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# Delhi Police at Rahul's house for details on 'sexual harassmet' of women

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A team of Delhi Police led by senior police officials on Sunday reached the residence of Congress MP Rahul Gandhi to record his statement in connection with his Bharat Jodo Yatra speech in Srinagar in which he had mentioned about the sexual harassment of some women. Sources said that senior police officials had served the notice to Gandhi in this respect. The source said that Gandhi himself received the notice.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) of New Delhi, Pranav Tayal is also present outside the house of Gandhi along with other police officials. The police have made heavy security arrangements outside his residence in the Tughlak Lane area of Lutyens zone.

The Delhi Police also have a questionnaire ready, which they want to give to him, in case he wants to reply in a written format. Further details are awaited. Gandhi had mentioned about the victims of sexual harassment in his Bharat Jodo Yatra speech in January in Srinagar.

"...in one particular case, I asked a girl (who had been raped) if we should call the police? She said 'don't call the police... I will be shamed'," Rahul Gandhi had said during the Bharat Jodo Yatra in Srinagar.

Speaking with the media persons, Special CP Hooda said that Gandhi made the statement on January 30 in Srinagar. "This is a very serious matter and we came here to gather more information in this connection. We need information regarding his speech and the victims so that we could initiate legal action into the matter and victims could get justice," said Hooda. The Delhi Police took cognisance of his account of the Yatra that he interacted with some women who were raped. The Delhi Police had visited him twice and waited for hours to get the details about the victims of sexual abuse who had approached him to seek security.



## RAHUL ASSURES DELHI POLICE TO SHARE INFO, SEEKS TIME

**New Delhi:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has assured the Delhi Police that he will share the information about the claims that he had made during his Bharat Jodo Yatra speech in Srinagar, and also said that he needed some time for this.

"We have met Rahul Gandhi, he has said that he needs time to give his statement. Gandhi said that the Yatra was so long and he needed to recollect who had connected him and his team. After receiving details he has assured to share them with us," said a police official who did not wish to be named.

A Delhi Police team led by Special Commissioner of Police, Law and Order, Dr Sagar Preet Hooda and Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), New Delhi Pranav Tayal had reached Gandhi's residence at Tughlak lane early this morning to serve him a notice.

According to sources, the police team on March 15 had waited for three hours at Gandhi's residence to serve him notice, however, he did not meet them. Again on March 16, senior officers visited his residence and served the notice after waiting for one and a half hours.

A senior police officer said the notice was issued after the police took cognisance of social media posts and sent a list of questions.

## Rahul attends meeting of Parliament panel on external affairs, denies anti-India remarks

**New Delhi:** After returning from London, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi attended the meeting of the parliamentary committee on external affairs where, sources said he responded to the BJP MPs without naming him about MPs going abroad and speaking against the country. Sources said Rahul Gandhi said that he has not spoken anything which is against the country. The members of the ruling party objected to this, but Rahul was supported by the opposition members, sources said. After which External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar intervened and said the members should speak on the subject.

Rahul has been insisting that he wants to speak in the House and met the Speaker a few days ago. He said four Ministers have raised allegations against him in Parliament House so he has the right to respond.

"It is my right to be allowed to speak on the floor of the House. I requested the speaker today. I went to his chamber and I requested him. I said - look, I would very much like to speak. I told him that people from the BJP have made allegations against me and as a Member of Parliament, it is my right to speak," he said on Thursday.

The BJP has ceased the opportunity to target Rahul Gandhi, and BJP National President J.P. Nadda has said that Rahul Gandhi has become "a permanent part of this anti-nationalist toolkit".

# Radical Sikh preacher still on the run

fresh FIR filed in illegal weapons case; Flag marches across Punjab; suspension of mobile Internet till Monday noon

Team Absolute | Chandigarh

Punjab Police continued their search for self-styled radical Sikh preacher and head of 'Waris Punjab De', Amritpal Singh, who has been declared a 'fugitive', for the second day on Sunday, with the police registering a fresh FIR against him and his associates in an illegal weapons case.

The police have seized a huge cache of arms and ammunition from Amritpal's aides, who were arrested on Saturday. The police had on Saturday launched a major crackdown against Amritpal and arrested 78 members of Waris Punjab De, including six to seven gunmen of the radical outfit. Daljeet Singh Kalsi, who handled the Khalistani ideology's finance, was arrested from Gurugram. Seven of Amritpal's associates, who were arrested for taking siege of a police station in Amritsar's Ajnala area last month, have been sent to police custody till March 23 by a court in Beas. Four aides of the absconding radical leader were taken to Dibrugarh in Assam for security reasons. According to reports, the arrested persons might undergo interrogation by a joint team of Punjab and Assam Police.

"Punjab Police are acting within the law. Amritpal Singh is still absconding. Don't believe in rumours and false news. We request all the citizens to maintain peace and harmony and not to panic," a video statement by IG (Headquarters), Sukhchain Singh Gill, said.

To prevent any untoward incident in case of the arrest of Amritpal, the police along with CRPF personnel on Sunday conducted flag

## Amritpal Singh's 4 aides flown to Assam's Dibrugarh jail for security reasons

**Guwahati:** Due to security reasons, four aides of absconding Sikh radical preacher Amritpal Singh were brought to Assam's Dibrugarh district on Sunday, according to police sources. They have been kept at the Dibrugarh Central Jail. An SP-rank officer of the Punjab Police, Superintendent of Police Tejbir Singh Hundal, led the team to shift the four arrested to Assam. However, neither the Punjab Police team nor any officer from the Assam Police confirmed this.

Dibrugarh Superintendent of Police Shwetank Misra said, "Four arrested persons have been brought here. We will divulge further details later." The identities of the four people are still unknown. Meanwhile, outside the Dibrugarh central jail, security has been beefed up. A police source said that the four arrested persons might undergo a marathon interrogation by a joint team of Punjab and Assam Police later in the evening.

marches across Punjab.

Punjab Police are planning to book Amritpal Singh under the provisions of the National Security Act (NSA), sources privy to the development said. In the interest of public safety, the government has extended the suspension of SMS and mobile internet services, except voice call, till Monday noon.

Amritsar Deputy Commissioner of Police, Parminder Singh Bhandal, told the media that the police have set up 100 checkpoints in Amritsar and its outskirts to physically check vehicles. CRPF jawans are accompanying the policemen at the checkpoints. Anticipating disturbance of peace, a large contingent of paramilitary force has been deployed outside Amritpal Singh's native village, Jallupur Khaira in Amritsar district. A special team of police, comprising personnel from seven districts, had followed the separatist leader's convoy while he was on his way to

Jalandhar's Shahkot tehsil on Saturday. "Amritpal's vehicle was chased for 20-25 km. His vehicle was at the front. However, he managed to escape by changing his vehicle," Police Commissioner Kuldeep Singh Chahal said.

Section 144 has been imposed in many districts of the state. The police have also increased security across Punjab. In addition, all vehicles are being checked on the Punjab-Haryana border.

Meanwhile, Amritpal's father, Tarsem Singh, has told the media that the police should have arrested him before he left the house. "We don't have any information about his whereabouts. They carried out a search at our residence for 3-4 hours, but did not find anything illegal," he said. He also termed the police action as "unjustified", claiming that his son was weaning the youth off drugs. "Why are the police not acting against criminals and those involved in drugs trade," he asked.

## EXCISE POLICY CASE

# Kavitha leaves for Delhi; suspense over appearance before ED

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's daughter K. Kavitha on Sunday left for Delhi amid uncertainty as to whether she would appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday in connection with the Delhi excise policy case.

Accompanied by state minister and her brother K.T. Rama Rao and MP Santosh Kumar, she left for the national capital by a special flight from Begumpet Airport.

It was not clear if Kavitha will personally appear before the ED or send her representative like she did on March 16. Hours before she was to appear before the ED officials in Delhi, she had written to the agency stating that she will not be personally



ly joining the investigation.

The Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) leader had authorised BRS general secretary Soma Bharat Kumar to appear before the ED on her behalf.

She stated that since she was not asked to appear in person, she was appearing through an authorised representative. Kavitha also wrote that since the petition filed by her in the Supreme Court is listed on

March 24, its outcome must be awaited before any further proceedings with respect to the summons issued by the ED. Kavitha, who is a member of Telangana Legislative Council, filed the petition in the Supreme Court challenging the ED summons in the case. She expressed the apprehensions that the ED might adopt highly coercive tactics and even resort to third degree measures in connection with their purported investigations. Kavitha had personally appeared before ED on March 11. She had taken exception to the ED calling her to the office and making her sit in the office till 8.30 p.m. despite her being a woman. She said though she furnished all relevant information and answered all queries, her phone was impounded.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Police have traced the girl and her two male friends who could be seen pushing her into a private cab in a viral video after an altercation in Outer Delhi's Mangolpuri.

The incident had happened late on Saturday night.

DCP of Outer Delhi Harender Kumar Singh said that they got a PCR call regarding this by an onlooker after which an FIR under section 365 of Indian Penal Code (IPC) was lodged and teams were formed to look into it.

The cab owner was identified as Deepak, a resident of Gurugram and a team was sent to his house. Police learnt this



car was sold to many persons and was also being used by many drivers. The drivers used to take bookings through Ola.

"Finally, we traced the last driver who was operating it. He told us he got a booking from Rohini to Vikaspuri by a girl and two boys. On the way they had a fight. We traced the girl and the boys on the basis of their booking. They told us that due to an altercation the girl got down the car and her friend forcefully got her back into the car," the official said. The police said that they were counselling the girl and as per her statement will decide the future course of action.

# BSF nabs Bangladeshi smuggler with gold biscuits valued at Rs 2.78cr

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The BSF has arrested a Bangladeshi smuggler in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district and recovered from his possession 40 gold biscuits valued at Rs 2.78 crore, an official said on Sunday.

A Border Security Force (BSF) official said the gold biscuits weighing over 4 kg were being smuggled to India from Bangladesh. An official said that BSF personnel had received information regarding a truck smuggling gold from Bangladesh to India through the Integrated Check Post, Petrapole, following which the truck was intercepted and searched. The smuggler, arrested on Saturday, has been identified as Sushankar Das -- a resident of Satkhira district of Bangladesh. During questioning, Das



said the truck's owner had loaded fish at 'Royce International' in Satkhira on the vehicle, and hid the gold biscuits which were to be handed over to 'Baba International' in Kolkata after reaching India. The smuggler has been handed over to Customs officials along with the recovered gold biscuits and the truck which has been seized.

# TWO INDIAN DESTINATIONS ARE AMONG TIME'S 'WORLD'S GREATEST PLACES OF 2023'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The TIME magazine has released its annual list of the 'World's Greatest Places' for the year 2023 and two Indian destinations have made it to the list. "The travel industry is back in full swing in 2023, but not without notable shifts in how and where we wander. Steeper costs and increased interest in sustainability and authenticity are reshaping the landscape," the magazine said.

The list which has 50 spots includes two Indian places - Mayurbhanj and Ladakh, that have been selected for their rare tigers and ancient temples, and adventures and eats, respectively. Time Magazine has created profile pages for Ladakh and Mayurbhanj where it has highlighted the reasons why these places are part of its prestigious list. Ladakh: "With its astonishing alpine



landscapes and Tibetan Buddhist culture, Ladakh-in the farthest-flung part of North India-has enough wonders to warrant multiple visits." the magazine

said.

In 2023, India designated its first Dark Sky Reserve, in Hanle village, about 168 miles southeast of Leh, Ladakh's

capital. The village has roughly 270 clear nights a year, making it ideal for astronomical splendour, it added.

Mayurbhanj: Renowned for its green landscape, rich cultural legacy and ancient temples, Odisha's Mayurbhanj is the second Indian site on the list. Talking about Mayurbhanj, the magazine noted that it is the only place on earth to spot the exceedingly rare black tiger. Apart from the famous Similipal National Park, there's a lot more that you can do in this district.

"This April, Mayurbhanj Chhau, a captivating dance festival on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list will take place on a much larger scale following a pandemic hiatus. Bespoke chhau performances that combine ancient martial arts and folk dance are scheduled at The Belgadia Palace, an elegant boutique hotel and royal residence," Time magazine noted.









# KAMAL NATH MAKES BIG ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR UPCOMING ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Rs 1500 against Shivraj's Rs 1000, LPG cylinder at Rs 500

Team Absolute | Bhopal

If the Congress comes to power in the 2023 assembly elections, it will provide LPG cylinders at a price of Rs 500, announced former chief minister Kamal Nath while addressing a public meeting in Narsinghpur on Sunday. The state Congress president is taking a tour of the state and sensitising its party workers for the upcoming assembly elections, which are going to be held at the end of the current year. The former CM also announced that when the Congress forms government in the state, Rs 1500 will be given to women against the Rs 1000 being provided to them by the current government under the Ladli Behna Yojana.

While talking to the media, Kamal Nath claimed that in Narsinghpur district BJP's Vikas Yatra faced



protests at more than 160 places. He alleged that farmers in Narsinghpur are not getting proper seeds, fertilizers or any other facilities and are running from pillar to post, even though Narsinghpur is a agriculture dominated district.

"As the elections are coming closer, BJP has started remembering the tribals, farmers and sometimes 'Ladli Behnas' are also coming to their minds", he said.

He further said that it is unfortunate that tension is building between the Union government and the state governments and this situation is not good for the democracy of the country. Shedding light on ticket distribution, he claimed that the tickets for the assembly elections will not be given from Bhopal, rather the tickets will be given after having talks with the local party leaders.

## 25 Injured As Bus Falls Off Culvert, Overturns In Ujjain



Team Absolute | Ujjain

At least 25 persons were injured, two of them seriously, when the Gujarat-bound bus they were travelling in overturned after falling off a culvert in Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh, a senior official said on Sunday. The accident occurred late Saturday night, he said.

"Nearly 25 passengers were injured, two of them critically, when the bus on its way to Rajkot from Indore

fell off a culvert on Bhuki Mata Bypass after picking up passengers from Ujjain," Collector Kumar Purshottam said. The injured were rushed to the district hospital, the Ujjain collector said.

Most of the victims had visited the famous Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain to offer prayers, police said. Mahakal area City Superintendent of Police (CSP) Omprakash Mishra said initial investigation suggested that the bus with around 35 passengers on

board was being driven in a rash manner.

After the bus overturned, its front wheels and engine got separated from the vehicle, he said.

The bus skidded off the road and fell 8-feet down before turning turtle, he said, adding that the incident took place at a blind turn, which is an accident-prone area.

"We have filed a case of rash driving against the bus driver, who is being treated at the district hospital," Mishra said.

## CM CHOUHAN PLANTS SAPLING DURING HIS STAY IN CHENNAI



Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a sampling of Pink Trumpet (Basant Rani) during his stay in Chennai today. CM Chouhan plants saplings every day in fulfillment of his resolve. The Pink Trumpet planted today is a medium-sized ornamental tree, bearing attractive flowers in various shades of pink to purple. Its bark is also used for medicine.

## Government school teacher booked for threatening female supervisor of WCD in Guna

Team Absolute | Guna

Chanchoura Police in Guna district, acting on a complaint lodged by the female supervisor of the Women and Child Development Department, booked a government school teacher for threatening her.

In her police complaint, complainant Laxmi Mer, a resident of Raghogarh submitted an application in which she said, "She is currently working as a supervisor in the Women and Child Development Department Project posted in Chanchoura. Mukesh Meena, a teacher posted in Mundra village, came in while she was working in the office and asked me to pay his January bill. In reply, she told that she took charge in February, and she won't be able to pay the January bill".

"Meena became enraged over this and began pressuring me that you don't know who I am. My name is Mukesh Meena. I'm familiar with the entire neighbourhood. I'll pick you up from the Kumbhraj area. He will



kill her wherever she goes. I told him he could do whatever he wanted. You go because we don't have any officers right now. "As I previously stated, I am not afraid of any of your officers," complainant Mer stated.

"Meena began abusing me and telling me that you don't know who I am. I'll kill you if you don't do my work. Meena tore the papers on my table and prepared to beat me. The rest of the office intervened," she explained.

On the complaint of the supervisor, the police registered an FIR against the accused teacher and started an investigation.

## FOUR KILLED IN MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT IN JHABUA

Jhabua: Four persons, three of them minors, were killed when an unidentified vehicle hit their motorcycle in Madhya Pradesh's Jhabua district, police said on Sunday. The accident took place at around 11 pm on Saturday at Umra Falia area in Mundat village, around 25 km from the district headquarters, Kalyanpura police station in-charge Kaushalya Chauhan told PTI.

The victims, Raju (17), Michael Pargi (15), Chain Singh (30) and Titiya Singh (15), were killed on the spot, he said. A case has been registered in this regard and efforts are on to identify the driver of the errant vehicle, the official said.

## 5 children seriously injured in a stray dogs attack in Khargone

Team Absolute | Khargone

With incidents of stray dog attacks on kids increasing day by day, in yet another incident, at least five children were grievously injured in a stray dog attack in Khargone district on Sunday. The incident took place at Bhavsar colony and Motipura area.

As per reports, a pack of dogs attacked a group of children playing outside their houses, biting various parts of the body and not letting them escape. After seeing the dogs attacking the children, their relatives present at the spot came to their rescue, scared away all the dogs and rushed them to a district hospital.

Children have sustained injuries in their necks, legs, hands, and around the head. There has been an increase in dog bite instances in the city, but the local administration has failed to take any steps to address the issue.

Earlier, a five-year-old girl was also attacked by stray dogs which mauled her to death. City residents continue to suffer from the stray dog menace with no resolution, with many citing the inaction and laxity of the local administration despite repeated complaints of children being a victim of biting. The administration must take serious steps to curb the dog menace now.

## Fire outbreak in Pithampur plastic factory, extinguished by 7 fire brigades

Team Absolute | Pithampur

A massive fire broke out in a plastic factory in Pithampur, of Dhar, on Sunday. The fire reportedly destroyed assets worth lakhs of rupees. The blaze continued for several hours before it was doused with the help of seven fire brigades. The area where the factory was built comes under Pithampur Police Station, Sector 3. As soon as the information about the fire was received, the nearby factories were evacuated as a precaution. Police and fire brigade vehicles also reached the spot as soon as the incident was reported. Who triggered the fire or the reason behind it is still a mystery. The extent of damage caused by the fire is yet to be estimated. At the same time, the company



management was seen avoiding the media. Sub-Inspector Brahmanand Chauhan, who reached the spot, said that as soon as the fire was reported, the fire brigade and the police

reached the spot. With the help of seven fire brigades, the flames were controlled. He added, the reason behind the incident is yet to be investigated. However, no casualties were reported.

## Top Shooters, ISSF President, arrive in India BHOPAL SHOOTING WORLD CUP GETS SET TO FIRE FIRST SHOT

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Six Olympic medallists, including three former and reigning Olympic champions as well as six reigning world champions, will headline a field of 198 shooters from 30 countries at the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup Rifle/Pistol stage, being held for the first time in Bhopal's M.P. State Shooting Academy range from March 20-27, 2023. Hosts India and China-participating in their first ISSF world cup this year, have entered the largest contingent of 37-shooters as Brazil and Singapore became the first foreign contingents to arrive in Madhya Pradesh's capital city.

Besides India and China, some other foreign squads that have already arrived also include the likes of Denmark, Switzerland, USA, Korea, France and Germany among others. Monday will see the maximum arrivals before the official opening



ceremony on March 21, 2023. The competitions begin on March 22, 2023.

Also arriving on the day in New Delhi, was Luciano Rossi, President, ISSF and his wife Laura Rossi, who were warmly welcomed at the New

Delhi International Airport by Raninder Singh, President, NRAI, and Mr. Rajiv Bhatia, Secretary, NRAI. Commenting on the visit of the ISSF President, Singh said, "We are delighted to welcome Luciano Rossi and the wonderful Laura Rossi

to India. This will be his first visit to India after being elected ISSF President in November last year and we look forward to make it a most memorable experience for both of them. We also take this opportunity to thank the President with all our heart, for continuing to support Indian shooting in every possible way. We assure him that India and the Indian Shooting fraternity will always stand steadfastly for the growth of our beloved sport and he can count on our support to him and his team in implementing their vision." The ISSF World Cup Rifle/Pistol Bhopal, will see a total of 10 finals, all Olympic events, over five consecutive competition days. The two (men and women) 10m Air Pistol events get decided first on Wednesday, March 22, 2023. China's Liu Jinyao and Lu Kaiman are the reigning men's and women's world champions in the event and both have arrived in Bhopal.

## State leaders steer MP Cong well past dependence on a national 'face'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After witnessing a deeper crisis including being ousted from the government in March 2020, in the last couple of years the Madhya Pradesh Congress has tried hard to revive its cadre and to end the growing narrative of its shrinking political ground.

Amid the crisis within the grand old party, the Congress will be more dependent on its state leadership unlike the BJP during the upcoming assembly elections due later this year.

Senior Congress leaders, who also played the strategy makers' role for the Madhya Pradesh Congress, claimed that the party is not worried if some of its leaders switched to the BJP or some other political parties in the coming days. A senior Congress functionary, said there are several such instances when the party has gone through a deep crisis in the past also, but it has revived again.

More importantly, despite one after another political jolt and factionalism among some top leaders, the guidance by the party's two veteran lead-



ers with vast political experience -- state party chief Kamal Nath and two-time ex-CM Digvijaya Singh -- seems to have made the cadre take on the ruling BJP strongly again.

With the Assembly elections only six months away, the Congress seems to have prepared itself to challenge the BJP's two-decade rule in Madhya Pradesh. Political observers said the Congress protested on the roads on every public issue, especially unemployment, growing corruption and crime, farmers etc.



"Despite losing power in March 2020, what was more noticeable was that the Congress became more aggressive. In that situation, keeping the morale of its cadre high was undoubtedly a challenging task for the party's leadership, but somehow they did it and they received positive results in the urban body elections. It is an established fact that if a political party will fight on public issues on the roads instead of sitting in air conditioned rooms, people will support it," said a political observer.

Political observers also claimed that there is a general perception from the top to the bottom level Congress workers in Madhya Pradesh that they have fought on their own, and the situation for them is not akin to the BJP.

"At present the Congress does not have a charismatic leadership at the Centre like the BJP has Prime Minister Narendra Modi and MP's Congress cadre is well aware of it. Secondly, in the Madhya Pradesh Congress, the state leadership has a higher impact than the central leadership," said a senior journalist, requesting not to be named.

Even some party workers also accept that not only the frontline leaders -- Kamal Nath and Digvijaya Singh -- but some others who have a strong hold in their region, have more impact than any top face from the central leadership of the Congress. "It is because the local leaders are fighting on the roads and interacting with the people on a regular basis. Therefore, people are connected closely with their local leaders," said a district level Congress worker.

## "Run For Health"

## STATE BANK OF INDIA ORGANISED HALF MARATHON

Team Absolute | Bhopal

State bank of India (SBI) LHO Bhopal organised half marathon on the theme "Run for Health" yesterday on March 19. The half marathon started from LAL Parade Ground. The marathon was aimed promoting a healthy lifestyle among the employees and customers of SBI.

The marathon "Run for Health" in which over 1200 employees and 400 customers from various branches across the city participated. The marathon was in three categories of 5, 10, and 21 KM and witnessed an enthusiastic response from the participants who ran with full vigor and enthusiasm.

Well-known personalities from Bhopal and surrounding areas participated in the marathon, including Principal Secretary Aniruddh Mukerjee IAS, Principal Secretary Deepti Gaur Mukherjee IAS & Chief General Manager of SBI



Bhopal Circle, Binod Kumar Mishra. Mishra expressed his views on the importance of fitness and health he spoke about the challenges of running and compared the difficulty of maintaining a consistent pace during practice with that of race day. He said, "Every race is a question and we never know what the answer will be until the last yard. That's the attraction of racing." He expressed his commitment to fitness and health and praised the efforts of the participants. He assured everyone that such activities would continue in the future.

The marathon also served

as a platform for SBI to promote its marketing efforts and also in line with the celebration of Aazadi Kaa Amrit Mohotsav. The bank aimed to send a message about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and the importance of fitness and also to develop a cordial relationship with its customers too.

The event was attended by officials from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC), other banks in Bhopal, authorities from the state government, and top police officials, army and paramilitary officials and jawans.



*"We found that a Mediterranean diet was beneficial in women, with a 24 per cent lower risk of CVD and a 23 per cent lower risk of total mortality," said researchers including from the University of Sydney. The risk of coronary heart disease was 25 per cent lower, while that of stroke was also lower, although not statistically significant.*

# BJP HOPES 'MODI MAGIC' WILL WORK IN K'TKA AS IT DID IN GUJARAT

Taking another step towards "self-reliance" in the defence sector, he dedicated the HAL Helicopter Factory at Tumakuru to the nation whose foundation stone was also laid by him in 2016. Later,



He urged the youth of the state to apply their technological expertise in the defence sector to strengthen the country.

On the other hand, Modi released the 13th installment of about Rs 16,000 crore under PM-Kisan Scheme in Belagavi and laid the foundation stone of several development projects worth more than Rs 2,700 crore in Belagavi and also dedicated them to the nation.

But, the party is banking heavily on the Modi magic to win the upcoming state elections.

# international

# 15 KILLED AS 6.7-MAGNITUDE QUAKE JOLTS ECUADOR

Buildings were damaged in several cities. In Ecuador, Machala and Cuenca were among the cities that suffered damage to buildings and vehicles, as emergency services rushed to help people.



The government said more than 250 injured people were treated in the

This is the strongest quake to hit Ecuador since 2016, when nearly 700 people died and thousands were injured, officials.

## Cyclone Freddy death toll hits 447, over 362,000 displaced in Malawi

He appealed for more humanitarian sup-



Cyclone Freddy hit Malawi's southern districts hard from the night of Sunday through Tuesday, causing strong winds, floods and mudslides, and killing hundreds and displacing hundreds of thousands in its wake.

# IMF TO APPROVE \$2.9 BN BAILOUT PACKAGE FOR SRI LANKA: CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR

He said Sri Lanka will hence have adequate foreign reserves for imports for essential sectors, adding that the IMF package will boost investor sentiment and enhance the country's access to more foreign funds and investments, Xinhua news agency reported. The IMF package will include budgetary support to Sri Lanka's government, which is a new element in IMF lending, he added.

Sri Lanka started the related negotiations with the international lender in 2022 after the South Asian country was hit by a severe economic crisis.



## *Mask mandate on public transportation in S.Korea to end on Monday*

The mask mandate will remain in place for medical facilities, pharmacies,



The government said it will decide

whether to lift the mask rule for those infection-prone facilities in late April or early May when the World Health Organisation could vote to downgrade Covid-19 on a global level at its next meeting scheduled for the end of April.

## N.Korea slams US, UN for addressing human rights violations, missile provocation

In response to the meeting, the North's mission to the UN said in a statement that Pyongyang "will counter the illegal 'human rights' campaign by the US and its followers with the most powerful means," according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). The mission said it defines



On Guterres' statement, Pyongyang's foreign ministry accused the Secretary-General of "adding fuel to the flames" and "far from helping easing the tension in the Korean Peninsula and the region," according to the KCNA. "I think it is good for defusing tension and for himself that the UN Secretary-General remains silent rather than meddling in the Korean Peninsula issue as now," Kim Son-gyong, the North's Vice-Foreign Minister for international organisations, said in a separate statement.





# MULTIPLE 'OPPOSITION' FRONTS MAY THROW UP A 1996 SCENARIO IN 2024

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

With the countdown to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections on, all major Opposition parties, including the regional forces, are bracing for a big political battle to oust the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, and a situation akin to 1996 emerging not ruled out.

Machinations are on in a big way for the past couple of years with several local, regional or national level 'conclaves' of Opposition parties being held at regular intervals, raising -- and then dimming -- hopes of the entire pack uniting to lock horns with the BJP and its allies.

The latest in the series is the effort by Trinamool Congress President and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and Samajwadi Party President and ex-Uttar Pradesh CM Akhilesh Yadav, who have agreed to keep "equidistant" from the BJP and the Congress.

Banerjee plans to rope in others like Biju Janata Dal President and Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik plus Bharat Rashtira Samithi President and Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and other leaders soon.

Maharashtra's Opposition front, Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) comprising the Congress, the Nationalist Congress Party, and the Shiv Sena-UBT are closely watching the developments, with a few senior leaders wondering whether the new associations are coming up to take on the BJP or hammer the Congress!

Many parties from the other southern states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, the Janata Dal-U of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar, the Aam Aadmi Party, and other regional forces are also monitoring the unfolding situation, compounding the confused scenario. The MVA leaders, particularly NCP and Sena-UBT have made it clear on record that "no Opposition unity is possible by excluding Congress", and junk theories of "Congress being isolated" or "Rahul Gandhi spelling doom" for the Opposition, and so on.

While admitting that there's no clear wave against the BJP, a Sena-UBT leader claimed that the current mood of the nation is quickly sliding to "anti-BJP", with the blatant attempts made to "finish off" the opposition or regional parties, the misuse of central agencies and the onslaught on all democratic institutions. Concurring, a NCP functionary said that the BJP will be made accountable for mishandling of the economy, failure to



control inflation and arrest unemployment, frittering resources on showpiece projects or mega-events, et al.

A senior state Congress leader, preferring anonymity, feels the scenario in 2024 would be daunting for the BJP at even more levels.

This time, a total of around 14 per cent new voters will be added, besides 20 per cent minority voters - the latter having an average voting

record of barely 38-42 per cent. "The new voters will come with huge hopes for their future and the current scenario barely inspires confidence in them... Perhaps for the first time since 1989, even the minorities will turn out in huge numbers and return to the Congress fold," he contended.

A Sena-UBT office-bearer said that the grassroots trend is slowly emerging -- "who or which alliance" can help defeat the BJP and they will vote accordingly -- in Maharashtra, this sentiment alone could fetch the MVA between 35-38 seats (out of 48 Lok Sabha seats).

The NCP's recent move to support the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP)-BJP alliance raised not only political eyebrows but questions on the GrandMaster Sharad Pawar's future strategy, though he remains the most "well-regarded" senior politician.

Sena-UBT and Congress leaders speculate that in case of an adverse ruling in the ongoing Supreme Court challenge to the Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, the NCP could spring some uncomfortable surprises. At the national level, the BJP-led NDA would remain strong in its bastions like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and partly in Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and the northeast.

The Congress-led UPA is likely to "exceed expectations", and attract more parties into its caravan in the coming months, especially from the south and west. "This time, most regional parties are seriously regrouping due to a fear of the Central investigation agencies being unleashed if the BJP returns ... Many are clear that it's a 'now-or-never ballgame' they can't afford to lose," said another NCP office-bearer.

As per a MVA leader's calculations, the Congress may bounce back to the 1996-level getting around 140-plus seats, the BJP may be restricted below 200, and the rest could be shared in big and small chunks by the other Opposition/regional parties.

However, there are also apprehensions that the BJP may resort to some big "political or economic sensationalism" in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls which could help it to attract the fence-sitters or Hindutva doubting-thomases, and up its potential tally significantly for a comeback.

A couple of Congress and Sena-UBT leaders grimly remarked that wherever the Opposition fails to unite, it will "benefit only BJP" and every parliament seat that will witness a triangular or multi-cornered contest can be safely written off beforehand.

## WOMAN ON MORNING WALK DIES AFTER BEING HIT BY CAR

**Mumbai:** A 38-year-old woman died after being knocked down by a car at Worli sea-face promenade in south Mumbai on Sunday during her morning walk, a police official said.

A case of rash driving was registered against the driver of the car for the accident that took place around 6.30 am, he said.

"The woman, identified as Rajlaxmi Raj Krishnan, was hit from behind by a speeding car when she was on a morning walk. Due to the impact, she was flung into the air before falling to the ground," the official of Worli police station said.

The woman was rushed to a nearby hospital, where she was declared dead, he said.

The 23-year-old driver of the car also received minor injuries in the accident. He was booked under relevant sections of Indian Penal Code (IPC), including rash and negligent driving, and causing death by negligence, the official said, adding that the accused is being questioned.

## 6 Questioned after Mumbai woman's body found in plastic bag

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Six persons were questioned in connection with the recovery of a decomposed body of a 53-year-old woman stuffed in a plastic bag in Mumbai's Lalbaug area.

Though the victim's daughter was arrested in connection with the murder, an investigating officer said, "We believe that woman accused in this murder case did not act alone. She must have received help from someone."

The accused daughter was identified as Rimple Jain.

Earlier, on March 15, Mumbai's Kalachowki police arrested the daughter of the victim after they recovered cutters and a small knife from the house.

"Mumbai's Kalachowki police arrested the daughter of the victim after registering a case under Section 302 (murder) of the IPC and the Arms Act," an officer said earlier.

According to the police, the accused used a marble cutter bought from Lalbaug to dismember her mother's body.

The accused told the police during interrogation that she panicked in the wake of the



murder and, preserving the body for two days, she decided to chop it to pieces for disposal.

"To avoid the foul smell from the rotting corpse, the accused daughter watched a video online and incorporated ways to keep the body fresh as was shown in the clip," the officer said.

The sleuths said that they believe that the woman was murdered in December.

"The woman's arms and legs were chopped off after she was killed. This was done using cutters and a small knife which have been recovered from the house," an officer said. Further details are awaited.

## Court acquits man, five family members accused of killing his wife for dowry

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A court in Maharashtra's Thane district has acquitted a man and his five family members accused of killing his wife for dowry in 2014 by giving them a benefit of doubt.

The court of Additional Sessions Judge Rachna R Tehra said the prosecution has failed to prove the charges against the accused, and there was no provision in law to convict someone emotionally.

The court passed the order on March 13, which was made available on Saturday.

The victim had married the man, now 43, in 2005.

The prosecution told the court that after the marriage, the victim resided with her husband and in-laws at Mumbai. The couple had two daughters and a son. A year after their marriage, the woman's in-laws started treating her badly. They tortured her physically as well as mentally to demand Rs 10 lakh from her parents for the purchase of land, it said. The prosecution also said that the accused strangled the woman with the help of a 'dupatta'



(long cloth) in March 2014 near the Ranjnoli Naka and stuffed her body in a gunny bag, which they dumped in a nullah.

Appearing for the defence, lawyers M Z Shaikh and Nadeem Khan contested the claim and argued that the accused had no role in the death of the victim. After hearing both sides, the court said, "In the facts and circumstances of the case, there are material contradictions, omissions and/or improvements so far as the accused are concerned. Therefore, it is not safe to convict the accused persons on the evidence available on record. The benefit of material contradictions, omissions and improvements must go in favour of the accused persons. Therefore, as such the accused persons are entitled to be given the benefit of doubt." "In the present case, a female was dead. This court also feels sorry for such unnatural death of the deceased. But convincing material not tendered by the prosecution to come to the conclusion that the accused persons conspired and committed the murder and nobody else. There is no provision in law for emotional conviction," it said.

## LAW MINISTER IS THREATENING JUDICIARY AND JUDGES: SANJAY RAUT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday alleged that Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju's remarks that a few retired judges are part of an "anti-India gang" are an attempt to pressure the judiciary and threaten judges.

Speaking at the India Today Conclave in the national capital on Saturday, Rijiju had claimed that a few retired judges and some activists who are "part of the anti-India gang" are trying to make the Indian judiciary play the role of the opposition party.

Reacting to the remarks while talking to reporters here, Raut said, "What kind of democracy is this? Does it suit a law minister to threaten the judiciary? It is a threat to judges who refuse to bow down to the government and it's an attempt to pressure the judiciary." Criticising the government doesn't mean being against the nation, Raut said.

The Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray)



MP also said that after Rahul Gandhi spoke about the threats to democracy in the country, there is now a move to get the Congress leader suspended from the Lok Sabha. To a question on the demand that Gandhi should apologise for his comments, Raut said, "Rahul Gandhi will not apologise and why should he?"

"Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders have in fact spoken against the country and its political leaders on foreign soil," he charged.

The BJP has been demanding an apology from Rahul Gandhi over his recent remarks he made in London, in which he alleged that the structures of Indian democracy are under attack and there is a "full-scale assault" on the country's institutions.

The remarks triggered a political slugfest, with the BJP accusing him of maligning India on foreign soil and seeking foreign interventions, and the Congress hitting back at the ruling party by citing previous instances of Prime Minister Narendra Modi raising internal politics abroad.

## Minister warns of action if development funds remain unused

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra minister Shambhuraj Desai has directed the Thane district administration to take action against those departments which do not fully utilise the funds allotted to them for development projects.

Speaking via video-conferencing during a review meeting on Saturday, Excise Minister Desai, who is also the Thane Guardian Minister, said the authorities need to



ensure that funds from the District Planning Committee (DPC) be spent on projects.

Thane collector Ashok Shingare gave a presentation on the status of the utilisation of funds allotted by the DPC. "The district administration should ensure 100 per cent utilisation of funds.

He also directed the officials to re-appropriate the balance and unutilised funds to other accounts and projects in the district," Desai said. "The collector should take action against those departments which do not spend the funds properly," he said.

## BMC delays pre-bid meet for underground parking

Team Absolute | Mumbai

AMIDST opposition by residents against underground parking at Patwardhan Park in Bandra West, the BMC has postponed the pre-bid meeting for tenders for the proposed parking lot citing "internal reasons". It will now be held on March 23. The BMC had floated a tender to construct underground parking beneath an open plot behind the existing Appasaheb Patwardhan Park in Bandra West on March 6. The plot is part of Patwardhan Park.

According to the BMC, the three-storey underground parking lot will be able to accommodate 288 cars through a robotic system. As per the plan displayed in the tender notice, there will be two entrance roads and a roof above the garden. The estimated cost of the project is Rs 75 crore.

The BMC had similar plans for Pushpa Narsee Park in JVPD too. But following stiff



opposition from the residents, the corporation is considering other options and hasn't floated a tender for the JVPD Park as yet. For Patwardhan Park, the BMC had arranged the pre-bid meeting on Thursday, March 16. But, it has now been planned for the coming week.

"It has been [postponed] due to internal reasons. Interested bidders can get a detailed idea of the project and solve any doubt during the meeting," said an official from the BMC. As per the present schedule, the last date for submission of the tender is April 3. The final process is expected to be complete on April 18. But this might be delayed further.

## SONALI KULKARNI APOLOGISES OVER 'INDIAN GIRLS ARE LAZY' REMARK

Team Absolute | Mumbai

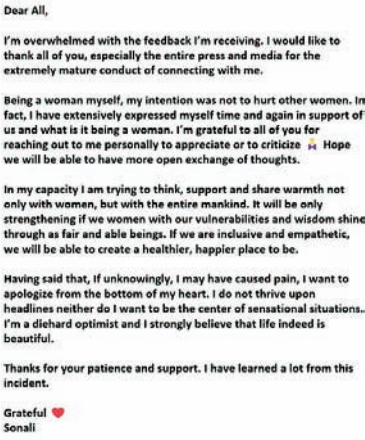
Actress Sonali Kulkarni, who is known for her work in Marathi cinema and Hindi films like 'Dil Chahta Hai' and 'Taxi No. 9211', recently said at an event that "Indian girls are lazy."

She said that girls look for well-to-do boyfriends or husbands to fulfil their needs instead of being passionate about their own careers. Soon after the statement came out, the actress started receiving the flak on the Internet.

The actress took to her Instagram and shared an apology note. She wrote in the caption: "But you were right! Women who haven't understood the context probably are hurt but on an honest note, whatever you said was right. Also, it wasn't about every woman, it was about a few women who genuinely want it easy."



The note started off as it read: "I'm overwhelmed with the feedback I'm receiving. I would like to thank all of you, especially the entire press and media for the extremely mature conduct of connecting with me. Being a woman



myself, my intention was not to hurt other women. In fact, I have extensively expressed myself time and again in support of us and what is it being a woman."

The actress continued in her note: "I'm grateful to all of you for

reaching out to me personally to appreciate or to criticise. Hope we will be able to have a more open exchange of thoughts. In my capacity, I am trying to think, support and share warmth not only with women, but with the entire mankind. It will be only strengthening if we women with our vulnerabilities and wisdom shine through as fair and able beings. If we are inclusive and empathetic, we will be able to create a healthier, happier place to be."

"Having said that, if unknowingly, I may have caused pain, I want to apologise from the bottom of my heart. I do not thrive upon headlines neither do I want to be the centre of sensational situations. I'm a diehard optimist and I strongly believe that life indeed is beautiful. Thanks for your patience and support. I have learned a lot from this incident," the actress concluded.







Asia Lions 191 for 5 in 20 overs (Upul Tharanga 50, Mohammad Hafeez 38, Tillakaratne Dilshan 27; Stuart Binny 2 for 38, Pragnan Ojha 2 for 26) beat India Maharajas 106 in 16.4 overs (Gautam Gambhir 32; Mohammad Hafeez 2 for 21 Sohail Tanvir 2 for 25) by 85 runs





Ashutosh Rana reveals Rajkummar Rao asked to be slapped for real for a scene



## My family is very supportive, they all like my bikini look: Rishina Kandhari

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Rishina Kandhari, who is known for working in TV shows such as 'Devon Ke Dev... Mahadev', 'Tenali Rama', 'Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai', and currently is a part of 'Na Umar Ki Seema Ho', was recently sporting a bikini during a family vacation to Goa.

Rishina said: "I consider myself an old soul and I'm way too Indian. I am also very shy in nature. But my husband Vishal keeps boosting

my confidence and keeps telling me that I should get liberated from myself. I was a very timid girl and whatever I am today is all because of his support, belief and trust in me. According to him, every woman should liberate her mind from the shackles that hold them back and come out victorious and self-reliant in their life and career."

So, this time when Rishina went for a mini vacation to Goa, she decided to opt for a bikini. She added: "We had gone to Goa for a short break from our hectic schedules to rejuvenate. We do that very

often. It's very important to be relaxed mentally. My family is very supportive and they all liked my bikini look."

Rishina, who is in her late 30s, has always been fit. She shared: "Being fit runs in the family. Workout is our daily routine. There's no pressure of looking good but we are a disciplined family, who take our fitness very seriously."

Talking about wearing it on screen, she said: "TV shows are all about desi looks and Saas Bahu dramas. They don't need you to

wear a bikini but if I am doing a web show or a film and they ask me to wear a bikini I will definitely wear a classy one."

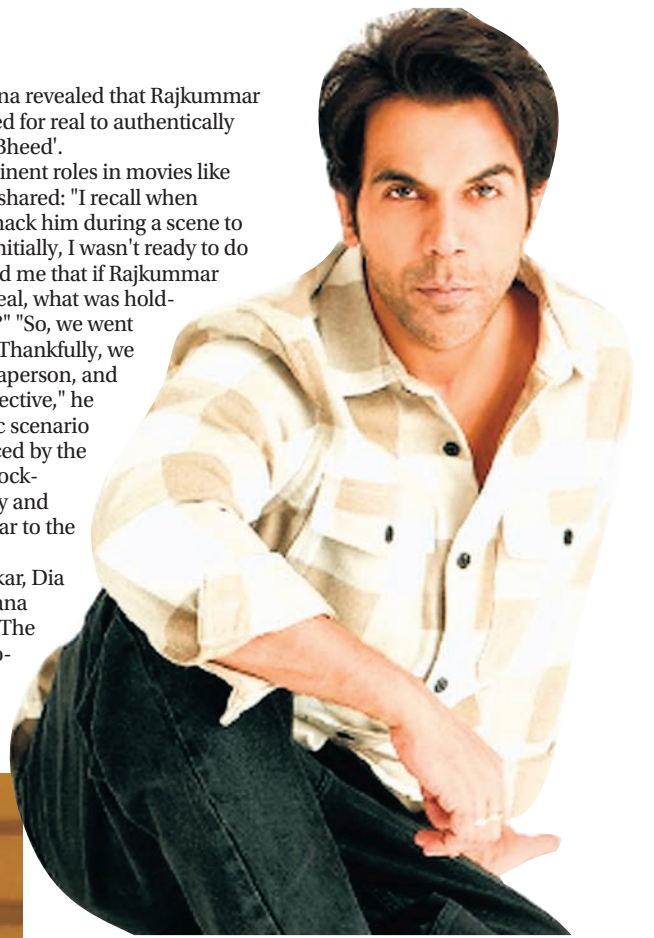
Celebrities are often easy targets whenever they post bikini or swimwear pictures on social media. She comments: "I didn't post my bikini pics on social media because of shameless faceless trolls who have nothing to do but belittle and demean women and write dirty comments on their posts. It affects me sometimes as I'm not that thick-skinned yet," she concluded.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Ashutosh Rana revealed that Rajkummar Rao insisted on being slapped for real to authentically portray a scene in the film, 'Bheed'.

The actor who has played prominent roles in movies like 'War', 'Paggilait' and 'Hungama 2', shared: "I recall when Rajkummar begged me to truly smack him during a scene to make it look real and believable. Initially, I wasn't ready to do it, but Anubhav stepped in and told me that if Rajkummar was willing to accept the slap for real, what was holding me back from doing the same?" "So, we went ahead and did the shot in one go. Thankfully, we had a great tuning with the cameraperson, and the scene turned out to be very effective," he added. 'Bheed' depicts the realistic scenario of various issues and problems faced by the people during the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown. It focuses on social disparity and shows how the situation was similar to the partition of 1947.

Rajkummar Rao, Bhumi Pednekar, Dia Mirza, Kritika Kamra, Ashutosh Rana and Anubhav Sinha appeared on 'The Kapil Sharma Show' for the promotion of their film. 'The Kapil Sharma Show' airs on Sony Entertainment Television.



## Having a sense of humour shapes how we view the world: Kunal Kemmu



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Kunal Kemmu, who is currently seen in the comedy web show 'Pop Kaun', shared his perspective on comedy and how it helped him learn a lot as an actor.

Kunal started his acting career with the TV show 'Gul Gulshan Gulfaam', and later acted in films such as 'Raja Hindustani', 'Zakham', 'Bhai', 'Hum Hain Rahi Pyar Ke', 'Dushman'. He played the male lead in 'Kalyug', 'Dhol', and was also seen in a comedy film 'Golmaal 3'.

He shared that as an actor he wants to explore something new and comedy helps in seeing things in a positive way.

He said: "There is always something new to learn, to explore, or to improvise, and I believe having a sense of humour shapes how we view the world. I also don't give much thought to how I present myself on social media and just do what comes naturally to me."

'Pop Kaun' features Kunal Kemmu, Johnny Lever, Rajpal Yadav, Chunky Panday, Saurabh Shukla, late Satish Kaushik, Nupur Sanon and Jamie Lever. The show is produced by Yam Productions, created and directed by Farhad Samji.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Ira Sone, who began her acting career in 2007 with the popular show 'Kumkum - Ek Pyara Sa Bandhan' and was last seen in 'Desh Ki Beti Nandini', is all set to hit the small screen after seven years with Ekta Kapoor's 'Kundali Bhagya'. She talked about being part of the show and playing a mother for the first time.

Speaking about her character in the show, she said: "I am playing the character of a mother in the show post the leap, which is for the very first time in my entire career."

On making a comeback after seven years in 'Kundali Bhagya', she added: "I chose 'Kundali Bhagya' because it is a very successful show, the story is so beautiful and so well justified. I felt like it was just the right show for me to play the role of mom. Because it's got so many shades and has a different touch."

She shared her reaction to playing a mother's role saying: "I was unsure on the first day of the shooting that I would be able to do it. But I took it up as a challenge and it's something new and different for me, so I am excited. I hope I will justify the character of a mother."

About doing a mother's role at a young age, she said: "I don't think that today there is any age limit to play a character. There are character-oriented roles these days. A mother's role is not just a typical character but she has her shade and she has her graph, which you will watch in the show. I am extremely happy about it."

## IRA SONE SPEAKS ON PLAYING MOTHER FOR THE FIRST TIME



Dhanashree Verma