the agricultural feeders will be energized with solar energy. Madhya Pradesh Urja Vikas Nigam Limited has been made the nodal organization of the state for the implementation of the scheme. Under the scheme, electricity will be provided for 8 hours a day on agricultural feeders energized by solar energy for the supply of agricultural needs. The entire power generated by the Madhya Pradesh Power Management Company Limited from the solar plant will be purchased through open tender at the prescribed rates for 25 years. Under the scheme, developers will be selected through open tender for setting up of 1250 MW capacity solar plants in the first phase for solarization of specific agricultural feeders connected at 33/11 KV specific agricultural feeders and non-agricultural feeders connected substations.

The Cabinet ratified the decision to convert 827 forest villages into revenue villages as per the provisions of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 and the prescribed procedure. The Cabinet decided to amend Clause 9 and Clause 23 of the excise policy of the state for the year 2022-23. According to Clause 9, in case of non-supply of liquor of 85 percent duty amount in every quarter against the minimum guaranteed duty amount fixed by the retail licensee of country/foreign liquor for his liquor shop, the balance payable shall be 5 percent of the minimum duty amount. Equivalent penalty has been reduced to 2.5 percent. According to Clause 23, if more liquor is stored in a liquor shop than the requirement of the licensee, it may be transferred to another liquor shop of the same group or different group of the same district with the condition that the party in which the liquor will be transferred, the transferee will not be allowed to lift the same type of liquor from the country/foreign liquor warehouse in that party.



## EDITOR'S SPECS

Nitish-BJP relation

**All is well?**

**A** day after Nitish Kumar skipped the Conference of Chief Justices and Chief Ministers addressed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi, there is talk in political circles that all is not well in the Bihar NDA in view of new bonhomie seen emerging between the Chief Minister and the RJD at Iftar programmes. The BJP is cautious, so is Congress which is in an alliance with the RJD. Congress sources say that the party is watching the situation but will only react something if and after Nitish Kumar takes some decision but also add a rider - that it might be pressure tactics by him. However, sources in Janata Dal-United say that there is nothing much to read about and it doesn't mean that they are parting ways. NDA government is stable and intact. There was some speculation in Patna that Nitish Kumar might be put forth as the Vice President candidate but the JDU leader has rejected this. Since, the BJP is the single largest party in the NDA, there is said to be internal pressure from it to replace the Chief Minister, which has not gone down well with Nitish Kumar. In wake of this, Nitish Kumar attended the iftar party of the RJD and took stand contrary to the BJP on loudspeaker row. Since then, the political distance between Nitish Kumar and Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav is seen as reducing as both met three times in last ten days. The effect of the three meetings is reflecting on the statements of Tejashwi Yadav and Nitish Kumar. The former, instead of targeting Nitish Kumar directly as earlier, is now blaming the Narendra Modi government, and focussing only those issues where the ideology and stand of Nitish Kumar do not match with the BJP.

# BJP PREPARES TO KEEP ITS FLAG FLYING HIGH ATOP FORTRESS GUJARAT

Santosh Kumar Pathak

**G**ujarat is considered not only as BJP's stronghold but also its laboratory.

It also holds importance for the party as it is the home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

Although the party has not lost a single election here since 1995, it does not want to take any chance in the upcoming Assembly elections, preparations for which have started on a war-footing. In the run-up to the Assembly polls scheduled for the year end, the most popular faces of the BJP -- former Chief Minister of the state and current Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, who has the details of every locality and booth of Gujarat -- have got into action.

Besides, BJP National President J.P. Nadda has also taken over the election command.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi convened an important meeting with party leaders at his official residence 7, Lok Kalyan Marg, in connection with the polls. All senior leaders, including Home Minister Shah, Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, besides state ministers and party veterans attended the meeting, which lasted for about two hours.

Gujarat Law Minister Rajendra Trivedi and State Chief Secretary Kailashnathan were also present.

Though there has been no official communication in this regard, in view of the political and administrative matters of the state, it is being considered very crucial.

The party is attempting to work out strategies to counter Congress like in the 2017 Assembly polls. It aims at getting better results compared to last elections. Actually, BJP has been in power in Gujarat continuously since 1995. After Narendra Modi took over as the Chief Minister in 2001, the BJP became invincible in the state, but after Narendra Modi came to Delhi as the Prime Minister in 2014, the party's performance has witnessed a slight fall.

This can be assessed by analysing the poll results since 1995. In the five consecutive Assembly elections -- 1995, 1998, 2002, 2007 and 2012 -- the party has been forming the government by winning between 115 and 127 seats out of the total 182 in the state. But in 2017, after Modi became the prime minister in



2014, the seats have been reduced to less than 100. In 2017, it could bag only 99 seats.

Congress had won 77 seats in this election. In terms of voting percentage, the BJP got the support of 49 per cent voters, while the Congress also gave a tough fight to it with 41.5 per cent votes.

After suffering a setback, the BJP undertook a complete revamping of the structure and changed not only the government but also the chief minister. Now the biggest challenge is to win more than 115 seats and form the government for the seventh successive term with a thumping majority at the end of 2022.

With this objective, Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister and Lok Sabha member Amit Shah and Nadda have started preparations making several trips to the state. The very next day after the results of Assembly polls were announced, the Prime Minister embarked on a two-day visit to the state and addressed a huge roadshow in Ahmedabad and a rally of elected representatives of Panchayat Raj institutions.

Home Minister Amit Shah, who along with Prime Minister Modi made the BJP invincible in Gujarat, is also visiting the state continuously and holding meetings with party leaders for

working out an election strategy.

On Friday, party president Nadda also reached the state office of Gujarat and interacted with the members of the election committee of the state, BJP MPs, MLAs, Mayors of the Municipal Council, Deputy Mayors, Standing Committee Chairmen.

He also held an important meeting with the Zilla Parishad Presidents as well as former MPs and MLAs of the party regarding the election strategy.

Late in the evening, he met with all the leaders of the State Core Committee and the State Election Committee at the Chief Minister's residence, discussed the political situation and election strategy of the state separately.

Nadda, who reached Gujarat, reiterated that Gujarat is a laboratory for the BJP in matters related to governance and organisation.

Resignation of the then Chief Minister Rupani and his council of ministers last year and the subsequent formation of a new government under Bhupendra Patel was an experiment done as part of the party's special strategy, he added.

Criticising the Aam Aadmi Party, he said: "Let us tell you that for the last several decades,

the main contest in the state has been between the BJP and the Congress, but the Aam Aadmi Party, excited by the victory of Punjab, has also started preparations for the state's Legislative Assembly elections in full swing." "Kejriwal, in alliance with the Tribal Party of India, which won three seats in the 2017 Assembly elections, is trying to challenge the BJP in the state, while the Congress, which managed to bring the BJP below 100 in the 2017 Assembly elections, is also in the state. I am engaged in formulating a strategy to end 27 years of exile," he added.

The BJP, he said, is facing challenges on many fronts simultaneously to counter the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party. At the organisational level, all the leaders of the party have been asked to accept the change and fight the elections unitedly again to form the BJP government in the state.

In the coming days, efforts will be made to reach out to all the voters and beneficiaries of all the 182 Assembly seats. Besides, attempts are also being made to woo the Patidar, Dalit and Adivasi voters of the state.

## international

# NATO TRANSPORT WITH WEAPONS FOR UKRAINE WILL BE DESTROYED: RUSSIAN MINISTER

Moscow | Agencies

**R**ussian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has said that NATO vehicles arriving in Ukraine with weapons and ammunition for Ukrainian troops would be destroyed, RT reported.

Shoigu stressed that the US and its NATO allies continue to pump weapons into Ukraine.

"Any transport of the North Atlantic Alliance that arrived on the territory of the country with weapons or materiel for the needs of the Ukrainian armed forces is considered by us as a legitimate target for destruction," he said.

Shoigu added that Mariupol is under the control of the Russian army. "Peaceful life is being established in the territories of the LPR and DPR and Ukraine liberated from nationalists. Including Mariupol, the largest industrial and transport hub on the Sea of Azov. It is under the control of the Russian Army," he said at the meeting.

The Russian Ministry of Defence also announced



the destruction of six traction electrical substations in Ukraine.

It is noted that through these facilities the Ukrainian troops were supplied with weapons manufactured in the US and European countries.

The West can help stop "war crimes" allegedly carried out by Ukrainian forces if it uses its influence over Kiev and ceases the supply of weapons to the country, Russian President Vladimir Putin told his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday, according to the Kremlin, RT reported.

During their phone conversation, which reportedly lasted for more than two hours, Putin congratulated Macron on his recent re-election and updated him on developments in Ukraine, including the evacuation of civilians from the Azovstal plant in Mariupol, according to a readout of the call.

Putin claimed that the EU nations have ignored "the war crimes of the Ukrainian security forces, massive shelling of cities and towns of Donbass, resulting in civilian casualties."

## CAMBODIA, INDONESIA, THAILAND TO HOST 3 MAJOR MEETINGS

**Phnom Penh:** Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand are due to host three important leaders' meetings in the Southeast Asia region this year, according to a joint statement released by the Foreign Ministries of the three countries on Wednesday. Cambodia will host the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Related summits on November 11-13; Indonesia will host the Group of 20 (G20) summit on November 15-16, and Thailand will host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' meeting on November 18-19, the statement said.

# UAE COMES UP WITH NEW VISA RULES, RESIDENCE SCHEME TO ATTRACT TALENT



**New Delhi:** The UAE has introduced new liberalised visa rules and residence scheme aimed to attract global talent and boost the Emirate's economy by supporting its competitiveness.

It has updated and simplified the golden residence rules which will ultimately result in creating more jobs and a resultant pick-up in housing demand from the expats in the country.

Additionally, all entry visas are now available for single and multiple entries to the UAE visitors.

Valid for 60 days from their issuance date, these visas can be renewed further for similar period. Such provisions have boosted the confidence of the expats with high sense of stability, attracting more and more families and individuals to move to Dubai which will ultimately create more demand for housing units.

Rizwan Sajjan, Founder and Chairman, Danube Group said, "The new visa rules and residence scheme introduced by the authorities is a highly welcome move that will immensely benefit the UAE economy by creating new jobs opportunities hence boosting the jobseekers' sentiments."

The new system for residence visas and entry permits provides customised benefits to every category including 10-year Golden Visa holder investors and skilled employees. The Green visa holders skilled self-employed and freelancers have been further provided five-year residency instead of the earlier two years.

The jobseekers will be benefited the most by the five-year multi-entry tourist visa that allows them to enter the country several times in a calendar year or stay for 90 days continuously and then extend it for another 90 days.

Moreover, the new visa and residence scheme introduced by the UAE authorities include Business Entry Visa that doesn't require any sponsor or host that will further encourage investors and entrepreneurs alike for exploring investment opportunities in Emirates.

Obviously, all these provisions will provide the expatriates even bigger stake in the UAE economy.

# TRANSITION TEAM STRONGLY CONDEMNS N. KOREA'S BALLISTIC MISSILE LAUNCH

Seoul | Agencies

**T**he transition team of South Korean President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol strongly condemned North Korea's ballistic missile launch on Wednesday, saying the incoming government will deal sternly with any provocations.

The warning came hours after North Korea fired a ballistic missile into the East Sea with just days to go until Yoon's inauguration on May 10, Yonhap news agency reported.

The launch was the North's 14th show of force this year and came amid concern the regime could stage an intercontinental ballistic missile or nuclear test.

"The transition team strongly condemns North Korea's provocation and again urges an immediate halt to actions creating tension and threatening international peace," the Committee said in a statement.

"The Yoon Suk-yeol government will deal strongly

with North Korea's provocations by working with the international community on the basis of thorough cooperation between South Korea and the United States," it said, promising "more fundamental deterrence measures" to counter the North's nuclear and missile threats.

The South Korean President-elect has signaled a hardline stance on North Korea with suggestions of carrying out a pre-emptive strike in the event of an imminent threat and purchasing additional units of the US THAAD anti-missile system. The transition team denounced the launch as a direct violation of UN Security Council resolutions banning North Korea's use of ballistic missile technology while also describing it as a "grave provocation" threatening peace on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

The Committee called on the outgoing Moon Jae-in administration to come up with tougher measures against North Korea's threats and to protect the people's safety.

# Palestine urges UN Security Council to stop Israeli activists' planned incursion into Al-Aqsa mosque

Ramallah | Agencies

**P**alestine has urged the United Nations Security Council to stop Israel from escalating tensions against Palestinians after Jewish activists reportedly decided to break into a holy mosque in East Jerusalem.

On Tuesday, Israeli media reported that activists of some Jewish organisations called for an "incursion into Al-Aqsa Mosque's compound," which will be launched on Thursday morning until the afternoon.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry condemned the activists' plans to raise Israeli flags and sing the Israeli national anthem at the mosque, saying in a statement that "these violations reflect the official Israeli insistence to escalate the situation and implement its plans to perpetuate the occupation."

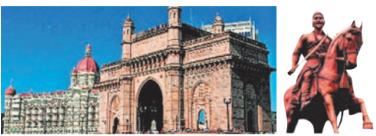
The Ministry called on the Security Council "to take the necessary measures to pressure Israel to stop its escalation against the Palestinian people". Hussein Al-Sheikh, a member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, called the extremists' plans "an outrageous disregard of the feelings of Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims" and "a continuation of extremist racist campaigns."

The Israeli government did not comment on the Israeli extremists' calls,



Xinhua news agency reported. Since the start of the Muslims' fasting month of Ramadan early April, tension between Israelis and Palestinians has been running high.

The compound of Al-Aqsa mosque, known as Noble Sanctuary and to Jews as Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City, has long been a focal point of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.



# ANTILIA CASE: PRADEEP SHARMA PLOTTED MANSUKH HIRAN'S 'COLD-BLOODED MURDER'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has named dismissed police officer Pradeep Sharma as the 'main conspirator' in the "cold-blooded murder" of Thane businessman Mansukh Hiran, in its affidavit in the case pertaining to planting a SUV with 20 gelatin sticks outside Antilia, the home of industrialist Mukesh Ambani.

Aware of the entire conspiracy, the NIA told the Bombay High Court that Hiran was considered the 'weak link' in the larger conspiracy to terrorise the billionaire Ambani family, when the SUV was discovered on February 25, 2021, sending shockwaves across the country.

Opposing the bail plea of Sharma - nabbed on June 17, 2021 and currently in judicial custody - the NIA affidavit said he was not innocent and had committed offences of criminal conspiracy, murder and terror acts.

A division bench comprising Justice A. S. Chandurkar and Justice G. A. Sanap has kept Sharma's bail plea -- challenging the Special NIA Court's rejection of his bail application in February 2022 -- for further hearing on July 17.



Act for heinous and serious offences.

Hiran was aware of the entire conspiracy of parking the SUV outside Antilia that day and the accused (Sharma and co-conspirator and sacked cop Sachin Vaze) feared that he (Hiran) could spill the beans making it difficult for the duo to gather the fruits of the larger plot.

The NIA said that from the evidence gathered, it was crystal clear that Sharma was directly involved in the crime and committed offences of conspiracy,

terrorist act, being member of a terror gang, kidnapping, murder and destruction of evidence.

It said Sharma willingly and intentionally entered into a well-organised criminal conspiracy for the execution of Hiran which was a direct outcome of the terror acts committed by Vaze and the other accused. The NIA also claimed that Hiran was eliminated after he refused to take the blame for parking the SUV outside Antilia.

"When Hiran refused to take blame for the crime, Vaze hatched a conspiracy with Sharma and other accused to kill Hiran so that he does not divulge that Vaze was the one who parked the vehicle outside Antilia," the NIA said in its affidavit.

The larger conspiracy in the case involved parking of the SUV, and circulating threat letters in the name of 'Jaish-ul-Hind' to terrorise the Ambani family and local people. The NIA pointed out that after killing Hiran, the accused (Sharma-Vaze) attempted to show it as a suicide. Shockingly, Sharma had attended meetings in the Commissioner of Police premises where the alleged conspiracy was hatched.

As the main conspirator, Sharma hired henchmen to kill Hiran by paying Rs 45 lakhs he had got from Vaze, and after the murder, asked the co-accused to flee from Mumbai to Nepal.

The NIA argued that Sharma was famous as an 'encounter specialist', influential and if released on bail, he would tamper with the evidence and influence the witnesses.

# Maha peaceful as MNS starts 'anti-loudspeaker' campaign

▶ THE MAHARASHTRA NAVNIRMAN SENA WORKERS LAUNCHED THEIR CAMPAIGN TO PLAY 'HANUMAN CHALISA' OUTSIDE CERTAIN MOSQUES IN MUMBAI AND OTHER PARTS OF THE STATE WHERE 'AZAN' WAS RELAYED ON LOUDSPEAKERS, HERE ON WEDNESDAY MORNING.

mosques in Mumbai and other parts of the state where 'azan' was relayed on loudspeakers, here on Wednesday morning.

In places like Kandivali in Mumbai, pockets of Thane, Pune and Nashik, some MNS workers were seen playing Hanuman Chalisa on portable loudspeakers as 'azan' was heard on local mosques, though at low decibels.

Police have deployed tight security in Mumbai and rest of Maharashtra, aided by over 30,000 Home Guards, QRT and other units, and there have been no reports of any untoward incidents so far.

Mumbai Police Commissioner personally went around some sensitive spots in Dharavi and south Mumbai to oversee the security arrangements and deter MNS workers from creating any law and order issues.

The MNS leaders referred to the Supreme Court guidelines prohibiting use of loudspeakers between 10 p.m. - 6 a.m. and said that their cam-

campaign will continue as announced before.

Party Spokesperson Sandip Deshpande said that the activists are ready to face action -- "Let the police do their job, we will do our jobs" -- as police continued to round up MNS workers from Mumbai and other areas in the state. Late on Tuesday night, MNS President Raj Thackeray had issued an appeal to all Hindus to blare out 'Hanuman Chalisa' outside any mosque using loudspeakers and not disturb those masjids which have already stopped using the public address systems.

Raj is likely to address the media later this afternoon to announce his further course of action in the matter as the civic elections are round the corner.

Meanwhile, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government ministers and officials reviewed the current situation and chalked out the future plans as the MNS remained adamant on its agitation despite all preventive measures.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena workers launched their campaign to play 'Hanuman Chalisa' outside certain

# After 12 days in jail, Rana couple granted bail by Mumbai Court

▶ A MUMBAI COURT ON WEDNESDAY GRANTED CONDITIONAL BAIL TO INDEPENDENT MP NAVNEET RANA AND HER MLA HUSBAND RAVI RANA, WHO WERE ARRESTED IN THE 'HANUMAN CHALISA' RECITAL CASE.



in the 'Hanuman Chalisa' recital case. The couple was arrested from their home after giving a call for reciting Hanuman Chalisa outside Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's private residence. According to their lawyer Rizwan Merchant, the duo shall be released on a bail of Rs 50,000 each, ordered not to speak to the media pertaining to the case under investigations and refrain from tampering with evidence, etc.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai Court on Wednesday granted conditional bail to independent MP Navneet Rana and her MLA husband Ravi Rana, who were arrested

# Claiming 90% success, Raj vows to drag 'anti-loudspeakers' campaign

Claiming "90 per cent success" on the first day of the anti-loudspeakers drive, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena President Raj Thackeray vowed to continue the campaign on a long-term basis till the issue resolved completely, here on Wednesday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Claiming "90 per cent success" on the first day of the anti-loudspeakers drive, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena President Raj Thackeray vowed to continue the campaign on a long-term basis till the issue resolved completely, here on Wednesday.

A majority of the mosques in Mumbai and other parts of Maharashtra reportedly did not use the loudspeakers for the morning 'azan' call to the faithful, the MNS chief told media-persons at his home.

"In Mumbai, there are 1,140 mosques... According to the reports I received since morning, only 135 sounded the 'azan' call on loudspeakers before 5 a.m., flouting the Supreme Court directives," Raj

claimed. He said that the issue is not limited to just one day since 'azan' is sounded five times daily and wondered why the Muslim clerics or religious leaders wanted to use loudspeakers for their prayers, disturbing all others in the vicinity.

"I reiterate... This is not a religious but a social issue. If anybody tries to give it a religious tone, then we shall be forced to do likewise. We don't want disturbances or riots, but loudspeakers must go," Raj declared.

Targeting his cousin and Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray without taking his name, Raj demanded to know what action will be taken against these 135 mosques which allegedly violated the SC orders banning use of loudspeakers only between 10 p.m. - 6 a.m. Taking umbrage at the police going

after the MNS leaders and workers, he asked why they are being targeted for following the law while no action is taken against those who are flouting the laws.

"The Mumbai Joint Commissioner of Police Vishwas Nangare-Patil told me that a majority of the mosques have taken police permission. My question is that a majority of the mosques and loudspeakers in the state are illegal, so how can you give official permission to such illegalities, and why for 365 days," Raj asked.

Shiv Sena leaders have lauded the people of Maharashtra for understanding the motives of the MNS leaders and maintaining peace and harmony today, and the Maharashtra Police for preventing untoward incidents.

Sena MoS Kishore Tiwari said that the "misguided and mischievous

campaign of MNS has been exposed" as the masses have maintained peace and unity despite all provocations, thanks to the excellent police security arrangements.

Former Mumbai Mayor Kishore Pednekar questioned Raj's "success" claims and he was clearly misleading his partymen and others.

"A majority of the mosques have already implemented the rules for using loudspeakers even before the campaign. Why does the MNS target only non-Bharatiya Janata Party ruled states... They should go and do similar drives in the BJP-ruled states also," Pednekar demanded.

Raj thanked those mosques which have understood his views but maintained that the agitation will go on till all the loudspeakers in mosques across the state are silenced.

# MAHARASHTRA PLANS MASTER DATABASE FOR FASTER SERVICES

▶ STATE CABINET APPROVED MAHARASHTRA UNIFIED CITIZEN DATA FOR DIGITAL DELIVERY OF SERVICES LAST YEAR. ACCORDING TO GOVT RESOLUTION, STATE HAS ALLOCATED RS 294.02 CRORE FOR PROJECT.

unique ID. ThePrint has learnt. Under the project, data from all state government departments will be brought on a single platform to give a "360-degree view of citizens" and the government schemes and services that they have availed, officials in the Maharashtra administration said.

The idea, a state government official said, is to create a "golden record of every citizen with a layer of intelligence" that can help the government in making data-driven decisions. As part of the project, titled 'Maharashtra Unified Citizen Data for Digital Delivery of Services', the government plans to maintain a unified database where every individual is linked with their households.

The initiative is aimed at helping state government departments plan their schemes better, reduce the time spent in preparing fresh beneficiary lists for every scheme, and bring

down instances of fraud or duplication of beneficiaries. The project is being implemented by the state Information Technology (IT) department.

The state cabinet approved the project in December last year. According to a government resolution dated February, the state administration decided to allocate Rs 294.02 crore for the project.

Explaining the initiative, the aforementioned state government official said that "whenever any department implements any new scheme, it has to undertake fresh surveys to draw up a list of eligible beneficiaries."

"As a result, every department already has a large database of citizens with it, but fresh surveys are still needed simply because all this data from different departments hasn't been merged," the official added. Sometimes, the official said,

"details in the databases of individual departments are inaccurate or don't match with each other."

"They are also not updated," the official added. "We will try to address these issues through technology in the unified master data. It will also help eliminate the scope for fraud and malpractices that arises out of the inefficiencies in the current system."

The state IT department has floated bids to pick a company that can help create such a unified data hub by merging existing databases of all different departments in 18 months, and then provide support to run it for three years after that.

Multiple calls and texts to Aseem Gupta, who holds additional charge as principal secretary of the IT department, for a comment on the matter went unanswered.

# After brief respite, heatwave conditions to return to parts of Vidarbha

According to a weather warning, "heatwave conditions are very likely to prevail at isolated places". A gradual rise in maximum temperature by 2-3 degrees Celsius over Vidarbha is likely in the next 4-5 days.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After a brief respite, heatwave conditions are likely to return to some Vidarbha districts in Maharashtra from Thursday until the end of the week.

Over the last two days, some districts witnessed thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds.

While the maximum temperature remained above 40 degrees Celsius in Vidarbha, the heatwave had abated. The highest maximum or day temperature of 44.5

degrees Celsius was recorded in Vidarbha's Wardha district on Tuesday. According to a weather warning by the Regional Meteorological Department in Nagpur for the region, "heatwave conditions are very likely to prevail at isolated places". A gradual rise in maximum temperature by 2-3 degrees Celsius over Vidarbha is likely in the next 4-5 days.

In Mumbai, the minimum and maximum temperatures recorded a slight dip, but continued to be near or above normal, and was accompanied by high

humidity. As per the 48-hour forecast for the city, cloudy skies are expected later this afternoon and in the evening. On Wednesday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD)'s Santacruz observatory recorded a minimum temperature of 25.5 degrees Celsius and 64 per cent humidity. This April was the third warmest in India in 122 years, the Monthly Weather and Climate Summary issued by the IMD said. This comes after March had remained the warmest over the same period.

# Wildlife NGO to cover open wells to protect animals

Wildlife SOS intends to cover around 40-50 open wells in Maharashtra immediately. It will be working in tandem with villagers and the forest department.

cover around 40-50 open wells in Maharashtra immediately.

"There are thousands of wells across the landscape shared by leopards, nilgai antelope, striped hyenas, sloth bears and humans. The abandoned and unprotected open wells with no side walls pose a very real and serious danger to human and animal lives. Every village has 30 to 50 wells, some of which are 80 to 100 feet deep and hazardous to any living creature who accidentally falls inside these, resulting in fatal injuries or death by drowning," said artickSatyanarayan, co-founder and CEO of Wildlife SOS.

Wildlife SOS has rescued over 50 leopards from open

wells in the last decade alone, flagging this as a serious problem in the area. "We have been working in collaboration with the forest department to rescue hundreds of animals, including leopards, from these wells. To prevent these death traps (wells) from claiming more lives, Wildlife SOS has initiated a participative community project that is both revolutionary, impact-oriented and effective to cover open wells. Filling or sealing wells is not an option because most of these still serve the local communities with valuable drinking water resources. Covering these is a workable solution that allows for people access to water while removing the risk of anyone falling in these," he added.

Team Absolute | Pune

Wildlife SOS has begun an effort partnering with local communities to cover open wells to reduce the risk of deaths, of both humans and wild animals. A non-profit charitable organization working across India for the protection of wildlife since 1995, Wildlife SOS intends to

# Medical students told to finish internship in hospitals attached to own colleges

As per the old practice, students were allowed externships, which meant the opportunity to complete the mandatory internship in hospitals attached to medical colleges and universities other than the ones where they pursued the MBBS courses.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Medical students in the state will now have to complete the mandatory 12-month internship in hospitals attached to the colleges where they studied MBBS. The Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS) issued a circular on Tuesday adhering to the new internship guidelines issued by the National Medical Council (NMC).

As per the old practice, students were allowed externships, which meant the opportunity to complete the mandatory internship in hospitals attached to medical colleges and universities other than the ones where they pursued the MBBS courses. Such a transfer was allowed to provide approval for the MUHS following due process. However, the new gazette issued by the NMC on internship guidelines disallows such transfer. Following the revised internship guidelines by the NMC, the

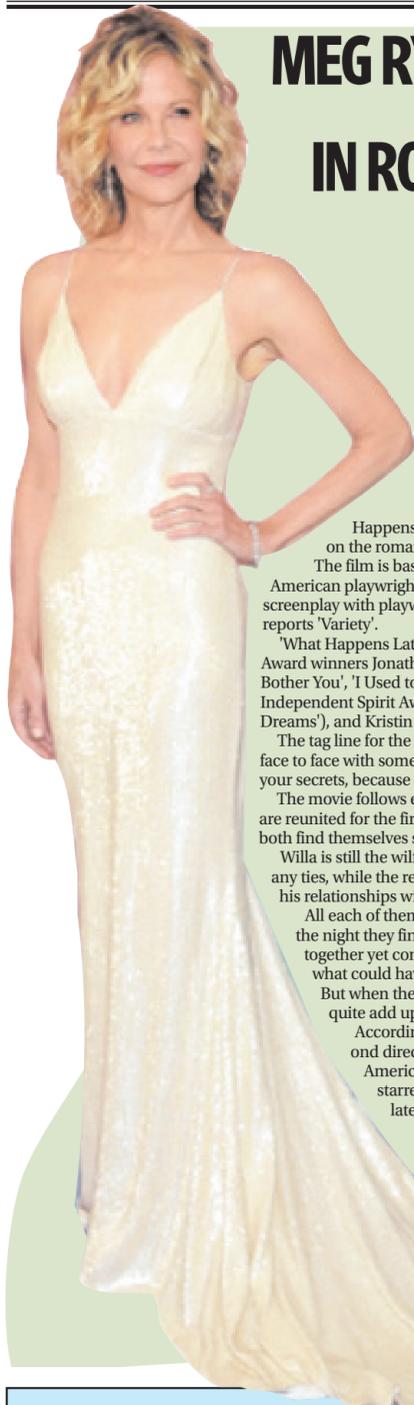


MUHS issued the circular on May 2 stating that the process will stop from the date of the circular.

"After the new gazette on compulsory rotating medical internships regulations was declared by the NMC, the same was discussed in the academic council of the MUHS. As per the decision taken, all medical colleges are informed that the process of changing the medical college for internships which

was allowed as per the amendments in the academic notification in 2012 will now be stopped for degree courses. This will be applicable from the date of the circular," stated the circular.

This, said students and parents, leads to loss of choice of preference in colleges to complete the internship. There was a trend of externship among students wherein they chose colleges with heavy patient flow in hospitals to get maximum exposure. "Offering medical services to areas where a medical college is located was one of the objectives to approve medical colleges. This meant the college is expected to provide medical facilities in that area. Due to the transfer process, some medical colleges could ignore running a health facility which included having qualified doctors to treat patients. Now all colleges will have to mandatorily provide properly functioning hospitals for students to complete internships," said an official from medical education on condition of anonymity.



## MEG RYAN TO DIRECT, STAR IN ROM-COM 'WHAT HAPPENS LATER'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Meg Ryan will direct and star alongside 'Californication' star David Duchovny in 'What Happens Later', an "evolved and nostalgic" take on the romantic comedy.

The film is based on the play 'Shooting Star' by American playwright Steven Dietz, who also co-wrote the screenplay with playwright and novelist Kirk Lynn, and Ryan, reports 'Variety'.

'What Happens Later' is produced by Independent Spirit Award winners Jonathan Duffy and Kelly Williams ('Sorry to Bother You', 'I Used to Go Here') through their Ten Acre Films, Independent Spirit Award nominee Laura D. Smith ('I'll See You In My Dreams'), and Kristin Mann ('The Quarry').

The tag line for the movie reads: "What if late one snowy night you came face to face with someone from your long ago? Someone who once held your secrets, because once, long ago, that person held your heart."

The movie follows ex-lovers Willa (Ryan) and Bill (Duchovny) who are reunited for the first time since their split decades prior when they both find themselves snowed in, in-transit, at an airport overnight.

Willa is still the wilful, independent spirit she once was, free of any ties, while the recently separated Bill is reassessing his life and his relationships with his estranged wife and daughter.

All each of them wants is to get home but over the course of the night they find themselves at first reluctantly drawn together yet compelled to revisit their past, along with what could have been and what might well be again.

But when the versions of their shared history don't quite add up, where do they go from there?

According to 'Variety', the film marks the second directorial credit for Ryan, a doyenne of the American romantic comedy, who helmed and starred in the 2015 movie 'Ithaca', starring the late Sam Shephard and Alex Neustaedter.

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Benedict Cumberbatch was "excited" to challenge himself with different versions of his Marvel character in the upcoming film 'Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness'.

Speaking to The Hollywood Reporter, he said: "I think it's same-same, but different."

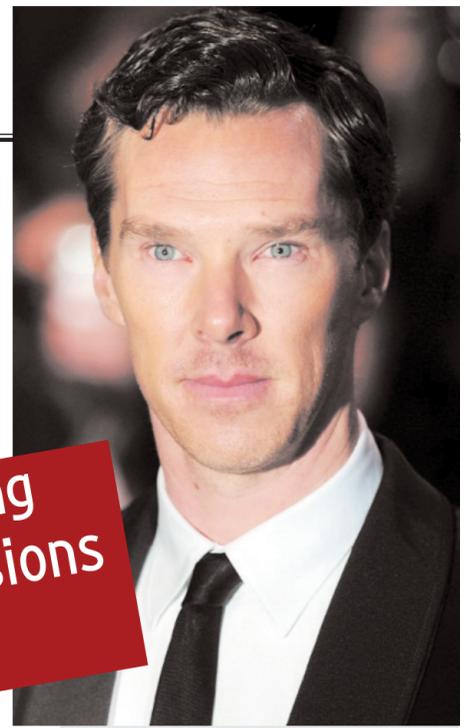
"You have to get a correlation so that you know you're watching an iteration that basically through perhaps choices or circumstance and environment has had a different outcome."

"But it's a nice sort of loop feeding into self-discovery and self-therapy for the character that we know from our universe, as to how he betters his choices or the situation. So it's a fun thing to explore. It's one of the paradoxes that a multiversal narrative will throw up, and I was excited by that challenge."

The Multiverse was opened in 2021's 'Spider-Man: No

Way Home', when Doctor Strange tried to cast a spell to help Peter Parker (Tom

Benedict loved challenging himself with different versions of 'Doctor Strange'



Holland) by making

people forget he was Spider-Man, but things didn't go according to plan, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Cumberbatch has defended his character, noting he made his decision with "pretty good" intentions.

The actor stressed it wasn't even his own character who messed up the spell, as he pointed to Peter's impact.



## Amy compares Met Gala's Gilded Glamour theme to 'vibrator'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress and comedian Amy Schumer saw the funny side of the lavish Met Gala and joked about the event's Gilded Glamour theme by comparing it to a 'vibrator'.

Asked what the Gilded Glamour concept meant to her, Schumer told Vogue's livestream host La La Anthony: "Um, a vibrator," reports femalefirst.co.uk. She then added: "You know what I'm going to say, it's ridiculous. Everyone's always at home (wondering) what is Amy going to wear this year ... you put your Spanx on right over your C-section scars and you get on that carpet."

The 'Trainwreck' star started the chat by introducing the guest she had brought with

her, climate activist Xiye Bastida.

The actress said: "She's a climate activist, and I'm just in the climate." Xiye then explained there should be climate crusaders in "every space" and Amy agreed, adding that she's also "here for the drinks". The 'I Feel Pretty' star previously said she didn't have a good time at the Met Gala. Speaking in 2019, she said of the event: "It's people doing an impression of having a conversation ... I don't like the farce. We're dressed up like a bunch of f\*\*\*\*\* a\*\*\*\*\*. I got to meet Beyonce and she was like, 'Is this your first Met Gala?' And I was like, 'It's my last' ... "I don't think it's stupid; there's no moral reasoning ... It's just not my thing. I just have this sense of entitlement that I should be able to feel comfortable at all times, like I could go to bed at any moment in what I'm wearing."

London | Agencies

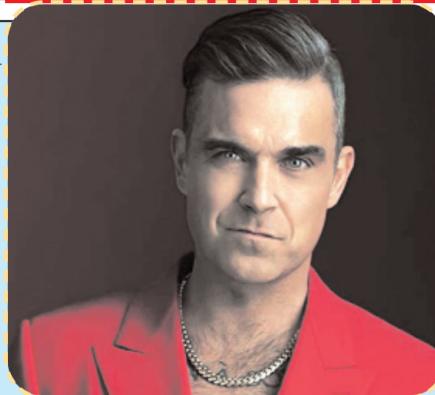
Singer Robbie Williams joked he didn't "condone" director Michael Gracey's decision for lead actor Jonno Davies to have to get nude in his upcoming biopic 'Better Man' but said the film won't hold anything back when it comes to his wild past. Speaking at a question and answer session with fans in Melbourne, Australia, The Sun newspaper quotes the former 'Take That' member as saying: "There are sex scenes that I do not condone. I am like, 'If they must be in there, Michael, then you put them in there.'"

"He said that it is a necessity for the script that I get completely naked and I am not sure why as there is one scene where we are in a church and it does not call for it," he continued, reports showbiz.com. "It is my life and it is what I got up to. It is not anodyne, it is not vanilla. It is drugs, the ups, the downs, the women, the sex."

The 48-year-old singer admitted the X-rated subject matter will stop him ever letting his and wife Ayda Field's four children from ever seeing his biopic.

"They are not going to know anything about this film. They can't see it as I will have a lot of things to answer for," he added.

"If they do I will be like, 'None of that happened. It is the magic of the movies. It's not a documentary.'" In the film, Robbie's 'Take That' bandmate, Gary Barlow, will be played by 'Anatomy of a Scandal' star Jake Simmance, while Liam Hemsworth stars as bandmate Howard Donald, Jesse Hyde plays Mark Owen and Chase Vollenweder has been cast as Jason Orange.



ROBBIE WILLIAMS DOESN'T 'CONDONE' SOME SEX SCENES IN HIS BIOPIC

## DOCTOR STRANGE IN THE MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS: BOOK THE TICKET AND GET READY FOR SOME REAL MADNESS



BY SHACHI CHATURVEDI

**Directed by :** Sam Raimi

**Written by :** Michael Waldron

**Cast :** Benedict Cumberbatch, Elizabeth Olsen, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Benedict Wong, Xochitl Gomez, Michael Stuhlbarg, Rachel McAdams

**Duration :** 2 hours 06 minutes

**Ratings :** 4.5/5 (four and half stars)

### STORY AND PERFORMANCE:

In the Marvel universe, the concept of a multiverse has opened up doors for numerous narratives and possibilities to develop. Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness is based on Stephen's (Benedict Cumberbatch) experience with parallel realms and universes.

The film is a complete package of craziness, with love, heartbreak, motherhood, action, and drama all rolled into one. The film is a must-see for all Marvel fans as it is destined to be a block buster.

Although like other Marvel films, this one has a connection to subsequent sequels, the scenes and characters are rather straightfor-



ward. If you aren't already a fan of superhero movies, this film may convert you. This movie appears to have the potential to become one of Marvel's most famous films.

### TECHNICAL ASPECTS:

Marvel once again outdid themselves in terms of visual effects and animation. This film set a solid example for the usage of appropriate background music at the right time.

The film is visually spectacular and features some extremely cool battle sequences, including one that pays homage to Raimi's own Evil Dead. Olsen gets a lot of screen time, and her transformation from Wanda to Scarlet Witch is one of the film's highlights.

### GENERAL TRIVIA:

Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness is a superhero film based on the Marvel Comics character Doctor Strange. It is

the follow-up to Doctor Strange (2016) and the Marvel Cinematic Universe's 28th feature (MCU). The film depicts, Strange and his companions' journey across the universe to meet a mysterious new enemy.

By October 2016, Scott Derrickson, the filmmaker and co-writer of Doctor Strange, had plans for a sequel. When Cumberbatch's return was confirmed in December 2018, he struck a deal to return as director. The title of the film was revealed in July 2019. For the unversed, the movie is all set to hit the big screen on 6 May 2022.

### ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Eve



## IPL 2022

# RCB BEAT CSK BY 13 RUNS

Pune | Agencies

Harshal Patel and Glenn Maxwell shared five wickets between themselves as Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Chennai Super Kings by 13 runs at MCA Stadium on Wednesday.

After Maheesh Theekshana and Moeen Ali took five wickets between themselves to keep Royal Challengers Bangalore to 173/8, Bangalore's bowling attack adopted the pace off approach successfully in restricting Chennai to 160/8 in their 20 overs.

The result means that Bangalore are now at fourth place in the points table, after snapping their three-match losing streak. Chennai, on the other hand, will be left to rue their inability to build on a wicketless power-play and Devon Conway getting a fine 56 on a pitch which had enough assistance for spin-



The left-handed Conway had a bright start, bringing out the conventional as well as reverse sweep for picking two fours off Shabbaz Ahmed in the opening over. With Josh Hazlewood keeping him and Ruturaj Gaikwad quiet due to his impeccable lengths, Chennai finished power-play at 51/0. Just after power-play, Ahmed delivered the breakthrough for Bangalore as Gaikwad pulled off backfoot but found diving long-on run-

ning to his right. Robin Uthappa made just one run before slicing straight to backward point on a short ball from Glenn Maxwell. Maxwell picked his second wicket of the night as he rattled Ambati Rayudu's stumps while trying to punch. Despite successive wickets, Conway continued to be at his belligerent best. Conway reached his second consecutive fifty in 33 balls. After that a sweep brought Conway's downfall, giving a

simple catch to deep backward square leg off Hasaranga. From there, slower balls kept on getting scalps for Bangalore as Ravindra Jadeja miscued the slog off Harshal Patel and was caught by cover. Patel had his second wicket of the night when he took out Moeen Ali with a wide slower ball hit loosely to extra cover, just after he was smacked over deep mid-wicket for six.

Chennai's hopes of MS Dhoni pulling off another heroic chase ended when he pulled straight to deep mid-wicket off Hazlewood in the 19th over.

### Brief scores:

Royal Challengers Bangalore 173/8 in 20 overs (Mahipal Lomror 42, Faf du Plessis 38; Maheesh Theekshana 3/27, Moeen Ali 2/28) beat Chennai Super Kings 160/8 in 20 overs (Devon Conway 56, Moeen Ali 34; Harshal Patel 3/35, Glenn Maxwell 2/22) by 13 runs

## I-LEAGUE

# REAL KASHMIR WITHSTAND TRAU PRESSURE TO EARN POINT AND BEAT THE DROP

Team Absolute | Kalyani

Real Kashmir held a powerful TRAU FC to a 1-1 draw on Wednesday, snapping their four-match losing streak, in the Hero I-League here at the Kalyani Stadium.

Real Kashmir's Kouassi Bernard Yao scored the opening goal, while TRAU's Meitalkeshangbam Roger equalised. Despite the fact that Real Kashmir failed to earn three points in this match, they would be pleased with the result as they have retained their top-tier status in the Hero I-League following Kenkre FC's 0-1 loss to Indian Arrows in Naihati.

The team from the Kashmir looked to attack early on and was also rewarded for their efforts as they broke the deadlock in the second minute through Kouassi Bernard Yao. The Ivory Coast striker smashed the ball into the back of the net on his right foot after being set up by Malem Meitei. After receiving the ball from the midfield, Bernard dashed towards the six yards box with the ball and ran past Helder Lobato Ribeiro and Shoib



Akhtar before deceiving Amrit Gope to bag the opening goal of the match.

TRAU won free kick in the 68th minute and this time Roger took the shot ahead of Ferdinandinho. The change worked as Roger smashed the ball into the top corner of the net from a narrow angle to level the contest 1-1.

In the 83rd minute, Bernard had a chance to score his second goal of the game, but his shot flew over the bar. He was sent off six minutes later for a foul on Helder Lobato Ribeiro, reducing Real Kashmir to ten men in stoppage time. However, they survived the added minutes to hold TRAU to a draw.

# INDIAN ARROWS END SEASON WITH WIN OVER KENKRE FC

Naihati: Indian Arrows registered 1-0 win against Kenkre FC in the I-League



at the Naihati Stadium here on Wednesday. Playing for survival, Kenkre failed to open their account against Arrows. Substitute Himanshu Jangra's 90th minute strike put the match to bed. Carrying the momentum built on their recent form, Kenkre wanted to add another win to their tally, knowing that a Real Kashmir fumble could mean survival in the Hero I-League. Seven minutes into the game, a loose pass in the Arrows' defensive third came to Yash Mhatre but he could not do any damage with it.

# LIVERPOOL QUALIFY FOR CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL AFTER SUFFERING IN VILLARREAL



Madrid | Agencies

A second-half fight-back saw Liverpool book their place in this season's Champions League final with a 5-2 aggregate win over Villarreal, but not before the English side were given a profound shock by the Spaniards, who had them on the ropes for 45 minutes.

Villarreal were aggressive, while Liverpool looked shaken and struggling to impose their usual high rhythm and movement on the game in arguably their worst display of the season, Xinhua reports. oreno crossed dangerously and Dani Parejo fired just wide for Villarreal as Liverpool continued to suffer.

Diaz hit the post a couple of minutes later and from the resulting corner, he directed a header which again went through Rulli's legs to make it 2-2 on the night, although there was little the keeper could have done to stop it. The Villarreal keeper should have done better when Sadio Mane made it 3-2 for Liverpool with just over 15 minutes left to play, running 40 yards from his goal to miss a tackle and allow the striker a simple finish to put the tie beyond doubt.

Capoue was then sent off for a bad challenge on Curtis Jones, but Villarreal can still be proud of their display although Liverpool can now think about the 10th Champions League final in their history.

# Ons Jabeur downs Simona Halep to reach semifinals in Madrid Open

## ZVEREV BEGINS HIS TITLE DEFENCE WITH WIN OVER CILIC

Madrid: Reigning Madrid Open champion Alexander Zverev began his title defence on Wednesday with a tough three-set win against Marin Cilic at Manolo Santana Stadium, here. The German made a slow start in the second-round meeting, but found his range as the match went on. He fired 11 aces and hit his heavy groundstrokes with more authority in the second and third sets to maintain his strong record against the Croatian, advancing 4-6, 6-4, 6-4. Following his two-hour, 17-minute triumph, the 25-year-old has earned 16 match victories in Madrid, his best record at any Masters 1000 event. The second seed will aim to make it 17 when he takes on American Sebastian Korda or Italian Lorenzo Musetti in the third round.

Madrid | Agencies

Ons Jabeur of Tunisia defeated two-time champion Simona Halep in straight sets 6-3, 6-2 in the quarterfinals of Madrid Open here on Wednesday.

The victory puts No. 8 seed Jabeur into her second WTA 1000 semifinal following Indian Wells 2021, and the Charleston final a month ago.

The Tunisian's record on hard courts across the first three months of the year, which were hampered by a back injury that forced her out of the Australian Open, was 8-5; since the Hologic WTA Tour moved to clay, she has gone 10-2 and counting. The result is also



Jabeur's first completed win over Halep, who won Madrid in 2016 and 2017. Previously, she had defeated the Romanian via retirement in the first round of Beijing 2018, but Halep had won two subsequent encounters at Dubai

2020 and Dubai 2022. Not only will a new Madrid winner be crowned in Saturday's final, but a brand new WTA 1000 champion. None of the remaining players in the field have captured a title above 250

level; and 2021 Cincinnati runner-up Jil Teichmann is the only one to have contested a WTA 1000 final previously.

Jabeur will face either Ekaterina Alexandrova or Amanda Anisimova in the last four. Jabeur dazzled throughout in every facet of the game. She conjured 25 winners, a good proportion of which were casually flicked dropshots that drew gasps from the crowd.

Leading 3-2, 40-0 in the second set and in complete control, Jabeur tried to be too cute with an easy putaway, allowing Halep to loft a winning lob and get back to deuce. But successful Jabeur dropshots staved off break-back point and sealed the crucial hold for 4-2.

# Sushant Mishra joins SRH as replacement for Saurabh Dubey

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) on Wednesday have signed Jharkhand left-arm pacer Sushant Mishra as replacement for medium-pacer Saurabh Dubey for the remainder of Indian Premier League (IPL) 2022.

The official release from IPL stated that Dubey has a back injury and subsequently, has been ruled out for the rest of the tournament.

Mishra is a young 21-year-old pacer from Ranchi who was a member of Indian team in 2020 Men's U19 World Cup in South Africa. In five appearances at the tournament, Mishra picked seven wickets at an average of 19.85 and economy rate of 4.45, with best figures of 3/28.

Hyderabad are currently at fourth place in points table with ten points



from nine matches. After losing their first two games, they won five matches on the bounce before losing two games,

again. The Kane Williamson-led side will face Delhi Capitals at Brabourne Stadium on Thursday.

# Have more kids, stick to basics to battle bad form: Warner to Kohli

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Australian opener David Warner has advised former India skipper and Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) star batter Virat Kohli to "stick to the basics" amid the lean patch.

Kohli has been struggling to score runs in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL). Kohli did hit a fifty in his last outing against Gujarat Titans but he took 53 balls to get 58.

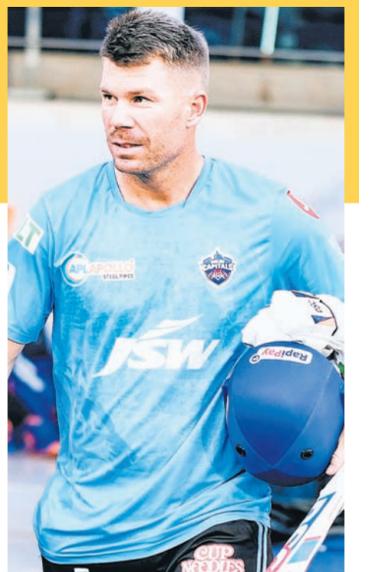
Warner, who plays for Delhi Capitals, said every player goes through a lean patch and

advised Kohli to have a couple of kids, enjoy life and cricket.

"Have a couple more Kids and Enjoy Love!"

The form is temporary and Class is permanent so you don't lose that. It happens to every single player in the world," Warner said in a meet and greet session hosted by Sports Yaari founder Sushant Mehta.

"It doesn't matter how good a player you are, you're always going to have these ebbs and flows. Sometimes the ebb is a long way before you get back up there. Stick to the basics," he added.



# Australia continue to lead ICC Test rankings; extend lead over India by nine points

Riding on the 4-0 Ashes triumph and the 1-0 series victory against Pakistan in the sub-continent, Australia have strengthened their claim as being the best team in the world after extending their lead at the top of the ICC Men's Test Team Rankings.

Dubai | Agencies

Riding on the 4-0 Ashes triumph and the 1-0 series victory against Pakistan in the sub-continent, Australia have strengthened their claim as being the best team in the world after extending their lead at the top of the ICC Men's Test Team Rankings.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) released their annual update of the rankings on Wednesday and Australia now lead second-placed India by nine points with a rating of 128



points. The new rankings reflect all Test series completed since May 2019, with those completed prior to May 2021 weighted at 50

per cent and subsequent series weighted at 100 per cent. India, who are second on the list, have 119 points, followed by New Zealand

(111), South Africa (110).

South Africa have closed the gap on New Zealand from 13 to the solitary point on the latest rankings, following a jump in their rating from 102 to 110 points. Rounding out the top-five is Pakistan with 93 points, with Babar Azam's side going past England (88) to take the fifth place.

England fell nine points from 97 to 88 in the latest rankings, with new skipper Ben Stokes taking over a Test side that has won just one Test match in the last 12 months.

## INDIA LEADS IN ICC MEN'S T20I TEAM RANKINGS

Dubai: India have further cemented their position at the top of the ICC Men's T20I Team Rankings following the annual update released on Wednesday. The Rohit Sharma-led side's lead over England on the top of the charts has extended to five rating points, from one previously. India are now on 270 points, while the second-placed England have logged 265 points. Pakistan South Africa and Australia are the tied, fourth and fifth-placed teams with 261, 253 and 251 points, respectively. New Zealand have dropped two places to No.6, losing five rating points (250). West Indies (240 points) remain on the seventh spot. Bangladesh (233 points) and Sri Lanka (230 points) have both gained one position in the chart to occupy the eighth and ninth positions respectively. Afghanistan have dropped two places, rounding out the top-10 after losing six rating points (226).



NEW ZEALAND PULL OUT OF THOMAS CUP FINALS AFTER COVID-19 CASES AMONG PLAYERS

Kuala Lumpur | Agencies

The New Zealand badminton team has pulled out of the 2022 Thomas Cup Finals after a number of their players tested positive for Covid-19, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) confirmed on Wednesday.

The USA badminton team will replace New Zealand in Group D in the prestigious

tournament, which begins in Bangkok on May 8.

The world governing body also mentioned that no other Oceania Member Association was able to fulfil the continental quota place in absence of New Zealand.

Notably, the Indian men's team has been placed alongside fourth seeds Chinese Taipei, Germany and Canada in Group C of the Thomas Cup.



## I BELIEVE BROADCAST MEDIA AND SOCIETY JUST MIRROR EACH OTHER: SAMBHABANA MOHANTY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Sambhabana Mohanty is seen in the role of Damini in the TV show 'Pyaar Ka Pehla Naam Radha Mohan'. The actor feels that both the story and the title of the show are unique.

"For us Indians, especially while growing up, the first form of love was always referred to as 'prem' between Ram-Sita and Radha-Mohan. It is a form of love that is selfless, pure in essence and unique. In fact, I believe this should be the most exalted form of love. And that love is exactly what we're trying to portray in the show," she says.

As an actor, Sambhabana takes every new show as a new adventure. "In fact, I take every day as a new adventure. I'm a very go with the flow' kind of a person. So yes, every show, every character is a new adventure full of surprises. We meet new people, we shoot in various environments, we get to perform various kinds of scenes, we have our ups and downs and that's what keeps my life dynamic," she adds.



## Sidharth Kiara attend Arpita Khan's Eid party amid breakup rumours

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Actors Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani, who are rumoured to have split, were photographed attending Salman Khan's youngest sister Arpita Khan's star-studded Eid bash.

Sidharth was seen in a black kurta pyjama for the party while Kiara was dressed in a white and grey top and pants paired with a long shrug. The two posed for the photographers, Sidharth then joined Kiara to lead her to the party.

It is not clear what led to rumours of their split. Sidharth and Kiara were seen sharing screen space together in the film very well received 'Shershaah'.

Kiara is currently gearing up for the release of her upcoming film 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2' and will next be seen in 'Jug Jugg Jeeyo', 'Govinda Naam Mera' and a Telugu film.

Sidharth too has a lineup of films such as 'Yodha', 'Mission Majnu' and 'Thank God' in his kitty.

## NOW, NO COFFEE WITH KJO

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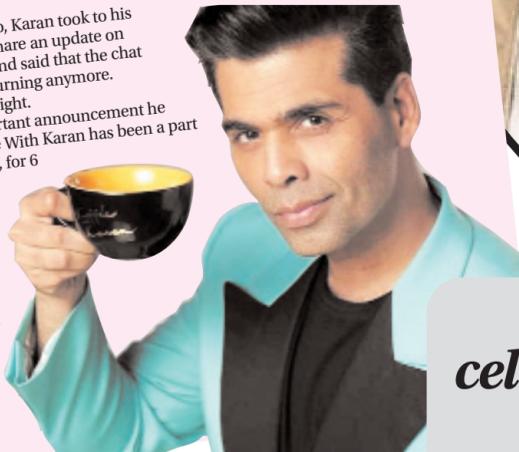
Just last month reports surfaced that filmmaker Karan Johar would soon be seen on the small screen with his show Koffee With Karan. There were multiple reports about the celebs who were supposed to be a part of it. There were buzz about Bollywood's popular on-screen couple Kajol and Shahrukh Khan making an appearance in an episode of the seventh season.

However, with latest update regarding the same, the fans and followers of show will be a little upset.

A few minutes ago, Karan took to his Instagram page to share an update on Koffee With Karan and said that the chat show will not be returning anymore.

Yes! You heard it right. Sharing the important announcement he wrote, "Hello, Koffee With Karan has been a part of my life, and yours, for 6 seasons now. I'd like to think we've made an impact and even found our place in pop culture history. And so, it is with a heavy heart that I announce that Koffee With Karan will not be returning."

Meanwhile, on the work front, Karan Johar will be donning the hat of a director with Rocky aur Rani ki Prem Kahani featuring Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt in pivotal roles.



## Akshay Kumar celebrated 30 years in the film industry

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Yash Raj's production house commemorated Akshay Kumar's 30 years in the Hindi film industry by developing a new 'Prithviraj' poster that features every film in which the actor has appeared.

Akshay can be heard saying in a video posted by the production house: "It didn't even cross my mind that this activity is happening to celebrate my 30 years in cinema! It's fascinating that 30 years have passed since my first film Saugandh!"

"The first shot of my film career was at Ooty and it was an action shot! Thank you very much for this gesture. This is really special."

The film 'Prithviraj,' is based on the life and heroism of the daring and powerful Samrat Prithviraj Chauhan. He is portraying the heroic warrior who fought valiantly against the cruel Ghor invader Muhammad.

Dr. Chandraprakash Dwivedi, well known for directing the television epic 'Chanakya' and the critically praised film 'Pinjar,' directed the film.

Sanyogita, King Prithviraj's beloved, is played by Manushi Chhillar.

Absolute | Mumbai

Mika Singh recently shot the music video for his

upcoming show Swayamvar - Mika Di Vohti in Ropar, Punjab. He chose the location as it is close to his ancestral village Sahauran.

He says the place holds a special place in his heart as he has spent most of his childhood in Ropar which created an emotional bond between him and that place. Mika shares: "Ropar is very near and dear to my heart as I grew up here and I have an indescribable emotional attachment to this village. The very first thing that came to my mind when I was searching for locations to shoot the music video was that it should be the beginning of a beautiful journey that I am on right now."

He goes on: "So, naturally I had to do the shoot here in Ropar. What better way to start this important journey than my origins." The singer is all set to begin searching for the right partner on national television through 'Swayamvar-Mika Di Vohti'. It will be coming soon on Star Bharat.

## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sara Ali Khan

## MIKA SINGH CHOOSES PLACE CLOSE TO HIS ANCESTRAL VILLAGE TO SHOOT HIS MUSIC VIDEO

