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## SUPREME COURT SEEKS SEBI'S RESPONSE ON HINDENBURG REPORT

# Need Robust Regulatory

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday observed that there is a need for a robust regulatory framework to protect the interest of the investors and if Centre agrees, a committee may be set up to suggest regulatory improvements.

The Supreme Court said this while hearing a plea seeking a direction to set up a committee monitored by a retired apex court judge to investigate the Hindenburg Research report, which resulted in crashing of Adani group company share prices and caused massive loss to small investors. During the hearing, the bench noted that the point that really "bothers us is how do we protect the interest of the Indian investors?"

A bench headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and comprising Justices P.S. Narasimha and J.B. Pardiwala, in its order, noted that the court has indicated to Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing Sebi, its concern in connection with ensuring that regulatory mechanism within the country is duly strengthened so that Indian investors could be protected against sudden volatility which has been witnessed in recent weeks. The bench noted that Sebi's response can contain the relevant causal factors, and the need for putting into place a robust mechanism to protect investors.

It further added that if the Centre is ready to accept the suggestion, the necessary recommendation of the committee may be made and a brief note on legal and factual matrix may be filed by the Solicitor General by Monday.



### OPPN REITERATES JPC DEMAND ON ADANI ISSUE

New Delhi: The Opposition on Friday in the Parliament reiterated its demand for a probe into the Adani Group by the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). The group has been accused by a US firm in its report of stock manipulation and accounting fraud.

As soon as the proceedings began on Friday at the Upper House, the Opposition MPs started raising slogans. Both the Opposition and Treasury benches indulged in sloganeering during the Opposition MPs' address in the House.

Slogans such as "Modi-Modi" and "We want JPC" were raised.

The MPs of the Opposition parties, including the Congress, reached the Well of the House, and raised slogans when their demands were not met.

### GOOGLE'S PLEA TO MODIFY ORDER DECLINED

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea by Google seeking modification of the court's January 19 order, and asked the tech giant to raise its objections before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).

In January, the apex court had declined to entertain a plea by Google challenging an NCLAT order, which refused to stay operation of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) order imposing Rs 1,337.76 crore fine on the tech giant.

During the hearing on Friday, a bench headed by Chief Justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud, made it clear to senior advocate Maninder Singh, representing Google, that no clarification is required in this matter.

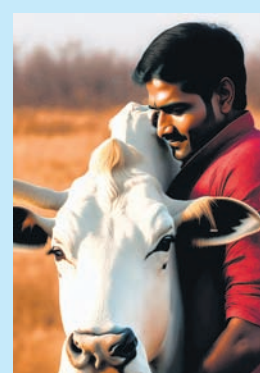
### SC JUNKS PLEA FOR BAN ON BBC

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday declined to entertain a PIL filed by Hindu Sena seeking a ban on the BBC for airing the documentary, 'India: The Modi Question' on the 2002 Gujarat riots. The bench, also queried senior advocate, representing the petitioner, "Completely misconceived, how can this be argued also? You want us to put complete censorship..."

The court also declined a request to tag the petition with a pending joint petition by journalist N. Ram, advocate Prashant Bhusan and Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra and another one by advocate Manohar Lal Sharma.

Earlier, this month the top court, acting on pleas of N.Ram and others, had asked the Centre to produce original records related to its decision to block the BBC documentary on PM Modi.

Dismissing the plea, the top court said, "Let us not waste any more time, Writ is entirely misconceived. it has no merit..."



### NO 'COW HUG DAY' ON 14TH: GOVERNMENT

New Delhi: After all-round criticism, the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) on Friday withdrew its appeal to celebrate February 14 as 'Cow Hug Day'.

February 14 is observed as 'Valentine's Day' across the world.

In a notice, the board's Secretary S.K. Dutta said, "As directed by the competent authority and the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, the appeal issued by the Animal Welfare Board of India for celebration of Cow Hug Day on February 14 stands withdrawn."

The AWBI had earlier issued a notice appealing to celebrate February 14 as 'Cow Hug Day', saying that it will bring "emotional richness" and increase "individual and collective happiness".

"Cow is known as 'Kamdhenu' and 'Gaumata' because of its nourishing nature like mother, the giver of all providing riches to humanity," the notice had said.

## CONGRESS MP RAJANI PATIL SUSPENDED FROM RS FOR RECORDING HOUSE PROCEEDINGS



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday suspended Congress MP Rajani Patil from the House for the remaining part of the Budget Session on grounds of parliamentary misconduct.

The Congress leader was suspended after tweeting a video from inside the House wherein opposition MPs could be seen protesting against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's response to the Motion of Thanks on Thursday.

Taking a 'serious view' of the matter, Dhankhar called it an 'unwholesome activity' on her part.

"In public domain yesterday, on Twitter, there was a

dissemination of a video relating to proceedings of this House. Rajani Ashokrao Patil was engaged in this unwholesome activity and what has been seen is a matter that must engage our attention," the Rajya Sabha Chairman said.

Dhankhar said that the Parliament is the ultimate authority for making rules, and no other external agencies will be involved in the investigation. The matter will be probed by the Privileges Committee.

"The entire matter will be probed by the Privileges Committee and till we have the benefit of the recommendation of the committee for consideration of this august House, Patil is suspended for the current session," he said.

## India's small rocket SSLV-D2 lifts off with earth observation satellite

Sriharikota (Andhra Pradesh) | Agencies

India's new rocket Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV-D2) on Friday morning lifted off with an earth observation satellite-07 (EOS-07) weighing 156.3 kg.

Piggybacking on that are two other satellites -- 10.2 kg Janus-1 belonging to ANTARIS of the US and 8.7 kg AzaadiSat-2 belonging to Space Kidz India, Chennai.

The SSLV-D2 is carrying a total weight of 175.2 kg.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has developed SSLV with a carrying capacity of 500 kg to the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) based on the market trend of going in for smaller satellites.

As to the mission's objectives, ISRO said it is to demonstrate the designed payload capability of SSLV in



LEO and injection of three satellites -- EOS-07, Janus-1 and AzaadiSAT-2 -- into the 450 km circular orbit.

With the new rocket in its portfolio, ISRO will have three rockets -- Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and its variants (cost about Rs 200 crore), Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV MkII cost about Rs 272

crore and LVMS Rs 434 crore) and SSLV (Development cost of three rockets about Rs 56 crore each) and production cost may go down later.

The SSLV's maiden flight -- SSLV-D1- on August 7, 2022 was a failure as the rocket had put the two satellites -- EOS-01 and AZAADISAT -- in a wrong orbit resulting in their loss.

## EVM-VVPAT IS NOT CONNECTED TO ANY NETWORK AT ANY STAGE OF ELECTION PROCESS

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India has informed that EVM-VVPAT is not connected to any network at any stage of the election process. Symbol Loading Unit (SLU), designed specifically to load candidates' details onto VVPATs, is used during time of Commissioning (Preparation) in the presence of candidates or their representatives to load the details, said the Ministry of Law and Justice in a reply on Friday.

EVMS and VVPATs are randomised twice prior to the stage of Commissioning. SLU, a secure device belonging to the EVM/VVPAT system, loads contesting candidates' data like names, serial numbers and symbols into the VVPATs at the time of Commissioning, informed the Ministry.

The symbol or candidate details getting loaded onto VVPATs are also displayed in a real time basis on a bigger screen or monitor for the candidates and representatives to simultaneously verify. The Commissioning is carried out after the last date of withdrawal of the candidates, in the presence of candidates/their representatives. Only the authorised engineers of BEL or ECIL, the two PSU manufacturers of EVMS and VVPAT's, are associated in the Commissioning process, said the reply.

## NEET-PG to be held on March 5: Health Minister

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test- Postgraduate (NEET PG 2023) will be conducted as per the schedule date on March 5, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya informed the Lok Sabha on Friday.

Mandaviya said that the decision to not postpone NEET PG 2023 has been taken to streamline the process to avoid further delay in the exam and counselling process caused due to COVID-19. The Minister was replying to a question by Congress member Gaurav Gogoi. "It is important to prevent delays caused due to COVID-19 and hence I have informed the students' delegation about why the exam



will not be rescheduled," he said, adding that earlier examinations were delayed by seven to eight months and later by four months. If I keep on delaying, such a situation will come.... It is very necessary to fix it and to conduct the entrance test on time".

"To ensure that no one is left out, the ministry has extended the cut-off date for all those MBBS students who

are yet to complete their internship. The government has recently extended the internship cut-off date to August 11, 2023, so that no students across the country are ineligible to appear for the exam. Secondly, students were informed about five months earlier that the NEET PG exam 2023 will be held on March 5," the health minister said.

## Delhi HC seeks police report on sale and supply of 'banned' Chinese manjha

Team Absolute | New Delhi

On account of supply of 'Chinese manjha' (kite string) even after its ban, the Delhi High Court on Friday directed the Police Crime Branch to submit a comprehensive status report investigating the manufacturers and importers supplying the material to the traders. A single-judge bench of Justice Prathiba M. Singh, who was dealing with a bunch of similar pleas while seeking status of all the related FIRs in the city, also sought details of the marketers still selling the manjha. Justice Singh said that the report also has to state whether any legal action has been taken against the public, such as Tehsildars and SDMs, who have a responsibility to carry



out the orders prohibiting the sale and production of Chinese manjha.

"Let the compliance of the directions be carried within six weeks," the court said.

To the Arvind Kejriwal-led government, the judge directed to again alert the Police, DMs, SDMs, Tehsildars, and other officials of the ban on Chinese manjha. The court further ordered Delhi Police to determine if it would be feasible to issue an advisory regarding the usage of plastic guards on bikes to protect riders from Chinese manjha. The court directed the government to file a further affidavit about the award of compensation to petitioners. The court listed the matter to continue on April 12.

- The study, which involved 88 scientists from 34 research institutes of the country, has been published in the prestigious science journal -- International Journal of Infectious Diseases (IJID).
- The research suggests that the difference between the official numbers of infection and the actual possible infections, could be due to high number of asymptomatic cases which were never reported.
- The study relied on mathematical modelling to arrive at assessment.

## Covid cases in India could be 17 times more: Study

Team Absolute | Varanasi

A study by scientists of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has claimed that the actual number of Covid-19 cases in India, including unreported and asymptomatic, could be 17 times more than the official figure of 4.5 crore.

The study was led by BHU geneticist Prof Gyaneshwer Chaubey of the department of Zoology, Institute of Science.

The team of scientists conducted serosurvey (antibody testing) among 2,301 individuals in urban areas of 14 districts in six states from September-December 2020.

Prof Chaubey said that the most striking aspect of this study was that



a large proportion of the Indian population was asymptomatic for Covid-19 and the age group 26-35 had the maximum number of asymptomatic people.

The researchers suggested that an antibody test in people after any Covid wave, accurately assesses the actual infection.

Thus, adopting the same process, the team conducted this research among a large number of people (street vendors) living in urban areas from 14 Indian districts who were most at risk of coronavirus infection.

The samples were taken of only those who self-reported that they never had any Covid-19 symptoms or positive RT-PCR test.

The minimum proportion of antibody-positive people was observed in Raipur, Chhattisgarh (2 per cent), while maximum proportion of antibody-positive persons was found in Ghazipur (47 per cent) in Uttar Pradesh.

Prof Chaubey said value should be viewed with caution, keeping in mind the limited geographical coverage of the study.



# 'NOT FREEBIES BUT SOCIAL SECURITY', GEHLOT ANNOUNCES RS 25L HEALTHCARE SCHEME, OPS

Jaipur | Agencies

After presenting the state Budget and announcing sops for the public, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said on Friday that the schemes announced are part of social security, and not freebies, as he announced old pension scheme (OPS) for almost all the serving and retired employees in the state.

The Chiranjiwi Yojna healthcare scheme has been increased to Rs 25 lakh per family and it is for every citizen of the state which will be available in empanelled private hospitals, Gehlot said.

"People understand that this is not for elections," Gehlot said.

The Chief Minister said the aim of the government is to provide social security and that is why LPG cylinder will be provided for Rs 500 which will benefit 76 lakh families.

The children of Covid victims will get government jobs when they attain the age, the CM said.

The state government also announced free electricity of 100 unit



to all domestic consumers.

"My focus is on people, not elections," he said.

The Budget also announced relaxation on other taxes and stamp duty, including relaxation in electricity duty

on solar energy from 60 paise per unit to 40 paise per unit. This will also benefit net metering consumers on residential buildings along with other consumers.

One-time tax on four-wheeler

# NCP to Centre: If all is well, why do lakhs of citizens 'quit India' every year?

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on Friday asked the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government at the Centre that if it claims all is well in the country, "why are so many citizens leaving India".

NCP spokesperson Clyde Crasto's sharp reaction came a day after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar released year-wise data on the number of Indians who have renounced their citizenship and taken up the nationalities of around 135 countries worldwide.

"If everything is indeed going well in India, according to the BJP-led Union government, why are people renouncing their Indian citizenship," Crasto asked.

Responding to a question in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, Jaishankar provided a year-wise break-up of the number of Indians who have left the country forever.

The minister informed the



Parliament that over 16 lakh Indians have renounced their Indian citizenship since 2011, including a whopping 225,620 in 2022 alone averaging around 618 per day and went on to acquire citizenship of 135 other countries ranging from Albania to the US, the UK, Vatican and Zimbabwe.

For reference purposes, Jaishankar even provided the data of pre-2014 and post-2014 or before and after the BJP government came to power at the Centre.

The NCP leader suspects that Jaishankar was trying to insinuate that the number of those who gave up citizenship over the years was more or less the same. "One must note that the government data shows that the highest num-

ber of Indians gave up citizenship in 2021, the most in the past decade," Crasto pointed out, citing official statistics.

Attempting to corner the BJP, Crasto said that now the government should also disclose the data on unemployment, inflation, GDP, and the price of fuel in comparison to crude oil prices, pre-and-post 2014. "The BJP-led Central government is constantly harping on how our country has progressed and prospered only after they came to power in 2014," he said.

The NCP leader said that if the BJP's proclamations are indeed genuine, the trend should be reversed Indians settled around the world should be flocking back to their motherland in huge numbers. However, Crasto said the government will not part with the other relevant data, because the stark reality is "Indians are giving up their citizenship and leaving due to high unemployment here, which led to our downfall in many areas."

## Associate of Canada-based terrorist Linda arrested in Punjab

Chandigarh | Agencies

Punjab Police have arrested an associate of Canada-based terrorist Lakhbir Singh, a.k.a. Linda, and his three aides after recovering four pistols along with ammunition from their possession, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said on Friday.

The arrested accused has been identified as Vijay Kumar, a.k.a. Toti, while his three aides have been identified as Amardeep Singh, Sooraj Singh and Rahul Lahoch, all residents of Jalandhar.

The main accused, Vijay, has been facing 18 criminal cases pertaining to drugs, illegal weapons, kidnapping and extortion.



DGP Yadav said that acting on input that accused Vijay along with his gang members were hatching a conspiracy to commit crime in Kartarpur area, teams from Jalandhar Rural promptly conducted a special drive in Durgi area of Jalandhar and arrested all four accused persons, who were travelling on two motor-

cycles.

He said the police have recovered four pistols, including two .32 bore country-made pistols along with 10 cartridges, one 9 mm country-made pistol along with two cartridges and one .12 bore country-made pistol along with one cartridge from their possession.

## CASH RECOVERY FROM CAR: POLICE SUSPECTS INTER-STATE HAWALA LINK

Kolkata | Agencies

Kolkata: A day after recovering Rs 1 crore unaccounted cash from a vehicle, the Kolkata police suspects that a major inter-state hawala link is operating from the city.

A joint team of Anti-Rowdy Squad (ARS) and special task force (STF) of the city police recovered this unaccounted cash from the boot of a vehicle on Thursday evening.

After detaining and questioning the driver Dulal Roy and the passenger Mukesh Saraswat, the police have identified the owner of the vehicle, Nishith Roy, a businessman by profession.

Interrogation of Dulal Roy and Mukesh Saraswat revealed that the cash was given to them by Nishith Roy, a businessman by profession, for handover to the representatives of another businessman operating out of the city's trading hub of Burrabazar in central Kolkata.

The police are integrating Nishith Roy in the matter to identify the other businessman and to zero in on the source of the recovered cash.



## Allow RSS marches across state: Madras HC tells TN Police

Chennai | Agencies

The Madras High Court has directed the Tamil Nadu Police to allow the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to hold route marches on public roads in the state.

Quashing an earlier order dated November 4, 2022, passed by a single judge restricting the RSS events to their compound limits, the bench comprising Justice R. Mahadevan and Justice Mohammed Shaffiq on Friday noted that a democratic state has the responsibility to uphold the right to freedom of speech and expression of its citizens.

The bench directed the RSS to propose three dates for the march route and apply for necessary police permits.



While ordering the police to process the RSS application according to the laws, the bench also instructed the RSS to organise the march in a peaceful manner.

## CASTEIST SLUR IN B'LURU COLLEGE FEST SKIT STIRS ROW

Bengaluru | Agencies

The incident of casteist slur made during the presentation of a college skit recently in Bengaluru has triggered a row.

A police complaint has been registered in this connection, while an online petition slamming the organisers is also getting support.

The Delroys Boys', the group of students performing the skit, has tendered an unconditional apology for the presentation. However, the debate over the issue is rising every day.

The incident came to light after a group of students published an online petition on Jhatkaa.org on Thursday evening. The petition stated that the college contingent from Jain University's Centre for Management Studies (CMS) staged an incredibly casteist and insensitive skit at a college fest.

The anonymous petitioners objected to the normalisation of caste discrimination in the pretext of humour. The skit was performed as part of 'Madads', a segment at the fest where the participants had



to advertise imaginary products.

The Delroys Boys', the theatre group from CMS, who are in the thick of the controversy, in their skit exhibited a man belonging to the lower caste attempting to date an upper caste woman. The skit turned B.R. Ambedkar as 'Beer Ambedkar'. It also used the phrase, 'Why be Dalit, when you can be D-Lit'.

Akshay Bansode, member of the Vanchiti Bahujan Yuva Aghadi, has

filed a police complaint in Maharashtra in this matter. The complainant urged the police to treat the complaint as an FIR and initiate action against the performers and the university.

Sources said that the controversial skit was performed at other platforms as well. The 'Delroys Boys' maintained that they are sorry if they spoke ill about some people and apologised for their 'mistake'.

## DELHI MAN BOOKED FOR SUBJECTING HIS WIFE TO CRUELTY

New Delhi: Delhi Police booked a man for allegedly subjecting his wife to cruelty in Rohini district, said an official on Friday.

A senior police official said that on Thursday a woman came to the Aman Vihar police station and gave a complaint alleging cruelty by her husband, a resident of Balbir Vihar.

"Thereafter an NGO counsellor was called and she was counselled. From the contents of the complaint, matter is found to be of matrimonial dispute. Hence, the complaint was forwarded to Crime Against Women (CAW) Cell, Rohini for further legal proceedings," said the official.

"There was no physical injury found to the complainant and she also denied medical examination," said the official.

"The victim's husband has been booked under sections 107 (security for keeping the peace in other cases) and 151 (arrest to prevent the commission of cognizable offences) of the Code Of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) as preventive measure," the official added.

## Sitharaman takes on Cong, Mamata in Lok Sabha

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, during her reply on the discussion on the Union Budget in Lok Sabha on Friday, slammed the Congress and also took on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee while imitating her "chhi-chhi" jibe.

Responding to the Opposition's charge that allocation for minorities' welfare had been reduced, Sitharaman criticised the Congress for the 1983 Nellie (Assam) massacre, when Indira Gandhi was the prime minister.

She took on the Congress by asking "when huge budget allocation was made for minorities that year, how did that incident happen?"

Sitharaman also referred to



the anti-Sikh riots of 1984.

"Nellie chi, chi, chi... What happened in Nellie, that should be condemned with chi, chi, chi just like Mamata Banerjee's poem," she said.

Mamata's 'chhi-chhi' remark was during the agitations against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, in a public rally.

## AIADMK's alliance with BJP to continue for 2024 polls: Palaniswami

Chennai | Agencies

AIADMK's interim general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami said on Friday that AIADMK's alliance with BJP will continue for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Claiming the AIADMK's relationship with the BJP had been cordial, he said that the parties would fight the 2024 polls together.

Talking to reporters in Tirunelveli after campaigning for his party's candidate in the Erode East Assembly by-poll, he played down the controversies about AIADMK and BJP leaders attacking each other on social media.

The AIADMK leader said that each leader would want their party to grow, unlike in the ruling Secular Progressive Alliance, where the partners focused more on the DMK's growth.

The former chief minister also remarked that it was the



AIADMK that had helped so many other parties and not the other way around.

The by-poll in Erode East is scheduled on February 27.

Palaniswami said that he would campaign for the candidate again on February 24 and 25. Exuding confidence that AIADMK will win the by-election, he said the victory would resound in Lok Sabha polls as well.

## Ghaziabad: Action taken against minors riding two-wheelers, 91 vehicles seized

Ghaziabad | Agencies

The Ghaziabad traffic police during a drive against minors riding two-wheelers in the city has registered FIRs against their parents and vehicle owners in various police stations. The police has also seized 91 such vehicles in the last week.

Among the FIRs, 12 have been lodged in Kavinagar police station, 8 in Nandgram, 10 in Kotwali, 4 in Vijay Nagar and 13 in Sahibabad, among others.

Additional DCP Traffic Ramanand Kushwaha had a meeting with the staff before starting the drive.

Kushwaha said that anyone under the age of 18 cannot drive vehicles. In case of such incidents, under section 199 (A) of the Motor Vehicle Act, the registered owner of the vehicle may be punished with a fine of Rs 25,000 or imprisonment for three years and cancellation of the vehicle registration for one year.

He added that there is also a provision of not issuing a license to the juvenile riding the vehicle till the age of 25.

Apart from this, the traffic police is also taking action against those who



drive vehicles without obtaining a license, despite crossing the age of 18.

In such cases, challans have been issued to 149 vehicles.

The traffic police is visiting schools and colleges to make students aware of traffic rules. Kushwaha said that a study on road accidents revealed that a large proportion of minors ride vehicles which is a matter of concern.

## Nagaland Assembly polls: BJP candidate wins unopposed

Kohima | Agencies

BJP candidate in Nagaland Kazheto Kinimi was re-elected unopposed from the Akuluto Assembly constituency after his only opponent and Congress candidate Khokasho Sumi withdrew his candidature on Friday, officials said.

An election official said that Friday was the last day of withdrawal of nominations.

Kinimi's supporters broke into celebrations soon after the 68-year-old BJP candidate was elected unopposed.

He was elected to the state Assembly for the first time in 2018 Assembly polls from the same Akuluto Assembly constituency. After his election to the state assembly for the second time, Kinimi tweeted, "Beyond humbled and honoured to represent the people of Akuluto 31 A/C for a second term, as unopposed. I praise Almighty God for this privilege and extend my grat-



itude to my supporters, well-wishers, the karyakartas of Akuluto BJP mandal and Nagaland state BJP." BJP opened its account in the Nagaland even before the February 27 elections to the 60-member Assembly.



# MUMBAI RANKS 7TH AMONG TOP 10 APAC CITIES IN INVESTOR INTENTIONS SURVEY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai is ranked seventh among the 10 Asia-Pacific (APAC) cities and emerged as a preferred destination for cross-border investment in the region.

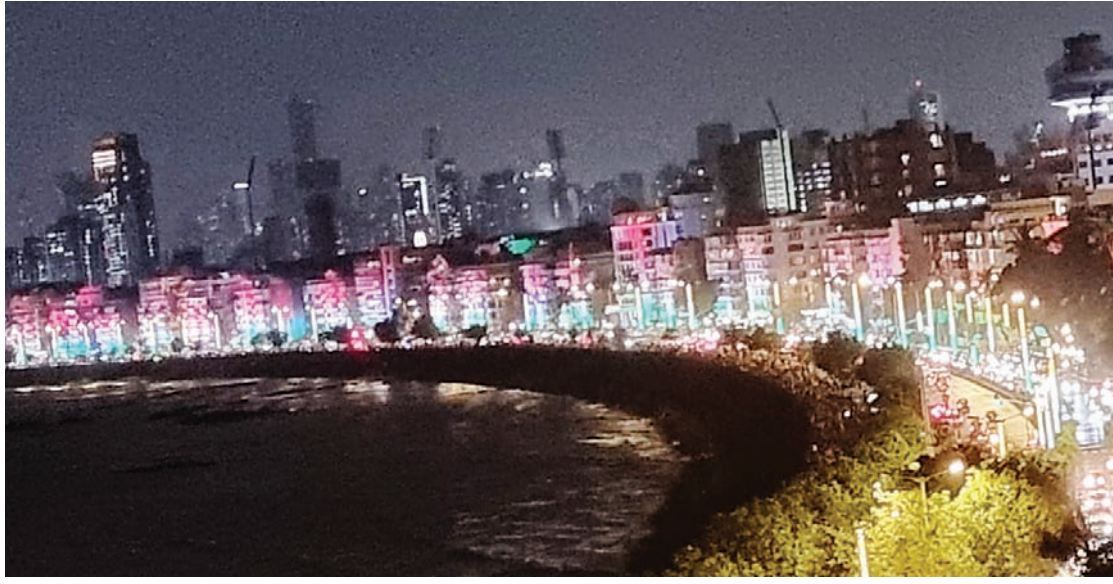
CBRE, the world's leading real estate consulting firm, on Friday announced the findings of its 2023 Asia Pacific Investor Intentions Survey.

According to the survey, Mumbai ranks ahead of Shanghai (ranked #8), Hanoi (ranked #9) and Seoul (ranked #10) on the list. No other Indian city had featured in the list in the last two years.

Tokyo topped the chart for the fourth consecutive year as the target market for cross-border investment, followed by Singapore. Vietnam continues to benefit from its status as a "China-plus One" destination. Mumbai (ranked #7) and Shanghai (ranked #8) continue to be a focus for long-term investors looking to add to their real estate exposure in the world's two biggest emerging economies.

The survey covered all asset classes, finding that nearly one-third (31 per cent) of investors will target opportunistic strategies, distressed assets, and non-performing loans this year to take advantage of current market conditions.

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE said,



"Real estate sector in India has remained resilient throughout 2022. Despite the challenging times, businesses have looked at India as an attractive, resilient, and cost-effective investment destination. The Indian economy is likely to remain a key driver of global growth in 2023. Investment activity in real estate surged to an all-time high in 2022, with Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, cumulatively accounting for 56 per cent of the investments in 2022. We expect Capital flows likely to remain steady in 2023."

Henry Chin, Global Head of

Investor Thought Leadership & Head of Research, Asia Pacific, CBRE said, "Industrial and logistics continues to be the most preferred asset class for Asia Pacific investors, followed by office and residential. The survey finds that core investors still opt for offices as their top choice. Investors are showing much stronger interest in the residential sector, especially multifamily/built to rent. We expect yields to expand further across all asset classes in 2023."

As per the survey, more than 60 per cent of investors expect to find

discounts in retail and Grade A offices in 2023. Despite logistics being the most preferred asset class, only 11 per cent of the investors are willing to bid above the asking price this year, compared to 35 per cent in 2022.

Greg Hyland, Head of Capital Markets, Asia Pacific, CBRE, said, "Despite healthy fundraising levels, most investors are adopting a cautious approach as they look for signs of yield expansion and the interest rate tightening cycle to stabilize. We expect investment activity to accelerate in the year's second half."

# PM Modi flags off two Vande Bharat trains, launches Mumbai infra projects

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off two new Vande Bharat Express trains linking Mumbai with Solapur and Sainagar Shirdi, amid cheers and clapping from the passengers and the audiences, here on Friday afternoon.

Landing here this afternoon at the INS Shikra, the Prime Minister drove to the World Heritage Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus and showed the green flag to the two swank new trains.

Later, PM Modi e-inaugurated the Vakola-Kurla and MTNL-Lal Bahadur Shastri elevated corridor arms of the Santacruz-Chembur Link Road, a critical east-west connector.

He also pressed the button to open a new vehicular underpass in Kurar village in north-Mumbai's Malad suburb connecting the Western Express Highway to ease traffic congestion in that area besides linking Kurar with Malad station.

The two Vande Bharat Express trains -- the 9th and 10th in the series -- will connect major pilgrimage centres in Maharashtra and give a fillip to the religious tourism circuit, officials explained.

The Mumbai-Solapur Vande Bharat train will transport pilgrims to the famed temples and religious sites of Siddheshwar, Akkalkot, Tuljapur, Pandharpur and even Alandi in the vicinity. Similarly, the Mumbai-Sainagar Shirdi Vande Bharat train will serve devotees going to Trimbakeshwar, Shirdi's Saibaba Temple, Shani Singanapur, and other impor-



tant locations in that region, besides the Kumbh Mela held in Nashik every 12 years, the next due in 2027.

Earlier, the PM was accorded a warm welcome by Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis, other ministers and senior officials.

This is PM Modi's second visit to Mumbai in three weeks, the previous one being on January 19, when he inaugurated or dedicated or laid foundation stones of infrastructure projects worth over Rs 38,000 crore, besides flagging off the Mumbai Metro Line 2 and Line 7.

The PM's two visits at a short interval are viewed as setting the stage for the upcoming BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections that are likely to be announced soon.

THE ONE-WAY FARE WITHOUT CATERING SERVICE ON THE CSMT-SOLAPUR VANDE BHARAT TRAIN WILL BE RS 1,000 FOR CHAIR CAR AND RS 2,015 FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIR CAR, WHILE THE FARES FOR THE TWO CLASSES WITH CATERING WILL BE RS 1,300 AND RS 2,365, RESPECTIVELY. A CR OFFICIAL SAID. THE ONE-WAY JOURNEY TICKET WITHOUT CATERING SERVICE FOR CSMT TO SAINAGAR SHIRDI WILL BE RS 840 AND RS 1670 FOR CHAIR CAR AND EXECUTIVE CHAIR CAR, RESPECTIVELY, WHILE THE TICKET PRICES WITH CATERING SERVICE WILL BE RS 975 AND RS 1840, RESPECTIVELY.

# SRK's wrist watch in new video is worth more than Rs 4.5 crore

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, who is basking in the success of his record-setting spy action thriller 'Pathaan', recently featured in a video with Deepika Padukone and the Internet is going gaga over his timepiece.

In the video, which Deepika shot prior to the 'Pathaan' media interaction, SRK can be seen doing the skincare routine with Deepika but what has caught the audience's attention is the watch that SRK is wearing in the video.

Netizens point out that watch is from Audemars Piguet. It is their Royal Oak Perpetual Calendar watch that is worth a whopping Rs 4.98 crore.

SRK is known to be a horophile and his love for watches is unparalleled. Earlier, during a show, SRK's 'Jab Tak Hai Jaan' co-star



Anushka Sharma had spoken about SRK's love for timepieces. She had mentioned that she would like to steal the superstar's watch collection. Shah Rukh Khan's most prized possession remains his sea-facing home Mannat. It is worth a massive Rs 200 crore. He also has a luxurious home in Delhi. Shah Rukh also has a BMW 6 series, a BMW 7 series, an Audi and other cars.

# AICC'S H.K. PATIL COMING TO FIRE-FIGHT CONGRESS CRISIS IN MAHARASHTRA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a damage-control move, AICC's Maharashtra in-charge H.K. Patil will come for a two-day visit to Mumbai on Sunday and attempt to defuse the ongoing crisis boiling over in Maharashtra Congress, officials said here on Friday.

Patil is expected to hold separate meetings with state President Nana Patole and senior leader Balasaheb Thorat - who recently quit as the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader - besides other top leaders to gauge the political situation first-hand.

The political upheavals rocked the state Congress ahead of the MLC elections in January, specifically linked with the Nashik Graduates Constituency, where the official party nominee, Sudhir Tambe, suddenly



stepped down in favour of his son Satyajee Tambe.

As the party tried to grapple with the situation, Satyajee Tambe - a nephew of Thorat - won the seat as an independent, trouncing Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) nominee Shubhangi Patil.

The Congress also got engaged in a fresh war of words with its MVA ally, Shiv Sena (UBT), after the latter blamed Patole's resignation as Speaker two years ago for triggering the crisis in the MVA which led to its collapse in June 2022.

Besides the Sena (UBT), even some

Congressmen like Vijay Wadetiwar have pointed fingers at Patole for his 'hasty' decision to quit as Speaker following his appointment as state party President, but the state unit has chucked the allegations to rally behind Patole.

Patil will take a review of the party's 'Hath Se Hath Jodo' campaign in meetings with Patole and Mumbai unit President Bhai Jagtap.

The Congress top brass is led to be in touch with prominent state leaders such as ex-CMs Sushilkumar Shinde, Ashok Chavan, Prithviraj Chavan, several ex-ministers and other party veterans. The AICC has taken the current crisis seriously in view of the upcoming civic elections in Maharashtra, besides the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls scheduled next year, and is keen to resolve it amicably, said a senior Congress leader.

# Flight delayed, 170 passengers spend 13 hours at Mumbai Airport

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As many as 170 passengers of an Air India Express flight to Dubai had a tough time at the airport here as the flight was delayed by 13 hours due to a technical snag.

The flight, which was scheduled to take off for Dubai at 3 pm on Thursday, finally left at 4 am on Friday.

In a statement, Tata Group-owned Air India Express said it provided assistance to some 50 passengers, who had special requirements, including the lounge facility.

However, the remaining 120 passengers were kept at the airport terminal building, an airline source said. A total of 170 passengers were booked for the flight. Significantly, Tata Group operates at least four luxury hotels in



the city with one in the domestic airport terminal premises itself. "Air India Express flight IX 247 on

Mumbai-Dubai route on February 9, 2023 had a progressive delay due to a technical snag, which was beyond the

control of the airline," the airline said.

"We made all possible efforts to minimise the difficulties of our guests, dinner was given to all guests, followed by continuous refreshments. Airport lounge facilities were provided to 50 guests who required special assistance and support," the statement said.

According to the source, there was an engineering related issue with the aircraft and the maintenance team said the aircraft will be worthy by 7 pm. So, accordingly the airline announced the revised schedule of 7 pm but later, it was identified that it was a progressive delay as the aircraft had to be replaced, the source added.

Since there were no spare aircraft available in Mumbai, the airline had to wait for the arrival of plane operating Jeddah-Mumbai flight.

# Case against 3 'Pujaris' for Ice on Shivling at Nashik Temple

Team Absolute | Nashik

A police case has been filed against three persons in connection with the appearance of ice in the shape of a 'linga' in the renowned Trimbakeshwar Temple in Maharashtra's Nashik in June last year, which a probe committee has now proclaimed as a hoax.

Videos of the 'linga' shaped ice, which first appeared on June 30, 2022, soon went viral on social media, though experts as well as anti-superstition activists questioned the timing, as it was summer, and lack of conducive climatic conditions for such ice formation. A probe by a committee set up by the temple trust into the incident, which took place when the Amarnath



Yatra was underway, checked CCTV footage and zeroed in on three 'pujaris' who were allegedly involved, a functionary said.

"The three pujaris had kept the ice piece on the shivling and circulated a video of it. They allegedly carried out this act to time it with the opening of the Amarnath cave shrine (in Jammu and Kashmir) so as to attract devotees here as well," temple trustee Prashant

Gaidhani said. He explained that "purohits" carry out rituals and prayers at the temple, whereas "pujaris" are involved in maintenance and management of the sanctum sanctorum, including cleaning 'nirmalya'.

Based on a complaint filed by temple liaison official Rashvi Jadhav, three pujaris were booked on February 8 for offences committed at a place of worship, cheating and conspiracy, a Trimbakeshwar police station official said.

No arrest has been made in the case and further probe was underway, the official added. Trimbakeshwar, located at the mouth of the Godavari, is one of the 12 'jyotirlings' in the country.

# Interstate gang targeting citizens at ATMs busted in Maharashtra

Team Absolute | Palghar

The Mira Bhayandar-Vasai Virar (MBVV) police in Maharashtra have detected 16 cases with the arrest of four persons who distracted people at ATM centres and stole their money, an official said on Thursday.

The MBVV police have recovered a car, cash and mobile phones worth Rs 5.28 lakh from the interstate gang apart from seizing 94 ATM cards, said Suhas Bavche, deputy commissioner of police-zone II, Virar.

The arrests came on the complaint of a man who was targeted at an ATM near Santosh Bhuvan in Nalasopara, on the outskirts of Mumbai, on December 9 last year. The man told the police that four persons kept him engrossed in talks,



replaced his ATM card with a fake one and withdrew 40,000 from his account, said the official.

Working on surveillance camera footage and other leads, the Pelhar police in Palghar district found that the four are from Ulhasnagar near Mumbai, but they had gone into hiding. The gang members changed their mobile numbers and moved to Daman, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh to evade

police, he said.

In the last week of January, the police learnt about the gang's return to Maharashtra. They were arrested at Shirpur in Dhule district, said the official.

The police identified them as Vicky Salve (32), Vicky Wankhede (22), Anil Veldode (29), and Vaibhav Mahadik (34). Their interrogation helped the police detect 16 cases in the Mumbai region, Nanded and Madhya Pradesh, said the official.

# MAHA JOURNALISTS TO PROTEST AGAINST ALLEGED MURDER OF COLLEAGUE

Team Absolute | Ratnagiri

Journalist associations of Maharashtra will protest across the state outside Tehsil and district headquarters with black armbands against the alleged murder of a journalist on February 7.

"On 10th February, Journalists will protest across Maharashtra at their respective places outside Tehsil or District HQs with Black armbands. And then they will give a memorandum to Tehsildar or Collector."

TVJA, Mumbai press club, Mumbai Marathi Patrakar Sangh, BNP (Bombay news photographer association), and Mumbai crime reporter association will be holding the protest today. Marathi journalist, Shashikant Warishe was killed in a road accident, hours after his against the proposed Nanar refinery in Ratnagiri was published following the arrest of an office-bearer of a group backing the refinery was arrested.

On Monday, journalist Warishe was standing near a petrol pump on the Rajapur highway when the accused allegedly ran him over with his car.



The vehicle reportedly dragged Warishe for several meters under the wheels before coming to a halt, the police said. "When people rushed to help, the accused fled from the spot and Warishe was lying unconscious on the road. He was taken to a local hospital for treatment but succumbed to

his injuries on Tuesday morning," he added. Recently, Warishe carried a report describing Ambekar as a 'criminal' and highlighted photographs where he is seen in the same frame with the Chief Minister and Prime Minister. mbekar, a leader of the local land mafia, was known to threaten

and harass those who resisted any land acquisition on behalf of the upcoming refinery.

Ratnagiri Superintendent of Police Dhananjay Kulkarni said that the accused was arrested and produced before the court, which sent him to police custody till February 13.



EDITOR'S SPECS

IAHQ SUFIYANA

The BJP in Uttar Pradesh will now take the Sufi route to win over Muslims voters. Sufism is the mystical Islamic belief in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine affection. The BJP has asked its minority cell to hold the 'Sufi Sammelans' primarily in Muslim dominated localities of the state. According to an estimate, Muslim population accounts for a sizeable chunk in around 30,000 of the over 1.6 lakh polling booths in the state. These 'qaumi chaupals', will be similar to 'gram chaupals' that were organised by the BJP before 2022 Assembly elections to connect with the beneficiaries of the various welfare schemes initiated by the Centre and the state government. UP BJP minority cell chief Kunwar Basit Ali said that the party has been reaching out to all sections of the society. "The followers of Sufism are equally important for the party. We are in the process of planning a campaign to reach out to them in the coming days," he said. Sufis are essentially associated with dargahs (shrines), contrasting with the Wahabi Muslims who regard dargahs as places of idol worship, which is forbidden in Islam. They believe that going to a dargah is worshipping the grave of the Sufi saint, whereas Islam permits worship of only Allah. The BJP is already making a conscious effort to win over Pasmanda (backward) Muslims, months after PM Narendra Modi pitched for expediting the process of ensuring welfare measures reach the socially oppressed rung among the Muslims. The development has been attaining significance even as the BJP lays out its poll template in the run up to civic and Lok Sabha polls. Analysts said that BJP is making efforts to woo the Muslims who have been consolidating heavily behind the Opposition, primarily the Samajwadi Party.

WHY IS THE OPPOSITION TRYING TO TARNISH AMRITKAL?

Lalit Garg

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government emphasizes on AmritKaal, they have laid the foundation of 'New India', 'Strong India', which will be realized in 2047, the hundredth year of its independence. The recently presented budget underlines the 'AmritKaal' in the best possible way. The strategies and plans of the government are also being made keeping the same in the centre. But it is a big irony that the entire opposition is in the dark about Amritkal. The responsible role of the opposition is being expected in making the AmritKaal nectar, but this is not going to happen, as it has repeatedly exposed its directionlessness, this has become clear in the budget session. What kind of politics is this, what kind of demonstration of the responsibilities of the opposition, in which the interests of the people and the amritkal are being neglected in the name of building a new India in the name of baking bread for their political interests. A burning question has emerged in front of Indian democracy that whether Indian politics has become without opposition? The opposition is completely disintegrated and is looking so weak and languid that the possibilities of a strong or solid political alternative are almost dead. Not only this, the opposition has not only become political, it has also become policy less? This is the reason why in the political journey reaching the occasion of Amrit Mahotsav, the condition of the opposition has never been so sluggish, worse and extinct. Such an environment is a challenge and an irony for democracy. If considered from this point of view, the behaviour of the opposition in India at the national level or in many states is disappointing. Opposition parties and leaders want to defeat BJP, want to weaken Modi's ever-strengthening image and position, but are unable to understand on which issues to fight and go among the public. Neither do they have effective issues nor do they have the ability to present the issues effectively. They will not be able to follow the religion of the opposition by proving the BJP as anti-Brahmins or anti-Dalit-backward, or by targeting the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or unnecessarily suspecting industrialists like Adani. Opposition MPs have proved that they neither have anything meaningful to say nor



listen to, by continuously raising slogans during the Prime Minister's address. The opposition MPs may have had some reasons for their din, but they proved the Prime Minister's statement that one is costing more with their irritating sloganeering. Once upon a time minorities like Muslims, Christians used to be polarized by creating fear against Sangh and BJP. A group of backward and Dalits were lured by calling them advocates of the upper caste. Where is the effective opposition, where are the issues of national interest. The efforts of the opposition seem to be to prove the BJP, the Sangh and the Prime Minister as well-wishers of industrialists, anti-Muslims-Dalits-tribals and supporters of the upper castes. Will the opposition be able to weaken the BJP on the basis of these issues? It is India's misfortune that the major group of the present opposition still fails to understand the positive changes and development taking place in the country. For this reason, the opposition party and its leaders want to take politics where India has gone far ahead. In spite of the BBC report on Gujarat riots at all costs and despite the entire opposition making it an issue, let alone non-Muslims, even ordinary Muslims were not seen coming forward aggressively against the BJP. Why? What is the meaning of calling Ramcharitmanas anti-lower castes in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh? Now India is focusing on development by coming out of such narrow and communal urges, disputes of religion, caste, class, language, the people of the country and minority communities also want development, want to see India becoming

powerful. Common people have understood that if India has to become a major economic power of the world, then our industrialists will play an important role in it. That's why the public is not agitated even after all the efforts of the opposition's conspiracies and conspiracies to make Modi tainted in the name of Adani. The opposition has also failed to convince the public that public interest or public sector banks' investments are at risk because of the Adani group. If anything is clear from the way the opposition is presenting the case of Adani Group, it is that it has found another case like the purchase of Rafale fighter jets and the Pegasus espionage episode to surround the government. This case also fizzled out like Raphael and Pegasus. Modi's address in the recent budget-session is a slap on the opposition, Modi gave much advice to the opposition in the currency of teaching a lesson to the children, but it is difficult to say that the opposition will pay attention to any advice of the Prime Minister, but he said it right. The more mud you throw, the more the lotus will bloom. It would be better if the opposition realizes that lies have no legs. The way the opposition tried to focus the discussion on the motion of thanks on the President's address to the Adani group, the Prime Minister failed it first in the Lok Sabha and then in the Rajya Sabha. By not saying anything directly on the questions of the opposition in this matter, he gave the same message that the government cannot be surrounded on this issue. Because today due to Hindutva and Hindutva-centric nationalism, there has been some practical and positive transformation in the power and politics of the country. Economic-social-cultural development and extensive works on the front of defence-security-science, education-medical have changed the ground reality, the country has become empowered, control of terrorism and violence has created an atmosphere of peace and tranquility among the people. Where are the incidents of terrorist and violence happening every day in Jammu and Kashmir now? Recurring terrorist attacks, communal violence in the country, where is it now? Apart from the narrow

politics of the opposition, the scene of outcry is not visible anywhere. Rahul Gandhi himself gave speeches against the government in Bharat JodoYatra, but no movement was seen anywhere, he had to say that there is peace in the country. The truth cannot be covered with false facts and theories for long. Today, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the BJP is holding power at the Centre with a majority, so the reason for this is that the thinking of the general public has changed to a great extent, it supports the politics of integration instead of the politics of division. It should not only be about the opposition, it should not only be about defeating Modi, but it should also be about the country, it should be about making AmritKaal a medium for the country's development, only then the opposition will be able to rise above its plight. If he opens doors to some new possibilities, shows the way to solve all the problems of the country and society, presents a roadmap to curb inflation, poverty, illiteracy, ill health, unemployment and crimes, then his acceptability will automatically increase. If the opposition is concerned about business, economy, unemployment, inflation, rural life and poor condition of farmers, then it should be visible. But the opposition, instead of becoming a challenge to the government either at the centre or the state level, seems to be engaged only in saving itself. He is fighting the battle of his identity but is not able to develop in himself the strong will and eligibility to oust the ruling party. Congress made serious efforts to establish the importance of money above 'public importance' in Indian democracy, the consequences of which it has to bear. Can the Congress or other opposition parties become a light in these odd and dark conditions, can they play an important role in Amritkal, can they be ready to fulfill their meaningful role; if the opposition does not perform its meaningful and effective role firmly, then there is darkness ahead for it.

(Lalit Garg is a Writer, Journalist, Columnist based in Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

international

CHINESE SPY BALLOON CAPABLE OF GATHERING INTELLIGENCE: US

Washington | Agencies

As the FBI is analysing recovered parts of the suspected Chinese spy balloon which was shot down on February 4, it was revealed that the device "was capable of conducting signals intelligence collection operations" and was part of a fleet that had flown over "more than 40 countries across five continents", a US State Department official said. "We know the PRC (People's Republic of China) used these balloons for surveillance. High-resolution imagery from U-2 flybys revealed that the high-altitude balloon was capable of conducting signals intelligence collection operations," CNN quoted the official as saying on Thursday. Signals intelligence refers to information that is gathered by electronic means - things like communications and radars. Senior FBI officials confirmed on Thursday that they have started initial stages of evaluating the pieces of the balloon that were recovered and brought to the Bureau's lab in Quantico, Virginia, on Sunday.



The investigation into recovered balloon is the first of its kind in the FBI's history. Only evidence that was on the surface of the ocean has been delivered to FBI analysts so far, one official said, which includes the "canopy itself, the wiring, and then a very small amount of electronics", one of the officials was quoted by CNN as saying. He added that the analysts have not yet seen the "payload," which is

where you would expect to see the "lion's share" of electronics. The officials also said that understanding the components of the balloon is vital intelligence and could be "important pieces of evidence for future criminal charges that could be brought". Administration officials from the Pentagon, State Department and intelligence community briefed lawmakers on Capitol Hill Thursday on the balloon. The House of

Representatives lawmakers called the balloon a "brazen violation of US sovereignty" as the body voted 419 to 0 on Thursday morning to condemn its use, the BBC reported. The suspected spy balloon, which US defence officials first announced of tracking the on February 2, was shot down two days later by an American F-22 fighter jet. The officials waited until the "strange object" was safely over water before shooting it down. The balloon was retrieved off the coast of Myrtle Beach in South Carolina on February 5. Earlier this week, The Washington Post had reported that the US believes the suspected surveillance balloon project was being operated from China's coastal Hainan province and targeted countries including Japan, India, Vietnam, Taiwan and the Philippines. In a briefing on Wednesday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Washington "was not the only target of this broader program which violated the sovereignty of countries across five continents".

Russian forces intensify offensive efforts in Luhansk: Official

Kiev | Agencies

A top Ukrainian official said that Russian forces have intensified their offensive efforts in the eastern Luhansk region over the past week. In a statement on Thursday, Luhansk Governor Serhiy Haidai said that officials have witnessed a slight increase in Russian operations near the cities of Kupiansk and Lyman, CNN reported. Russia is on the offensive in Luhansk, though without "much success" so far, the Governor added. Haidai's remarks came just two days after he had claimed that Russian troops were being sent to the war-torn nation's eastern region as part of an offensive planned by Moscow on February 15. On Tuesday, he had said that "we are seeing more and more reserves being deployed in our direction", reports the BBC. Almost a year into Moscow's ongoing invasion, an estimated 300,000 Russian reserve troops have been recruited in recent months in an attempt to break through Ukraine's front lines in the east. Capturing the key city of Bakhmut could enable Russian forces to press on towards the bigger cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk. The Governor had further claimed that the



Russians' two-month training period was coming to an end and Moscow would need around 10 days to transfer them to the front for a new offensive. He suggested that in Luhansk region they would target the three towns of Bilohorivka, Kreminna and Svatove, the BBC reported. Since the past few months, Ukraine has been warning of an imminent Russian offensive that could begin on February 24, marking the first anniversary of Moscow's invasion. Thursday's development came as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met European Union leaders in Brussels after his trips to London and Paris a day earlier, during which he asked for more fighter jets in an effort to boost Ukraine's war capabilities amid the ongoing invasion.

Quake death toll surpasses 21,000 in Turkey, Syria

Ankara/Damascus | Agencies

The death toll from the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria four days ago has surpassed 21,000, according to latest data released by authorities and rescuers. The death toll from the earthquakes climbed to 17,674 in Turkey, with 72,879 injuries, Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay said on Thursday. In Syria, 1,678 people were killed in government-held areas, and the death toll in the opposition-held region stood at 2,190, according to media reports. A magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck Turkey's southern province of Kahramanmaraş at 4:17 a.m. local time, followed by a magnitude 6.4 quake a few minutes later in



the country's southern province of Gaziantep and a magnitude 7.6 earthquake at 1:24 p.m. local time in Kahramanmaraş province, Xinhua news agency reported. International search and rescue teams, including an 82-member Chinese rescue team that arrived in Turkey on Wednesday, rushed to the quake-impacted zone to assist in rescue efforts.

Alarm bells in Pakistan as reserves drop below \$3 Billion

Karachi | Agencies

Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank decreased by 5.5 per cent or \$170 million to \$2.91 billion in the week ending February 3, the State Bank of Pakistan said on Thursday, deepening the economic woes of the crisis-stricken country, media reports said. The country has \$8.54 billion in reserves in total, including \$5.62 billion held by commercial banks, The News reported. The country is struggling to service extremely high levels of external debt, and has barely enough dollars to cover less than three weeks worth of imports, the report said. The nation's already precarious economic predicament was made



worse by the rapidly decreasing reserves. Pakistan held talks with the IMF to obtain assistance for containing a growing financial crisis that was made worse by a lack of foreign currency and skyrocketing inflation. The rupee recently fell to historic lows after the government, in an attempt to meet IMF lending conditions, lifted currency controls that had been artificially supporting the

currency. Pakistan is dealing with a serious array of issues. Tens of millions of people were harmed by flooding last year, which cost \$30 billion in damages. The country has been negatively impacted by inflation, the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine on food and energy prices, and political uncertainty, The News reported. Pakistan has long-standing issues with its balance of payments. The government is hoping that it will quickly reach an agreement with the IMF mission over the terms of its \$6.5 billion lending programme to unlock crucial funding from the IMF this time. But even if a loan tranche of \$1 billion is unfrozen, this is only a bandage. More amounts are required if Pakistan is to avoid default.

12 KILLED, 63 INJURED IN ROAD ACCIDENT IN TANZANIA

Dar Es Salaam: At least 12 people were killed and 63 others injured in a road accident in Tanzania's central district of Kongwa in Dodoma Region, an official said.



Rosemary Senyamule, Dodoma Regional Commissioner, on Thursday said the accident involved a bus and a truck that collided head-on at midnight on Wednesday at Silwa village along the Dodoma-Morogoro highway. "Eight men and four women travelling in the bus were killed on the spot," said Senyamule, adding that 63 of the injured persons were rushed to Kongwa District government hospital. She said the bus was heading to Bukoba in Kagera region from the port city of Dar Es Salaam before it collided with the truck that was ferrying cement, Xinhua news agency reported. Awadh Haji, head of police operations and training, said the collision occurred after the bus driver attempted to overtake another vehicle without taking precautions.



# CM, KAMAL NATH EXCHANGE BARBS OVER 'UNFULFILLED' PROMISES

Team Absolute | Bhopal

CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan and State Congress President Kamal Nath, once again, exchanged barbs on Friday, over the unfulfilled promises in the election-bound MP. On Friday morning, CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan said, "Congress always did politics to gain power and for that they can go to any length." Accusing Congress of making 'false promises', he said that the Congress manifesto promised to provide bank loans at reasonable rates for agri-related industries such as animal husbandry, poultry farming, fisheries and for horticulture development. However, in the 18 months of Congress rule, no steps were taken in this direction. He said Kamal Nath should answer what he delivered during his tenure as a chief minister. Hitting back, State Congress President Kamal Nath said that BJP, in its manifesto, had promised that the irrigation area would be doubled in five years



## CHHINDWARA OR SAUSAR? NATH NOT SURE WHERE TO CONTEST FROM

Bhopal: State Congress President Kamal Nath, on Friday, dismissed reports that said he will not be contesting 2023 MP Assembly elections. Speaking to media in Pohri of Shivpuri district, on Friday, Nath said, "I am yet to decide the constituency I will contest from. I have to decide between Sausar or Chhindwara constituencies." Explaining the context, he said "I am a resident of Sausar and people of my village ask why I never contest from here, but Chhindwara. So, I told them that's because more people know about Chhindwara than Sausar." "And now, I am yet to decide where I will contest the elections from," he said. A day before, on Thursday, during a conversation with the media persons, Nath had said that he was not sure if he will contest the upcoming 2023 assembly elections. This kicked up political uproar in the state. However, 24 hours later, on Friday, Nath clarified that he was not sure from which constituency he will contest from and never meant that he will not contest elections.

and Rs 2.5 lakh crore would be invested for the same. Training guns towards the BJP, he said "Instead of irrigation, BJP rule doubled corruption in the state." Taking a jibe at Nath, CM Chouhan said, "Heard Kamal Nath will not be contesting elections?" However, the same day itself, Nath, dismissed it as rumour, saying, "I have never stated that I am not going to contest the election, I have said that I am yet to decide the constituency."

# VD Sharma shares video of Panna's tigress with 4 cubs

Team Absolute | Panna

A tigress and its four cubs have become a matter of delight for the tourists visiting the Panna Tiger Reserve. The feline, along with cubs, often wanders in the open and sometimes even cross paths with tourist vehicles, giving them the much desired opportunity to tourists to click pictures. BJP State President VD Sharma on Friday tweeted the video of the feline with cubs. "Indeed, it's a treat for tourists in the Panna Tiger Reserve to see a Tigress wandering with her cubs. It seems like Panna Tiger Reserve is ready to welcome the G-20 representatives. Notably preparations are



underway in Khajuraho for the G 20 meeting which would be attended by the delegates across the globe. As Panna Tiger Reserve is in proximity to Khajuraho, G-20 representatives can enjoy a little break out of their busy schedules there.

# Valsad child kidnapping: Accused held from MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal/ Valsad

Valsad police cracked a child kidnapping case within 24 hours and nabbed the accused from Madhya Pradesh, a police official said here on Friday. Ramesh Nepali the accused is being brought to Valsad. Dunga Police Station Inspector V.G. Bharvad said that on Wednesday evening, one Mahesh Garasiya lodged a complaint, alleging that Ramesh Nepali, a watchman working at Saiveer Industrial park, had kidnapped his six-year-old daughter. The complainant suspected Ramesh's involvement as he was missing since Wednesday afternoon and so was his daughter. Immediately three teams were formed and Ramesh Nepali's phone was put on technical surveillance. Since he hailed from Nepal, police suspected that he must have moved towards North India, and dispatched a team. On Thursday night, Ramesh was tracked



down in Madhya Pradesh and nabbed. He is being brought to Valsad where he will be officially arrested.

## TWO DEAD, TWO INJURED AS CAR SLAMS INTO TRUCK IN GUNA

Guna: Two men died and two women were injured after their car rear-ended a truck in Guna district in Madhya Pradesh on Friday, a police official said. The incident took place at 10am when the car was on its way to Biora, Vijaypur police station in charge Zuber Khan said. "Two men in the car died on the spot, while two women on the back seat have suffered injuries. The deceased are yet to be identified, while the women are not in a condition at present to give statements to the police," he informed.

# DEPRESSED BHU STUDENT ENDS LIFE BY SUICIDE

Team Absolute | Bhopal/ Varanasi (UP)

Ashish Kumar Namdev, a student of M.Sc final year of the Chemistry department of Banaras Hindu University (BHU), died at SSL hospital after consuming pesticide in his room at Dalmia hostel on varsity campus. He was being treated for depression and had also attempted suicide while preparing for competitive exams at Kota, Rajasthan six years ago. Pravin Kumar Singh, ACP Bhopal, said, "After consuming pesticide, Ashish Kumar Namdev was lying in an unconscious state in his hostel room and was rushed to the SSL Hospital by other inmates. Namdev died during the course of treatment on Thursday. "During initial investigation it has come to light that Namdev was depressed and being treated for bipolar disorder for the past six months. He had also attempted suicide when he was studying in Kota in 2017," said the ACP. The family of the deceased has arrived from Rewa in Madhya Pradesh



and the body has been sent for post-mortem examination. Hostel inmates said that Ashish was in depression, especially after he was not selected by any company in the placement drive.

# Police seize liquor worth Rs 1.1 crore being sent to dry Gujarat

Team Absolute | Shajapur

Madhya Pradesh police have seized truck carrying liquor worth more than Rs 1 crore to dry state Gujarat from Haryana, an official said on Friday. The Berchha police in Shajapur district had received inputs that a consignment of liquor was being sent to Bihar, another dry state, through MP. Accordingly, they intercepted a truck on Thursday and found it to be laden with automobile spare parts, said the official. "The truck was searched and 558 cartons of premium Indian made foreign liquor (IMFL) worth Rs 1.12 crore were seized," he said. But the driver told police that he was on his way to Gujarat with the consignment from Haryana,



said additional superintendent of police TS Baghel. The official said the driver has been arrested and the truck impounded. "We are verifying his statement and questioning him to know the modus operandi of the network," he added.

## MINOR DIVYANG GIRL RAPED IN CHILD CARE HOME

Indore: In shocking incident, a 17-year-old girl was raped by unidentified person at a child care home for Divyang in the Vijay Nagar area, police said on Thursday. The girl was staying here for the past 4 years but no one was aware about the incident. The police are investigating the case and the CCTV are being examined to know about the accused. According to the Vijay Nagar police station staff, the mother of the girl complaint on Thursday that her 17-year-old daughter is divyang and she was kept at Anubhuti Vision Seva Sansthan in Scheme Number 74 for the past four years. Her mother visited the place in August after receiving information from there that the condition of her daughter is not well. Then the mother took her to a hospital and after treatment she took her to her home in Pithampur. In November, she went back to the Anubhuti Sansthan. Recently, she received information that the condition of his daughter had again deteriorated. She reached the city on Thursday and took the daughter to a hospital where the doctors informed her that her daughter was about 6 months pregnant.

# Khelo India Youth Games to conclude on February 11 in Bhopal

Colourful program will be held at Upper Lake of Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the Khelo India Youth Games-2022 being held in Madhya Pradesh, in the enthusiastic atmosphere created in the state for the last 13 days, about 6 thousand players from different states contested with all their energy and fervour for medals in 27 different sports. The Khelo India Youth Games will culminate with colourful presentations on February 11 at 6:30 pm at Bhopal's pride the Upper Lake. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union Sports and Youth Affairs Minister Anurag

Thakur will be the chief guests. Union Minister of State for Sports, Youth Affairs and Home Nisith Pramanik and Khel Ratna awardee Olympian shooter Gagan Narang will be especially present. State Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Yashodhara Rajee Scindia will preside over the closing ceremony. Before the closing ceremony, at 5:30 pm, all the winning players will be welcomed by taking out a grand rally from the Chief Minister's residence to the Boat Club, sitting in the champion bus. CM Chouhan will flag off the

champion bus Kalaripayattu, Gatka players and MMA artists will perform along with the champion bus. Apart from this, RJ Anadi, bikers, break dancers and cyclists will give various performances. The closing ceremony will begin with the performance of the little flute player Anirban Roy. A film on Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat will be screened. Players and teams will be awarded with overall trophy. The ceremony will have a dance performance on the anthem of Khelo India Youth Games "Hindustan Ka Dil Dhadka Do".

# HC judge wrongly billed at Jabalpur petrol pump, collector orders probe pane



Team Absolute | Jabalpur

A day after a High Court judge was allegedly wrongly billed at a petrol pump in Jabalpur, the collector issued strict action against such pumps on Friday. He ordered that a four-member committee will be formed to monitor the petrol pumps in terms of quality and billing, informed Kamlesh Tandekar. On Thursday, a High Court judge went to a Jabalpur-based petrol pump for a fuel refill. He was shocked to see the receipt as he was billed for 57

litres petrol when his car's tank capacity was just 50 litres. The judge caught the forgery and sealed the petrol pump. Following which, district department and food department teams swung into action. Kamlesh Tandekar, Food and Civil Supplies District Controller informed that, a joint committee comprising officials from petroleum companies, Food-Civil Supplies department and Naptol department was formed to keep an eye on the petrol pumps and probe the case.

# CM Chouhan's first Insta Live: Youth asks to make him CM for a day

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Today's Insta live was a little more special as CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan, for the first time, took it to Instagram to interact with the youths. In the Instagram Live, he advised students to live a purposeful life. Simultaneously, he answered their queries. On the lines of Nayak film, Ronak Dubey asked him to make him CM for a day. On this, he said "It was a film. The good part of that film was how we can start doing good from Day-1. Nevertheless we know that there is a vast difference between a film and reality. But if one has to become CM then why only for a day, if (one) wants to become CM then work hard to become permanent CM, there is no problem. Those who do work by fixing the target, they



achieves it. If you want to become CM then come in the political field, do the hard work and move ahead...and I feel one day success could be achieved". Answering to a question asked by Shailesh that he remains so busy during day then how does he find some 'me' time, CM said that he gets free time when he is travelling. For instance, if he is travelling from Indore to

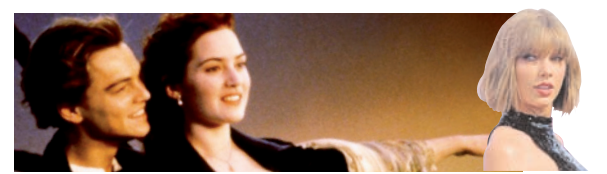
Bhopal, he turns on his favorite music in the car. Replying to a question of childhood desires, he said during childhood, he wanted to sit in the lap of god akin to Dhurva. And so he would go to nearby jungle and worship there in an effort to impress god, he said as he chuckled. CM also sang his favourite songs during the Instagram live programme. They were "Laaga Chunri Mein Daag" "Rukh Jana Nahin Tu Kahin Har Ke," "A Bhai Jara Dekh Ke Chalo,". Speaking to media after the Instagram Live, he said that it was a unique experience to interact with thousands of youths. "It was a special moment... there were different kinds of questions, queries ....I informed them it was my first Instagram live .... I learnt from them (youths)...it was a wonderful experience for me," he said.

# Special Vyapam court sentences two to four-year rigorous imprisonment

Team Absolute | Bhopal/New Delhi

A special Vyapam court on Thursday awarded four-year rigorous imprisonment to two accused in a case related to the police constable recruitment exam of 2012 conducted by the Madhya Pradesh Professional Examination Board, known as Vyapam. The court sentenced Sonu Rathore and Rajkumar Tyagi to four-year rigorous imprisonment along with a fine of Rs 14,100 each. A case was lodged against the duo in 2014 at the Dehat police station in Bhind district. The CBI later took over the probe following a Supreme Court order. It is alleged that Tyagi, who was recruited as constable, had passed the exam by arranging a solver to write the paper on his behalf. After his selection, Tyagi

was posted in Dehat. During the scrutiny of the service book of the said constable, it was observed that there were two photographs in the name of Tyagi, one was affixed on the first page of service book and the other on a form filled at the time of physical proficiency test (PPT) for PCRT-2012. During investigation, it was found that neither the handwriting nor the signature of Tyagi matched with the writings on the answer sheet. "Thus, it was evident that Tyagi had not appeared for the written exam in 2012. After sincere efforts, the CBI traced the impersonator. It was found that Tyagi had entered into a conspiracy with Sonu Rathore who wrote the exam on his behalf," the CBI said. After investigation, the CBI had filed the supplementary chargesheet on March 10, 2018 against the accused.



## Mischa Barton claimed that she was told to sleep with DiCaprio

Los Angeles | Agencies



**'N**otting Hill' actress Mischa Barton has claimed that she was told to sleep with Leonardo DiCaprio when she was 19 and he was 30.

The actress had made a revelation in an old video which has now emerged from the dark depths of the Internet because well, nothing really dies on the Internet, reports Mirror.co.uk.

The actress' words from a 2005 interview have resurfaced after the actor was criticised for being spotted with 19-year-old Eden Polani.

Mischa's comments came from her interview with Harpers & Queen during the height of her fame playing Marissa Cooper in 'The OC'. In the chat

she discussed the moment she and then-publicist Craig Schneider saw the Titanic man at a shoot in Malibu.

Mirror.co.uk further states that the meeting came just as Leo and Gisele Bundchen had ended their six-year on-off relationship. Mischa claimed in the interview that Craig said: "For the sake of your career, go and sleep with that man."

The actress said she told him she wasn't interested in older men and asked the publication: "Isn't Leo, like, 30 or something?"

The re-emergence of the interview comes as Leonardo faced backlash for being sighted with Eden, who is a French-Israeli model. Sources close to Leo denied that the pair were dating after rumors spread but didn't comment on whether they had ever been romantically involved.

## Why Idris Elba stopped describing himself as a black actor?

London | Agencies

**L**ondon-born star Idris Elba explained why he has stopped describing himself as a black actor.

The actor, who has starred in a host of big-budget films and TV shows during his career, has revealed that he's reluctant to be put "in a box", reports femalefirst.co.uk.

The London-born star explained: "As humans, we are obsessed with race. And that obsession can really hinder people's aspirations, hinder people's growth. Racism should be a topic for discussion, sure."

"Racism is very real. But from my perspective, it's only as powerful as you allow it to be. I stopped describing myself as a black actor when I realised it put me in a box. We've got to grow. We've got to. Our skin is no more than that: it's just skin. Rant over."

He went to school in Canning Town in east London, and the acclaimed actor admits he never

really felt at home there.

He told Esquire UK magazine: "I didn't like Canning Town, didn't like it at all. I was like, 'When can we go home to Hackney? Go Ridley Road Market'. It was a right-wing, white, working-class community."

"There weren't that many black people weren't that many Asians. In my school there was a lot of black and brown, but the neighbourhood, not so much."

Idris said that he's "the same black" regardless of where he is in the world. "I'm always curious why this is fascinating to people. It's a question I get asked a lot. I don't go to my black friends, in conversation, and ask them to tell me about racism. Have I ever faced racism? Yeah. 'I'm not any blacker because I'm in a white area, or more black because I'm in a black area. I'm black. And that skin stays with me no matter where I go, every day, through black areas with white people in it, or white areas with black people in it. I'm the same black," the actor added.



## Kathryn Newton hits the red carpet for the premiere of Ant-Man

Los Angeles | Agencies



**J**ust days after the Los Angeles premiere of Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania, Kathryn Newton headed north of the border for the Toronto premiere. The actress - who was photo bombed by Michelle Pfeiffer on the red carpet of the L.A. premiere - was all smiles at the premiere.

Newton was even presented with a birthday cake, with the premiere taking place just a day after her 26th birthday. Newton stepped out in a stunning, sparkling and strapless rose-colored dress with a slit up her left leg. The gown was literally tied together down the left side and fell to the red carpet in Toronto. She completed her look with a pair of nude platform heels on the red carpet.

When she went in to present the screening in front of the Toronto crowd, she was surprised with a birthday cake.

Newton is also expected to reprise her role as Cassie Lang in Avengers: The Kang Dynasty (May 2, 2025) and Avengers: Secret Wars (May 1, 2026). She also has the upcoming film Winner in post-production, starring alongside Connie Britton, Emilia Jones and Zach Galifianakis.

The actress

also stars in Lisa Frankenstein alongside Carla Gugino, Cole Sprouse and Jenna Davis, also in post-production.

## VIN DIESEL WANTS ROBERT DOWNEY JR. IN NEXT 'FAST AND FURIOUS' MOVIE



Los Angeles | Agencies

**A**fter having names such as Charlize Theron, Helen Mirren, Rita Moreno and Jason Momoa attached to his 'Fast and Furious' franchise, Hollywood star Vin Diesel knows exactly who he wants to join the family next -- Robert Downey Jr.

Asked by 'Variety' about his dream casting at the 'Fast X' trailer premiere on Thursday night, Diesel, who plays protagonist Dom Toretto, gave RDJ's name without hesitation. But who would he play?

"Without telling you too much about what happens in the future, there's a character who is the antithesis of Dom who is promoting AI and driverless cars and a philosophy that with that goes your freedom," Diesel said.

"There is somebody that believes that's the future, and that's at direct odds with the Toretto mentality."

However, when pressed about if he's pitched Downey Jr. the role yet, Diesel simply growled and said in a playful yet menacing tone, "How dare you ask me this question in front of all these people? I have pride and I have dignity."

Diesel's co-star Michelle Rodriguez also had thoughts on the red carpet about who she'd like to see in the final 'Fast and Furious' film. "Who's the guy there these amazing 'Jason Bourne' movies? Matt Damon!" Rodriguez said.

"I f\*\*\*ing want Matt Damon. Matt Damon, would you be in a 'Fast and Furious' movie? C'mon, we got four Oscar winners, man. And you're an Oscar winner!"

'Fast X' also stars Jason Statham, Tyrese Gibson, Chris 'Ludacris' Bridges, John Cena, Jordana Brewster, Brie Larson, Nathalie Emmanuel, Sung Kang, Scott Eastwood, Michael Rooker, Daniela Melchior, Alan Ritchson and Cardi B.



## I really want to style other celebs: Cardi B

Los Angeles | Agencies

**T**he chart-topping rap star Cardi B, who is one of the world's best-selling music artists, has said that she'd love to style other celebrities. Cardi, who is known for having a bold fashion sense, wrote on the micro-blogging Twitter: "I really want to style other celebs." In response, Chrishell Stause posted a side-by-side image of herself and Cardi, explaining that they were both wearing dresses from the same designer, reports femalefirst.co.uk. Chrishell who is best known for starring in 'Selling Sunset', the hit Netflix show - wrote: "We wore the same designer GG\_Studio." Meanwhile, Cardi previously said to be happier before she became famous.

The 'WAP' hitmaker - who married rap star Offset in 2017 - no longer worries about her financial situation, but Cardi insisted she felt happier "two or three years ago".

She said: "One positive thing is that, my family, whatever they want, they get. Everything that I want to buy, I can get. I don't have to worry so much about my future. One negative thing is that, even though I'm happy, I feel like I was a little bit happier two or three years ago when I had less money."

Cardi also felt she had a greater degree of control over her own life before she became a global star.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Louise Thompson



## IND vs AUS 1st Test, Day 2

# ROHIT'S TON, JADEJA AND PATEL'S FIFTIES GUIDE INDIA TO TAKE 144-RUN LEAD

# Going to get a huge amount of talent from WPL: Harmanpreet Kaur

Nagpur | Agencies

Opener Rohit Sharma scored a majestic hundred, his first as Test captain, while all-rounders Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel struck fighting unbeaten half-centuries as India reached 321/7 at stumps to take a 144-run lead against Australia on Day 2 of the first Test of the four-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy series.

At the close of play at the VCA Stadium here, Jadeja was batting on 66 while Axar Patel was keeping him company with 52 runs as India scored 244 runs in the day, losing six wickets, setting them to go for victory in the next three days.

Rohit scored his first century since September 2021; his ninth overall by lofting Murphy for a boundary, his ton came off 171 balls and was studded with 14 fours and two sixes. He was out in the first over after tea, his opposite number Pat Cummins sending his off-stump cartwheeling with the second new ball. Rohit's 345-minute vigil at the wicket fetched him 120 runs and his innings was studded with 15 boundaries and two sixes.

Jadeja, who claimed 5-47 to help India dismiss Australia for 177 in their first innings, and Axar Patel



took over from there on, adding 81 runs for the unfinished eighth-wicket partnership as they propelled India past the 300-run mark. Jadeja completed his half-century off 114 balls, hitting seven boundaries. Patel achieved the milestone off 94 balls and struck eight fours. It was an engrossing and enthralling day as both sides tried to take control of the proceedings. Every time India tried to press home the advantage, Australia claimed a wicket or two to peg them back. Debutant Todd Murphy (5-82) claimed his maiden

five-wicket haul in his debut Test and troubled the Indian batters throughout the day. The rookie off-spinner bowled a fine line and length at the right pace.

However, Australia will rue the five chances they dropped in the Indian innings.

Rohit played one of his best innings as he held the Indian innings together with a majestic effort. He was cautious, played the spinners with soft hands, used his feet and read the line and bounces perfectly. This was his ninth century in Test

cricket and came after a long period of drought going back to September 2021. It was also his first as India captain and second at the VCA Stadium after an unbeaten 102 against Sri Lanka in 2017.

### Brief scores

Australia 177 v India 321/7 in 114 overs (Rohit Sharma 120, Ravindra Jadeja batting 66, Axar Patel batting 52; Todd Murphy 5-82). India leads by 144 runs.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur is extremely excited to see the Women's Premier League (WPL) come to life, pointing out that Indian cricket will get a huge amount of talent from the competition.

"We have been waiting for this moment for a long time and finally the time has come. I am looking forward to that. We are going to get a huge amount of talent from this tournament. Domestic players are going to get to play with and against overseas players in a lot of matches. That's something we are looking forward to seeing," Harmanpreet said.

Harmanpreet is the first Indian cricketer to play 100 T20Is and is renowned around the world for her clean-hitting abilities. She is also the first Indian woman to score a century in T20Is during the 2018 ICC Women's T20 World Cup and led the country to runners-up finish in the 2020 edition of the tournament and is going to lead India in



the 2022 Women's T20 World Cup in South Africa. Asked about the impact the tournament is likely to have, Harmanpreet reflected on her time playing franchise T20 leagues like the Women's Big Bash League (WBBL) in Australia. "It helps players build confidence. When I was playing in Australia, that

gave me a lot of confidence to do well in international cricket." "Now, the WPL is going to play the same role for Indian domestic players. Whenever we share the dressing room with overseas players, it is always very special for all of us. That is something all domestic players are looking forward to."

# 2025 World Aquatics Championships moved to Singapore from Russia

Singapore | Agencies

The 2025 World Aquatics Championships will be held in Singapore, World Aquatics has announced.

Kazan had won the bid to host the 2025 World Championships, but owing to international sanctions against Russia, Singapore will instead host the premier international aquatics event.

With dates to be decided, over 2,500 athletes are expected to participate in the showcase event in 2025, representing World Aquatics' 209 member federations, reports news agency Xinhua.

Japan's Fukuoka will host the 20th World Aquatics Championships this July.



This tournament was originally scheduled to be staged in 2021, but was postponed twice due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions.

The 21st World Championships, originally scheduled for summer 2023, was then rescheduled to take place in Doha in February 2024.

# MARKRAM'S CENTURY POWERS SUNRISERS INTO FINAL AGAINST CAPITALS

SA20

Centurion (South Africa) | Agencies

A marvellous century by captain Aiden Markram helped Sunrisers Eastern Cape beat Joburg Super Kings by 14 runs and set up a summit clash with the Pretoria Capitals in the inaugural SA20.

The Sunrisers skipper embraced the occasion and struck a scintillating 100 off just 58 balls in the second SA20 semifinal against the Joburg Super Kings at Centurion that powered the Eastern Cape side to 213/5. Markram displayed fantastic temperament as the Sunrisers were reduced to 10/2 after losing both openers Temba Bavuma and Adam Rossington early on to Lizaad Williams (4/41).

But that was when the experienced Markram made the ultimate difference as he formed a match-turning 99-run partnership with Jordan



Hermann. The SA20 has unveiled plenty of young South African talent and young Hermann certainly showed that he is one to look out for

in the future with a composed 48 (36 balls) that helped resurrect the Sunrisers' innings. With Tristan Stubbs (20) and

Jordan Cox (18) adding a couple of powerful strikes, it allowed the Sunrisers to post an imposing 213/5.

But the Wanderers-based side was not ready to give up without a fight. Reeza Hendricks kept the Super Kings in the contest until the final over with a superb 96.

Ultimately, though, it was the Sunrisers' night as the Super Kings fell short by 14 runs as they finished on 199/5.

### Brief scores

Sunrisers Eastern Cape 213/5 in 20 overs (Aiden Markram 100, Jordan Hermann 48; Lizaad Williams 4-36) beat Joburg Super Kings 199/6 in 20 overs (Reeza Hendricks 96, Romario Shepherd 36 not out; Roelof van der Merwe 2-23) by 14 runs.

# Desert Vipers' Hales, Gulf Giants' Jordan lead elusive 'Belts' race

ILT20

Dubai | Agencies

With only three teams remaining in the competition, the International League T20 has reached its most exciting phase with Desert Vipers Alex Hales and Gulf Giants Chris Jordan leading the elusive 'Belts' race in different categories.

The MI Emirates set up a clash against Gulf Giants in Qualifier 2 after registering a comprehensive eight-wicket victory against Dubai Capitals. The winner of the Qualifier 2 match will take on Desert Vipers in the grand finale.

However, apart from the race to the ILT20 trophy, another interesting and exciting race is being run on the side. The cricketing superstars have focused on taking their team over the line, but have also kept an eye on the unique set



of individual awards throughout the month-long tournament being held in the UAE. Desert Vipers' Alex Hales has led the

race to the Green Belt for the most part of the competition with 468 runs. However, Gulf Giants' James Vince and MI Emirates' Kieron Pollard and Muhammad Waseem are strong contenders for the top run scorer's award with 342 runs, 337 runs and 336 runs respectively.

The battle for the White Belt has been a tight contest during the course of the season. Gulf Giants' Chris Jordan and David Wiese are currently at the top two spots in the top wicket-taker's table with 17 and 16 wickets respectively. However, Desert Vipers' Wanindu Hasaranga and Sheldon Cottrell are not far behind with 14 and 12 wickets respectively.

Desert Vipers' Alex Hales is also a strong contender for being the Most Valuable Player of the season and bagged the Red Belt.

# TOP SEED SCHWARZMAN BUNDLED OUT OF CORDOBA OPEN

Cordoba (Argentina) | Top seed Diego Schwartzman of Argentina was eliminated from the Cordoba Open with a straight sets loss to countryman Juan Manuel Cerundolo in the Round of 16.

World No. 28 Schwartzman won just 61 per cent of his first service points on Thursday and converted only one of four break point attempts on the outdoor clay of the Polo Deportivo Kempes complex in Cordoba. Cerundolo sent down six aces and won 67 per cent of points on his first serve to take the match in one hour and 40 minutes, reports news agency Xinhua.

He will face Hugo Dellien in the quarterfinals on Friday after the Bolivian overcame Argentina's Guido Pella 6-3, 6-4. Others to progress in the ATP 250 event on Thursday were Alberto Ramos-Vinolas, Federico Coria and Joao Sousa.

# Champions League

# Bayern's Upamecano takes singing lessons to beat PSG

Berlin (Germany) | Agencies

Professional singing hasn't been part of Dayot Upamecano's life as a footballer -- until now.

The defender might not be becoming an opera enthusiast, but his latest actions might open doors for a closer relationship.

As if special games require special actions, the French international took up singing lessons ahead of Bayern Munich's delicate last-16 duel in the UEFA Champions League against Paris Saint-Germain, reports Xinhua.

For a long time, Upamecano has complained about his difficulties in "speaking loudly on the pitch."

Things improved after he asked for help from an opera singer. "I improved and strengthened my vocal cords."

Before he complained about a regular sore throat. "I got more and more



hoarse and thought I needed help to solve the problem."

Upamecano and his vocal guide sang together over several weeks. "He showed me several helpful exercises," the Bayern centre-back said and has hailed the results of his lessons.

"Now it's much easier to shout loudly and give advice on the pitch that can be heard far away from our backline," he stated happily. The singing practice seems to have come at the right time "as this for both teams is a special event."

# There is lot of anticipation for this Women's T20 WC in India: Mithali Raj

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Legendary India batter and former captain Mithali Raj stated there is a lot of anticipation for the Women's T20 World Cup in the country, adding that a side doing well on a particular day will matter the most.

The eighth edition of the Women's T20 World Cup will be held from February 10-26 in South Africa. India, the runners-up of 2020 Women's T20 World Cup, will open their Group B campaign in the tournament against arch-rivals Pakistan on February 12 at Newlands Cricket Ground in Cape Town.

Apart from Pakistan, they will also face 2009 champions England, 2016 winners West Indies, and Ireland in the group stage of the competition. Group A has teams



like defending champions Australia, hosts South Africa, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, and Ireland. "I am really looking forward to my time in the commentary box for the T20 World Cup. There is a lot of anticipation for this tournament in India and I am sure in other parts of the world too."

There are some very fine sides here, and it is going to be all about who does well on a particular day. I wish the teams all the very best and hope they enjoy being part of this tournament," Mithali was quoted as saying in an ICC media release.

# Bundesliga BORUSSIA DORTMUND ON WAY TO REPEATING 2021 WAVE

Berlin (Germany) | Agencies

In the 2022-2023 season's crunch time, Borussia Dortmund are gathering speed and seem prepared to achieve bigger goals.

Five consecutive victories since the winter break are triggering enthusiasm to repeat the ride of 2021, when the Black and Yellows ended up winning the German Cup.

Team spirit and determination can take the 2012 Bundesliga champions to new heights after hitherto inconsistent performances, reports news agency Xinhua.

Aside from injured players returning, the recovery of Sebastian Haller from testicular cancer and the new contract of youngster Youssouf Moukoko has provided addi-



tional emotional support.

The 2-1 win against league rivals Bochum in the German Cup this Wednesday delivered additional proof from Kehl's perspective. The team and coach, he stated, have found a promising balance of fighting

spirit and efficiency along with momentum, confidence, rhythm and conviction.

"We have a great chance to win some silverware this season," goalkeeper Gregor Kobel said after Dortmund managed to close the gap to league lead-

ers Bayern Munich since the 2022 FIFA World Cup and winter break.

Dortmund has risen to third place and the Champions League qualification spots, just three points behind Bayern.

# Ambition is to be a part of WC team and win the tournament: Babar Azam

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Pakistan captain Babar Azam has expressed his ambition is to be a part of a World Cup team and to win the prestigious ICC tournament.

Two-time ICC Men's ODI Player of the Year Babar Azam has achieved almost everything possible in 50-over cricket over the last 24 months, but there is one more accolade the inspirational skipper is missing and dearly wants to achieve - leading Pakistan to the ICC Cricket World Cup title.

Babar, who has done well in 50-over cricket over the last 24 months, is at the No.1 spot in the ODI Player Rankings, which he has held since July 2021 and named the ODI Player of the Year for



the last two years. "The ambition is to be a part of the World Cup team and to win the tournament. The World Cup is coming up and my ambition is to perform well so that we can win it," Babar told ICC Digital. "You see a lot of things individually too, but my goal right now is to win the World Cup," he added.



# Tara Sutaria opened up about what self love means to her

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**B**ollywood actress Tara Sutaria has spoken about what self love means to her and said that she has always loved the idea of love.

Tara has collaborated with Bumble, the women-first dating app, to launch a new campaign 'Before anyone else, there were you' ahead of Valentine's Day to encourage self-love.

Asked about what self-love means to

her, Tara said: "I think self-love or loving yourself means so many different things to different people. To me and to so many of us, I know that this will resonate because we all went through a pretty rough time recently when Covid hit the world and I think self-love took a new shape and meaning for all of us."

"All of us learnt to slow down and truly understand ourselves, begin to hear ourselves and therefore, love ourselves. I've always loved the Idea of love - call it utopia, idealistic - and I've always looked

at love with a lot of love, but I've never really looked at myself with that sort of love so it's taken me a lot to get to where I am today which is learning to really and truly understand every part of myself - the good, the bad, the ugly - everything that comes with being human, I suppose."

Talking about the qualities she looks for in her future partner, Tara adds, "I don't necessarily or intentionally look for qualities in a partner or somebody that I'm with but I've realised over the years what is important in every relationship in my

life -- my friendships, my family and all other relationships -- life can be pretty hectic and complicated sometimes but what really helps, especially in the bad times, is a really good sense of humour."

"And, I think, especially with the kind of lifestyle that I have, it's very important to look at things with a pinch of salt and just enjoy the mundane and the crazy days. It's not always possible and it might sound a bit idealistic but I think I look for that quality more than others in all the relationships that I have in my life."



## Himansh Kohli, Shakti clear air on dating rumours

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctors Himansh Kohli and Shakti Mohan, who recently sparked dating rumours after they were spotted in Mumbai for brunch, have cleared the air now. The two have collaborated on a new romantic track titled 'Daayein Baayein', which will be releasing soon and is going to be a gift to their fans on this Valentine's Day. Commenting on the collaboration, Himansh said, "I'm thrilled to announce my upcoming track with Shakti Mohan titled 'Daayein Baayein', which is a sincere and beautiful love story. This music video is a gift to my audience for this Valentine's Day". Shakti Mohan on her collaboration with Himansh Kohli said, "I'm so thrilled to bring such a delightful track to my fans in the season of love. We have put our heart and soul to this track and hopefully the audiences will shower their love and support to it as they have done in the past." The track has been sung by Yaseer Desai with its music composed by Goldie Sohel who also is the lyricist of the song.



## 'I WANTED TO GIVE BACK IN A BIG WAY'

SUNIEL SHETTY GREW UP ON MARTIAL ARTS, WISHES TO 'GIVE BACK IN A BIG WAY'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctor Suniel Shetty, who is set to host MMA reality series, 'Kumite 1 Warrior Hunt', has shared that his image of a tough-nut-to-crack action hero is because he grew up learning martial arts. The actor said: "I grew up learning martial arts and that itself is something that gave me an opportunity and the image of an action hero in Hindi cinema, so I owed it to that. And then the breakup of martial arts, boxing, escape boxing, jiu jitsu and so many different forms."

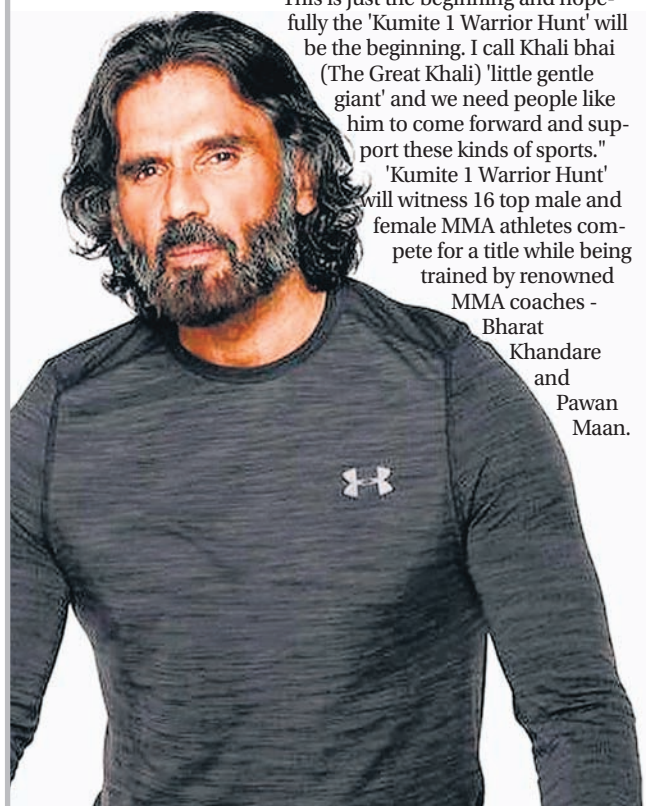
"When you talk about MMA, it is coming together of all these formats to prove which one is not better than the other or which one probably is more effective than the other one."

He further mentioned: "And that's why I keep saying wrestling, wrestling, wrestling, because that's about grabbing, less about power, less about grip, and hence I focus on the never say die approach." "I felt I needed to start something on this stage of my career in a few years that I didn't even work. I wanted to give back, and I wanted to give back in a big way. The show is one way of nurturing talent from small towns; India has so much, but they don't get opportunity." "So for me, it is about an opportunity for these kids and to bring about a change."

The seasoned actor, who is an MMA enthusiast, also said that the MMA fighters are like his children and he takes inspiration from them. "They are like my children. I cry for each one and I clap for each one. It's more about the beauty, it's the love and passion for the sport, and I also take inspiration from them."

"This is just the beginning and hopefully the 'Kumite 1 Warrior Hunt' will be the beginning. I call Khali bhai (The Great Khali) 'little gentle giant' and we need people like him to come forward and support these kinds of sports."

"Kumite 1 Warrior Hunt" will witness 16 top male and female MMA athletes compete for a title while being trained by renowned MMA coaches - Bharat Khandare and Pawan Maan.



## Wamiqa Gabbi, Ishan learnt contemporary dance for their short film

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**A**ctors Wamiqa Gabbi and Ishan Khatter, who are receiving a lot of positive response to their short film 'Fursat', trained extensively in contemporary dance since the narrative dance as the vehicle to carry the story forward.

The actress was busy shooting for another project and had to fly in between schedules to commit to her training for the project. Wamiqa said: "Dance is a language that Vishal Sir used in this movie. We have mostly used contemporary dance steps and the brief I got was irrespective of where you stand or what your position is, everyone should look like each other's mirror image - which meant our timings had to be bang on." Wamiqa is a trained Kathak dancer but getting into the new territory of a new form was exciting.

She said: "Even though I am a trained Kathak dancer, I trained in contemporary dance for over two weeks and used all my free time in between my shoots for practice. I was shooting for another project and I would fly to Mumbai on my day off and rehearse with my teacher." The 30-minute-long movie, which also stars Ishan Khatter, was shot on iPhone 14 pro and has been hailed for its cinematography and choreography. The short film, which tells the story of a man named Nishant who can get a glimpse into the future with the help of an ancient relic called 'Doordarshak', was praised by Apple CEO Tim Cook. Wamiqa will be next seen in Vishal Bharadwaj's 'Khufiya' along with Tabu and Ali Fazal.



## Abhishek Pathak and Shivaleeka Oberoi ties the knot



Goa | Agencies

**A**ctress Shivaleeka Oberoi from Khuda Haafiz is now wed to director Abhishek Pathak of Drishyam 2! The much in love pair exchanged vows in a private ceremony in Goa. Manish Malhotra created the wedding attire for the bride and groom, with some unique customizations. The images from Shivaleeka and

Abhishek's wedding have since been uploaded to Instagram.

Shivaleeka looked mesmerizing in a red lehenga by Manish Malhotra, a statement traditional polki necklace, matching earrings and maang tikka, choodas, and golden kaleeras. Meanwhile, Abhishek wore an ivory embroidered sherwani from Manish Malhotra. The first picture shows Abhishek planting a kiss on his bride's

cheek, while the next one shows them basking in happiness! While sharing the pictures, Abhishek and Shivaleeka wrote, "You don't find love, it finds you. It's got a lot to do with destiny, fate and what's written in the stars."

Last evening 9th Feb 2023, surrounded by our loved ones, we got married in a place where our relationship bloomed. This will forever be the most magical moment of our life! With our hearts full of love and so many memories, we can't wait to build even more special ones and begin this new journey together. Seeking your love & blessings." For those unaware, their wedding was an intimate affair, attended by their close friends, family members and colleagues from the industry. Celebrities such as Ajay Devgn along with Aaman Devgan, Kartik Aaryan, Nushratt Bharuccha, Viduyt Jammwal, Sunny Singh, Bhushan Kumar, director Luv Ranjan, Ishita Raj Sharma and many others attended the wedding.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sidhika Sharma