

absolute india

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Rs 936cr related to crypto currency attached or seized by ED: Govt

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Nearly Rs 936 crore related to crypto currency has been attached or seized by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under PMLA, Union Minister of State for Finance, Pankaj Chaudhary said on Monday.

Besides, five persons have been arrested and six prosecution complaints (PCs) including one supplementary PC have been filed before the Special Court, PMLA in these cases, he stated.

Chaudhary in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha on Monday said that crypto assets are by definition borderless and require international collaboration to prevent regulatory arbitrage.

Under Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA), assets amounting to Rs 289.28 crore have been seized under section 37A of FEMA and one show-cause notice to crypto currency exchange Zannai Labs Pvt Ltd, known as WazirX and its directors under FEMA for transactions involving cryptocurrencies worth Rs 2,790 crore has also been issued.

Therefore, the Minister said, any legislation for regulation or for banning can be effective only with significant international collaboration on evaluation of the risks and benefits and evolution of common taxonomy and standards.

The Minister stated that the ED is investigating several cases related to crypto currency frauds wherein a few crypto exchanges have also been found involved in money laundering. Necessary action as per provisions of Prevention of Money



Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) has been taken by the ED.

"As on January 31, 2023, proceeds of crime amounting to Rs 936 crore have been attached/seized/frozen, 5 persons have been arrested and 6 prosecution complaints (PCs) including 1 supplementary PC have been filed before the Special Court, PMLA in these cases," said the reply.

Giving more information, the Minister said that RBI has been cautioning users, holders and traders of Virtual Currencies (VCs) vide public notices on December 24, 2013, February 1, 2017 and December 5, 2017 that dealing in VCs is associated with potential economic, financial, operational,

legal, customer protection and security related risks.

RBI, vide its circular dated May 31, 2021 has also advised its regulated entities to continue to carry out customer due diligence processes for transactions in VCs, in line with regulations governing standards for Know Your Customer (KYC), Anti-Money Laundering (AML), Combating of Financing of Terrorism (CFT), obligations under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, etc in addition to ensuring compliance with relevant provisions under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) for overseas remittances, the Minister added.

KERALA WOMAN THREATENS TO BOMB B'LRU AIRPORT, ARRESTED

Bengaluru: Karnataka Police have arrested a woman from Kerala, who threatened to explode a bomb at the Bengaluru International Airport while arguing with the authorities regarding delay to board the flight, police said on Monday.

The incident had come to light lately and the court has handed over the woman to judicial custody for 11 days. The accused has been identified as 31-year-old Manasi Satheebainu from Kozhikode in Kerala.

According to police, the incident took place on February 3 and came to light lately. The accused woman was supposed to travel from Bengaluru to Kolkata. She had booked a ticket on the 6E445 Indigo flight and had arrived at the airport for the journey. She had started an argument while checking near gate number six with the staff of the airport. She had threatened that if she was not allowed to go inside immediately, she would plant the bomb and explode the airport. The accused woman also created a ruckus as she shouted that a bomb has been planted at the airport and the passengers must return to save their lives. The security staff took her into custody and handed over to the police. Sandeep Singh, a CISO official, lodged a complaint against the accused woman under IPC Sections 505, 323 and 353.

Turkey-Syria quake toll rises above 2,300

ISTANBUL/DAMASCUS | Agencies

The death toll in Monday morning's devastating earthquake in the Turkey-Syria border area has crossed over 2,300, reports said.

The death toll in Turkey has risen again to 1,498, according to the country's disaster management agency, and 810 in Syria, the BBC reported.

The 7.8 magnitude quake struck near Turkey's Gaziantep early on Monday (local time) while a new 7.5-magnitude tremor hit at around 1.30 p.m. local time and was described, by officials, as a new quake, "not an aftershock".

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent messages of condolence to his



Turkish and Syrian counterparts Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Bashar al Assad and said his government was ready to help. Russian rescue teams have been sent to both countries to assist at the disaster sites, RT reported.

Other countries like Azerbaijan, Germany, Greece, India, Israel, Serbia, Spain, the UK and the US have also offered help.

INDIA'S 140 CR PEOPLE WITH TURKEY IN ITS CRISIS: PM MODI

Bengaluru: Expressing concern and shock over the massive earthquake that hit Turkey on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that India's "140 crore people are with the victims of the earthquake in Turkey".

Speaking after inaugurating the India Energy Week, PM Modi said, "We are focusing on Turkey presently which has suffered from a huge earthquake. Large numbers of people have lost their lives and it has caused huge losses to the country."

PM Modi further stated that the surrounding countries of Turkey also suffered heavy losses due to the impact of the earthquake. India is ready to help earthquake victims, he stated.

Earlier, in response to a tweet by Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Modi said, "Anguished by the loss of lives and damage of property due to the Earthquake in Turkey. Condolences to the bereaved families. May the injured recover soon. India stands in solidarity with the people of Turkey and is ready to offer all possible assistance to cope with this tragedy."



LCA accomplishes maiden landing onboard INS Vikrant

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Achieving a new milestone, the Indian Navy's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) made its maiden landing onboard the country's first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant on Monday, navy officials said.

According to the Navy, this is the maiden landing of a fixed wing aircraft on the carrier as part of its operationalisation.

A Navy spokesperson said that this is a historical milestone achieved towards Aatma Nirbhar Bharat by Indian Navy as naval pilots carried out the landing of LCA (Navy) onboard INS Vikrant, demonstrating India's capability to design, develop, construct and operate the indigenous aircraft carrier with indigenous fighter aircraft.

Post commissioning of the aircraft carrier, efforts are currently under way to operationalise its aviation complex after which it would be ready for operational deployment.

INS Vikrant, displacing a weight of 42,800 tonnes, was commissioned into the Navy last September. The aviation trials are to be carried out post commissioning.

The Defence Ministry is taking many initiatives to strengthen the forces. Lately the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), headed



by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, has accorded approval for Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for 24 capital acquisition proposals for a total value of Rs 84,328 crore. This includes 10 proposals for Indian Navy and two for Indian Coast Guard.

According to the Ministry, approvals for procurement of naval anti-ship missiles, multi-purpose vessels, and high-endurance autonomous vehicles will further enhance maritime strength giving boost to Indian Navy's capabilities.

CBI ARRESTS 3 IN BRIBE CASE; RS 1.02 CR RECOVERED

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday arrested three persons including two officials of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) and a contractor in connection with a bribe case, an official said, adding that the probe agency also recovered Rs 1.02 crore in cash.

The arrested individuals were identified as Santosh Kumar senior section engineer at Railways, a resident of Assam's Silchar; Sajjan Kumar, a contractor of a private company based in Guwahati; and Rampal, a deputy chief engineer with Railways.

"A case has been registered against 10 people including four officials of NFR and others including Sajjan Kumar, his firm and his employees," the CBI said.

The CBI said that Santosh and Rampal along with some private persons entered a conspiracy to extend undue favours to the private contractors in awarding the contract agreement and early release of payment against manipulated and inflated bills vis-a-vis construction work in NFR.

"Rampal and Kumar were receiving the bribe amount from Sajjan when they were held," the CBI said.

Court can't guide CBI in every step of teachers' scam probe: Calcutta HC

Kolkata | Agencies

The court cannot guide the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in every step of investigation in the multi-crore teachers' recruitment scam in West Bengal, Justice Biswajit Basu of the Calcutta High Court observed on Monday.

"It does not look good that the court will direct you on every step that should take in the process of investigation. Do your own work yourself. Even the court has to direct you on whom to be interrogated in the matter. You are appearing at the court daily, listening to advice and going back. This system cannot continue. Please act fast," Justice Basu was heard telling the counsel and investigating officials of the CBI present at his court.

Justice Basu also questioned why the CBI officials were not taking into custody and questioning others involved in the scam.

"Those who have paid and those who have accepted bribes are equally guilty. Why are you not tak-



ing them into custody and questioning them? Why is the CBI so reluctant in the matter? I presume lots of money involved in the crime proceeds has been transferred elsewhere by now," observed Justice Basu.

This is the second time within a span of just four days; the CBI officials have faced the wrath of the Calcutta High Court in connection to the teachers' recruitment scam. On February 2, Justice Abhijit

Gangopadhyay while seeking the details of the assets of all the members of the special investigation team (SIT) of CBI probing the scam observed that "following the lackadaisical approach of the central agency in the matter it seems that he will personally have to handle the investigation and send a report to the Prime Minister". Recently, he also ordered for the replacement of an inspector-level officer from the SIT of CBI probing the matter.

SC AGREES TO EXAMINE SAME-SEX COUPLE PLEA AGAINST KERALA HC ORDER DIRECTING COUNSELLING SESSIONS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to examine a plea by same-sex couple challenging the Kerala High Court order directing one of them to attend counselling sessions with a psychiatrist. Advocate Sriram P. mentioned the plea before a bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and sought urgent hearing in the matter. The bench asked the counsel to keep the brief ready and it will hear the matter at the end of the board. The plea said the petitioner and the detenu are female as per their



gender orientation and they both wish to get married and be together. The plea challenged the Kerala High Court's January 13, 2023 order, which directed the detenu to attend counselling sessions with a psychiatrist so far as her sexu-

al orientation is concerned. The plea contended that the parents of the detenu have kept the detenu in illegal custody against her will so as to direct the marriage between the petitioner and the detenu. "The present Special

Leave Petition is seeking to invoke the basic principle of Habeas Corpus and seeking the detenu to be produced before the court physically," said the plea. The plea contended that the detenu, through video confer-

encing, clearly told the high court that she is in love with the petitioner and the detenu wanted to come with the petitioner and live happily with her ever after. The plea said: "The High Court erroneously sought the detenu to be sent for counselling. The counselling impugned herein is obviously counselling to change her sexual orientation. It is most respectfully submitted that this counselling is proscribed under law and the High Courts of Madras, Uttarakhand, and Orissa have specifically and categorically followed the law laid down by this High Court prohibiting it."

Delhi mayor polls postponed again amid ruckus by AAP, BJP



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) House adjourned without electing a mayor for the third time in a month on Monday.

As soon as the House reconvened to elect Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Standing Committee members, both the BJP and AAP members resorted to sloganeering. An uproar erupted over

the nominated members being allowed to vote in the election to the post. Following the ruckus, the chair adjourned the House until the next date.

MCD Presiding Officer said that the polls to elect mayor, deputy mayor and Standing Committee members will be held simultaneously. She also said that as per the DMC Act aldermen are eligible to vote in the mayor and deputy mayor polls.

However, the AAP councillors protested and raised slogans against the aldermen being allowed to vote for the mayoral election. AAP's councillor and Leader of the

House Mukesh Goel said, "The Supreme Court order clearly says that aldermen can only vote in ward committee polls but cannot vote in the mayor polls. This is completely illegal."

The BJP leaders started raising slogans -- "Khareed farokht band karo, humare neta kharidna band karo (stop trying to buy our leaders)" inside the House after which Presiding officer Satya Sharma adjourned the House for 10 minutes. The presiding officer said that anyone who does not hold voting rights has to leave the house. AAP leader Akhilesh Pati Tripathi and Sanjeev Jha were asked to leave the House, as they do not have the voting rights. After this, the AAP councillors again started raising slogans against the BJP members. "Elections cannot be held in such an atmosphere. The House is adjourned until the next date," said presiding officer Satya Sharma. The BJP councillors and MPs left the House, while the AAP councillors were still sitting inside and refusing to leave.



NOT ABOVE LAW JUST BECAUSE ONE IS A CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY, SAYS SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday orally observed that just because one is a constitutional authority, they cannot say they are above the law, while directing the Uttar Pradesh government to dispose of all cases related to premature release of prisoners within a period of three months of the prisoner becoming eligible.

The Uttar Pradesh government counsel contended before a bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud that there may be certain "practical aspects" which can prevent authorities from following the directions, involving the disposal of cases related with premature release of convicts. Counsel pointed out that the decision-making process involves many officials, which includes the Director General-Prisons, then the matter is examined by the state government and finally, the Governor.

At this, the Chief Justice said: "There is no vacuum at the constitutional level... that's how prescient the Constitution is. Just because one is a



constitutional authority, they cannot say they are above the law."

The bench, also comprising Justices P.S. Narasimha and J.B. Pardiwala, directed the officials of legal services authorities in Uttar Pradesh to collect information from district and state prisons on convicts who have become eligible for premature release. It further directed the state government that all cases in connection with the premature release of prisoners shall be disposed of within three months of the prisoner becoming eligible for the relief.

The apex court was informed that 2,228 convicts are entitled for remission in Uttar Pradesh. Emphasising on implementing the process in a transpar-

ent manner, the bench also directed the jail superintendents in UP to furnish information to the secretaries of the district legal services authority (DLSAs) to ensure that the process of premature release is implemented efficiently.

The apex court made it clear that the state government should take final decision based on the policy governing the premature release of convicts. According to Uttar Pradesh government's 2018 policy, a convict serving a life term would be considered for premature release if the person has undergone a total of 20 years of the sentence - 16 years of the actual sentence and four years of remission.

The apex court, besides Uttar Pradesh, also issued notices to Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra on monitoring the premature release of convicts there. In September last year, the apex court had taken note of the Uttar Pradesh policy on remission. According to this policy, there will be no requirement for an application for premature release from a convict and their cases will be considered automatically by the jail authorities.

Prime Minister lauds HAL's new factory, unveils Light Utility Helicopter

Bengaluru | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday dedicated HAL's new helicopter factory to the nation during a function at Gubbi near Tumakuru district in Karnataka.

Speaking on the occasion, he hailed HAL's efforts in strengthening 'Aatmanirbharta' in the defence sector by building India's largest helicopter factory. "From drone manufacturing to building Tejas fighter, naval carrier and transport aircraft, India is now producing everything indigenously," he said. "HAL is manufacturing Tejas for the Indian Defence Forces and is the centre of global attention. The factory will produce hundreds of helicopters and generate business to the tune of Rs 4 lakh crore besides generating direct and indirect employment boosting the regional economy," he added.

Modi said that after laying the foundation stone in 2016, it was a momentous occasion to see the factory operational today. He unveiled a Light Utility Helicopter (LUH) produced by HAL.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated HAL and said that the inau-



guration of the Tumakuru factory is a big milestone in India's journey towards 'Aatmanirbharta'. The Tumakuru factory will boost India's defence services. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said HAL is one of the leading companies and is the pride of Karnataka. He welcomed its presence in Tumakuru.

The Tumakuru factory will become a one-stop solution for all helicopter requirements of the country. With the establishment of facilities like Heli-Runway, Flight Hangar, Final Assembly Hangar, Structure Assembly Hangar, Air Traffic Control (ATC) and

various supporting service facilities, the factory is fully operational. This factory is being equipped with state-of-the-art Industry 4.0 standard tools and techniques for its operations.

The Light Utility Helicopter (LUH), initially being built in this factory is an indigenously designed and developed 3-ton class, single engine multipurpose utility helicopter with unique feature of high manoeuvrability.

Initially, this factory will produce around 30 helicopters per year, and it can be enhanced to 60 and then 90 helicopters per year in a phased manner.

Delhi LG approves filling up of teaching, non-teaching staff of govt-aided schools through DSSSB

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Lt Governor V.K. Saxena has approved the filling up of teaching and non-teaching staff of government-aided schools through DSSSB as is being done in the case of Delhi government schools.

"However, since this would require amendment in the Delhi School Education Rules (DSER), 1973 and the Delhi School Education Act (DSEA), 1973 that governs such provisions, the LG has directed the government (Education Department) to follow the laid down procedure in this regard," said a statement from Raj Niwas.

"To ensure that the autonomy of such schools and their Selection Committees, tasked with the responsibility of making such recruitments is maintained, it has been decided that against



every vacancy to be filled, the Selection Committees of the government-aided schools will be provided with the panel of three names by the DSSSB for them to make a choice," the LG office said.

In case of government schools, the DSSSB selects and provides one candidate against each vacancy.

There are about 8,300 sanctioned posts in 207 government-aided schools

against which recruitments are done from time to time. While the DSER, 1973 provides for a Selection Committee, with the nominee of the Director of Education, for such recruitments, the rules are silent about the procedure to be adopted by these Selection Committees for selection of teachers and clerical staff.

The said provisions shall be optional for government-aided minority schools.

TELANGANA CONGRESS CHIEF LAUNCHES PADYATRA

Hyderabad | Agencies

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President, A. Revanth Reddy, on Monday launched Haath Se Haath Jodo padyatra in the state to take Rahul Gandhi's message of Bharat Jodo Yatra to people.

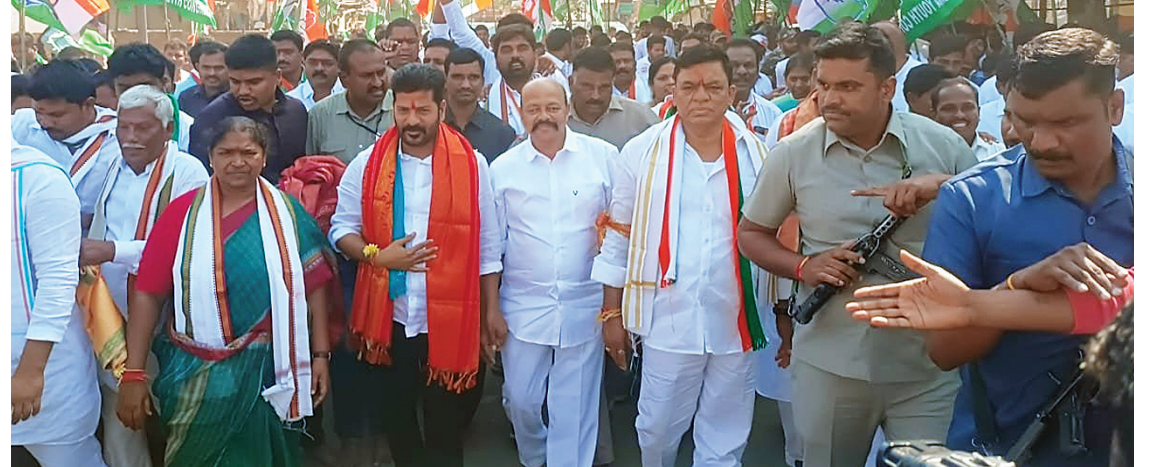
The padyatra is also aimed at highlighting the failures of the Central and the state governments.

Revanth Reddy launched the foot-march in Mulugu district after offering prayers to tribal deities Sammakka and Saralamma.

He along with local Congress MLA Seethakka and hundreds of party workers participated in the walkathon for six kilometers on the first day.

Addressing the participants, Reddy said he would work the spirit of tribal warriors Sammakka and Saralamma to fight and end autocratic and feudal rule in the state.

Reddy, who is also a Member of Parliament, later tweeted that the first day of the padyatra was a huge suc-



cess. "We will continue to take the message of our leader Rahul Gandhi Ji to every nook and corner of the state," he said.

Reddy would walk 20 to 25 km each day and interact with a cross-section of people along the padyatra route with an objective of covering 60 Assembly constituencies in the state in phases in the next two months.

Congress MP Uttam Kumar Reddy and some other top leaders also launched padyatras in their respective constituencies.

In Mahabubnagar, Adilabad and other places, protests were also held as part of padyatras demanding action against industrialist Adani over the scam. The protestors raised slogans against Prime Minister Narendra

Modi and Adani, alleging that the government at the Centre is trying to shield the industrialist.

Congress leaders alleged that PM Modi is protecting his best friend. They staged a protest against the Modi government's refusal to allow a debate in Parliament or to constitute Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to probe the scam.

Riders of Ola Bike, Rapido among 5 held for robbery

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Police have arrested five men, including two riders of Swiggy, Rapido and Ola Bike, for allegedly robbing a 55-year-old man of Rs 32 lakh at gunpoint in Delhi.

The accused have been identified as Rihaan, Ansaar, Nazim, Rahul Verma and Aakash alias Yogesh.

Police said that Rahul and Aakash are working as a rider of online food delivery app Swiggy, online delivery app Rapido and Ola Bike.

According to Rohit Meena, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara), on January 29, 51-year-old Mohan Lal told police that three assailants came on a bike, hit him with the butt of the pistol, threatening to kill him, and robbed his bag containing Rs 32 lakh near Hedgewar Hospital in the area.

"During investigation, the route of travel was mapped and after an amalgamation of CCTV analysis, Rahul and Aakash were nabbed who upon interrogation revealed



that many more persons were involved in conspiring, recce and execution of the robbery and thereafter they were booked under dacoity," said the DCP.

Nazim, Ansaar and Rihaan were also nabbed after multiple raids. "Their interrogation revealed that one accused, who is on the run, planned the dacoity along with Ansaar, Nazim and Rihaan. More persons are yet to be arrested," said the DCP. "The accused had been doing recce of Mohan Lal for the

past 15 days and January 26, they planned to commit the dacoity but dropped it. On January 29, after making a foolproof plan which even involved weapons, they executed and looted Rs 32 lakh," said the DCP. "There were four bikes and nine persons, who were assigned individual tasks with minute details of execution. Further raids are being made to nab the remaining accused persons and to recover the remaining amount," the official added.

PUNJAB EX-MINISTER DHARAMSOT ARRESTED



Chandigarh: The Punjab Vigilance Bureau on Monday arrested former Congress minister Sadhu Singh Dhamsot for amassing assets disproportionately to his known sources of income.

A spokesperson for the Vigilance Bureau said following investigations of an enquiry a case under the Prevention of the Corruption Act has been registered against Dhamsot.

Giving details, he said from March 1, 2016, to March 31, 2022, the income of the former minister and his family was Rs 2,37,12,596 while the expenditure was Rs 8,76,30,888, which was 269 per cent more than his known sources of income. He said the former minister would be produced before the competent court in Mohali on Tuesday.

ADGP Kashmir reviews security scenario in Baramulla

Srinagar | Agencies

Additional Director General Police (ADGP) Kashmir Zone Vijay Kumar on Monday visited J&K's Baramulla district and chaired a detailed review meeting, the police said.

During the meeting, the prevailing security scenario, anti-terrorist operations, additional measures for the counter-infiltration grid like establishing more BOPs for enhancing intelligence gathering, effective investigation, law and order and anti-drug drives were discussed.

"During the meeting, ADGP Kashmir was briefed about the overall prevailing security situation, and counter-infiltration grids and counter-terrorist operations in the North Kashmir Range. While appreciating the efforts of police to maintain law and order, he emphasised the officers to adopt professional approach while dealing with counter-terrorist operations. He also urged officers to strengthen



the general security grid and ensure great synergy and coordination among all the agencies working on the ground," a police statement said.

"He also emphasised upon the officers to keep strict vigil over the anti-national elements, especially terrorist associates who are hell bent on disturbing the peace and tranquillity of the valley. Special focus was given on handling the drug menace and strict action against drug peddlers," it noted.

With regard to area domination in the hinterland, ADGP Kashmir directed the officers to revisit the existing plan in consultation with other forces and ensure proper area domination, including night domination.

"He also directed the officers to ensure strict naka checking so as to restrict the movement of anti-national elements. While discussing investigation of cases, he stressed upon officers to complete investigation of pending cases on a priority basis," the police said.

Delhi man strangles paralysed father to death

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi man has been arrested for strangling his paralysed father to death after the latter urinated in his bed, a police official said on Monday.

The accused has been identified as Sumit, a resident of Anand Parbat area of central Delhi. According to Deputy Commissioner of Police, Central, Shweta Chauhan, a police control room call was received in Anand Parbat police station at around 9 p.m. on Friday regarding the death of a person. "A police team reached the spot and found one person lying on the bed. Initially, it appeared a natural death as deceased Jitendra Sharma was paralysed and addicted to alcohol also," she said. However, police began a

probe after the deceased's wife told police that she suspects her son was behind the murder of her husband. "The body was shifted to RML Hospital and after autopsy, the doctor orally informed that it was not a case of natural death and appeared to be a case of homicidal death or strangulation. Subsequently, a murder case was registered and investigation was taken up," said the DCP. During investigation, the statement of a neighbour was recorded who informed that on the same day, he was also drinking alcohol along with the deceased and his son. "He also mentioned that he left both of them around 6.30 PM and after sustained interrogation and confrontation with witness, Sumit (son of the deceased) confessed to his crime," said the DCP.

Kabbadi player alleges sexual harassment by coach, records statement



Team Absolute | New Delhi

A 27-year-old kabbadi player, who had alleged that she was sexually harassed and blackmailed by her coach, on Monday, recorded her statement in a Delhi court.

According to Deputy Commissioner of Police, Dwarka, M. Harsha Vardhan, the kabbadi player had given a complaint recently at Baba Haridas Nagar police station against her coach, stating she was

preparing for a competition in Hiranukda near Mundka in 2012 and in March 2015, her coach had sexual relations with her without her consent.

"She further stated in the complaint that in 2018, the coach even forced her to give him a part of the winning amount. She then transferred Rs 43.5 lakh into his bank account." In 2021 she got married and the accused is blackmailing her, threatening to leak her private photos," the DCP said.

BIHAR MAN HELD FOR TORTURING MINOR DAUGHTER

Patna: A street vendor in Bihar's Samastipur was arrested on Monday for allegedly beating up and torturing his six-year-old daughter, police said.

The accused was identified as Mantun Rai, 50, of Dhamaun village. An FIR has been registered in Patori police station. As per the statement of the victim, she said that Rai tied her with the iron chain and branded her with a hot iron bar. He had also brutally beaten her as well only for sleeping in the house of a neighbour. The victim sustained a fracture in her leg. After the brutal assault, Rai took her to Sadar hospital for treatment. When the doctors asked her the cause of the injuries, she said that her father had beaten her brutally and used the hot iron on her.

<p>CHANGE OF NAME I No. 4572436H CHM RAJKUMAR SARKAR s/o KRISHNA CHANDRA SARKAR presently residing at Vill- Gomordha, Lohanda, Dinajpur, Raiganj, west Bengal Pin:733134 have changed my son's name from RAKI SARKAR to MRINAL SARKAR and changed my son's DOB from 24/12/2005 to 24/12/2006 vide affidavit No. 75AA 724194.</p>	<p>CHANGE OF NAME I, No. 4578920L L/HAV SONTAKKE PRITAMKUMAR DINAJI presently residing at Ward No. 3 Main road, Sillori Nagpur, Maharashtra Pin-441107 have changed my son's name from VEER SONTAKKE to VEER PRITAMKUMAR SONTAKKE vide affidavit No. 75AA 724192.</p>	<p>CHANGE OF NAME I No. 4578970W L/HAV PAWAR VIJAY ASHOK is s/o ISHWARI VIJAY PAWAR presently residing at Village - Yes Gaon(B.K) PO- YES GAON(B. K) Sub Dist- Malegaon, Dist- Nashik State- Maharashtra Pin: 423203 have changed my daughter's name from ISHWARI VIJAY PAWAR to ISHWARI VIJAY PAWAR vide affidavit No. 75AA 724191.</p>
<p>CHANGE OF NAME I No. 458112Y NK GAWALI SANDIP DIGAMBAR presently residing at Chinchkheda, Jalna, Maharashtra Pin-431206 have changed my daughter's name from TANUSHA to TANUSHA SANDIP GAWALI vide affidavit No. 75AA 724190.</p>	<p>CHANGE OF NAME I SOYAMATA PRITAMKUMAR SONTAKKE is legally wedded spouse of No. 4578920L L/HAV SONTAKKE PRITAMKUMAR DINAJI presently residing at Ward No. 3 Main road, Sillori Nagpur, Maharashtra Pin-441107 have changed my name from SOYAMATA SONTAKKE to SOYAMATA PRITAMKUMAR SONTAKKE vide affidavit No. 75AA 724193.</p>	



SANT SHIROMANI RAVIDAS MAHAKUMBH IS FOR ALL ROUND DEVELOPMENT OF ALL CLASSES: CM CHOUHAN

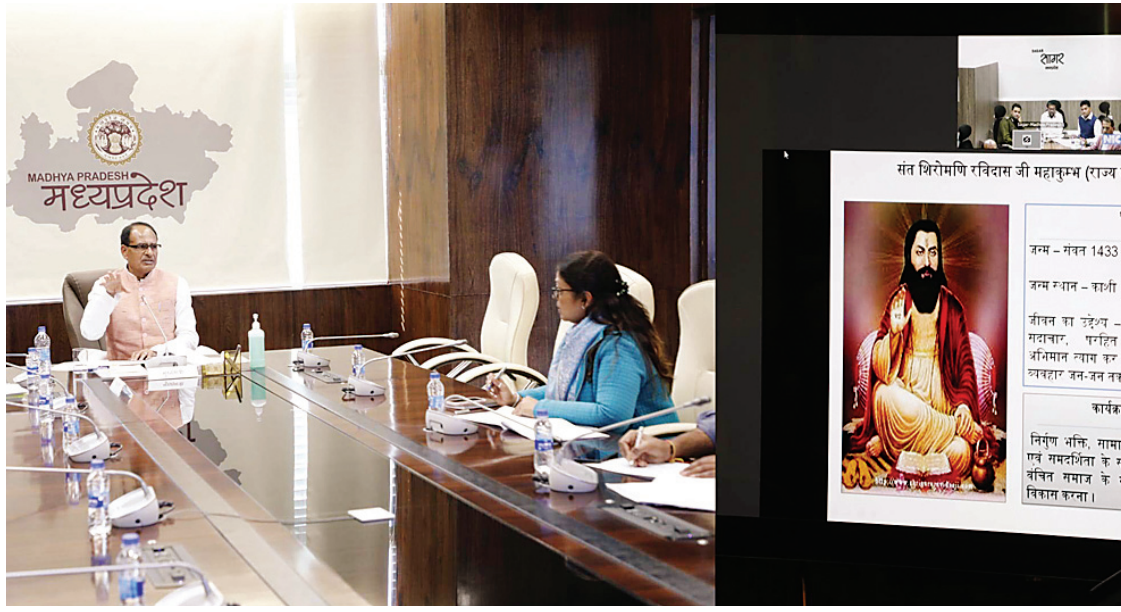
Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has directed that the talents of Scheduled Castes should be honoured and the products made by entrepreneurs should be displayed at the state-level Sant Shiromani Ravidas Mahakumbh to be held in Sagar on February 8. Activities should also be conducted to connect more and more people with the schemes and programs run for the welfare of Scheduled Castes.

Chief Minister Chouhan was reviewing the ongoing preparations for Mahakumbh. Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains and Principal Secretary Pallavi Jain Govil were present in the meeting held at Mantralaya. Commissioner Sagar and Collector took part virtually.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that the objective of the programme is all-round development of scheduled castes and all sections of the deprived society with social harmony, equality and equanimity. All the districts of the state should be connected with the Mahakumbh.

It was informed that the program will be held at Kajali Van Sadar locat-



ed on Jhansi Road in Sagar from 1 pm. A photo exhibition focused on Scheduled Caste welfare and an exhibition of products made by selected Scheduled Caste entrepreneurs will also be held at the venue. Benefits will also be distributed in the pro-

gram. Bhajans focused on Sant Ravidas darshan will be presented and Ravidasi sect seers will be honoured in the Mahakumbh. Along with this, a photo exhibition focusing on his life will also be organized. Followers from the districts includ-

ing Damoh, Tikamgarh, Vidisha, Raisen, Guna, Narsinghpur, Jabalpur, Bhopal, Ashoknagar, Chhatrapur, Panna and Niwari will join the Mahakumbh. The program will be broadcast live on various platforms of social media.

Six-year-old boy kidnapped, killed in Mhow; two detained

Team Absolute | Mhow:

A six-year-old boy was allegedly kidnapped and killed for ransom in Mhow area of Madhya Pradesh's Indore district, police said on Monday. The police have detained two suspects, and one of them is a relative of the victim, an official said.

The boy went missing from Pigdambar village around 6 pm on Sunday and was found dead in a deserted place on Monday, he said.

The police launched a search operation after receiving a complaint about the missing boy. However, his body was found in a culvert between Saindal and Mairdal villages in the Choral forest area, Kishanganj police station in-charge Kuldeep Khatri said.

The deceased was last spotted with a relative near the railway line passing through Pigdambar village. Based on this, the police have



detained him and another person, he said.

Meanwhile, the boy's father Jitendra Chouhan and his uncle Vijendra Chouhan, a Congress leader from Mhow, claimed that they received calls from an unidentified person demanding Rs 4 crore. But before they could act

in the matter, they received information about the boy's body lying in the Choral forest area, they said.

Khatri, however, said, "The police are yet to record the statements of the boy's family members and as of now, nothing could be said about the ransom call or demand for money."

7-year-old stabbed 29 times by man who tried to rape her

Team Absolute | Indore

A man was sentenced to death by a court in Indore in Madhya Pradesh on Monday for killing a 7-year-old girl after abducting her with the intention of committing rape but failing to do so as she raised an alarm that attracted a mob.

Additional Sessions Judge and Special Judge (POCSO Act) Surekha Mishra sentenced Saddam (31) to death and also imposed a fine of 9,000 on him, while directing the state government to give 3 lakh as compensation to the girl's family.

Saddam was charged with murder and abduction under provisions of the Indian



Penal Code and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, district public prosecution officer Sanjeev Srivastava said. "Saddam abducted the seven-year-old girl with the

intention of raping her on September 23, 2022 when she was playing near her grandmother's house in Azad Nagar area. He took her to his house but failed to rape her after she raised an alarm. Enraged, he stabbed her 29 times and killed her," Srivastava said. "After committing the crime, Saddam came out of his house and threatened the eyewitnesses saying he would kill them if they approached police. A CCTV camera installed in the Azad Nagar area had footage of Saddam abducting the girl and his fingerprints were found on the knife recovered from his possession. The DNA report also confirmed his involvement," he informed.

AUTO DRIVER KICKED, HIT WITH STICKS

Bhopal: An auto driver was brutally beaten up by a group of men, including officials of the railway police, in front of his wife in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain on Sunday. An investigation has been launched after the video of the assault was shared online. Police officials, however, claim that the man was assaulted after he hit a railway police official who had intervened after he picked up a fight with a hotel employee.

The incident reportedly took place when the auto driver had an argument with the hotel staff over picking up passengers from the railway station, located near the hotel. The argument soon led to physical assault. A video shows the auto driver being punched and kicked as he tries to defend himself. The hotel staff called a group of railway policemen from the station, who also thrashed the auto driver with canes as he lay on the ground. At one point, the railway officials even pushed the auto driver's wife as she begged them to spare him.

"The auto driver is a habitual offender; he has been creating a nuisance in the area. He has been picking up fight with people regularly. He has once been caught vandalising a hotel. Complaints against him have been filed in two police stations in the area. He even assaulted a policeman who tried to investigate the matter," said a police official.

Management Development Program organised for Indian Navy officers

Team Absolute | Bhopal

To enhance the professional efficiency of NAVY personnel, CRISP

International has organized specially designed management development program at CRISP, Bhopal residential campus. The program was greatly acclaimed by the participating officers and they revealed that the training programmes helped them in improving managerial, administrative, leadership, communication & Presentation skills.

The one-week training included self-awareness, memory skills, stress management, effective communication skills, motivation, emotional intelligence based on interactive methodology of audio-video discussions, group discussion, Power point presentation, lec-



ture, management games, role plays, case studies, mind power games, psychological testing and proving techniques.

One of the participating officer Joga Rao said that 'CRISP

soft skills training experience is amazing as apart from significant professional applications, it can apply to improve their family life also.

CM CHOUHAN PLANTS BANYAN, SAPTAPARNI AND KHIRNI SAPPLINGS WITH CITIZENS



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Banyan, Saptaparni and Khirmi in the garden located at Shyamala Hills. On February 19, 2021, Chief Minister Chouhan had taken a pledge in Amarkantak to plant saplings daily. Today is the 717th day of CM Chouhan's resolve to plant saplings every day. Along with the Chief Minister, Swadeep Singh Bhadauria and Monika Bhadauria planted saplings on their marriage anniversary. Kuldeep Singh Bhadauria, Rita Singh Bhadauria, M.S. Bhadauria and Mithilesh Bhadauria were also with them. Former District Panchayat Vice President of Bhopal Kalpana Meena planted saplings on her birthday. Social workers Brijesh Meena, Ashok Meena and Vijay Meena were also present on the occasion.

Banks are the lifeline of the economy: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that banks are the lifeline of the economy. Presently it is not possible to imagine life without a bank. PM Modi launched a campaign to open every person's account, as a result of which bank accounts were opened for all poor people. The amounts of public welfare schemes of the Central and State Governments are deposited directly into the accounts of the eligible persons. With the expansion of banks and the facilities being provided by them to the general public, transparency in the system has received a boost and people's lives have become easier. HDFC Bank's cooperation in encouraging self-employment activities in the state and empowering women self-help groups is commendable.

Chief Minister Chouhan was addressing the inauguration programme at Manas Bhawan located



in Shyamala Hills for the virtual launch of 20 branches of HDFC Bank in Madhya Pradesh. CM Chouhan cut the ribbon of HDFC ATM at Manas Bhawan and inaugurated 20 branches in the state virtually. HDFC's head office in Mumbai and 20 branches of the state were virtually connected to

the programme. Former Rajya Sabha member Raghunandan Sharma, Circle Head of HDFC Bank Ashu Garg, MP State Head Neeraj Nema and other officials were present. Chief Minister Chouhan garlanded the statue of great poet Tulsidas located in Manas Bhawan.

Railways JE held for rape on pretext of marriage

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Delhi Police have arrested a 28-year-old Junior Engineer (JE) of the Indian Railways for allegedly raping a 24-year-old girl on the pretext of marriage after getting in touch with her through a matrimonial website, an official said on Monday. The accused has been identified as Vipin Karpanter, a resident of Rajgarh in Madhya Pradesh. He was arrested on February 3.

According to a senior police officer, the girl, a resident of Delhi, came in contact with Karpanter on the matrimonial website and remained in touch with him till September 2022. "She had alleged that the accused, who works as a



Junior Engineer in Indian Railways, had physical relations with her on the promise of marriage," the official said. "A FIR under Section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal

Code has been registered at Shakarpur police station and the accused has been apprehended. Vipin is married and has two children," the official added.

Khelo India Youth Games 2022

National Games medallist Shauryajit Khaire gunning for gold in Mallakhamba

Team Absolute | Ujjain

When Shauryajit Khaire won a bronze medal in Mallakhamba during the National Games held in Gujarat last year, he became the talk of the whole country after becoming the youngest athlete to win a medal at the Games.

Now 10-year-old is in Madhya Pradesh to participate in the Khelo India Youth Games for the first time and he is aiming at nothing less than gold.

After his medal at the National Games, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also congratulated Shauryajit, a Class 5 student of Vadodara's Bharati Vidya Bhavan, on his success.

"I was very proud when I won the medal at the National Games. People started knowing me. Everyone from the colony to the school expressed happiness over my success. I felt good," he said.



Shauryajit is the youngest athlete in the Khelo India Youth Games 2022 and is all set to replicate his performance from National Games. Regarding his preparations and intentions, he said, "This time I am practicing a lot to win

the medal and I will take gold. I am fully prepared for Ujjain and will try to get maximum points there."

The 10-year-old athlete doesn't know much about the Khelo India Youth Games as no one from his school or family has been into sports. It was Shauryajit's father, who liked Mallakhamba, and he used to take him to watch and practice the sport. "I practice for two hours daily but my focus is more on studies. No one does Mallakhamba at home. My father liked Mallakhamba. He used to take me. When I went to see it, I liked it and that's why I chose Mallakhamba." It is noteworthy that five traditional games including Mallakhamba are a part of the KIYG 2022. While Yogasana & Malkhamb are being hosted in Ujjain, the other indigenous sports will be played across different cities in the state viz; Kalarippayattu in Gwalior, Gatka in Jabalpur, Thang-ta and Yogasana.

'WANTS TO WIN MEDAL IN FOR THE COUNTRY'

Vinatai sets youth games record at KIYG 2022;

Team Absolute | Indore

Vinatai Aher, who won the 40kg title in the girls' weightlifting event, wants to win a medal for the country. 17-year-old Vinatai lifted a total of 129 kg that included 57 kg in snatch and 72 kg in clean and jerk to set a Youth Games Record.

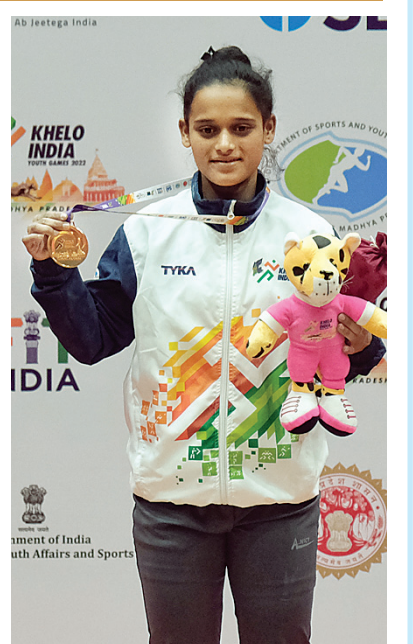
Vinatai, who practices under the supervision of Praveen Vyavhare at the Manmad gym, practices with national youth record holder Akanksha Vyavhare, who is 14 years old and has arrived for the first time to participate in the Khelo India Youth Games in Madhya Pradesh.

Vinatai, who studies at MG College, Manmad, said that she wants to win a medal for the country. Vinatai said, - It was a great experience to be here. The competition is also very good. It opens

the way for players like us to go ahead. From here onwards I have to go for International. I will put in all I have to get selected in the national team. My aim is to win a medal for the country.

Vinatai played his first national event in Nagercoil last year. Vinatai said, - "I finished second in Nagercoil. The first place was won by Joshna Sabar of Odisha, whom I defeated here. Now I will prove myself by participating in more and more national events."

When asked if she got into weightlifting from any inspiration, Vinatai said, "My inspiration is my brother who is a weightlifter himself. He plays international. His name is Mukund Aahe and he holds the national record in 55kg. My younger sister is also into weightlifting and we all practice under the supervision of Praveen sir."





EDITOR'S SPECS

Do hearing personal experiences increase Covid vaccination rates?

Hearing personal experiences of someone who got sick with Covid-19 or died from the disease are twice as likely to receive a Covid-19 vaccine, a new study has shown. According to the study published in the journal *Vaccine*, the researchers surveyed 1,193 people in the US who were eligible for the vaccine to see who knew family members or friends who had recovered, were still sick or had died from Covid-19 and had received at least one dose of the vaccine. The researchers found that essential workers and people with good or better health status were more likely to have received an initial vaccine dose within four months of the EUA (Emergency Use Authorisation) as older respondents, had a higher income or a higher education level. Conversely, uninsured people, Alaskan natives or American Indians were significantly less likely to receive the vaccine within four months of the EUA, the study mentioned. "This study shows that the messenger matters more than the message: Hearing about the experiences of a trusted person, such as a friend or a family member, can be more effective than vaccine mandates," said Saurabh Kalra, a doctoral student at the US-based Rutgers School of Public Health and lead author of the study. These findings indicate the need for targeted efforts to increase vaccinations among young adults, those with lower levels of education, and those living in lower-income households, said the study. "These findings should encourage people to share stories about their Covid-19 illness and bereavement experiences with their friends and family as well as through social media as it may motivate people to be vaccinated," said co-author Irina Grafova, a health economist at Rutgers School of Public Health.

MVA ALLIES ARE AS INSEPARABLE AS 'AMAR AKBAR ANTHONY'

With the countdown for the 2024 Lok Sabha and Maharashtra Assembly elections started, the national Opposition parties are busy calculating various political alliances, permutations, combinations and strategies to boost their electoral arithmetic vis-a-vis the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Much to the chagrin of the Opposition parties, in the past two Lok Sabha (2014-2019) elections -- despite their best efforts -- the EVM machines kept popping out saffron bunnies sporting BJP caps, with the magic attributed to baton-masters, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Home Minister Amit Shah. Three years ago, an unforeseen and probably belated alliance of Congress-Nationalist Congress Party-Shiv Sena (UBT) named MVA, stonewalled the BJP's attempts to return to power for a second consecutive term after the October 2019 Assembly elections. Barely recovering from the 'hijack', but fretting in the Opposition, the BJP managed to topple MVA Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray in June 2022 and grabbed power with the help of the Balasahebchandra Shiv Sena (BSS), proping up Eknath Shinde as the new Chief Minister. Though heavily 'leaking' and 'bleeding', Sena (UBT) President Thackeray did not desert the MVA allies -- which in turn reciprocated by keeping him within the fold, with full dignity. As the national political landscape looms with the likelihood of at least three Opposition combines, it is abundantly clear that NCP-Sena (UBT) will throw its lot in any coalition comprising the Congress -- though they may be at political loggerheads in different states with powerful local satraps and influential regional parties. In December 2021, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and in February 2022, Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao met with Maharashtra leaders to discuss their national political designs. They met NCP supremo Sharad Pawar and Sena (UBT) tiger Thackeray, both the Maharashtra bigwigs accorded Banerjee and Rao a warm welcome, but politely cold-shouldered suggestions hinting at a non-Congress front as "unfeasible". Pawar and senior NCP leaders such as



Praful Patel, daughter Supriya Sule, nephew Ajit Pawar, state president Jayant Patil plus Sena (UBT)'s Thackeray, Sanjay Raut, Arvind Sawant and Aditya Thackeray, among others, on various occasions, have stressed the need for Opposition unity including the Congress to pose an all-out challenge to the BJP in 2024. Pawar and Raut have aired their views on how only the Congress commands a pan-India presence, acceptance among all sec-

tions, experience and a nationally recognised leadership, that would be an asset in effectively grappling the BJP challenge. While Pawar Sr. continues his backroom manoeuvres in New Delhi and through his legion of friends' across the political spectrum towards this aim, the recently-concluded Bharat Jodo Yatra (BJY) led by MP Rahul Gandhi proved to be the proverbial booster dose' for the Congress and partly the

Opposition's sagging morales. Willy-nilly stamping their support to Congress, NCP's Sule, Patil, Dr. Jitendra Awhad and other bigwigs joined Gandhi's BJV, followed by Sena (UBT)'s Aditya Thackeray, Ambadas Danve, Sanjay Raut and Urmila Matondkar joined him at various points in Maharashtra and in Jammu & Kashmir. On earlier occasions, the trio -- uncharitably labelled as autrickshaw' by the BJP -- stuck together when in a morning shock for MVA, Devendra Fadnis was sworn-in as Chief Minister and Ajit Pawar (NCP) as the Deputy Chief Minister on November 23, 2019. The development came even as an ecstatic Thackeray was finalising his wardrobe for his own swearing-in as the MVA Chief Minister, decided just a couple of days before. However, the NCP and Congress virtually moved heaven-and-earth and ensured that the two-man government crashed in just 80 hours and a victorious Thackeray took the oath as Chief Minister on November 28, 2019. Weeks before the MVA government collapsed in June 2022, Pawar had sounded categorical warnings to Thackeray of the impending disaster awaiting his party, as revealed recently by Ajit Pawar. Ostensibly, the Sena leaders misjudged the gravity of the situation as "the most trusted people" were involved -- who ultimately betrayed them through the abrupt coup d'etat. As the central probe agencies went after several NCP and Sena (UBT) leaders, even reaching upto the relatives of the Pawars and Thackerays, the MVA partnership did not crumble. The MVA fought the recent MLC biennial polls to emerge victorious in three seats, the BJP and a rebel Congressman got one each. The three parties are now contesting the upcoming bypolls to two Assembly seats in Pune, which will be a further test of their political resilience. After the MLCs polls, the MVA's message, as stated by the Congress President Nana Patole, Ajit Pawar and Raut, is clear -- "united we stand, divided we crash".

international

23 THAI TOURISTS OUT OF CONTACT AFTER ARRIVING IN S.KOREA

Seoul | Agencies
A total of 23 Thai tourists have gone out of contact after arriving at Muan International Airport in southwestern South Korea over the past week, the Justice Ministry said on Monday. The Ministry said 10 Thais disappeared soon after landing at the Muan airport in Muan, 385 m south of Seoul, on a chartered flight from the Southeast Asian country on Monday morning, reports Yonhap news Agency. It said all efforts are under way to find the missing Thais. Earlier, 13 out of 174 Thai tourists who arrived at Muan International Airport last week have not shown up for their return flight and



remained out of contact, according to the Ministry. The 174 Thais landed at the Muan airport on a chartered flight on January 30 to visit major tourist attractions

in South Jeolla Province. But 13 of them disappeared soon after their arrival at the airport and did not board their return flight slated for Sunday, the ministry said. International flights resumed at the Muan airport in July last year after a Covid-19-related hiatus of over two years. Last week's chartered flight from Thailand was the first of its kind to arrive in Muan since the outbreak of the pandemic. The provincial government of South Jeolla, to which Muan belongs, aims to attract about 2,400 Thai tourists via chartered flights by the end of March but the latest disappearance of some Thai tourists is expected to negatively affect the goal.

70% of Mongolian territory covered by snow

Ulan Bator | Agencies



About 70 per cent of the Mongolian territory has been covered with snow of up to 60 cm in thickness, local media reported on Monday. The condition increases the risk of extreme wintry weather -- known as "dzud", said the report, citing the country's Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry. Dzud is a Mongolian term to describe a severely cold winter when a large number of livestock die because the

ground is frozen or covered by snow, reports Xinhua news agency. Herders across the country have used 60 per cent of the total hay and fodder stored for the livestock, it said. Since the beginning of this year, more than 233,000 heads of livestock have been killed in the country due to the harsh winter and other reasons, according to the Ministry.

SOUTH KOREA, AUSTRALIA RENEW CURRENCY SWAP DEAL FOR 5 YEARS

Seoul: The central banks of South Korea and Australia have agreed to renew their bilateral currency swap deal for five more years. The Bank of Korea (BOK) and the Reserve Bank of Australia extended their existing currency swap agreement, in which the South Korean currency is swapped for the Australian dollar, for five more years through February 5, 2028, Xinhua news agency reported citing an official statement released on Monday as saying. The size of the agreement was unchanged at A\$12 billion, or 9.6 trillion won. The central banks initially signed the swap deal in 2014 and extended it in 2017 and 2020. The BOK said the two countries shared a view that the currency swap agreement contributed to increased trade and financial market stability.

Fire damages Buddhist temple in Melbourne

Melbourne | Agencies

A Buddhist temple in Melbourne was gutted by fire, with about 80 firefighters battling the blaze on site on Monday. The Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) crews were called to the Bright Moon Buddhist Temple in the Australian city's south-east at about 8 p.m. and arrived to find the large multi-storey building ablaze, reports Xinhua news agency. According to the FRV, the incident has been deemed under control at about 10.35 p.m. Nearby residents were told to stay home, close all exterior doors and windows and turn off heating and cooling systems. There were no injuries reported in the fire. FRV Assistant Chief Fire Officer Paul Foster told local media that the firefighters were still putting out the remaining blazes on Monday



morning. Foster said that it was a large and "rather spectacular" fire as the temple was about 150 meters by 100 metres and five-storey tall. "This was an extensive fire, very rapidly developing and quite spectacular to look at... It was seen for many kilometres around," Foster said. The temple, belonging to the Bright Moon Buddhist Society, was purchased and converted into the present hall and prayer areas in 1991 and gradually became a popular worship place for local Buddhist communities.

Inflation in Laos hits 23-year high

Vientiane | Agencies

The inflation rate in Laos climbed to 40.3 per cent year-on-year in January 2023, the highest in 23 years, with a surge in energy and consumer goods prices. According to a report issued by the Lao Statistics Bureau on Monday, the soaring price of fuel, gas and other imported goods, compounded with the depreciation of the Lao currency kip, are among the main factors driving inflation, reports Xinhua news agency. The price of communications and transport rose 49.9 per cent, affecting both the cost of production and the cost of living. Meanwhile, the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages category jumped 47.1 per cent. The cost of medical care and medicine increased 42.2 per cent. The cost of household utilities gained 34.2 per cent. According to the report, the cost of the hotel and restaurant category surged 34 per cent. The



cost in the alcohol and tobacco category rose 26.3 per cent. In addition, the cost of housing, water, electricity, and gas category rallied 26 per cent. The cost of clothing and footwear increased 24.9 per cent. Inflation in Laos has increased significantly since the beginning of 2022, with rising prices continuing to inflict hardship on people. The annual average inflation rate in the Southeast Asian country was 23 per cent in 2022, jumping from 3.8 per cent in 2021. In response to the economic woes, the Lao government has outlined the 2023 work plan, vowing to take stronger action to revitalize the stagnant economy, notably by stabilizing currency exchange rates, curbing inflation, and amassing more revenue to boost its spending power, according to the report.



ON INDUSTRIES LEAVING, EKNATH SHINDE'S DIG AT TEAM THACKERAY

Team Absolute | Thane

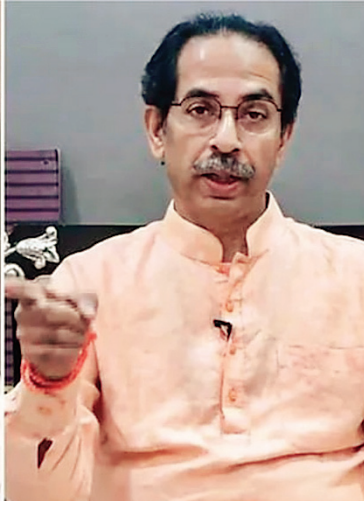
The industries that were reluctant to come to Maharashtra and shifted operations elsewhere in the recent past did so due to non-cooperation from the then state government and were unaware change was set to happen, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said on Monday.

The Shinde government came to power in June last year following his rebellion against then chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, which also split the Shiv Sena. His government comprises the Balasahebanchi Shiv Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Maharashtra, since then, has also been seeing a tussle between the ruling dispensation and the opposition parties over mega projects choosing to set base in other states. Notable among these were the Vedanta-



Foxconn semiconductor project and the Tata-Airbus military transport aircraft, both of which moved to neigh-



bouring Gujarat. Speaking at the concluding function of the four-day CREDAI MCHI property exhibition,

Shinde said, "Some of the industries that left the state did so due to non-cooperation by the then (Maha Vikas Aghadi) government over two-and-half-years. These industries were unaware the government here was about to change." Now, they (opposition Thackeray faction of the Sena, Congress, NCP) are blaming us for industries moving away. Do industries move out in just two months? Our government has the full support of the Centre. We signed MoUs worth Rs 1.30 lakh crore at the recent World Economic Forum in Davos," he added. Asserting that good roads were a prime requirement for development, Shinde quoted former US president John F Kennedy who had said "American roads are not good because America is rich, but America is rich because American roads are good".

BMC launches survey to gauge Mumbaikars' mental health

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nearly 8 years after the first National Mental Health Survey (NMHS), the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Monday launched a city-wide survey to determine the 'mental health' status of Mumbaikars, an official said here.

The survey, under directions from the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, will cover 3,600 people covering all strata of society including migrants, who will be randomly selected by a special software.

Besides Mumbai which will complete the exercise by August-September, the NMHS exercise shall be carried out in New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata,



Hyderabad, and Bengaluru.

A field survey team comprising mental health specialists will knock on the doors of the selected persons and quiz them for around 30-40 minutes on various aspects of mental health, including a section pertaining to Covid-19 pandemic and its ramifications.

This is the second NMHS by the Union Health Ministry since 2015-2016, and the BMC's Topiwala National Medical College & BYL Nair Charitable Hospital have been selected as the nodal centres to carry out the mega-exercise in Mumbai.

The hospital's Department of Psychiatry and Department of Community Medicine will implement the survey through a Coordinator and 7 other staffers who will personally visit the people whose names will be randomly thrown up by the software.

The first survey was coordinated at the national level by National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) and covered 12 states, with some startling results.

It had thrown up a lifetime prevalence of psychiatric disorders like depression, mood or anxiety problems and alcoholism in about 10 per cent of the people in non-urban centres and 14 per cent in urban centres.

After Nashik MLC polls, deep fissures appear in Maha Congress

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Days after the Nashik Graduates Constituency polls in which a rebel Congressman Satyajit Tambe won as an Independent backed by the Bharatiya Janata Party, wide cracks have emerged in the state Congress.

A senior 8-time MLA and Congress Legislative Party leader Balasaheb Thorat has reportedly shot off a letter to the Congress high command complaining against the state party president Nana Patole.

The development has created ripples in the party as the mild-mannered Thorat is himself a former state party chief and minister for several years, with a reputation to take along all sections and factions of the state unit.

Addressing party workers and supporters on Sunday, Thorat expressed distress at the manner in which the



'dirty intra-party politics' ostensibly fuelled the recent rebellion by his nephew Tambe -- who won the Nashik MLC seat.

"I have informed the central leadership in Delhi about this entire episode. Appropriate action will be initiated," said Thorat, without taking names.

Tambe -- who vanquished Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA)'s united candidate and a former BJP rebel Shubhangi Patil -- has also alleged that the recent developments were a 'conspiracy' to put his uncle (Thorat) in trouble.

Incidentally, after her defeat by Tambe, Patil has

joined the Shiv Sena (UBT), even as the MVA leaders have signalled to the Congress to sort out its internal issues on priority.

When questioned, a tense Patole said he was not aware of any such letter written by Thorat or its content, so he was not in a position to reply to anything based on hearsay. Among other things, Tambe -- who was expelled by the Congress for six years -- had claimed that he was denied the AB Form for the MLC polls despite an assurance from the party, compelling him to contest as an Independent and emerging victorious.

Though the state Congress has denied Tambe's allegations, other senior leaders including Vijay Wadetiwar have termed the entire issue as disturbing and called for thrashing it out in the party forum later this week.

BANGLADESHI NATIONAL ARRESTED FOR ILLEGAL STAY



Thane: A 42-year-old Bangladeshi national was arrested for illegal stay in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Monday. The accused had been working as a tailor at different establishments in Bhiwandi town since the last 10 years and did not possess any valid documents, assistant police inspector V B Bade of Narpoli police station said. The man was found working at a garment factory at Dapoda of Bhiwandi and was arrested during a check on Saturday, he said.

An offence under relevant sections of the Indian Passport Act and the Foreign Nationals Act has been registered, the official added.

BJP ready to 'sacrifice' nominee for unopposed bypolls in Kasbapeth

Team Absolute | Pune

In an apparent climbdown, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday expressed readiness to withdraw its candidate from the Kasbapeth Assembly constituency to ensure an unopposed by-election here on February 26.

State BJP President Chandrashekhar Bawankule and Pune polls in-charge Chandrakant Patil said the party was prepared to give a ticket to the legendary Tilak family if the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi agrees to an unopposed election.

The prestigious Kasbapeth bypolls are necessitated after the death of sitting BJP MLA Mukta S. Tilak - a great-grand-daughter-in-law of the freedom-fighter, Bal Gangadhar Lokmanya Tilak - in December 2022.

Bawankule and Patil said they are willing to field Shailesh Tilak (husband of the late Mukta Tilak), the great-grandson of Lokmanya Tilak,



as the party candidate replacing veteran BJP leader, Hemant Rasane, whose name was announced last week.

The two leaders said they have issued oral and written appeals to all MVA leaders like state Congress President Nana Patole, Shiv Sena (UBT) President Uddhav Thackeray, Nationalist Congress Party leaders Sharad Pawar and Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar and even Thackeray's ally, Vanchit Bahujan

Aghadi chief Prakash Ambedkar. "We have asked them to clarify their stand... If they are agreeable to unopposed elections, we can field Shailesh Tilak," both Bawankule and Patil said. However, Pune and State Congress leaders, Sena (UBT) and NCP leaders made it clear that they will not take the BJP's bait and would unitedly contest the Kasbapeth bypolls.

"The MVA has unanimously decided to fight the Kasbapeth seat. We have nominated Ravindra H. Dhangekar as our united candidate," declared Patole.

Sena (UBT)'s Sanjay Raut and NCP leaders have said that "there is no question" of backing out of the bypolls in Kasbapeth and Chinchwad seats.

The BJP has fielded Ashwini L. Jagtap - the widow of the sitting BJP MLA Laxman Jagtap, who passed away in January - for the Chinchwad seat, who will be pitted against the NCP which will contest the seat.

Court pulls up civic body over notice to cut 177 trees in Mumbai's aarey

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Monday directed the Mumbai civic body to clarify how it has issued a public notice seeking to cut 177 trees at the Aarey Colony area for a Metro car shed project when the Supreme Court in 2022 permitted felling of only 84 trees.

A division bench of Acting Chief Justice SV Gangapurwala and Justice Sandeep Marne was hearing a public interest litigation filed by activist Zoru Bhatena challenging the notice issued by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

The Metro car shed project at Aarey Colony in suburban Goregaon has been embroiled in controversy with environmentalists holding protests against indiscriminate felling of trees in the area which they claim is a forest area.

The civic body issued the notice on January 12 following an application filed by the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (MMRCL) seeking permission to remove 177 trees for



the Metro car shed project. In the PIL, Bhatena claimed the notice was in violation of the Supreme Court's November 2022 order, which only allowed for the removal of 84 trees.

On Monday, senior counsel Aspi

Chinoy, appearing for the BMC, told the high court that the 177 trees include 84 trees mentioned by the Supreme Court.

"The remaining are mostly shrubs and some wild trees that have grown after 2019 (when the MMRCL filed its

first application seeking to fell 84 trees)," Chinoy said.

Bhatena's lawyer Zamaan Ali, however, opposed this and said these trees have been assigned ID numbers and hence cannot be termed as shrubs or wild trees.

The bench then pointed out to Chinoy that the public notice mentions 177 trees and not shrubs.

"Where do we get that these are shrubs? Also the Supreme Court order is of November 2022. This order deals with only 84 trees. At that time why it was not brought to the notice of the apex court that there are more than 84 trees that need to be removed? The question would be whether these are shrubs or trees," ACJ Gangapurwala said. The court directed the BMC to file an affidavit in response to the petition by February 16.

Ali then sought the court to restrain the BMC and MMRCL from taking any action at the site. Chinoy assured the court that pending hearing of the petition nothing would be done.

IT professional loses Rs 2.23 lakh to cyber fraudsters

Team Absolute | Thane

A 36-year-old IT professional from Maharashtra's Thane city was allegedly duped of Rs 2.23 lakh by cyber fraudsters, police said on Monday. Based on a complaint, the Naupada police on Sunday registered an FIR under section 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code and relevant provisions of the Information Technology Act, an official said.

According to the complainant, he tried to book a cab to Nashik on the website of a travel agency on September 18, 2022, he said.

The victim provided his details to the agency through email and on a phone number listed on the website. He soon received a call from a person who asked him to pay Rs 100 on the agency's website and pay the remaining fare after the trip, the official said.



The complainant failed to make the payment despite repeated attempts. A few hours later, he received a message on his cellphone that Rs 81,400, Rs 71,085 and Rs. 1,42,520 had been debited from his bank account using his credit card details,

he said. The victim then instructed the bank to block his credit card. Later Rs 71,085 was credited to his account, but he lost the remaining sum to the tune of Rs 2.23 lakh, the official said.

Police ban drones, gliders for 24 hrs during PM visit on Feb 10

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Head of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's daylong visit to Mumbai, the police have banned the use of drones, paragliders and remote-controlled microlight aircraft, all types of balloons, kites, at various locations in the city, an official said here on Monday.

The ban will be effective for 24 hours from the midnight of February 9-10 to midnight of February 10-11 near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, INS Shikra, Marol in Andheri east and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus.

In the order, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ops) Sham Ghuge said: "On the occasion of the Prime Minister of India's Mumbai visit at Mumbai Airport, INS SHIKRA, CSMT and Marol, Andheri, on February 10, 2023, large number of VIPS, Various Officers in large numbers are expected to attend the program. It is necessary that some checks should be put on activities around Mumbai, so that Terrorist/Anti-Social elements may not attack through drone, paragliders, remote control



microlight aircraft, all types of balloons, kites and immediate action is necessary for the prevention of the same."

"These activities shall not be allowed in the jurisdiction of Airport Police Station, Sahar Police Station, Colaba Police Station, M.R.A. Marg Police Station, MIDC Police Station & Andheri Police Station., and anyone flouting them shall attract action," said Ghuge. Modi is expected to attend a series of events in Mumbai city and suburbs on February 10 and will be accompanied by many VIPS like the Governor, Chief Minister, Deputy CM and others.

Dedicate Mumbai coastal road to Lata Mangeshkar, urges family

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On the first death anniversary of the legendary singer, Lata Mangeshkar's family on Monday urged that the upcoming Mumbai Coastal Road Project should be named in her memory.

The plea was gently voiced on behalf of the clan by veteran singer Usha Mangeshkar on the occasion of the foundation stone laying ceremony for Lata Didi's memorial at Haji Ali Chowk.

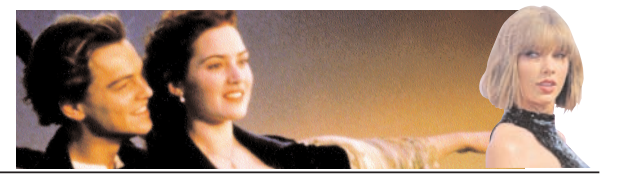
"We are very pleased that the memorial is coming up here... Its quite close to our home, Prabhu Kunj. The Maharashtra government and the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation are working on it and it will be ready soon. We want it (the road) to be named in memory of Lata Didi," she said. The proposed 40-feet tall memorial, to be named 'Swarancha Kalpvriksha' (Melodious Tree) will be constructed through Tourism Minister M.P. Lodha from his MLA funds with contribution from the BMC, and is expected to be completed in the next six



months. Immortalising Lata Didi, her voice and songs, her music will be played at the memorial venue on important days for the public.

Usha Mangeshkar added that this is the first time such a mega-project is taken up in Mumbai, coming up just beside the Mangeshkar's ancestral home and hence the family is desirous that it should be named after Lata Didi. The foundation stone laying ceremony was attended by Lodha, the entire Mangeshkar clan of Usha, Asha, Meena, Hridaynath, Adinath and others, Bollywood personalities like Shivaji Satam, Sudesh Bhosale, Nitin Mukesh and more.

The most prestigious project of the BMC, the Mumbai Coastal Road is coming up at a quick pace with the 10-km-long first phase in south Mumbai expected to be ready by December 2023. Slated to cost around Rs 13,000 crore, the first phase comprises twin tunnels of 2.07 km running under the Malabar Hill, linking Girgaum Chowpatty Beach with Priyadarshini Park at the northern end.



65TH ANNUAL GRAMMY AWARDS

BEYONCE SETS GRAMMY RECORD WITH 32 TROPHIES

Los Angeles | Agencies

Its official: Beyonce has the most Grammy wins of all time. On Sunday night, she made history with four wins, bringing her career total to 32, reports 'Variety'. Her 'Renaissance' wins for best dance/electronic album put her in the history books, after also winning best R&B song for 'Cuff It', best dance/electronic recording and traditional R&B performance.

Beyonce's record-breaking status will not completely mollify fans who think she should have won album of the year or record of the year by now, notes 'Variety'.

On Sunday night, those awards went to Harry Styles and Lizzo, respectively. The song of the year trophy, which she has won just once in the past, when she was still a member of Destiny's Child, went to Bonnie Raitt.

Before the 2023 Grammys, according to 'Variety', the record for most Grammy wins was held by the 31 claimed by classical music figure Georg Solti -- a benchmark set all the way back in 1997 when he earned his final prize, for best opera recording. Solti died that same year.

Beyonce led the 2023 nominations with nine, putting her in a tie for all-time Grammy nominations with her husband, Jay-Z -- 88 each. Beyonce's tally includes her pre-solo work as Destiny's Child member.

Coming into Sunday's awards, she had won 28 Grammys, already making her the most awarded female artist in Grammy history.



'ABOUT DAMN TIME' GETS LIZZO RECORD OF THE YEAR

Los Angeles | Agencies

American singer Lizzo was conferred with the Record of the Year honour at the recently concluded Grammy Awards, which came for her viral hit 'About Damn Time'. For her, the win was "unexpected" as she dedicated the award to the late artist Prince.

"When we lost Prince I decided to dedicate my life to creating positive music," she said. She went on to share her hopes to spread positivity through her work.

"I'd like to believe that not only can people do good, but that we just are good," she said. "We are good inherently. And anybody at home who feels misunderstood or on the outside looking in like I did, just stay true to you. I promise you you'll attract people who believe in you and support you."

BEST MUSIC VIDEO FOR TAYLOR SWIFT'S 'ALL TOO WELL: THE SHORT FILM'

Los Angeles | Agencies

American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift won Best Music Video for 'All Too Well: The Short Film' at the recent Grammy Awards. Swift beat out work from Adele, BTS, Doja Cat, Harry Styles, and Kendrick Lamar. The video of 'All Too Well: The Short Film' has been self-directed by Swift. Before tonight, Swift had won 11 Grammys, including one for Best Music Video. Since directing the 'All Too Well' short film, Swift has been tapped to direct her debut feature, based on a self-penned screenplay. Swift was not at the premiere ceremony to accept her Grammy Award, but she tweeted later, "I can't put into words what this means to me. For the Recording Acad and my peers to acknowledge me as a director, and in doing so, acknowledge my work to try and reclaim my music. I'm blown away. Thank you to all the fans that willed this to happen."



Ricky Kej wins 3rd Grammy for collab album with Stewart Copeland

Los Angeles | Agencies

It seems to be India's year at the global entertainment arena as after the Golden Globe and Critics' Choice Awards win of 'Naatu Naatu' from the S.S.Rajamouli directorial 'RRR', along with Oscar nominations for 'The Elephant Whispers' and 'All That Breathes', Indian music composer and producer Ricky Kej clinched the honour at the recently concluded Grammy

Awards.

The composer picked up his career's third Grammy for 'Divine Tides', which was nominated in the Best Immersive Audio Album category. The album 'Divine Tides' is a collaborative project with rock legend and Police drummer Stewart Copeland.

Sharing his happiness right after the win, Ricky posted a picture and wrote: "Super grateful, my 3rd Grammy Award."

LAMAR GETS BEST RAP ALBUM FOR 'MR. MORALE & THE BIG STEPPERS'

Los Angeles | Agencies

American rapper Kendrick Lamar picked up his 15th Grammy Award this time for the Best Rap Album, for 'Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers' at the 65th annual Grammy Awards.

He said in his acceptance speech: "I finally found perfection with this album. As artists we're all entertainers. We say things to provoke thoughts and feelings and emotions. Making this record, one of my toughest to make, allowed me to do that and share other people's experiences."

The rapper took home the award over fellow nominees Pusha T, Jack Harlow, Future and DJ Khaled. Lamar has now won Best Rap Album thrice after having been victorious in the category in 2016 'To Pimp a Butterfly' and 2018 for 'Damn'.

OZZY OSBOURNE BAGS TROPHIES FOR BEST METAL PERFORMANCE, BEST ROCK ALBUM

Los Angeles | Agencies



British rock legend Ozzy Osbourne made splashes at the 65th Annual Grammy Awards as he bagged two honours - Best Metal Performance for the song 'Degradation Rules', which also features his Black Sabbath musician Tony Iommi, and Best Rock Album for 'Patient Number 9'.

Ozzy won the Best Metal Performance honour over the Black Keys, Elvis Costello & The Imposters, Idles, Machine Gun Kelly, and Spoon. Producer Andrew Watt accepted the award on his behalf, giving shoutouts to the late Taylor Hawkins and Jeff Beck for their support of the album.

Osbourne recently announced that he is likely finished touring. "Never would I have imagined that my touring days would have ended this way," he revealed. "My team is currently coming up with ideas for where I will be able to perform without having to travel from city to city and country to country."

VIOLA DAVIS COMPLETES EGOT WITH FIRST GRAMMY WIN

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Viola Davis is the fresh inductee to the group of EGOT winners. EGOT signifies a recipient of an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and a Tony award. Davis is the 18th person to achieve EGOT status, joining the likes of Audrey Hepburn, Mel Brooks, Andrew Lloyd Webber and John Gielgud. She won her first Grammy at the 65th annual Grammy Awards for her audiobook recording of her memoir, 'Finding Me'. "I wrote this book to honour the six-year-old Viola," Davis said on stage at the ceremony in Los Angeles. "To honour her life, her joy, her trauma, everything. And, it has just been such a journey -- I just EGOT!" She previously won an Emmy for her role in 'How to Get Away with Murder', an Oscar for 'Fences' and two Tony awards for 'King Hedley II' and 'Fences'.



HARRY STYLES WINS BEST POP VOCAL ALBUM FOR 'HARRY'S HOUSE'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Former One Direction member Harry Styles took home the Best Pop Vocal Album title for his studio album 'Harry's House' at the 65th annual Grammy Awards. He edged out 'Voyage' by ABBA, '30' by Adele, 'Music of the Spheres' by Coldplay and 'Special' by Lizzo to bag the honour.

Styles described making 'Harry's House' with two of his best friends as "the greatest experience of my life" and playing it for people "the greatest joy I could've asked for".

This year, he was nominated in six categories; in addition to Best Pop Vocal Album, he received recognition for Album of the Year ('Harry's House'), Record of the Year ('As It Was'), and Song of the Year ('As It Was'), Best Pop Solo Performance ('As It Was'), and Best Music Video ('As It Was'). 'Harry's House' also won for Best Engineered Album, Non-Classical.



SAMARA JOY FETED WITH BEST JAZZ VOCAL ALBUM

Los Angeles | Agencies

The 65th edition of the Annual Grammy Awards is here and it's bigger than ever.

The Best Jazz Vocal Album was conferred upon American Jazz singer Samara Joy.

The honour came in for her album 'Linger Awhile' which was released on Verve Records

in September 2022. Joy first began singing jazz while attending Fordham High School for the Arts in the Bronx, New York, and she carried that voice to State University of New York at Purchase. During her time in college, she not only won the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition, but was also awarded the Ella Fitzgerald Scholarship in 2020.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Jennifer Lopez



'I'll show them who I am'

SARFARAZ KHAN RECALLS HOW HE FOUGHT BACK FOR HIS PLACE IN TEAM

Mumbai | Agencies

Ignored for the upcoming four-match Test series against Australia, Mumbai batter Sarfaraz Khan recalled how he changed people's perception of him being a white-ball player and not a red-ball player.

Sarfaraz also recalled how he waited for his opportunity and then responded with a triple hundred when he got the chance to bat for Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy.

Though the Mumbai batter did not say so, his recalling of the incident indicates how he plans to continue working hard and wait for the opportunity to show his capabilities. Sarfaraz was considered a shoo-in for a middle-order spot in the Test squad against Australia, but the selectors opted for red-ball specialist Suryakumar Yadav.



Sarfaraz explained how everyone used to say that he is only a white-ball player and not fit for red-ball. "When I returned from the World

Cup and played IPL for 1-2 years, some people said that Sarfaraz Khan is a white ball player who will not be able to play against the red ball and that he is the only player who can bat for the last 4 overs with the white ball. But I knew that I could do it, and I have been working hard on it.

"I was waiting for an opportunity, where I could get 4-5 matches to play continuously in the Ranji Trophy, so I'll show them who I am. When that day came, I made a comeback for Mumbai, and my first century for Mumbai ended up going straight to the triple century. After that, I realised that things aren't as difficult as people make them out to be. I also had a dream from the childhood of raising the bat and helmet in my hand with Mumbai's logo on my chest, so the taste for that thing is never going away and I will never let it go."

AISHWARYA PISSAY WINS NATIONAL RALLY TITLE FOR 6TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

Nashik | Agencies

Aishwarya Pissay, the 27-year-old queen of Indian motorsports and Petronas TVS Racing team factory rider, clinched her sixth consecutive National rally title in the Ladies' class as the six-round of FMSCI Indian National Racing Championship 2022 (INRC-2w).

Going into the Rally of Nashik, the sixth and final round with a comfortable lead, the Bengaluru rider saw her closest competitor, Fazeela, from Kerala skipping the final round. And with the National Rally Championship title virtually assured, she took it easy and salvaged a second place, which was enough to defend her title.

"My race bike TVS TR 200R, which is based on the



TVS Apache RTR 200 is supremely capable and delivered a superb performance. Throughout the season, in the tough and technical terrain, I was able to take control of the situation and push it to my liking. It gives me immense joy and happi-

ness to win six consecutive National Rally titles. I thank my mechanics, family, sponsors, and all those who supported me. My special thanks to Petronas TVS Racing, who stood by me through thick and thin," said Aishwarya Pissay.

Para athletes to open season at Tunis GP; eye Asian Para Games and Worlds qualification



Tunis | Agencies

Indian Para-athletes including Paralympic silver medallist discus thrower Yogesh Kathunia will open the 2023 season with the Tunis World Para Athletics Grand Prix that kicks off at the Rades Athletics Stadium.

Kathunia, who will compete in the men's discus throw F56 event, will be leading an 11-member Indian team that also has Paralympian Simran and Asian Para Games medallist Rinku Hooda. Devendra Gehlot, who took part in the Birmingham 2022 CWG, is also part of the visiting team.

Kathunia, who has been recovering from a lower back muscle spasm suffered two weeks back, is also aiming for the same adding that he had good training at Panchkula. The Tunis 2023 Grand Prix will see the participation of around 300 athletes from 25 countries.

Among the top names, host Tunisia which took four gold medals at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will have their Paralympic stars Walid Ktila (men's T34 wheelchair racing) and Raoua Tlili (women's F41 thrower) in their ranks.

Malaysia's top Para-athletes including Abdul Latif Romli (men's long jump T20), Mohamad Puzi (men's 100m T36) and Muhammad Ziyad Zolkefli (men's shot put F20) are also in Tunisia.

All events that will be featured on the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games programme were available for entries at Tunis 2023, making the Grand Prix an important of the preparations for both this year's World Championships and next year's Paralympics in the French capital.

Barca extend lead in Spain as Real Madrid lose in Mallorca

Madrid | Agencies

FC Barcelona moved eight points clear at the top of La Liga after a 3-0 win at home to Sevilla, coupled with a 1-0 defeat for Real Madrid in Mallorca. Jordi Alba broke the deadlock in the 58th minute when the full-back finished off a long move that involved 17 passes. Gavi doubled Barca's lead in the 70th minute, with a simple tap-in at the far post after an excellent pass from Raphinha and Raphinha got a deserved goal with 10 minutes to go after being set up by Alba, who had broken the Sevilla offside trap. Real Madrid lost 1-0 away to Mallorca, who scored in the first half when



Vedat Muriqi's header was deflected over Andriy Lunin by Nacho Fernandez.

Cyle Larin's second goal in two games for Valladolid was enough to give his side consecutive wins and condemn third-place Real Sociedad to

their first league defeat since October 30 last year.

The side from San Sebastian didn't have a good day in front of goal, and Larin punished them when he took advantage of Valladolid's only chance in

the second half. Enes Unal equalized for Getafe with an 82nd-minute penalty after the ball hit Saul Niguez's outstretched arm in the penalty area.

There were thrills and controversy as Celta Vigo won 4-3 away to Betis. Jorgen Strand Larsen put Celta ahead in the fifth minute only for Juanmi to level three minutes later.

Sergio Canales gave Betis the lead in the 22nd minute, but Gabriel Veiga scored twice and Joseph Aidoo put Celta 4-2 up before Nabil Fekir's 83rd-minute penalty.

Valencia's misery continues as they slipped to a 1-0 defeat away to Girona that leaves them fourth from the bottom of the table.

Davis Cup

Croatia cruise into Finals Group stage despite doubles slip

Rijeka (Croatia) | Agencies

Borna Coric fired Croatia through to the Davis Cup Finals for a fourth time after ending Austria's hopes of a final day fight-back in their 2023 Qualifier.

Coric saw off Dominic Thiem 7-6(3) 6-2 in an hour and 45 minutes to prevent Jurgen Melzer's visiting side from gaining any further momentum after Austrian doubles pair Lucas Miedler & Alexander Erlinger had recorded a surprise triumph over the home side in the doubles.

Austria's doubles pair upset Nikola Pietrangeli and Ivan Dodig 6-3 7-6(11) in one hour and 50 minutes to deny a Croatian clean sweep after the two Bornas - Borna Coric and Borna Gojo - had won their singles on the opening day.

That left Thiem with an opportunity to take the contest to a deciding



fifth, but the 2020 US Open champion, still on the comeback trail from a wrist injury, struggled for consistency against Coric.

In the other qualifiers, Korea Republic recovered from 0-2 down for the first time to claim a remarkable 3-2 victory over Belgium, while Finland sealed their first-ever berth in the Finals Group Stage with a 3-1 win over Argentina.

Elsewhere, Netherlands cruised past Slovakia 4-0, and there were 3-1 victories for Chile and Czech Republic over Kazakhstan and Portugal respectively.

The six victorious teams follow Great Britain, Serbia, Switzerland, Sweden, USA and France in progressing from this weekend's Qualifiers.

Bayern beat Wolfsburg to defend lead in Bundesliga

Berlin | Agencies

With Kingsley Coman's first-half brace, 10-men Bayern Munich secured a crucial 4-2 away victory over Wolfsburg to recapture the league lead in the curtain-closer of the 19th round Bundesliga.

The Bavarians caught a perfect start on the road as Coman's right-footed cross caught Wolfsburg goalkeeper Koen Casteels flat-footed with nine minutes played, reports Xinhua news agency.

Bayern showed no mercy in front of the target and made it two in the 14th minute when Joao Cancelo whipped a pinpoint cross to the far post, where Coman volleyed home into the top right corner.

The visitors gained momentum and tripled their lead six minutes later after Joshua Kimmich's free-kick found Thomas Muller, who nodded home from 11 meters.

Wolfsburg needed some time to respond but reduced the arrears before the break as Jakob Kaminski traded passes with Paulo Otavio before beating Bayern goalkeeper Yann Sommer into the bottom right corner from inside the box.

After the restart, Bayern had to continue



with 10 men as Kimmich received his marching orders for his second yellow in the 54th minute.

The Wolves couldn't benefit from their numerical advantage as Ridle Baku headed into the arms of Sommer with all time and space from close range at the hour mark.

Bayern punished Wolfsburg's wastefulness moments later after Jamal Musiala danced through the defense before finishing the job between four defenders to stun Casteels with the 4-1 against the run of the play in the 73rd minute.

With the result, Bayern jump back to the top spot whereas Wolfsburg suffered its third straight defeat.

Serie A

Lautaro's header decides Milan Derby

Rome | Agencies

Lautaro Martinez continued his scorching form with his header deciding the Derby della Madonnina, as Inter Milan beat AC Milan 1-0 in Serie A.

The Nerazzurri lost the Milan Derby back in September but took revenge on their city rivals in the Supercoppa last month, while AC Milan was looking for a resounding response after a dismal run since the start of 2023.

Inter Milan had a relatively full squad to choose from, but AC Milan still had to do without Mike Maignan and Zlatan Ibrahimovic. Head coach Stefano Pioli made a tactical tweak to opt for a 3-5-2 system, as Rafael Leao was benched again. The Italian manager Roberto Mancini also presented on the stand for the showdown.

Hosts Inter pressed high from the start, trying to use their aggression and tempo to good effect as a couple of attempts from Lautaro threatened goalkeeper Ciprian Tatarusanu.



The efforts paid off in the 34th minute as Hakan Calhanoglu's corner found Lautaro, whose twisting header went beyond Tatarusanu.

Inter Milan kept creating havoc after the break, but AC Milan were poor in their attacking quality, they had the chance to level the scoring, but Olivier Giroud's awful first touch fumbled a golden opportunity.

Romelu Lukaku came off the bench and found the net in the 83rd minute, but the goal was wiped out while Lautaro's second was also canceled for offside.

Premier League: Arsenal, Man City both lose as Dyche makes immediate impact at Everton

London | Agencies

Manchester City missed the chance to close the gap to two points on Arsenal at the top of the Premier League when they lost away to Tottenham.

Harry Kane's goal in the 15th minute was enough to give three points to Antonio Conte's side, which was also his 267th goal for Spurs, beating Jimmy Greaves' all-time club record.

Sean Dyche had an immediate impact as the new Everton boss, as his side won 1-0 at home to league leader Arsenal in his first game in charge thanks to James Tarkowski's 60th-minute far-post header following Dwight McNeil's corner and the fact the two players worked with Dyche at Burnley should not be ignored.

Wolverhampton's 3-0 win over Liverpool keeps Everton in the bot-



tom three as Julen Lopetegui's side produced an excellent performance to swamp a downcast Liverpool.

Wolves led 2-0 after just 12 minutes

after Joel Matip's own goal and another by new signing Craig Dawson's goal in the 12th minute and Ruben Neves added a third in the 71st

minute. Casemiro saw his first-ever direct red card in a league game as Manchester United held on for a 2-1 win at home Crystal Palace. United led 2-0 when Casemiro was sent off in the 70th minute thanks to Bruno Fernandes' seventh-minute penalty and a goal from Marcus Rashford.

Jeffrey Schlupp gave Palace hope in the 72nd minute, but United held on for their 13th consecutive home win.

Newcastle was held to a 1-1 at home to West Ham, with Lucas Paqueta's goal for the visitors just after the half-hour canceling out Callum Wilson's early opener.

Brighton goes sixth thanks to Kaoru Mitoma's 87th-minute header at home to Bournemouth, while Brentford are seventh after thrashing bottom-of-the-table Southampton 3-0.

Leicester City twice came from behind to win 4-2 away to Aston Villa.



SIDDHARTH-KIARA'S WEDDING VIBES

Groom's guests outnumber the bride's

Team Absolute | Jaipur

Around 17 guests have arrived so far from Siddharth Malhotra's family to attend his wedding to Kiara Advani. Siddharth came with his father Sunil Malhotra, mother Rima Malhotra, Brother Harshad Malhotra and others at around 8 p.m. on February 4. Siddharth's grandmother told media that she is very excited and happy. Delhi boy Siddharth's guest list is longer than Kiara's. It includes his mother's friends as well. These guests have come from Delhi and Punjab.

The couple's common friend Karan Johar was on the list from both sides. Bollywood actress Sonakshi Sinha, film producers Aarti Shetty, Pooja Shetty and many others will attend the wedding.

10 people have come from Kiara's family so far.

Kiara's guest list at the wedding includes people from Bollywood as well as business families. The most special is her childhood friend Isha Ambani. Isha and her husband had reached Jaisalmer airport by their private charter at around 9.30 p.m. on Sunday night. Apart from this, Kiara's Bollywood friend Shahid Kapoor came with his wife Meera and Karan Johar on Sunday morning. Actress Juhi Chawla and her businessman husband Jai Mehta, choreographer Shabina Khan, business woman Jeba Kohli, and actor Ishaan Chandok will also attend the wedding. The event management company has called a team of waiters from Mumbai and Delhi to maintain the privacy of the wedding. Local people are not being engaged for any

work in marriage. A team of around 500 waiters has been deployed, of which 200 are from Mumbai. The dress code of white pants and shirt and turban on the head has been decided for the waiters. The event management will be assisted by the hotel staff.

A SPECIAL PERFORMANCE BY BRIDE'S BROTHER

Jaipur | Kiara's brother Mishaal will give a special performance for his sister and brother-in-law on the occasion of their wedding in Jaisalmer's Suryagarh palace. Mishaal has prepared a song especially for this occasion. He is a rapper, composer and music director by profession. Mishaal released his first track 'No My Name' in November 2022. The event reportedly will also feature a performance by Shahid Kapoor and Karan Johar. Both may dance on the song 'Dola Re Dola' from 'Devdas'. This was mentioned by both of them in an episode of 'Koffee-with-Karan'. Kiara and Shahid were much liked in the film 'Kabir Singh'. Shahid arrived with wife Meera Rajput on Sunday to attend the wedding. Karan is also a common friend of the couple who gave Siddharth his break in Bollywood with 'Student of the Year'.

GUESTS TO FEAST ON 100 DISHES FROM 10 COUNTRIES

Jaipur | More than 100 dishes from 10 countries will be served to the guests at the wedding of Bollywood stars Kiara Advani and Siddharth Malhotra. The menu includes Italian, Chinese, American, South Indian, Mexican, Rajasthani, Punjabi, and Gujarati cuisines. Jaisalmer's Ghotwan Ladoo will be among the sweets. Punjabi boy Siddharth has taken special care of his guests from Punjab and Delhi and has made arrangements for spicy food for them. There will be more than 50 stalls at the wedding with 500 waiters in their dress code. The responsibility of attending to each guest has been given to each waiter. Two to three dishes will be kept at each stall. Besides, many dishes are on the breakfast and lunch menus.



GUESTS TO SHAKE LEGS ON BEATS OF DJ GANESH

Jaipur | The guests at the Siddharth-Kiara wedding will shake legs on the beats of DJ Ganesh, who has already made big Bollywood stars groove to his beats. He is now in Jaisalmer to attend and give dance beats in Kiara-Sid's wedding. DJ Ganesh has performed in more than 30 countries so far.

DJ Ganesh got fame in Bollywood after performing at Karan Johar's birthday party. After this, he made everyone dance to his beats at Isha Ambani's engagement, Richa Chadha and Ali Faizal's wedding. Now they have come to add colour to Kiara-Sid's marriage.

Hari and Sukhmani bands have also been called for music night on Monday and to make the wedding special. Both also performed at Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal's wedding. Hari and Sukhmani sing a mix of English and Punjabi songs. The band of both starts the song with the English line. After that line of Folk and Sufi songs, they sing in Punjabi.

Both Hari and Sukhmani Malik met in 2008. After this, both of them formed their band in 2009. Together they made 10 songs. The duo's band now performs at live concerts, Bollywood actors' and high profile weddings.

'GHAR MEIN GHUS KE MARUNGI': KANGANA THREATENS COUPLE 'SPYING' ON HER

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After hitting out at a 'well-known' actor for spying on her, Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut, on Monday again took to her social media to send a public warning to the actor while she also shared that there has been no spying since she put up her last post.

Taking to the story section of her Instagram, Kangana wrote a note, telling her followers that the incessant spying around by the paparazzi has stopped. She wrote: "All those who worry about me please know that since last night there are no suspicious activities around me, no one is following me, with or without cameras."

She then pointed the gun again at the said actor, as she wrote: "There's no point in having a conversation with those who understand only through muscle. Message to gang changu mangu: guys haven't dealt with a village blood, mend your ways or you are going to have it from me."

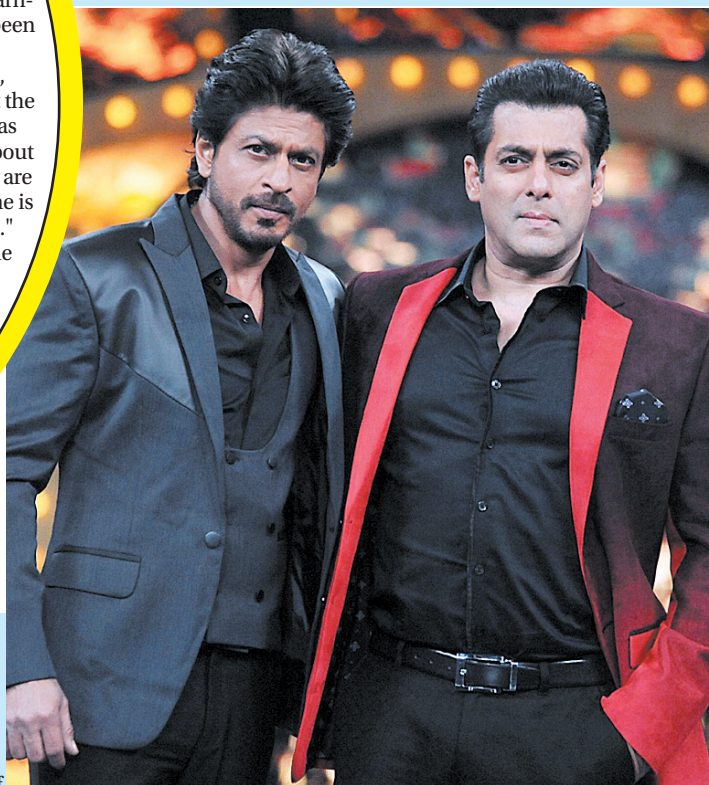
She also had a message for those who think that she's insane: "Those of you think that I'm insane, you know that but don't know the level of my insanity."

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstars Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan teamed up on-screen for the delight of their fans in 'Pathaan' and now the post-credit scene is turning out to be a landmark in Hindi cinema given the magnitude of their stardom and their impact on the screen.

The two actors spoke on joining forces as their titular characters of Tiger and Pathaan and also the spy universe of YRF. Salman said: "For Shah Rukh and I to come together on the big screen, it always needed a special film and I'm glad 'Pathaan' is that film. When we did 'Karan Arjun', it was a blockbuster and now, Pathaan, which is part of YRF's Spy Universe, has also turned out to be a blockbuster. I'm aware that audiences love to see us together on screen and I'm happy that they have given us so much love in 'Pathaan'. I was floored when Adi narrated the sequence to me and told me about his vision to bring us together on screen again." SRK said: "Trust me when I say this, Salman and I have always wanted to act together but we were waiting for the right film, the right script because we both knew that there would be incredible excitement to see us on screen but we would have to deliver that promise to audiences because they love us so much. If not, they would be mighty dejected and it wouldn't work for the project. Since it's for the fans the script has to be good."

SRK, Salman open up on working together, spilling of spy universe



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Donal Bisht