

absolute india



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Adani row

LIMITED RISKS FOR INDIAN BANKS, NO IMPACT ON SOVEREIGN RATINGS, SAYS FITCH RATINGS

Global credit rating agency Fitch Ratings on Tuesday said that Indian banks' exposure to the Adani group do not present any major risk to the banks' standalone credit profiles.

Chennai | Agencies

In a statement issued the credit rating agency said: "Fitch Ratings believes that Indian banks' exposure to the Adani group is insufficient in itself to present substantial risk to the banks' standalone credit profiles. Indian banks' Issuer Default Ratings (IDRs) all remain driven by expectations that the banks would receive extraordinary sovereign support, if needed."

On February 3, 2023, Fitch Ratings said that the controversy over the short-seller report has no immediate impact on the ratings of Fitch-rated Adani entities and their securities.

"Even under a hypothetical scenario where the wider Adani group enters distress, exposure for Indian banks should, in itself, be manageable without adverse consequences on the banks' Viability Ratings," Fitch Ratings said.

Citing the State Bank of India's (SBI) information on February 3 that the government owned banks' share of loans to Adani Group loans had fallen to 31 per cent by end-2022, from 55 per cent in 2016.

"We believe loans to all Adani group entities generally account for 0.8 per cent - 1.2 per cent of total lending for Fitch-rated Indian banks, equivalent to 7 per cent - 13 per cent of total equity," Fitch Ratings said.

According to Fitch Ratings, even in a dis-



stress scenario, it is unlikely that all of this exposure would be written down, as much of it is tied to performing projects.

Loans involving projects still under construction and those at the company level could be more vulnerable. However, even if exposures were fully provisioned for, we do not expect it would affect banks' Viability Ratings, as banks have sufficient headroom at

their current rating levels, Fitch Ratings said.

On the banks holding some unreported non-funded asset exposure, such as commitments or through holdings of Adani group bonds or equity, particularly as collateral Fitch Ratings said those could be small and may not be material for its rated banks.

However, Fitch Ratings said the government owned banks could face pressure to

provide refinancing for Adani Group companies if foreign banks scale back their exposure or investor appetite for the group's debt weakens in global markets.

"This could affect our assessment of the risk appetite of such banks, particularly if not matched with commensurate building of capital buffers. However, such a scenario would underpin the quasi-policy role of state-owned banks and reinforce our sovereign support expectations," Fitch Ratings added.

These effects could be amplified if the controversy heightens financing challenges for other Indian corporates, increasing their reliance on local bank borrowings.

Nonetheless, India's corporate sector has generally deleveraged in recent years, reducing its exposure to refinancing risk. Fitch Ratings said the economic and sovereign implications of the Adani controversy remain limited. However, there is a tail risk that fallout from the controversy could broaden and influence India's sovereign rating, with knock-on effects for bank IDRs. "When we affirmed the sovereign's rating at 'BBB-' with a Stable Outlook in December 2022, we stated that a structurally weaker growth outlook that weighs further on India's debt trajectory could lead to negative rating action," said Fitch Ratings.

Nonetheless, we still view the underpinning of India's robust growth outlook as sound and that such risks are low, Fitch Ratings said.

SC junks Rana Ayyub's plea challenging Ghaziabad court summons against her in PMLA case



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday junked a plea by journalist Rana Ayyub challenging summonses issued by a special court in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) case.

A bench of Justices V. Ramasubramanian and J.B. Pardiwala said the question of jurisdiction can be raised during the trial to ascertain if the proceeds of crime were acquired over there.

It said: "We are of the view that the issue of territorial jurisdiction cannot be decided in a writ petition, especially when there is a serious factual dispute about the place/places of commission of the offence. Hence, this question should be raised by the petitioner before the special court,

since an answer to the same would depend upon evidence as to the places where any one or more of the processes or activities mentioned in Section 3 were carried out."

"Therefore, giving liberty to the petitioner to raise the issue of territorial jurisdiction before the trial court, this writ petition is dismissed". The top court did not accept Ayyub's counsel contention that since she had opened her bank account in Navi Mumbai, in which the money was collected, she can be proceeded against not in a Ghaziabad court but in a special designated court in Mumbai. "The area in which the property is derived or obtained or even held or concealed, will be the area in which the offence of money laundering is committed."

After human excreta, dog carcass found in drinking water tank in TN

Chennai | Agencies

In a shocking incident, the carcass of a dog was found in an overhead water tank that supplies drinking water to a colony in Pudukottai in Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu.

A few days back, human excreta was found in an overhead water tank that supplies drinking water to a Dalit colony in Vengaiyaval in Pudukottai district. The issue had created a major uproar with Dalit parties calling for demolishing the water tank and transferring the case to the CBI.

According to sources in Virudhunagar district, the operator of the water tank in which the carcass of a dog was found was about to clean the tank on Monday when he noticed a foul smell. The operator found the carcass of a dog in the water tank, which was rotten.

The operator immediately reported the matter to the police who informed the district authorities. The officials then inspected the tank and sent the carcass for post-mortem. Police sources said that



the someone might have killed the dog and put in the water tank.

Tamil Nadu is turning into a hub of caste-related violence and the deposit of human excreta and dog carcass in drinking water tanks are incidents of settling scores in caste-related issues.

Students' food poisoning

Karnataka Police lodge FIR against college management

Dakshina Kannada | Agencies

Karnataka Police on Tuesday lodged an FIR against the college management in Dakshina Kannada district in connection with the food poisoning case in which 231 students fell seriously sick after meals at the hostel mess.

District Education Officer Dr Jagadish had lodged a complaint with Kadri police station against the management of the City College of Nursing, alleging that suspicious, poisonous food is being given to girl hostel inmates. It also mentions that the management has not maintained hygiene during preparation of food and while admitting the students to hospitals, the management had kept the district administration in the dark. The District Education Officer,

Principal, and district officers jointly inspected the kitchen of the hostel. The samples of food items, drinking water, stored meat and other articles have been sent to the lab. The direction had been given not to prepare any food in the kitchen. Following the incident, the meeting of parents and college management had been organised where parents vented their ire on non-availability of hygienic food, and a few parents maintain that they don't know in which hospital their kids are being treated. Holiday has been declared in the college till future directions. Dakshina Kannada District Commissioner M.R. Ravikumar stated on Tuesday that 116 students are still being treated at the various hospitals, and their stools, and blood samples have been sent for testing.

Wanted to get rid of Shraddha as she started hurling abuses at me, said Aftab: Charge sheet

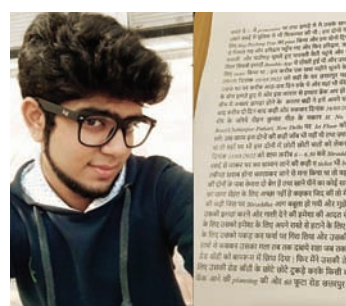
Team Absolute | New Delhi

Aftab Amin Poonawalla confessed he used to fight with his live-in partner Shraddha Walkar over his affairs with other girls, and then, over living expenses, which led to her allegedly hurl abuse at him, and he killed her to stop this, as per the charge sheet.

He also said that his habit of drinking led him to lose his job at Decathlon Sports Store, Dahisar, in east Mumbai. This happened in October 2019 when Aftab and Shraddha were in a live-in-relationship in Mumbai.

Poonawalla also said that it was the time when Walkar came to know about his other affairs and used to fight with him.

"Shraddha learnt that I had affairs with other girls. She came to know that I used to talk to other girls on Bumble app which led to arguments between us. She had known that I was cheating on her but as we used to drink together, we would solve our issues," he said, as per the charge sheet.



He also accepted that he was very aggressive and used to beat up Shraddha who then finally lodged a complaint against him with the Mumbai Police.

Finally to improve their relationship, they decided to go on a backpacking tour in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh where they met Badri through Bumble app. They then stayed at the house of Badri in Delhi's Chhattarpur, but here, they again fought over various issues and he then asked them to leave the house. After this, they met a broker and took a rented accommodation in the neighborhood.

Poonawalla then said that they had no jobs and had spent their entire money on the trip.

"We again started fighting with each other. Shraddha booked a railway ticket for me. She asked me to go to Vasai and bring some house stuff, but I didn't go on the pretext that I was ill," he said, as per the charge sheet.

Soon, Walkar said that they have nothing left and eating outside food wasn't good for them. Poonawalla said that he then told her that she would have to share half of the total expenses which made her cross, and she started hurling abuses at him.

"I now wanted to get rid of her habit of hurling abuses and decided to kill her. I pushed her on the floor and sat on her chest. I pressed her throat until she died. I chopped her body into pieces and packed it into bags," he confessed, as per the charge sheet.

The Delhi Police took legal opinion before filing the charge sheet, as their case depends on scientific evidence in the matter as Walkar's body was not recovered.

ChatGPT owner OpenAI gets into top 50 global sites as visits hit 672 mn

Team Absolute | New Delhi

OpenAI, the developer of ChatGPT, has seen traffic up by 3,572 per cent to its site, from 18.3 million to 672 million visits since ChatGPT's release in late November.

According to SimilarWeb data, over the last 28 days, OpenAI has become the 44th globally-ranked website.

Over the last month, there were around 73.9 million visits from India and the US, representing about 11 per cent of all traffic. Other main countries that have visitors to the site are France, Canada, and Germany.

"SimilarWeb traffic shows that OpenAI is quickly becoming one of the biggest websites in the world after going viral," a digital adoption spokesperson said.

"While ChatGPT has been tipped as the 'next Google', we know that Google is creating a rival chatbot, Bard, to fend off any competition, which is rumoured to be



announced in the coming days," it added.

ChatGPT drives over 92 per cent of total website traffic. As of now, OpenAI is the number one technology website in the Computers Electronics and Technology category, overtaking Zoom, AOL and AT&T, the study mentioned.

There are currently 24 million average daily visits to OpenAI.com due to ChatGPT. Globally, ChatGPT is the fastest-growing app currently, according to investment bank UBS, which reported the chatbot reached 100 million monthly active users by January.

Guidelines ready for environment education, undergraduate level

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The guidelines and curriculum framework for environment education at the undergraduate level has been prepared. As per the draft guidelines, there will be a six-month compulsory core module course in environmental studies for undergraduate students. The duration of the course will be 50 lectures. The exams will be conducted along with the annual examination.

The UGC had constituted an expert committee for the draft guidelines and curriculum framework, which has prepared its report. The report will soon be in public domain besides being shared with all the universities.

The core module syllabus for environmental studies includes class room teaching and field work. The syll-



labus is divided into eight units covering 50 lectures. The first seven units will cover 45 lectures which are class room-based to enhance knowledge skills and attitude to environment. Unit eight is based on field activities which will be covered in five lecture hours and would provide students first-hand knowledge on various local environmental aspects. UGC Chairman M. Jagadish Kumar said that

environment education needs to include areas such as climate change, pollution, waste management, sanitation, conservation of biological diversity, management of biological resources and biodiversity, forest and wildlife conservation, and sustainable development. "The present document is an outcome of the UGC's initiative to implement the National Education Policy 2020,

which has emphasised the need to formulate guidelines and curriculum framework for environmental education. The document is expected to cater to students from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and also includes topics to sensitise students about the commitment of the nation towards achieving sustainable development goals," said Kumar.

Continuing problems of pollution, loss of forests, solid waste disposal, degradation of the environment, issues like economic productivity and national security, global warming, the depletion of the ozone layer and loss of biodiversity have made everyone aware of environmental issues.

Kumar said that, out of the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), six are directly linked to environmental protection and resource conservation.

Quad launches cyber security initiative

Washington | Agencies

India, Australia, Japan and the United States on Tuesday launched an initiative to boost their cyber security called the 'Quad Cyber Challenge'.

"We are inviting Internet-users across the Indo-Pacific and beyond to join the Challenge and pledge to practice safe and responsible cyber habits," the White House said in an announcement.

"The Challenge reflects Quad's continuing efforts to strengthen individuals' and communities' cyber security awareness and action, as well as to foster a more secure and resilient cyber ecosystem to benefit economies and users everywhere." The Challenge consists of a checklist for individuals and businesses to determine their cyber security situation, along with recommendations such as installing security updates, improving and regularly



changing passwords, installing password managers, adopting two-step verification, locking up devices, and keeping back-up files.

The challenge will provide resources, including basic cybersecurity information and training, for all users and will culminate in events during the week of April 10.

"The Quad partners are working to ensure that everyone has access to the resources needed to make informed decisions while online and using smart devices," the announcement said.

The Quad announcement said the goal is to protect cyber-users from cyber-crimes and other cyber threats.



ARMY SAYS NARCO-TERRORISM MATTER OF CONCERN IN J&K

Srinagar | Agencies

The Army said on Tuesday that narco-terrorism is becoming a matter of concern in Kashmir. Addressing a gathering at the first segment of the investiture ceremony at the Badambagh cantonment in J&K's Srinagar city, Lt. General Upendra Dwivedi, GOC-in-C of northern command said that Kashmir is witnessing a concerning rise in narco-terrorism.

"Security situation in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh poses many challenges in terrain and operational dynamics especially from different adversaries along the northern and western borders.

"We are committed to defending India's sovereignty and territorial integrity while upholding the democratic traditions of the nation. "We are maintaining a constant vigil, monitoring all developments and will take all necessary steps to protect the national interests.

"Indian Army is prepared to meet any challenges in the future and will always work for the betterment of the



people of the Region.

"Last two years have brought to the fore new challenges in the wake of abrogation of Article 370, the Galwan conflict and multiple waves of Covid-19.

"The situation along the LOC has remained stable and the ceasefire continues to sustain. A very strict vigil and a robust technology enabled multi-tiered counter infiltration grid

are being maintained to thwart any attempts of infiltration.

"Ceasefire violations, infiltration bids or any other misadventure attempted by the adversary will be dealt with firmly.

"Numerous infiltration bids have been foiled in the last year. The highest standards of professionalism displayed by the troops in all dimensions of counter terror operations

have nullified and limited the kinetic threat. "Kashmir is witnessing a concerning rise in narco-terrorism, as Pakistan is now using this as a new tool in its proxy war.

"At present a dual strategy of sending across drugs as well as weapons through drones is being employed to keep the fire burning in an attempt to disrupt the social fabric. "Cross-border terrorism, smuggling of narcotics provides a succour to terrorism. The security forces are alive to this trend and have already initiated counter drone measures to curb the menace.

"Our focus continues to reinforce our intelligence setup by synergising with all stakeholders and sister agencies, to usher in peace and undertake developmental activities. "The overall situation is progressively improving and a positive and conducive environment for accelerating the developmental initiatives of the government has been created. The dividends of peace and stability are reaching people in the far flung areas and they are participating wholeheartedly to preserve and sustain this peace.

ED seized Rs 859.15 cr under PMLA in illegal loan apps cases: MoS Finance

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has furnished a list of digital lending apps (DLAs) being used by the regulated entities (REs) of RBI to the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), which in turn has shared the list with the respective intermediary (app stores) and requested them to ensure that only the apps figuring in the list are hosted on their app stores.

This was informed by Union Minister of State for Finance, Bhagwat Kisanrao Karad, in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

Giving information on addressing the issue of money laundering through illegal loan apps, the minister said that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has been entrusted with the task of curbing money laundering under the provisions of PMLA Act, 2002.

The ED has initiated investigation under PMLA in several cases where the proceeds of crime have been generated and acquired by accused persons/entities through illegal loan apps, Karad said.

In these cases, the minister said that as on date, proceeds of crime of Rs 2,116 crore (approx) have been identified, out of which proceeds of crime amounting to Rs 859.15 crore has been attached/seized/frozen under the provisions of PMLA.

Further, assets amounting to Rs 289.28 crore have been seized under Section 37A of



Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999. Giving more information, Karad said that the RBI has issued master circular on Know Your Customer (KYC) norms/Anti-Money Laundering (AML) standards/Combating Financing of Terrorism (CFT)/Obligation of banks and financial institutions under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

Under this circular, banks and financial institutions have been advised to follow certain customer identification procedures for opening of accounts and monitoring of transactions of suspicious nature to avoid its misuse for money laundering and reporting the same to the appropriate authority, the minister said.

Cannot conduct virginity test on accused during investigation: Delhi HC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday ruled that the virginity test conducted on an accused while the investigation is on, be it in police or judicial custody is unconstitutional in the spirit of Article 21 of the Constitution.

The ruling came as a single-judge bench of Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma was dealing with a case related to the 1992 Sister Abhaya murder in Kerala.

In this case, as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had conducted a virginity test on Sister Sephy (one of the convicts) leading to a violation of Sephy's human rights, the bench granted her liberty to opt for compensation after the criminal case is over.

Sephy had filed a petition in 2009 questioning the virginity test.

A special CBI court had convicted Sephy in Kerala in 2020 for murder of Sister Abhaya, whose body was found in a well after co-convict Father Kottoor threw her into it to hide



the cause of death. Sister Abhaya was smacked on the head with a hand axe before she was dumped in a well, the trial court had found. The CBI and Centre's objection on territorial jurisdiction was also rejected by the court on Tuesday, observing that the authorities including the National Human Rights Commission are in the national capital and hence, part of the cause of action arose here. Kerala Police and it Crime Branch had, initially, dismissed the matter as a case of suicide. It was only due to public outbursts that the matter was later handed to the CBI.

Former servicemen said idea of Agniveer came from RSS: Rahul

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday hit out at the Modi government over Agniveer scheme and said that it was imposed on Army by the RSS and Home Ministry.

"During the Bharat Jodo Yatra, retired officers of Indian Army told us that idea about Agniveer came from RSS and was thrust on the Army. They said we are training 1000s in weapons and then soon after, they will become civilians amid high unemployment. The officers told me that Ajit Doval is the man behind this idea," Rahul Gandhi said in the Motion of Thanks on President's address. "How is it that the Agniveer Yojana was mentioned only once in the President's speech?



There was no word on unemployment and inflation in the address. So all the issues that people told me about during

the yatra, we didn't hear in the President's address," he added amid uproar.

"During 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', we heard people's voices while we also kept our voices. We talked to children, women, and the elderly during the yatra. We asked the youth about their jobs... Many said they are unemployed or drive Uber. Farmers talked about not getting money under PM-BIMA Yojana and their land being snatched away, while tribals talked about Tribal Bill."

"When we first started walking (referring to Bharat Jodo Yatra), we wanted to play the opposition and tell people about issues facing the country. However, as we progressed, after 500-600 kms, there was a major change. Instead of us telling the people the source of their problems, they themselves started speaking to us," he said.

Three LeT terrorist associates held in Srinagar

Srinagar | Agencies

The J&K police arrested three terrorist associates of proscribed outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba in Srinagar and recovered Rs 31,65,200 in cash and other incriminating materials from their possession, the police said on Tuesday.

"A police party from Nowgam police station during routine checking at Lasjan Crossing (NHW) spotted three suspicious individuals coming from Lasjan carrying a blue colour cricket kit bag, trying to avoid the naka checking party. They were tactfully apprehended by the alert naka party," the police said.

The trio has been identified as Bilal Asmad Sidiqi from Kursoo Rajbagh, and Umar Adil Dar and Salik Mehraj, both from Soiteng.

"During checking of the said kit bag, cash amounting to Rs 31,65,200, one mobile phone, and three pages of LeT letter pad were recovered. On personal search of Bilal Asmad Sidiqi and Salik Mehraj, five pages of LeT letter pad were recovered," the police said.

During preliminary investigation, it came to fore that the trio was working as terrorist associates of LeT. The money was received by them as part of a conspiracy to strengthen its cadres within Srinagar district.

"The said money was received by them on the directions of their handlers based out of Pakistan as part of a larger criminal conspiracy hatched to pass/raise money/funds for furthering their activities and cause large scale disturbances in J&K," the police said.

UP GOVT TO PROMOTE HERITAGE SITES DURING GIS-23, G-20

Lucknow | Agencies

The Directorate of UP State Archaeology (DUPSA) has decided to promote its heritage scheme vigorously during the Global Investors Summit (GIS)-23 and G-20 events scheduled in the city later this month.

The scheme 'Monument Mitra' or 'adopt a heritage scheme' was launched by the central government in 2020 but has found very few takers in the state so far.

Only three out of 11 sites offered in phase-1 of the scheme in 2021 were adopted by different firms.

In phase-two in 2022, only two organisations expressed willingness for adoption of the 10 sites on offer. The directorate got six queries for adoption.

DUPSA director Renu Dwivedi said, "We will set up stalls during the two upcoming summits and invite people/organisations to become 'monument mitra'. We are hopeful



that it will create a buzz at these events."

Samadhi in Mahavan (Mathura), Kusumvan Sarovar in Govardhan (Mathura) and Kardameshwar Mahadev Temple in Varanasi were earlier adopted by some organisations.

hotels. Remaining three sites, Govardhan ki Chattriya in Govardhan, Mathura, Hullaskheda excavation site in Mohanlaljanj and Gurudham Mandir in Varanasi are open for adoption.

The 'Monument Mitra' scheme was started by the central government in 2020 across India with an objective to conserve monuments through public-private partnership and bring people closer to the heritage. Under the scheme, every state had to offer its heritage sites for adoption. The scheme provides individuals and organisations an opportunity to adopt and conserve heritage sites. Those adopting the heritage sites are called 'Monument Mitra'. They will be entitled to look after basic amenities, lighting and maintenance of the monument and in return, to earn some revenue, they will be allowed to open parking lots, conduct light and sound shows and set up cafeterias and cloak rooms.

MUZAFFARPUR CIVIC BODY TO SPEND RS 1 CRORE ON DOG STERILISATION

Patna: The Municipal Corporation of Bihar's Muzaffarpur has decided to spend Rs 1 crore for the sterilisation of stray dogs in the district. Mayor Nirmala Sahu said that a proposal was passed during the session of the civic body's house.

"Keeping in view of the large number of dog bite cases, the majority of the councillors raised this point in the meeting. A number of accidents also happened due to stray dogs. Hence, we have passed the fund of Rs 1 crore to achieve the purpose," Sahu said. "The fund will be used to capture stray dogs from the streets followed by their sterilisation. Besides, we have also decided to capture stray bulls from the roads as well. These stray animals are responsible for many accidents," Sahu added.

MNM women's wing urges TN govt to provide menstrual holidays to students

Chennai | Agencies

The state secretary of Makkal Needhi Maiam's (MNM) women and child welfare wing, Mookambika Rethinam, on Tuesday called upon the Tamil Nadu government to provide menstrual leave to female students in the state.

MNM is the political party founded by actor-politician Kamal Haasan. Rethinam pointed out the Kerala government's initiative on the same and called upon the Tamil Nadu government to follow suit. It may be noted that the Kerala government has brought a notification on menstrual leave for girls students.

In a statement, Rethinam said, "Kerala government's directive to provide menstrual and maternity leave to female students in all colleges and universities is highly appreciated. Kerala government deserves praise for implementing this as a model project in the country."

Rethinam also said that the Kerala government has extended this programme implemented by the Cochin University of Science and Technology



to all the colleges and universities of the state.

She said that such initiatives are important for addressing the practical issues faced by women and girls.

The MNM leader then called upon the Tamil Nadu government to implement this scheme in the state for the benefit of girls and women.

She said the government and the universities should come forward to implement a pilot programme and create awareness to overcome the difficulties faced by women and girls.

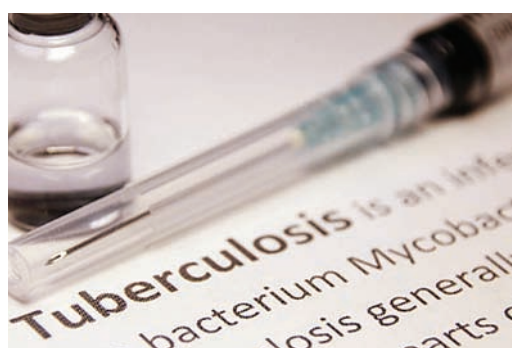
TN's major drive against TB after 5,000 died in 2022

Chennai | Agencies

Tamil Nadu health department has commenced a major drive against Tuberculosis (TB) after 5,000 people were reported dead in the state due to the disease in 2022.

Sources in the state health department told IANS that a study conducted by the department has revealed that 25 per cent of those diagnosed with Tuberculosis were diabetic. The state tuberculosis cell has now commenced testing for tuberculosis among diabetics patients in the state.

The state tuberculosis cell has also started providing training to mid-level health workers who are engaged in Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam



(MTM) scheme and these workers will be provided with an incentive of Rs 500 for every positive TB case detected. While the state TB cell has volunteers who can detect the cases, the department is involving health workers from other parts of the health department in TB detection and awareness.

In 2022, Tamil Nadu

reported 93,500 notified TB cases of which 25 per cent are diabetic. Dr. Asha Fredrik, State TB officer while speaking to media persons said, "We are checking for TB among diabetic patients and will be providing training to mid-level health providers engaged in MTM scheme to test diabetic patients for TB especially if they show symptoms for

Tuberculosis." Medical officers of the Tamil Nadu health department warned that patients who are having cough with sputum for a minimum of two weeks with unexplained weight loss or loss of appetite and with blood-stained sputum must test for TB.

The state Tuberculosis department is engaging MTM volunteers for detecting TB as they make daily house visits, deliver medicines as also checking for diabetes and blood pressure among residents. Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam (MTM) scheme is to provide emergency health care at the doorsteps of people and was launched in the state in 2021 after the DMK government assumed office.

Make construction a hassle free experience



Jaipur | Agencies

Buildstorey is coming with a new and unique concept of providing all building material on your finger click. The website will launch on 15th March and from then anyone who's building a house for self or building a commercial project wouldn't have to roam around the market to procure the building materials as all of it will be available on buildstorey.com.

Soft launch of the platform was done by the company at Decor India Show &

Buildstorey has turned out to be one of the most visited stalls attracting the attention of builders, home owners, contractors & companies. With over 50 plus brands on board, buildstorey has been receiving interest from many companies for collaborations & tie-ups.

Buildstorey, an e-commerce platform for construction material, is created by the people of Jaipur for the people of Jaipur. The founders of the concept are Sudhir Kabra, Harsh Bajaj, Karun Modi, Deepak Chaudhary & Ayush Jain.



UDDHAV THACKERAY FACTION BOYCOTTS PARLIAMENT DEBATE ON PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena today announced its boycott of the Parliament debate on the Motion of Thanks on President's Address, claiming the government had turned down its demand for a discussion on the Adani issue and a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe in the matter.

"We have decided to boycott the debate on the Motion of Thanks on President's Address in both Houses of Parliament. We remain steadfast on our demand for a JPC probe," Vinayak Raut, a Lok Sabha member of Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray), said.

He said the government had also termed down the demand of the Thackeray faction for a separate discus-



sion in Parliament on the Adani issue. "As a united opposition we demand the government constitute a JPC over the stock manipulation of a group, over-pricing and round-tripping in the stock market, hence the Shiv Sena has decided to boycott the motion of thanks. We demand a JPC to get to the bottom of the truth," Sanjay Raut, Rajya Sabha member of the Thackeray faction, said. Lok Sabha member Pratap

Jadhav, belonging to the Eknath Shinde faction of Shiv Sena, participated in the debate on the Motion of Thanks in the lower house. The rival factions of the Shiv Sena are engaged in a tussle for the control of the organisation after Shinde walked out of a majority of MLAs and Lok Sabha members, bringing down the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government in June last year.

MAN HELD FOR MOTORCYCLE THEFTS

Thane: A 23-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly stealing motorcycles in Kashmir area of Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Tuesday.

The police had received several complaints about motorcycle thefts in Kashmir and were keeping a vigil in the area, senior inspector Aviraj Kurhade said.

Acting on a tip-off, the police on Sunday nabbed the accused, who was involved in nine cases of motorcycle thefts in the limits of Kashmir, Navghar, Mira Road, Tulj Nagar police station in neighbouring Mumbai, he said. The police also recovered 10 stolen motorcycles worth Rs 4.2 lakh from him, the official added.

Total 16.73 lakh hybrid/EVs in India, Maharashtra tops the list with 2.96 lakh

Team Absolute | Mumbai/New Delhi

Of 16,73,115 hybrid or electric vehicles in use in the country, Maharashtra tops the list with a total 2,96,186 vehicles followed by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu with 2,03,592 and 1,69,006 respectively.

The Minister of State for Heavy Industries, Krishan Pal Gurjar in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha on Tuesday informed that in order to promote adoption of hybrid and electric vehicles in the country, the Government launched the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid & Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India) Scheme since 2015, an official statement said.

Presently, Phase-II of FAME India Scheme is being implemented for a period of 5 years from April, 2019 with a total budgetary support of Rs 10,000 crore.

Besides, multiple steps have been taken by the Government for adoption of hybrid and electric vehicles in the country. The Government on May 12, 2021



approved a Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for manufacturing of Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) in the country in order to bring down prices of batteries in the country.

Electric Vehicles are covered under PLI scheme for Automobile and Auto Components, which was approved on September 15, 2021 with a budgetary outlay of Rs 25,938 crore for a period of five years, said the reply.

As per the information, GST on electric vehicles has been reduced from 12 per cent to 5 per cent; GST on chargers/charging stations for electric vehicles has been reduced from 18 per cent to 5 per cent.

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) announced that battery-operated vehicles will be given green license plates and be exempted from permit requirements.

CBI arrests Western Coalfields official in bribe case

Team Absolute | Mumbai/New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday said that they have arrested a Western Coalfields Ltd official for allegedly demanding and accepting a Rs 1 lakh bribe.

A senior CBI official said that the accused was identified as Gautam Basutkar, the Sub Area Manager, Ghonsa Open Cast Mine (OCM), Western Coalfields Ltd (WCL), in Wani North Area of Maharashtra's Yavatamal district.

The CBI registered the case against Basutkar on the allegations of demanding bribe of Rs 3,23,610 from a man to issue the delivery order for lifting the coal from the WCL mine.



The complainant's firm was authorised to lift 8,200 MT coal from Ghonsa OCM, in Wani North Area but the firm could lift only 4623 MT

coal. Basutkar allegedly denied to issue the new delivery order and demanded a negotiated bribe of Rs 3,19,000 for earlier favour rendered by him to the complainant and to issue new delivery order for 2,500 MT coal.

The CBI laid a trap and caught the accused red-handed while demanding and accepting bribe of Rs one lakh as the first installment from the complainant.

Searches were conducted at the official and residential premises of the accused which led to the recovery of documents relating to property and other incriminating documents.

The arrested accused was produced before the Special Judge, CBI, Kelapur, who sent him to CBI custody till Wednesday.

2 WORKERS KILLED AS METAL STRUCTURE FALLS AT CONSTRUCTION SITE

Palghar: Two workers were killed and as many others injured when a heavy iron structure of a roof fell on them at an under-construction factory in Maharashtra's Palghar district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place on Monday in Palghar industrial area, they said. The heavy metal structure was being mounted with the help of a crane when it fell on the workers, an official from Palghar police station said.

Two workers - Ramdin Nishad (41) and Rahul Nishad (29) - died on the spot and while two others were injured, he said. The bodies were sent to a government hospital for post-mortem, he said.

The police have so far registered a case of accidental death and are conducting a probe into it, the official said.

Maha Congress fissures widen as CLP leader Balasaheb Thorat resigns

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The internal crisis in the Maharashtra Congress deepened as a veteran Vijay alias Balasaheb Thorat resigned as the Congress Legislative Party Leader, party sources revealed.

He has sent in his offer to quit to the party high command in New Delhi and not to the Assembly Speaker, the sources said.

However, Congress state President Nana Patole denied any such development and said he has not received any resignation letter from Thorat.

"I wish Thorat 'many happy returns' on his birthday today and wished him a



long and healthy life... However, I have not got any such letter which is claimed.

At least he should communicate with us, then we

can discuss the issues," a visibly exasperated Patole said to persistent queries by mediapersons.

Though the party central leadership has not yet accepted his resignation, Thorat is said to be adamant on quitting the crucial post he has been holding since June 2019.

The resignation caps off a bitter feud that erupted between Thorat-Patole after the recent results of the Nashik Graduates Constituency MLC biennial polls last week.

The election was won by a Congress rebel contesting as independent Satyajet Tambe -- nephew of Thorat -- and rounced the MVA nominee Shubhangi Patil.

MAN KILLS FRIEND WHILE DRUNK, ARRESTED: THANE POLICE

Thane: A 24-year-old man allegedly attacked and killed his friend in an inebriated state in Maharashtra's Thane district on Tuesday, police said. The incident took place at a quarry in Shil area of the district around 3 am, an official said.

The victim Amjat Khan, 23, was consuming alcohol with the accused, when an argument erupted between them, senior inspector Sachin Gawde of Shil-Daighar police said.

The accused attacked Amjat Khan with a bamboo stick and stones, killing him on the spot, the official said. The police were subsequently informed and the body was sent for post-mortem, he said, adding that the accused has been arrested under section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code.

Ferry service between Gateway of India, Navi Mumbai flagged off

Team Absolute | Thane

Maharashtra Ports Minister Dada Bhuse on Tuesday flagged off a ferry service between Belapur in Navi Mumbai and the Gateway of India in Mumbai, giving commuters another transport option.

The ferry will cover the distance in an hour, he said.

The lower deck of the ferry can accommodate 140 people, while 60 people can use the upper deck at a time. The fare is Rs 250 per seat on the lower deck and Rs 350 a seat on the other deck.

The fares are less than



what taxis charge for a road journey between Belapur and Colaba, where Gateway of India is located. The service, which has been launched on an experimental basis, will go a long way in meeting the needs of the people who travel to

Mumbai for work and vice versa, said the minister. The timings and commuters' requirements will be reviewed from time to time, including the introduction of the monthly passes when more people start using the service, he

Threat call received to blow up Mumbai Airport: Cops

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport received a threat call yesterday night where the caller introduced himself as an Indian Mujahideen terrorist and threatened to blow up the airport.

According to Mumbai Police, the call was received at around 10 pm at Mumbai airport on Monday.

The caller introduced himself as Irfan Ahmed Sheikh and described him-



self as a member of the terrorist organization Indian Mujahideen. After giving his introduction, the caller spoke about suspicious things using some code words.

The airport authority immediately informed Mumbai Police about the call. Police registered a case against the unknown person under section 505 (1) of the IPC. The investigation is underway.

Meanwhile, Mumbai Police and other agencies are on alert and security has been beefed up.



ACTOR RAKHI SAWANT FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST HUSBAND, ADIL DURRANI SUMMONED BY COPS

Mumbai: Bollywood actor Rakhi Sawant's husband Adil Khan Durrani was called for questioning by the Oshiwara Police on Tuesday. Rakhi Sawant alleged that her husband Adil Khan Durrani is having an extra marital affair, an official said. Rakhi had married Adil just weeks ago. According to the police sources, Rakhi Sawant has filed an FIR against Adil at Oshiwara Police for allegedly cheating with her. In her complaint she alleged that her mother died because of her husband.

In her complaint, Rakhi told the police that her husband did not pay the money for her mother's surgery even after she gave him a cheque of Rs. 10 lakhs before she left for reality show Bigg Boss Marathi 4, police sources said. Senior Inspector Manohar Dhanawade of Oshiwara Police Station said, "The police called Adil Durrani for questioning following a complaint. The police filed a case on the complaint of Rakhi Sawant. We will be recording his statement."

Hillary Clinton to visit Ellora caves, today



Aurangabad | Agencies

Former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton on Tuesday arrived in Maharashtra's Aurangabad district where she will visit the world famous Ellora Caves on Wednesday, an official said. Clinton, who was on a visit to Gujarat for the last two days, arrived in Aurangabad on Tuesday afternoon and head to Khultabad town for an overnight stay, he said.

On Wednesday, she will visit Grishneshwar temple,

which is the 12th jyotirlinga in the country, and the Ellora Caves, the official said. Around 100 policemen was deployed for her security during the Aurangabad visit, he added.

On Monday, Clinton announced a Global Climate Resilience Fund of 50 million dollars for women to fight climate change in association with the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) founded by late activist Ela Bhatt.

The fund will empower women and communities to

fight climate change and help provide new livelihood resources and education, she said. She attended a programme in Ahmedabad on Sunday to mark 50 years of SEWA as a trade union and paid homage to its founder and renowned social activist Ela Bhatt, who passed away in November last year.

Clinton visited salt pan workers in the Little Rann of Kutch in Gujarat on Monday and learnt from them the process of salt production and hardships faced by them.

MAN HELD FOR DUPING HOMEBUYERS OF RS 50 LAKH

Palghar: The police have arrested a man who allegedly operated a racket involved in cheating homebuyers in Vasai Virar region of Maharashtra's Palghar district, an official said on Tuesday. The police on Sunday arrested the 28-year-old man, who along with four others had allegedly cheated homebuyers to the tune of Rs 50 lakh, the official said.

The gang, which was operating in the Vasai-Virar region, had recently duped a buyer of Rs 17.5 lakh by selling him a flat on which a loan had already been taken, senior inspector Pramod Badhak said.

The accused did not give the victim possession of the flat, following which the latter approached the police, he said.

During interrogation, the arrested accused revealed that his gang had cheated homebuyers in the area to the tune of Rs 50 lakh, the official said. The accused has several cases to his name at different police

Fire in under-construction high-rise building in Prabhadevi, fireman injured

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A fire broke out on the seventh-level podium area of an under-construction high-rise in Prabhadevi on Monday night, an official said. According to the officials, the fire was extinguished using two small hose lines at 3.59 am on Tuesday morning.

A 40-year-old fire officer was injured and was shifted to KEM hospital, a Fire Brigade official said. "While he was in stable condition, he took discharge against medical advice," the official added.

According to BMC data, the fire was confined to building construction materials, plywood, bamboo, packaging material, sanitary material, G.I. sheets, office furniture, office files & records, electric wiring & electric



installations, etc. in the godown at 7th level podium in an area about 4000 to 5000 sq.ft. "One compressed oxygen gas cylinder exploded in one of the said godowns, thereby causing more spread of fire," the official said. Seven fire engines were rushed to the spot.

1,500 ADVASIS STAND UP FOR RIGHTS IN BANDRA

Team Absolute | Bandra

Hundreds of adivasis from Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and adjoining areas participated in a protest organised by the Kashtakari Shetkari Sanghatana, near the suburban collector's office in Bandra East. Over 1,500 adivasis from 27 padas demanded that the authorities provide them with caste certificates and resolve various land-related issues at the earliest. Vanita Thakare, a resident of Khambyacha pada, said, "We have been staying in Aarey Milk Colony for several decades but yet we don't have



papers related to our land. We are dependent on farming. We also don't have our caste certificates and so on, more than 400 tribals from Aarey Milk Colony, participated in the protest that took place near the collector's office." Another tribal resident from Aarey Milk Colony, Mangesh Chaudhari said, "It is our request to the

authorities to make sure that we are not displaced from the land where we reside and pursue agricultural activities."

The tribals have also been demanding that the government declare tribal padas villages and set up camps there. They also called for basic facilities like electricity, water, roads, health services and anganwadis.

The tribals also demanded the lands that they have been occupying for generations, as per the Forest Rights Act. Sanghatana head Vitthal Lad handed over a list of the demands to Suburban Collector Nidhi Chaudhari.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Why was Turkey-Syria quake so devastating?

The devastating 7.8-magnitude earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria that has killed 4,890 people so far, is likely to be one of the deadliest this decade.

As of Tuesday morning, the toll in Turkey stood at 3,381, while in Syria it increased to 1,509.

According to scientists, the earthquake was so devastating due to a combination of factors, including the earthquake's timing, location, relatively quiet fault line and the weak construction of the collapsed buildings, reports *The Straits Times*.

The tremor caused such devastation because of its strength -- the strongest earthquake to strike Turkey since 1939 -- and because it struck a populated area.

Turkey is in one of the world's most active earthquake zones, said the report.

In 1999, an earthquake along the North Anatolian fault line in the northern Turkish region of Duzce killed over 17,000 people, but Monday's earthquake occurred on the other side of the country, along the East Anatolian fault, the report added.

The East Anatolian fault has not experienced a magnitude-7 earthquake in over two centuries, which could indicate that people are "neglecting how dangerous" it is, Dr Roger Musson, an honorary research associate at the British Geological Survey, was quoted as saying.

He further said that it had been so long since the last big quake, "quite a lot of energy" may have built up. He added that the magnitude of the aftershocks on Monday, including a massive 7.5-magnitude tremor, supported this theory.

HIGHER CAPEX, INFRA PUSH, GREEN INITIATIVES TO DRIVE UP DEMAND FOR BANK FUNDS

The Indian banking sector is happy with the Union Budget for 2023-24 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

VENKATACHARI JAGANNATHAN

For the banking sector which is seeing an increased credit off take in the recent times, is expecting more business due to increased allocation for capital investment and also inflow of cash with the increase in rebate for tax payers under the Income Tax Act which is expected to bring them some low cost funds.

While that is for the bankers, Sitharaman too had announcements for the investors and banking public. She said to improve bank governance and enhance investors' protection, certain amendments to the Banking Regulation Act, the Banking Companies Act and the Reserve Bank of India Act are proposed.

However Sitharaman declined to elaborate on the proposed amendments when queried by the media as the Parliament session is on.

Be that as it may, Sitharaman said the capital investment outlay for FY24 is being increased steeply for the third year in a row by 33 per cent to Rs 10 lakh crore, which would be 3.3 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). "The direct capital investment by the Centre is complemented by the provision made for creation of capital assets through Grants-in-Aid to States. The Effective Capital Expenditure of the Centre is budgeted at Rs 13.7 lakh crore, which will be 4.5 per cent of the GDP," she said.

Sitharaman added that the newly established Infrastructure Finance Secretariat will assist all stakeholders for more private investment in infrastructure, including railways, roads, urban infrastructure and power, which are predominantly dependent on public resources.

According to A.K. Goel, Chairman, Indian Banks Association (IBA) and Managing Director & CEO, Punjab National Bank, the increased capital expenditure could help in further increasing the demand for bank funds.

"Similarly, setting up of an Agriculture Accelerator Fund for encouraging innovative start-ups in rural areas would help banks to get more information on the agriculture sec-



tor, which is one of the main segments where the resources of banks are deployed. Besides, Rs 20 lakh crore in targeted agriculture credit from the banking sector will also help the agri sector immensely," Goel said.

The Finance Minister's announcement to infuse Rs 9,000 crore to revamp the Credit Guarantee Scheme will enable additional collateral-free guaranteed credit of Rs 2 lakh crore for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through the banking sector.

According to CARE Ratings the proposal to allow carry forward of losses on strategic disinvestment, including that of the IDBI Bank, will support the strategic initiatives of the government.

The announcement that the government and its undertakings to return 95 per cent of the forfeited amount relating to bid or performance security in cases of failure by MSMEs to execute contracts during the Covid period will increase the credit profile of the

sector, CARE Ratings added.

Sitharaman's announcement on the establishment of an Urban Infrastructure Development Fund managed by the National Housing Bank (NHB) would support lending by banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) for infrastructure assets in tier-2/3 urban locations, according to CARE Ratings.

"In the area of green energy, the budget has provided for Rs 35,000 crore for priority capital investment towards energy transition and net zero objectives. There is also a proposal in the budget on green credit programme which will be notified under the Environmental Protection Act which envisages facilitating behavioural change for protecting the environment.

"This could intensify environmentally sustainable and responsive actions by companies, individuals and local

bodies. Since banks are also focusing in sustainable financing, this proposal will also help the banks in their initiatives," Goel said.

Initiatives to promote business activities in GIFT IFSC and setting up of the National Financial Information registry are all positives for the banking sector too, Goel added.

According to CARE Ratings the proposal relating to normalisation of taxation on Market Linked Debentures (MLD) will adversely impact fundraising by NBFCs from high net worth individuals (HNI) and family office funds. The proposal is likely to impact bond capital markets at the margin.

The Finance Minister also said the financial sector regulators will be requested to carry out a review of existing regulations.

international

IMRAN ACCUSED OF RECEIVING BRIBES VIA HIS FRONTWOMAN, FARAH GOGI

Islamabad | Agencies

Former Prime Minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan was on Tuesday accused of receiving bribes and other corruption proceeds via his alleged frontwoman, Farah Shehzadi alias Gogi, with millions in cash deposited into her account over three years, media reports said.

This was disclosed by special assistant to the Prime Minister on interior and legal affairs with the status of Federal Minister, Attaullah Tarar, in a news conference in Islamabad on Tuesday, Samaa TV reported.

Tarar claimed that he had managed to obtain data from banks about the transactions made in Farah's accounts. He said that in 2018, Farah had created 10-12 bank accounts, Samaa TV reported.

He added that as per the data collected, some 969 cash deposit transactions into Farah's accounts were



recorded in the past three years when Usman Buzdar was the Chief minister of Pakistan Punjab.

He claimed that the total value of these cash deposits was around Rs 1.6 billion.

Showing a document of transac-

tions with the name of the depositor and the recipient, Tarar claimed that it is the evidence of Imran Khan's alleged corruption, Samaa TV reported. He also claimed that it was Khan who had engineered Farah's escape from the country because if she is

summoned by the authorities, she will disclose all of Khan's secrets.

Tarar also claimed that Khan made sure that Farah benefited from allegedly tailored amnesty schemes, Samaa TV reported.

He added that they have also written to the relevant authorities to secure a red warrant for Farah's arrest and repatriation to Pakistan to face questioning. Tarar claimed that Khan was seeking exemption from personal appearance and other technicalities to delay his cases and to have them dismissed rather than face them.

He added that it cannot take six years to decide the foreign funding case while Nawaz Sharif's case and Maryam Nawaz's case were decided within months.

"I sincerely appeal to the Supreme Court to hear Imran Khan's case on day-to-day basis," Tarar said, as he sought fairness in trial, Samaa TV reported.

Alcohol bans in central Australia reinstated amid crime wave

Canberra | Agencies

Alcohol bans will be reinstated for indigenous communities in central Australia in response to a crime wave.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Chief Minister of the Northern Territory (NT) Natasha Fyles confirmed that dry zones will be reinstated for indigenous town camps and communities near Alice Springs, reports Xinhua news agency.

It comes less than 12 months after intervention-era alcohol bans in the NT ended in July 2022, making alcohol legal in some areas for the first time in 15 years.

As a result, rates of alcohol-fuelled violence have soared in Alice Springs, drawing national attention and calls from Mayor Matt Paterson for Australian Defence Force



(ADF) support. Albanese visited the region in late January and launched a review that recommended the return of bans. Under the new legislation that will be introduced to the NT Parliament, communities can apply to opt out of the reinstated bans if 60 per cent of residents support the decision and they have an alcohol management plan in place. Addressing the Parliament, Albanese conceded the current and former

government could have done more to plan for the end of the 15-year bans. He said the situation in Alice Springs is about more than alcohol and announced A\$250 million (\$173 million) in funding for a "better, safer future" for the region.

"This is about intergenerational disadvantage. It is about a lack of employment services, a lack of community services, a lack of educational opportunity," he said.

Australian central bank lifts cash rate to 3.35%

Canberra | Agencies

The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) on Tuesday increased the cash rate target by 25 basis points to 3.35 per cent, delivering a ninth straight hike since the central bank began raising rates in May last year.

The RBA also lifted the interest rate on Exchange Settlement balances by 25 basis points to 3.25 per cent, reports Xinhua news agency.

RBA Governor Philip Lowe said in a statement that in Australia, CPI inflation over the year to the December quarter was 7.8 per cent, the highest since 1990, while in underlying terms, inflation was 6.9 per cent, which was higher than expected.

"Global factors explain much of this high inflation, but strong domestic demand is adding to the inflationary pressures in a number of areas of the economy," said

the Governor.

According to the statement, the central bank's forecast for CPI inflation is to decline to 4.75 per cent this year and to around 3 per cent by mid-2025, with GDP growth expected to slow to around 1.5 per cent over 2023 and 2024.

"The full effect of the cumulative increase in interest rates is yet to be felt in mortgage payments," Lowe noted. With an aim of returning inflation to the 2-3 per cent range, the central bank expects further increases to be needed over the months ahead. The latest report from Australia and New Zealand Banking Group (ANZ) and Roy Morgan showed that Australian Consumer Confidence was down 3.2 points to 83.6 from January 30 to February 5, the largest weekly drop for six months since early August 2022.

SYRIA CALLS FOR INT'L AID AFTER DEADLY EARTHQUAKES

Damascus: The Syrian Foreign Ministry has called for international help after powerful earthquakes hit the country and killed nearly 900 people in Syria.

In a statement, the ministry urged the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organisations to support the Syrian government in its rescue efforts following the deadly earthquakes, Xinhua news agency reported.

Syria needs help in searching for survivors under the rubble and removing dead bodies and medical and food supplies for hosting and feeding the affected people, the ministry said.

Powerful earthquakes rocked southern Turkey and its neighbour Syria early Monday, killing at least 2,370 in Turkey so far.

A 7.7-magnitude earthquake jolted the northern Syrian provinces of Latakia, Tartous, Hama, Aleppo and Idlib on Monday, killing at least 1,400 people.

US state's Senate passes bill to allow fireworks during Diwali



New York | Agencies

Lawmakers at the Utah Senate in the US unanimously passed a bill that will make Diwali a state commemorative period, and allow discharge of fireworks during the Indian festival of lights.

Moved by Senator Lincoln Fillmore from South Jordan, the Senate Bill 46 was approved unanimously last week, ABC4 reported.

The bill would designate Diwali as a

state commemorative period and will allow the sale and discharge of fireworks during the five days of Diwali, which is usually between late October and early November.

Fillmore said one of his constituents in Herriman reached out to him and gave him the idea for this bill, which needs just one more vote before heading to the House of Representatives.

"I appreciate Utah's Indian community. Their collaborative efforts to organise events to include the neighbouring communities, as well as their efforts to increase education about Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism, have helped create a better sense of understanding in our state," Senator Fillmore said in a statement.

"This bill recognises others' cultures, contributing to the wonderful tapestry that is Utah." The bill will be scheduled for a third reading at the Utah Senate in the near future. Diwali was celebrated in the White House for the first time in 2002, and in 2007, the US government gave official recognition to the festival. In 2021, the Diwali Day Act was introduced in the US to declare the festival a federal holiday. This year, Diwali will fall on November 12.

Chhatrapati Shivaji statue goes missing from California Park



New York | Agencies

A statue of Maratha ruler Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj has been reported missing from a park in San Jose, California.

The statue at the Guadalupe River Park was a gift from Pune, San Jose's sister city, and it was the only statue of Shivaji Maharaj in North America.

"We regret to inform our community that the Shri Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue at Guadalupe River Park is missing," The San Jose Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighbourhood Services tweeted on February 3.

Park officials did not say when the statue was taken.

The Twitter post shared the photo of the statue depicting the leader on horseback along with a photo of the now-missing statue with just the base remaining. The Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighbourhood Services informed that the authorities are investigating the theft.

"The City is deeply saddened that this landmark has been stolen. We are working with community leaders to find solutions and will provide updates as we receive them," the Twitter post read.



GIRLS SHOULD HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS FOR COMPASSIONATE APPOINTMENT IN THE STATE: SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A meeting of the Cabinet was held at Mantralaya under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on February 7. Decision was taken by the Council of Ministers that after the death of R.S. Rathore, Additional Director, Economics and Statistics on April 19, 2021 due to Corona infection, his married daughter Shraddha Malvi, despite non-eligibility, should be given compassionate appointment considering it a special case in the sequence of the decision of the High Court, Bench, Indore, on humanitarian grounds.

In the provisions of the order related to compassionate appointment issued by the General Administration Department on September 29, 2014, a policy based decision was also taken by the Council of Ministers that both sons and daughters have equal rights for compassionate appointment, even if the daughters are married. In this regard, necessary amendments should be made in the General Administration Department policy.

Suraj Policy-2023 approved in the interest of homeless and economically weaker sections

According to the announcement made by the CM Chouhan, the Council of Ministers will make proper use of the government land freed from encroachment by the district administration as a resource for the homeless, economically weaker sections (EWS) and construct necessary infrastructure works and community facilities along with housing construction in Suraj Colony for them. The Cabinet approved



the Suraj Policy-2023 for the construction of housing for the homeless, weaker sections (EWS) on the land available after freeing from the encroachment of government lands.

CM's Milching Cattle Supply Programme for Special Backward Tribes

A budget provision of Rs 150 crore has been made by the Council of Ministers in the Animal Husbandry and Dairy Department for the year 2022-23 under the 'Chief Minister's Animal Husbandry Development Scheme'. The Chief Minister's Milching Cattle Supply

Programme was included in the Animal Husbandry Development Scheme to implement the pilot project to connect the special backward tribes of the state, especially the Baiga tribe, with animal husbandry and to provide milching cattle to the beneficiaries.

Pumped Hydro Storage Project

The Cabinet approved the development of storage-based projects in the New and Renewable Energy Policy-2022 implemented in the state from last year. In this series, the Council of Ministers decided to implement the

pumped hydro storage projects and carry out the tender process. With this decision, the continuity of energy obtained from renewable energy projects will be ensured and grid stability will also be benefited.

161 crore 95 lakh sanctioned for the expansion of State Data Centre

According to the recommendation of the Empowered Committee constituted by the Cabinet under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, the total project expenditure for the expansion, operation and installation of the new Disaster Recovery Site at the National Data Centre Bhubaneswar and augmentation of the currently installed hardware and software is 161 Crore 95 lakh rupees which has been approved.

Creation of 20 posts for the examination cell of the High Court

The Cabinet approved the creation of 20 posts for the examination cell of the High Court, Jabalpur as per the proposal of the High Court. These posts include the posts of Additional Registrar, Assistant Registrar, Personal Assistant, Stenographer, Accountant, Translator, System Analyst, Computer Programmer, System Administrator, Console Operator, Telephone Operator, Driver and Peon.

Other decisions

In view of the increasing number of nursing colleges and schools in the state and the increase in the number of nursing students, the Cabinet approved the creation of 37 new posts for the smooth functioning of the duties of the Madhya Pradesh Nurses Registration Council.

Ladli Laxmi Yojana has brought about changes - CM Chouhan



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Ladli Laxmi Yojana has proved to be a scheme to bring changes in the lives of daughters of the state. With the implementation of the scheme, not only did the girls get scholarship amount, but a new era of their empowerment has started. With the expansion of the scheme, now the government will also do the work of depositing fees for higher education in Ladli Laxmi 2.0. After the Ladli Laxmi Yojana, now in the Ladli Bahna Yojana, women from poor and middle class families will get an amount of one thousand rupees per month. By empowering girls and sisters, efforts are being made to bring them into leadership roles through their participation in envi-

ronment-protection, de-addiction and other social campaigns.

Chief Minister Chouhan was transferring the scholarship amount in the accounts of Ladli Laxmi daughters of the state at Kushabhau Thakre auditorium in Bhopal yesterday. CM Chouhan transferred scholarship amount of Rs. 107 crore 67 lakh to 3 lakh 33 thousand 842 Ladli Laxmi girls with a single click. Awards were also given to 5 Ladli Laxmi girls for their outstanding achievements in the state level programme. Bhopal Mayor Malti Rai was present in the programme. The programme was broadcast through webcast and other mediums in the entire state. In Panchayat and Anganwadi centres in different districts, sisters and daughters also joined this programme virtually.

Govt doctor caught taking bribe of Rs 15,000 from disable person in Katni

Team Absolute | Jabalpur

A doctor posted at the government-run Katni district hospital in Madhya Pradesh was caught by Lokayukta sleuths on Tuesday while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 15,000 from a divyang person for issuing him a disability certificate, an official said. The complainant in the case, a resident of Reethi tehsil in Katni district, suffers from disability in both legs and the government doctor demanded Rs 40,000 as bribe from him for issuing a medical document certifying 40 per cent disability, said deputy superintendent of police (Lokayukta) Dilip Jharbade.



Acting on a complaint, sleuths of anti-corruption body Lokayukta laid a trap and caught Dr Purshottam das Soni, an orthopaedist, when he accepted Rs 15,000 as the first instalment of the bribe money from the com-

plainant at his private clinic situated in his residence, he said. A case under relevant sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act was registered against the physician and further investigation was underway, added Jharbade.

"Chikitsak Bachao Yatra" concluded after covering 5000 kilometres across 38 districts

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Doctors in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal concluded their "Chikitsak Sampark Yatra" on Tuesday and took decision regarding the work shutdown. Doctors' agitation is going on in Madhya Pradesh since January 27th for implementation of DACP, restoration of old pension, interference of officers in medical work and other issues. This movement has been started for the implementation of the DACP policy of the central government, restoration of old pensions and interference of administrative officers in medical work. Doctors from Medical Education Department, Health Department, Home Department, and



Gas Relief Department have participated in this movement. 7 Medical Associations together have formed this organization.

The Madhya Pradesh Government and Autonomous Doctors Federation's combined "Chikitsa Bachao Sampark Yatra" started on

27th January 2023 from Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior. It covered a distance of more than 5000 kilometres from 38 districts of the state and 13 government medical colleges, the yatra reached its destination, Bhopal at 11 am on Tuesday.

The purpose of the visit is clear, to measure the medical level of the state and to get to the root of the basic problems of the doctors, said Madhya Pradesh Government / Autonomous Medical Association in a press release. On Tuesday, a huge gathering of all the doctors of the state was organized in the premises of Gandhi Medical College, Bhopal from 12:00 noon, after which a symbolic rally will be taken out peacefully, the press release stated further.

Official accused for misappropriating Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna funds in Neemuch

Team Absolute | Neemuch

Employment assistant of gram Data that falls under Manasa tehsil of Neemuch district were accused of misappropriating funds under the Central Government's Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY), a housing scheme. Gopal Nath along with other beneficiaries raised the issue at the collector's public hearing on Tuesday and made a complaint. They alleged that guidelines such as internet-based geo-tagging and selection processes under PMAY were flouted in panchayat. They accused the employment assistant of misappropriating PMAY funds and using them for personal benefits. They alleged that people

have been deprived of PMAY benefits while Puri Bai Shambunath, mother of employment assistant, Mandan Nath, Sunil Nath, niece, having two-storey buildings have received financial assistance under the scheme. In the complaint application, they accused the employment assistant of encroaching onto government land meant for primary and secondary school and constructing a boundary wall. Villagers lodged several complaints against the encroachment but in vain. They demanded punitive action against fraudulent beneficiaries and complicit officials including employment assistant and demanded suspension of assistant secretary with immediate effects.

600 LITRES OF SPURIOUS LIQUOR SEIZED; 2 HELD

Team Absolute | Indore

Police busted a gang allegedly involved in making spurious liquor and arrested two of its members in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city on Tuesday, an official said. The police seized around 600 litres of spurious liquor from the accused, the official said. The accused, identified as Amit Jain and Anand Jatiya, were nabbed from a house under Gandhinagar police station area after a raid, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Guruprasad Parashar said. He said both the accused were making spurious liquor from spirit.

This illegally made liquor was being filled in bottles of popular brands and sold in Indore city



and surrounding areas by putting fake labels on them, the official said. The police seized around 600 litres of spurious

liquor, a large number of empty bottles, their caps and other equipment from the possession of the accused, he said.

However, a similar case took place two years ago in which six people died of consuming spurious liquor.

DRUNK COP DRIVE VEHICLE INTO GROUP OF PEOPLE, INJURES THEM IN BURHANPUR

Burhanpur: In a sensational incident reported in Burhanpur district, a police officer lost control of his vehicle while allegedly driving drunk and hit a group of people on District Hospital road on Tuesday afternoon. Eyewitnesses claimed that the accused was intoxicated and created chaos in the middle of the road. A person identified as Akash Chowdhary also claimed that he along with his sister was going on a motorcycle when the police officer lost control of his vehicle and rammed into their motorcycle and misbehaved with his sister.

People gathered at the spot which led to traffic congestion. On being informed, Lalbagh police officials sent the drunk policeman to the District hospital for a medical checkup.

Superintendent of police Rahul Kumar Lodha said that the said police personnel is undergoing a medical checkup. Appropriate action would be initiated as per reports of the check-up.

LOUDSPEAKERS, DJ BANNED IN ITARSI IN VIEW OF SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS

Itarsi: Itarsi SDM Madan Singh Raghuvanshi stated in the order that the decision has been taken in view of the upcoming examination in schools.

"It has come to the notice that for marriage and other programs, DJ is being used extensively till late at night. Also, the yearly examinations of higher school students have been announced. In view of the situation, the ban on the use of loudspeakers and DJ seems necessary," the statement read.

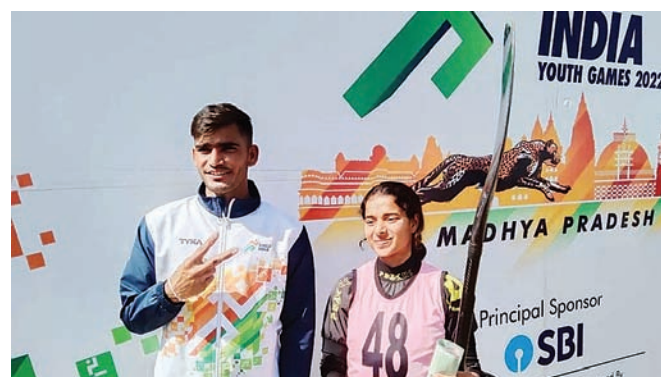
Although the normal loudspeakers will be allowed in the Itarsi for two hours in case of due permission, the order said. "A complete ban is being implemented for the use of loudspeakers in Itarsi. Heavy sound systems, especially DJ won't be allowed in any hotel, marriage garden or organisation. Only in case of necessities, heavy sound systems will be allowed for the duration of two hours, but only with due permission," the statement further read.

Vishal, Bhumi brings double gold for host Madhya Pradesh

Team Absolute | Khargone

On the second day of the Canoe Slalom competition at Sahastradhara as part of Khelo India -2022, host Madhya Pradesh won gold medals in both categories. Vishal Verma, from Sehore district has won gold in a canoe, and Bhumi Baghel from MP Sports Academy won gold in the kayak event here. On Tuesday, in the men's category, Canoe competitions were held, while in the girls, kayak events were held. Vishal completed the track's 18 gates in 80.870 seconds, while Bhumi completed the track in 90.060 seconds.

Karthik S of Karnataka took silver in the men's category, while Vemula Kumar of Andhra Pradesh took bronze. In the girl's



Kayak event, silver went to Nagadi Gayatari of Andhra Pradesh, and bronze went to Jhanvi Raikwar of Maharashtra.

Bhumi, who won a gold medal for MP Sports Academy said, this sport requires more power, especially on natural tracks. Furthermore, each player should

have a strategy and should never give up.

Bhumi, who began her training in a small pond at Delhi's IK Stadium, began gaining technical knowledge of the game in 2019 at the MP Sports Academy. Following that, Bhumi won bronze at the Asian

Championships in Pattaya, Thailand. Bhumi has also competed in the World Championships in Ochsberg, Germany.

Vishal Verma, from Shikarpur, a small village in Sehore district, said that till now, the national-level competition has been held in Maheshwar, where he has won gold medals. Today, winning gold at the Khelo India Youth Games has boosted his self-esteem. Vishal, who is currently in class 12, has been receiving coaching at MP Sports Academy for the past four years. Vishal has competed in five national and one international competition during this time. Based on his previous experience, Vishal believes Maheshwar's track is the best not only in India, but also in Asia.

BJP Vikas Yatra covers 17 villages during its second day

Team Absolute | Mahidpur

On the second day, the BJP Vikas Yatra, which began in

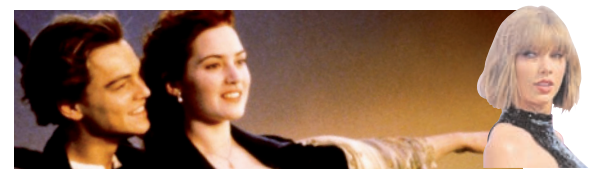
Sumarakhedha village under Mahidpur town, passed through at least 17 villages before arriving in Akhyajasa village. The chief guest was local MLA Bahadur Singh Chouhan. Public representatives assist in identifying the remaining eligible beneficiaries of welfare schemes, such as families who were previously denied access to government programmes, and connecting them with them even during the Vikas Yatra. Before arriving at Akhyajasa village, the yatra passed through Sanoria, Manpura, Tarot, Kacharia, Nipaniyabadar, Kataria, and Kataria.

During this time, the MLA laid the groundwork for at least ten rural development



projects worth Rs 66.38 lakh. Along with that, the foundation stone for eight construction projects totalling Rs 31.29 lakh was invested.

On the third day, the Vikas Yatra aimed to visit 19 villages, beginning in Ranayaripeerkhedha village and ending in Mahuripura village, passing through Ghatpalya, Balah, Hajiyakhedi, and Melakhedi villages.



'You guys look so awkward'



Mila Kunis takes a dig at hubby Ashton over awkward pics with Reese Witherspoon

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Mila Kunis took aim at her husband Ashton Kutcher for how awkward he looked while posing with Reese Witherspoon on the red carpet. The pair were standing next to each other at a promotional event for their new rom-com 'Your Place or Mine' when they were snapped by photographers, reports Mirror.co.uk.

But instead of praising her man and his co-star, actress Mila decided to tell them how uncomfortable he appeared. Speaking in an interview with Today with Hoda & Jenna, Reese opened up on the funny interaction.

She said: "She even emailed us last night. She goes, 'You guys look so awkward on the red carpet together.'" As per Mirror.co.uk, however, it was all said in good jest and Reese admitted that it's been good getting to know Mila off-screen. She continued: "It was just fun to get to know her significant other 'cause I've loved her for so long."

And praising Ashton's acting skills, Reese added: "He's so professional. He's the funniest guy. I mean such a goofball. We had so much fun, and every time he'd wear a funny outfit, I'd text Mila. I'd be like, 'What is he wearing?'"

It was payback for Ashton's kind words for Reese at the end of last year. He told People magazine in December: "We just had fun. I can talk to Reese about anything - acting, business, kids, media, football. She's always game."

Salma Hayek reveals the truth: She was considered 'too sexy' for romcoms

Los Angeles | Agencies

Salma Hayek revealed in a new interview with GQ UK that Hollywood blocked her from starring in a comedy for nearly 20 years because she was deemed too sexy for the genre, says 'Variety'. Although Hayek acted in romantic comedies such as 1997's 'Fools Rush In' (opposite Matthew Perry) and 'Breaking Up' (opposite Russell Crowe), she said it wasn't until 2010's 'Grown-Ups' that she got the chance to star in a traditional comedy movie. Hayek credited Adam Sandler with finally giving her the chance to be funny.

"I was typecast for a long time," Hayek told GQ UK, according to 'Variety'. "My entire life I wanted to do comedy and people wouldn't give me comedies. I couldn't land a role until I met Adam Sandler, who put me in a comedy [2010's 'Grown-Ups'], but I was in my forties! They said, 'You're sexy, so you're not allowed to have a sense of humor.' Not only are you not allowed to be smart, but you were not allowed to be funny in the '90s." "Did being blocked by acting in comedies make Hayek angry?" "I was sad at the time," she said. "But now here I am doing every genre, in a time in my life where they told me I would have expired -- that the last 20 years I would have been out of business. So I'm not sad, I'm not angry; I'm laughing, I'm laughing, girl."

Hayek, notes 'Variety', is back in romance mode for her new movie, Steven Soderbergh's 'Magic Mike's Last Dance'. In the final installment in the 'Magic Mike' franchise, Hayek plays the older love interest of Channing Tatum's eponymous stripper. Her character, Maxandra Mendoza, works with Mike to create a male stripper revue.



Ben Stiller to star in limited series adaptation of 'Three Identical Strangers'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Ben Stiller is nearing a deal to star in a limited series adaptation of the documentary 'Three Identical Strangers', 'Variety' has learned. The series hails from writer Amy Lippman with Sony Pictures Television producing it along with SK Global and TriStar Television. Like the documentary, the series would focus on the true story of Bobby Shafran, David Kellman and Eddy Galland -- identical triplets who were separated at birth only to be reunited later in life. Stiller, who's executive producing via Red Hour Films, would star as the three adult brothers. Lippman, meanwhile, would serve as showrunner and executive producer.

The role would mark a rare television appearance for Stiller and one of his first major acting roles in years, notes 'Variety'. He has made cameo appearances in films like 'Hubie Halloween' and 'Bros' of late, as well as appearing in the 2021 film 'Locked Down'. His last starring role was in 'The Meyerowitz Stories' in 2017.

Stiller's other notable acting roles include 'Zoolander', 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty', the 'Night at the Museum' franchise, 'Dodgeball', and 'Meet the Parents'. He also won an Emmy in 1993 for 'The Ben Stiller Show'.



SONY PICTURES IS LOOKING TO REBOOT A SERIES WITH JENNIFER KAYTIN ROBINSON

Los Angeles | Agencies

Sony Pictures is looking to reboot 'I Know What You Did Last Summer' with Jennifer Kaytin Robinson ('Do Revenge', 'Someone Great', 'Sweet/Vicious') set to direct, reports 'Variety'. The project is in early development at the studio, with the franchise's original stars Jennifer Love Hewitt and Freddie Prinze Jr in talks to reprise their roles. Leah McKendrick is on board to write the script for the project, which she developed with Kaytin Robinson. It is set to bring a fresh perspective to the franchise to Sony.

News of the relaunch comes following the successful reboot of the 'Scream' franchise, which continues with 'Scream VI' hitting theatres on March 10, according to 'Variety'.

The film also follows Kaytin Robinson's 'Do Revenge', which featured Sarah Michelle Gellar, who along with Ryan Phillippe, rounded out the original 'I Know What You Did Last Summer' quartet.

Directed by Jim Gillespie and written by Kevin Williamson, the 1997 slasher film saw four teens from a small seaside town haunted (or, more literally, stalked) by a hook-wielding maniac after getting into a hit-and-run accident that they'd tried to cover up, 'Variety' notes.



Kevin Costner's time with 'Yellowstone' could be coming to an end

Los Angeles | Agencies



Kevin Costner's time with the hit Paramount series 'Yellowstone' could be coming to an end. 'Variety' quoting sources reports that Costner could potentially exit the series on which he has played John Dutton since its launch in 2018.

The issue seems to be Costner's shooting schedule, with the actor being available for fewer days as the show has progressed. Sources also say discussions are underway for a new expansion of the 'Yellowstone' franchise that would feature several characters from the mothership show, with Matthew

McConaughey in talks to star. "We have no news to report. Kevin Costner is a big part of 'Yellowstone' and we hope that's the case for a long time to come," a Paramount Network spokesperson said in a statement quoted by 'Variety'. "Thanks to the brilliant mind of Taylor Sheridan," the spokesperson added, "we are always working on franchise expansions of this incredible world he has built. Matthew McConaughey is a phenomenal talent with whom we'd love to partner."

Reps for Costner and McConaughey did not immediately respond to requests from 'Variety' for comment.

Sheridan has also been at work on a new spin-off centred on the historic 6666 ranch in Texas.

Chris Brown apologises to Robert Glasper after throwing tantrum

Los Angeles | Agencies

After throwing a temper tantrum, Chris Brown is backtracking on a series of comments he made following the 2023 Grammys.

The singer was up for an award in the best R&B album category and lost to pianist Robert Glasper, reports People magazine.

While other nominees in the category included PJ Morton, Mary J. Blige and Lucky Daye, Brown openly voiced his frustration after losing the award by verbally attacking Glasper in a series of posts shared to his Instagram Story.

After Glasper's 2022 album Black Radio III took home the prize, he began expressing his feelings by writing on his story "YALL PLAYING WHO DA F-K IS THIS?" against a screenshot



where Glasper was announced as the winner.

People further states that in screenshots captured by The Shade Room, Brown continued: "I'm going to keep kicking a respectfully" before writing in white letters against a plain black background. "Bro who the f**k is Robert Glasper?"

He then continued to tease Glasper by saying he has to "start playing the harmonica" and added a photo of himself playing the instrument with the caption "New level unlocked" and "HARMONICA BREEZY."

Although the musician did not openly respond to Brown's comments, Brown went on his

Instagram Story to share that he apologised to the artist by sending him a direct message on Instagram.

"Congratulations my brother... the message began. "I would like to apologise if you took offense to my reaction at the Grammys... you were not the intended target and I know I came off really rude and mean. After doing my research I actually think your amazing... THE ORGANIZATION ISNT DOING US BLACKS OUR DUE DILLIGENCE. YOU AND I SHOULD never is in the same category (sic)," continued Brown.

Finishing off the apology message, he continued: "Two totally different vibes and genres. So from one black man to another... CONGRATULATIONS... HOPE YOU ARE ABLE TO FEED YOUR FAMILY FOR LIFE. God bless my G (sic)."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Louise Thompson



ICC T20 RANKINGS

Smriti stays in top three; Deepti Sharma drops to third position

New Delhi | Agencies

India opener Smriti Mandhana continued to be in the top three while all-rounder Deepti Sharma slipped one place in the latest ICC Women's T20 rankings released on Tuesday.

Mandhana stays in the third spot despite being dismissed cheaply against South Africa tri-series final, though does drop from 731 to 722 rankings points, while Australia duo Tahlia McGrath and Beth Mooney hold onto first and second spots respectively. India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur remained on 612 rankings points and equal with Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu after scoring 21 runs against South Africa, both moving into the top 10. Deepti, on the other



hand, slipped to third place in the all-rounder's list despite opening the bowling and taking 1-19 in the same tri-series final. Sneha Rana was the big mover in the bowling



rankings, rising four spots to sixth after claiming 2-21 in the final. England's Sophie Ecclestone maintained the top spot in just 27 matches with 763 rankings points.

A match-defining spell against India in a T20I tri-series final has propelled emerging South Africa spinner Nonkululek Mlaba to the second spot in just 27 matches with 753 rankings points.

Shubman, Siraj in shortlist for Men's Player of the Month for January 2023

Dubai | Agencies

India's Shubman Gill and Mohammad Siraj, who had tremendous series against Sri Lanka and New Zealand, along with Black Caps' opener Devon Conway have been shortlisted for the ICC Men's Player of the Month awards for January 2023.

The shortlist was announced following a blockbuster month of cricket which included a host of bilateral cricket across the globe.

Included in the men's Player of the Month shortlist, the talented batter Gill dazzled with recent ODI performances against Sri Lanka and New Zealand, registering two centuries and one double-century.

Gill secured his first nomination for the award on the back of a superb month, most notably in ODI cricket. Scoring 567 ODI runs during the period at an astonishing average of 113.40. His entertaining and powerful strokeplay saw him hit three figures on three occasions. In a month full of highlights.

Arguably his best outing in this period was a glittering 208 not out in the series opener against New Zealand in Hyderabad, coming in just 149 balls with 28 boundaries. As well as his successful ODI exploits, Gill churned out 76 runs in T20I cricket during the



month.

Mohammed Siraj continues to rocket up the ICC Men's ODI Player Rankings and reached the summit for bowlers in January thanks to back-to-back four-wicket hauls against the same opposition.

Siraj's rise to the top of the ICC Men's ODI bowler rankings has been nothing short of meteoric.

Having only made one appearance in ODI's before last year, Siraj has been a

constant performer in the past 12 months, earning him a spot in the recently announced ICC Men's ODI Team of the Year for 2022, and now finds himself at the top of the rankings after another excellent month.

Siraj played in five ODIs during January, against Sri Lanka and New Zealand, taking 14 wickets at a remarkable average of 10.57 which included back-to-back four-wicket hauls against the two touring sides.

Women's T20 World Cup

LOWER-ORDER BATTING HELPS AUSTRALIA BEAT INDIA IN WARM-UP TIE

Cape Town | Agencies

India Women allowed Australia to escape from a precarious 79/8 in the 16 over to post a modest 129/8 and then batted poorly to lose their first warm-up match ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup.

Fine rearguard innings by Georgia Wareham (32 not out) and Jess Jonassen (22 not out) helped Australia recover from a difficult situation they had landed at the Newlands. Wareham and Jonassen raised 50 runs for the unfinished ninth wicket partnership as Australia reached 129/8 in 20 overs.

In reply, India Women were bowled out for 85 in 15 overs with only three batters reaching double figures. Darcie Brown claimed 4-17 for Australia as they proved their strength and lived up to the tag as favourites to lift the title.



As so often, Australia's depth came to the fore as they got out of a hole to beat India by a comfortable margin.

Australia were reduced to 79 for eight, batting first, Shikha Pandey miserly on her way to figures of two for nine including Meg Lanning and Tahlia McGrath.

Chasing a target of 130, India quickly slumped to 22 for four, Darcie Brown the destroyer in chief with four

for 17. India's innings never really got going, with Deepti Sharma their best performer, making an unbeaten 19 as they were bowled out for 86.

Brief scores: Australia 129/8 in 20 overs (Georgia Wareham 32 not out, Beth Mooney 28; Shikha Pandey 2-9, Pooja Vastrakar 2-16) beat India 86 all out in 15 overs (Deepti Sharma 19 not out, Harleen Deol 12; Darcie Brown 4-17, Ash Gardner 2-16) by 43 runs.

Ghana winger Christian Atsu rescued from rubble with injuries

New Delhi | Agencies

Ghanaian winger Christian Atsu, who was reported missing in Turkey's Hatay province following the devastating earthquake, has been removed alive from the rubble of a building with injuries, his Turkish club Hatayspor's Manager Mustafa Ozat has told Turkish radio.

The Ghana international and his Sporting Director Taner Savut were trapped under rubble after the earthquake that killed at least 4,800 people in Turkey and Syria on Monday.

"Christian Atsu was removed injured. Our sporting director, Taner Savut, is unfortunately still under the rubble," Hatayspor manager Mustafa Ozat told Turkish Radio Radyo Gol.

"Hatay was deeply affected. We are coming towards the end of the most dangerous hours," he added.

Atsu, who has 65 caps for Ghana, represented the Black Stars at the 2014 World Cup and at four Africa Cup of Nations tournaments.

He is playing with Turkish Super Lig side Hatayspor, the main club in Hatay, which was one of the most affected Turkish cities during the earthquakes. Atsu has spent the majority of his club career in England where he signed for Chelsea in September 2013. Then, he was loaned to a host of clubs including Everton, Bournemouth and Newcastle United FC, for whom he signed permanently in 2017.



PGTI PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

Sachin Baisoya establishes lead with 64 on day one

Kolkata | Agencies

Delhi's Sachin Baisoya posted a brilliant six-under 64 to establish himself as the leader on day one of the Rs 1 crore TATA Steel PGTI Players Championship 2023.

PGTI Qualifying School champion Aryan Roopa Anand of Bengaluru and US-based Varun Chopra, both rookies, were tied second at five-under 65 along with Om Prakash Chouhan of Mhow, Chandigarh's Angad Cheema, Delhi's Ajay Baisoya and Patna's Aman Raj.

Gaurav Pratap Singh (66) of Noida and Sunhit Bishnoi (67) of Gurugram fired hole-in-ones during their rounds. Gaurav (hole-in-one on 11th) and Sunhit (hole-in-one on 6th) were placed tied eighth and tied 14th respectively.

Sachin Baisoya, who has had a decent run in the last two seasons having finished



inside the top-25 of the PGTI Rankings, carried forward the momentum on Tuesday by a round that featured seven birdies and a bogey.

Baisoya, a bronze winner for Delhi in the team event at the 2022 National Games, landed it within five feet on five occasions thanks to his accurate approach shots and chipping.

The Sachin, who accumulated seven top-10s over the last two seasons including

two third place finishes, said, "I had one of my best ball-striking days today and that helped me score well on this relatively narrow layout. My tee shots and approach shots turned out as I had visualised them." "I've played well over the last two seasons and the podium finish at the National Games in 2022 gave me further impetus. I'm just trying to continue with the same mindset and hopefully the results will follow."

Sania Mirza suffers first-round exit from Abu Dhabi Open

Abu Dhabi | Agencies

Indian tennis ace Sania Mirza and her American doubles partner Bethanie Mattek-Sands bowed out of the Abu Dhabi Open WTA 500 tennis tournament, which was the Indian star's penultimate event of the career. Sania and Bethanie lost to Belgian-German pair Kirsten Flipkens and Laura Siegemund by a 3-6, 4-6 scoreline in the opening round of the women's doubles.

The loss brings six-time Grand Slam winner Sania closer to her retirement as she has announced to hang up her racquets after the Dubai Tennis Championships, which starts on February 27, where another American Madison Keys will be her partner in women's doubles. Interestingly, Sania claimed her first major in 2009 at Melbourne Park, when she

paired up with Mahesh Bhupathi. And she ended her illustrious Grand Slam career at the same venue. From 2009 to 2016, Sania Mirza won six Grand Slam doubles titles - three each in the women's doubles and mixed doubles. In 2015, she even became the world's No. 1 in women's doubles ranking.

"The journey of my professional career started in Melbourne in 2005 when I played Serena Williams in the third round as an 18-year-old," a teary-eyed Sania said after the Australian Open mixed doubles final.

"That was scarily enough 18 years ago and I've had the privilege to come back here again and again and win some titles here.



SAFF U-20 WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

India lose lead and match against Nepal

Dhaka | Agencies

The India U-20 Women's National Team are starting down the barrel of elimination from the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship after suffering a 1-3 defeat at the hands of Nepal at the Mostafa Kamal Stadium.

India stands on four points from three games after the Group Stage, while Nepal sit on six points from as many matches. Bangladesh, who are set to play Bhutan later in the day, also sit on four points, and need a draw to



make it to the final.

It was a tale of two halves,

as India started the match on the front foot, but Nepal clawed back in the second half. Apurna Narzary had put India in the lead early on, but a goal each from Anjali Chand, Preeti Rai, and Amisha Karki meant that Nepal secured their spot in the final. It was an error by goalkeeper Anshika that gave the Himalayan nation its first goal. India goalkeeper Anshika tried to clear the ball under some pressure, but hit it straight at Amisha; Chand got on the rebound and put it into an empty net.

Nepal kept troubling the Indian midfield, and was soon awarded a penalty after Astam Oraon was deemed to have made a dangerous tackle inside the box in the 69th minute. Captain Preeti Rai stepped up to the spot and slammed it home despite the fact that Anshika had dived in the correct direction.

Amisha Karki secured the win for Nepal with just a minute of regulation time left, when she tapped in a low cross by Preeti Rai, to make the score 3-1 in Nepal's favour.

SA20

JOBURG SUPER KINGS OVERWHELM MI CAPE TOWN

Johannesburg | Agencies

The Joburg Super Kings romped to a convincing 76-run victory and a bonus point against MI Cape Town in SA20 at the Wanderers as they maintained their momentum in the build-up to the semifinals.

The big defeat ended MI Cape Town's season, on a disappointing note. The Newlands-based team were already eliminated from the competition before the clash against the Super Kings but slipped to yet another defeat to finish at the bottom of the points table.

Simon Katich's team will rue a couple of last-over finishes that could have changed the complexion of the season, but ultimately they will have to ponder about how they



are going to improve next season.

The Joburg Super Kings, meanwhile, can look forward to their upcoming semi-final with confidence.

The victory was set up by Leus de Plooy's 81 not out which powered the home team to 189/6 in their 20 overs. Du Plooy received solid support from Australian T20 World Cup winner Matthew Wade, who carved out 40 off just 18 balls.

MI Cape Town had started well with the ball by picking up three wickets in the Powerplay through George Linde (1-16) and Sam Curran (2-26).

MI Cape Town's reply, however, stuttered from the start with none of their batters being able to capitalise on a good start. Rassie van der Dussen made 20, while Grant

Roelofsen managed 21.

Young Dewald Brevis fought a lone hand at the backend of the innings, but ultimately the Super Kings' bowling and fielding were too good for MI Cape Town on the night.

The Super Kings entrenched their second position on the Betway SA20 table with 27 points - equal to that of the table-topping Pretoria Capitals who have a superior net run rate.

Brief scores: Joburg Super Kings 189/6 in 20 overs (Leus du Plooy 81 not out, Matthew Wade 40; Sam Curran 2-26, Jofra Archer 2-35) beat MI Cape Town 113 all out in 17.5 overs (Dewald Brevis 27; Kyle Simmonds 3-23, Gerald Coetzee 3-27, Maheesh Theekshana 2-16) by 76 runs.

Aaron Finch retires from international cricket

Melbourne | Agencies

Aaron Finch, who led Australia to their first ICC Men's T20 World Cup title in 2021, called time on his international cricket career.

Finch, Australian Men's T20 Captain, announced his retirement from all international cricket, 12 years after making his debut.

Having retired from One-Day Internationals in September 2022 after playing 146 matches, Finch has now decided to step away from T20 Internationals after playing 103 matches, where he averaged 34.28 at a strike rate of 142.5. He also played five Test matches in 2018.

"Realising that I won't be playing on until the next T20 World Cup in 2024 now is the right moment to step down and give the team time to plan and build towards that event," Finch told reporters at the MCG. "I also want to say a huge thank you to all the fans that have supported me throughout my international career."

Finch first represented Australia in the U19 World Cup in 2006 -- alongside current internationals Usman Khawaja, Matthew Wade and David Warner. Renowned for his power at the top of the order, Finch's 172 off 76 balls against Zimbabwe in 2018 remains the highest individual score in T20 Internationals. At the time, this innings broke his own record of 156 of 63 balls against England in 2013.

Finch will continue to play in T20 domestic competitions, including the KFC Big Bash League.

"Team success is what you play the game for and the maiden T20 World Cup win in 2021 and lifting the ODI World Cup on home soil in 2015 will be the two memories I cherish the most.

"To be able to represent Australia for 12 years and play with and against some of the greatest players of all time has been an incredible honour," Finch added.





Samantha's mythological drama to get a new release date

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shaakuntalam, Samantha Ruth Prabhu's highly anticipated upcoming mythological film, has been postponed yet again. Yes, the film was supposed to come out this month, on February 17. However, the makers issued a statement announcing that Shaakuntalam has been postponed and that a new release date will be announced very soon.

The film's producers took to twitter to announce that Shaakuntalam will not be released on February 17. According to the statement, "we regret to inform our beloved audience that we would not be able to release shaakuntalam this 17th of february, we would be announcing the release date soon. Thank you for your continued support and love." The post was shared with the caption, "The theatrical release of Shaakuntalam stands postponed. The new release date will be announced soon."

Samantha has begun filming for her upcoming film, Citadel India, in which she will co-star with Varun Dhawan. The filming of Kushi, which had been halted due to Samantha Ruth Prabhu's health issues, has recently resumed. Kushi, directed by Shiva Nirvana, is the director's second collaboration with Arjun Reddy star Vijay Deverakonda. The film is set to be released very soon.

Nushratt Bharuccha shares sneak-peek of her upcoming movie

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Bollywood actress Nushratt Bharuccha, who has been in the news for her film 'Chhorii 2', is all set to headline another solo lead project titled 'Akelli'.

The actress also shared a sneak-peek into the shooting of 'Akelli' on her social media. In the picture shared on her social media, the actress' reflection can be seen in the camera lens. A clapper board is also seen in the frame just beneath the lens hood. She wrote on the picture, "lights, camera".

Meanwhile on the work front, she will be next seen sharing the screen with Akshay Kumar and Emraan Hashmi in the upcoming film 'Selfiee'.

The film is the Hindi adaptation of the Malayalam film 'Driving Licence' which starred Prithviraj Sukumaran. The Malayalam star is also the co-producer on 'Selfiee'.

In addition, Nushratt is also shooting for 'Chhorii 2'.

MADHURI IS PLEASED WITH THE RESPONSE, HER FILM RECEIVED FROM THE JURY

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Bollywood actress Madhuri Dixit, and Shiram Nene's second production "Panchak" had its screening recently in the competition section at the ongoing Pune International Film Festival (PIFF), and they are pleased with the response that the film received from the jury.

The film, shot in Konkan, is a dark comedy and deals with the fear of superstition and death. The film features an ensemble cast of the finest artistes from Marathi film, television, and stage, and is shot in picturesque Konkan.

About the response to the film at the fest, Madhuri and Nene, in a joint statement, said: "We were humbled and elated with the response we received at the screening at the festival." "When we originally heard the script, we immediately knew we had to produce the film. The content attracted us and we are sure the audiences will love the film."

Directed by Jayant Jathar and Rahul Awate, the film, an RNM Moving Pictures production, stars Adinath Kothare, Tejashri Pradhan, Anand Ingale, Nandita Patkar, Bharati Acharekar, Vidyadhar Joshi, Satish Alekar, Sagar Talashikar, Dipti Devi and Ashish Kulkarni.



Divyenndu and Isha teamed up again for the new song

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Actors Divyenndu and Isha Talwar, who swayed the audience with their chemistry in the crime-thriller series 'Mirzapur' have teamed up again for the new song 'Kashni' from the musical wedding series titled 'The Marigold Project'.

Sharing her thoughts on the album launch, Isha Talwar said: "The Marigold Project' covers the entire spectrum of a typical Indian wedding beautifully - from haldi to bidaai, it's all there! I've waited to collaborate with Divyenndu on a fun project and this one felt right." Singer Asees Kaur said: "I'm

thrilled to be a part of this unique musical experience with Akshay & IP! Kashni and Maaye Ni are timeless songs with rich lyrics, and compositions that will stay with listeners forever. But it's hard to pick a favourite! I loved the soulful 'Jee Aayan Nu' and the upbeat 'Vibe Cute Badi' as well! I hope this album becomes a part of memories in every wedding celebration."

Rashmeet Kaur said: "The songs in The Marigold Project truly capture the essence of a wedding and

the emotions that come with it. I'm excited to be a part of this fantastic ensemble alongside Asees, Akshay & IP. Nikki Jehi Sui is a one-of-a-kind folk song with modern production, which brings back my childhood memories from family weddings, but with a new age twist! Vibe Cute Badi is a big wedding banger waiting to happen! Wedding season, wait for us."



SWARA BHASKER IS SET TO PORTRAY NINE CHARACTERS IN HER UPCOMING FILM

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Bollywood actress Swara Bhasker, who is known for films like 'Raanjhanaa', 'Anaarkali of Aarah', 'Veere Di Wedding' and several others, is set to portray nine characters in her upcoming film. The actress has replicated the vintage fashion from the yesteryear for her upcoming film 'Mrs. Falani' in which she will be seen in nine varied avatars pulling off 9 different characters. The characters range between 30 to 42 years and shall belong to 9 different states.

Sharing her experience, Swara said: "Mrs. Falani' is going to be the most challenging film of my life. Undoubtedly, it is every actor's dream to play so many different characters in one film. I am amazed at learning the intricacies that range from home-maker to home-maker every ten miles. I am really stoked about it!" Interestingly, Swara shall be playing a home-maker representing different states such as Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab apart from others and reportedly, Swara has also got her nose pierced for the film. Earlier, Priyanka Chopra too has pulled off a similar feat as she played 12 characters in the rom-com 'what's Your Raashee?' The film, which also starred PC's then rumoured beau Harman Baweja, received positive response for its music. For its storytelling and direction? Not so much.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Ankita Sharma