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Delhi Police at Rahul's house for details on

'sexual harassment' of women

Team Absolute New Delhi

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, Pranab 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 se



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

Absolute Chandigarh

unjab Police continued their search for selfstyled 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

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 ideologue'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

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-Harvana 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

Rahul Gandhi sends 4-page reply to Delhi Police

New Delhi: Congress MP Rahul Gandhi has reportedly answered the Delhi Police regarding their query in connection with the sexual assault remark he made in Srinagar during his Bharat Jodo Yatra. The sources said that Gandhi sent four-page reply to Delhi Police highlighting in 10 points. However, the sources have said that the answers were not clear in nature.

EXCISE POLICY CASE

Kavitha leaves for Delhi; suspense over appearance before ED

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

elangana 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 personal-



ly joining the investigation. The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader had authorised BRS general secretary Soma Bharat Kumar to

appear before the ED on her behalf. representative. Kavitha also wrote

She stated that since she was not asked to appear in person, she was appearing through an authorised 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.

Girl's friend pushed her into car after fight, finds Delhi Police probe

Team Absolute New Delhi

he 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 book-

ings 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

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

Team Absolute New Delhi

he 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.

Team Absolute New Delhi

he 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

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 Mayubhanj 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

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.

Mayubhanj: 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 maga-



WB TEACHERS' SCAM: ED RECOVERS 350 OMR SHEETS FROM HOUSE OF REAL ESTATE PROMOTER

ollowing the raid and search operations, the Enforcement Directorate (ED), probing the multi-crore recruitment scam for teaching and non-teaching staff in the state-run schools in West Bengal has recovered as many as 350 optical mark recognition (OMR) sheets from the residence of a private real estate at Salt Lake in the northern outskirts of Kolkata

The raid and search operation that started since Saturday and are continuing till the time the report was filed. The real estate promoter from whose residence the OMR sheets have been recovered is Ayan Shil, an extremely close confidante of expelled youth Trinamool Congress leader, Santanu Bandopadhyay, who is currently in ED custody because of his alleged involvement in the multicrore recruitment scam.

"The question is how could the OMR sheets, which are supposed to



be in the safe custody of West Bengal School Service Commission, be dumped at a private property. The

ferent years. Besides, the OMR sheets, a list of probable candidates to be shortlisted for the selection, were also recovered from Shil's resi

Apart from these recruitmentrelated documents, the investigating sleuths have got documents of some property that are jointly- owned by Bandopadhyay and Shil. The ED officials doubt that a major part of the scam proceeds collected by Bandopadhyay was invested in the real estate business owned by Shil.

Already, the ED counsel has informed a special court of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in Kolkata that a major part of the crime proceeds collected by other expelled and arrested youth Trinamool Congress leader Kuntal Ghosh has been invested in the business of film financing.

The ED counsel has also claimed that on this count Ghosh also gave advance to a number of Tollywood actors and actresses. Now with Shil's involvement, the connection of the real estate sector in the scam has also

Fake scheme of work from home busted, 2 held

Team Absolute New Delhi

elhi Police said on Sunday that they have busted a fake scheme of work from home with the arrest of two accused who cheated a number of gullible persons

DCP of Outer Delhi, Harender Kumar Singh, said that the accused have been identified as Ankit Rathi and Sudhir Kumar.

"The fraudsters lured victims with lucrative returns of 30 per cent on the amount invested. As many as Rs 64 Lakh was deposited in a bank account in one day before it was freezed by the bank," Singh said. The police said that a person named Harin Bansal had lodged a complaint in this respect alleging that he was cheated to the tune of Rs 9,32,000 by the accused.

Bansal claimed that he was

'If rubber price is raised to Rs 300/kg, BJP

surfing Instagram when he came across a post said 'earn huge money daily working from home'. He clicked on the post and was taken to a WhatsApp number. "He was then asked to reg-

ister on a website through a link that was given to him. The fraudsters said that he has to complete the tasks given to him on the website, which was his job. They told him that he will get commission along with the original amount after completing the tasks given to him. Initially he deposited a small amount and was able to withdraw his money along with the commission earned from his bank account. Later when he invested bigger amounts, he never got back the money," the police said.

Bansal said the money was sought from him on the pretext of government tax, the police said. The police then

found that money was being transferred to nine different bank accounts one of which belonged to Ankit Rathi, a resident of Baghpat. Immediately, a police team was sent there, which found that Rathi had fled to Haridwar. He was later nabbed from Haridwar

"Rathi told us that his friend Sudhir Kumar had told him that Rs 10,000 daily could be earned by opening bank accounts and handing them over to another person who would operate an online betting website. Sudhir has also been arrested by the police," the police said.

Sudhir disclosed that once he was surfing Facebook when he saw a post regarding earning money by letting someone else access his account. He was told that they provide bank accounts to online betting websites.

200 kg ganja seized in Hyderabad, 3 held

yderabad Narcotic Enforcement Wing (H-NEW) has seized 200 kg ganja and arrested three persons in this connection, an official said on Sunday.

The sleuths of H-NEW along with Langer House Police apprehended two drug transporters and a peddler who were found in illegal possession of ganja at Attapur under Langer House Police Station limits.

The police seized 200 kg of ganja, three cell phones and one four wheeler (Eicher DCM) -- all valued at Rs 60 lakh.

C. Srinivas Rao and A. Sathi Babu, both transporters from Andhra Pradesh and a drug peddler Habeeb from Rangareddy district were arrested.

Five other accused are absconding. They are Parvez and Jaweed of Hyderabad, Mangesh from Maharashtra and Nagesh and Pandu, both from Andhra Pradesh.

According to police, Pandu and Nagesh had lured Srinivas Rao, driver of DCM and Sathi Babu to earn easy money by transport-



ing ganja from Rajahmundry to Hyderabad. They offered Rs 1.20 lakh for the trip.

Srinivas had modified his vehicle by setting up a box on the top of the driver cabin for keeping ganja. The ganja was to be handed over to Habeeb and Parvez in Hyderabad.

Preliminary investigation revealed that this ganja consignment was destined to Osmanahad in Maharashtra

On credible information, H-NEW with the assistance of Langer House Police seized the

will get MP from Kerala,' says Bishop

he Thalassery Arch Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church, Mar Ioseph Pamplani has said that if the Government of India raises the price of rubber to Rs 300 per kilogram, the church will help the BJP in Kerala and will overcome the situation of the BJP not having an MP from the state.

Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies

He was addressing the Catholic Farmers Conference of the Thalassery Arch Diocese on Sunday. The Catholic Church has a major influence among catholic farmers and most of the rubber plantations in the state are owned by catholic farmers. Rubber is trading between Rs 131 to Rs 151 per kg between December 2022 and March 2023.

The open statement of the



Catholic Bishop will have its tremors across the political spectrum of Kerala. Kerala's Minister for Public Works and Tourism and son-in-law of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Mohammed Riyas was cautious in his response to the question on the Bishop's statement. When media persons asked him the question at Palakkad, the young CPI-M leader said: "I haven't seen the statement of the Bishop. I will comment only after having seen the statement and in what context he has said so if at all he has spoken like that.'

However, the minister said that the RSS was aiming for a Hindu Rashtra as it was fast approaching its centenary year in 2025 and that the minorities of the country including Muslims and Christians are in fear. He said that the absolute majority of Narendra Modi in the past two elections has given the much-needed fillip for the RSS in this regard.

The CPI-M state secretary M.V. Govindan shot down the statement and said that no such social engineering will have any impact in Kerala. Without directly commenting on the statement of the Bishop, the CPI-M state secretary said that whatever RSS and BJP try in Kerala, they won't be successful.

It may be noted that BJP is yet to open an account in Kerala in the Lok Sabha.

CHURCH PRIEST COUNTERS ARCHBISHOP'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORTING BJP

Thiruvananthapuram: Capuchin church priest and the editor of 'Indian Currents' weekly, Father Suresh Mathew, said on Sunday that Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany's statement on supporting the BJP cannot be taken as the stand of the Christians in Kerala, though attempts have been made by Christian leaders to align with the saffron camp.Pamplany, the Archbishop of the Roman

Catholic Church in Thalassery, had said in a public meeting that if the Government of India raises the price of rubber to

Rs 300 per kg, the church will help the BJP in Kerala overcome the situation of not having a single MP from the state. 'Indian Currents' is the weekly online magazine of the Catholic Church. Mathew said that many Christian religious leaders in Kerala do not have an idea about the ideology of the BJP, which is just the political face of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Hyderabad Agencies

Tnion minister for tourism and Sunday alleged that the Telangana government is not taking action against owners of buildings whose negligence is leading to a series of fire accidents.

He visited Swapnalok Complex in Secunderabad, where a huge fire on Thursday night claimed six lives. The minister spoke to officials and

enquired about the cause of the fire.

Kishan Reddy, who is a member of Lok Sabha from Secunderabad, told media persons that the state government is regularising unauthorised buildings for revenue. He alleged that the government is encouraging illegal constructions so that it can earn more revenue.

The Union minister termed the fire accident in the building unfortunate.



He said that though poor and innocents were losing lives in fire accidents, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and state government were not taking action against those responsible for

"Whenever a fire accident takes place, they say we will take action but later forget it," said Kishan Reddy. He said negligence by the owners of buildings was resulting in

tragedies. Many commercial establishments lack fire safety equipment or not complying with fire safety

Kishan Reddy asked all enterprises to do regular inspections of fire safety compliances and audits and rectify any defects to avoid accidents.

Six youths including four women were killed and few others injured in a huge fire that broke out at Swapnalok Complex on Thursday

This was the second major fire accident in Secunderabad, the twin city of Hyderabad, in less than two months.

Three persons were killed in a huge fire at a multi-storey commercial complex on January 28. The building was completely gutted in the fire and it was later demolished by the authorities as the structure had become

Power employees call off strike after UP govt's assurance

Lucknow Agencies

ower employees in Uttar Pradesh have called off their 72-hour strike after a detailed round of discussion with UP energy minister Arvind Kumar Sharma. The strike was called off after 64 hours on Sunday.

The Vidyut Karmachari Sanyukt Sangharsh Samiti (VKSSS) announced the decision after the UP energy minister Arvind Kumar Sharma said that the government would sympathetically con-

sider all their demands. The minister appealed to the power employees to return to work at the earliest so that power supply could be restored in areas where it had

NIA arrests 13th accused in



been adversely affected. The minister further assured that any action initiated against employees would be legally withdrawn.

Shailendra Dubey said that after the assurance from the government, the power employees had decided to give time so that their demands could be fulfilled.

Man ties dog to bike, drags it over 2 km; arrested

Ghaziabad | Agencies

n a shocking incident, a man has been arrested here for tying a dog to his motorcycle with a rope and dragging it for around 2.5 km on Saturday.

The man has been identified as Islam, a resident of the Vijay Nagar police station area. He was caught by the onlookers who rescued the injured dog and took it to a

hospital.

Surbhi Rawat, President of People for Animals (PFA), said that the accused first hit the stray with a brick, following which it lost conscious-

Rawat said she reached the spot on receiving information of the incident and found the dog covered in blood, following which Islam was handed

over to the police. The accused claimed that

he was taking the dog to abandon it at a different place after it had shown signs of "abnormal behaviour" and bitten several people. ACP Anshu Jain said: "A video was received through social media, wherien a dog was being dragged after being tied to a bike by a person. The said person has been identified and arrested. Further action is being taken in the matter.'

Phulwari Sharif PFI case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

he National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday said that they have arrested an accused, Md Irshad Alam of Mehsi in Bihar's East Champaran in connection with the Phulwari Sharif PFI

The NIA said that they found that despite the ban on the PFI imposed on September 27, 2022, the PFI leaders continued to propagate the ideology of violent extremism and were also arranging arms and ammunition to commit crimes.

The case was registered in July 2022 when four accused were arrested as they gathered in the Phulwari Sharif area of Patna for training and to carry out acts of terror and violence. Three more were arrested in February this year.

PFI cadres in Phulwari Sharif and Motihari had vowed to continue PFI activities in a clandestine manner in



Bihar and had also arranged a firearm and ammunition recently to eliminate a youth of a particular community in Bihar's East Champaran dis-

"Alam, who has been arrested yesterday, was in close association with accused Yakub Khan alias Usman alias Sultan, a Physical Education Trainer of PFI. Accused Yakoob Khan had posted incriminating videos on social media to spread communal flare-up. Subsequently Yakoob, along with Md Irshad Alam and other associates, had planned to execute a targeted killing. Reece was conducted with the help of Irshad to carry out the attack. A firearm and ammunition were also arranged by Yakoob Khan with the help of other arrested accused," the official said.

The official said that as of now they have arrested 13 accused in this connection. Earlier, in January this year, the agency filed a charge sheet against four accused persons.



madhya pradesh

KAMAL NATH MAKES BIG ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR UPCOMING ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

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

Team Absolute Bhopal

f 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 county. 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

A t 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 hospi-

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

tal, the Ujjain collector said.

board was being driven in a

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

hanchoura 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 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

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.

to India. This will be his first visit to

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

India after being elected ISSF

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

Team Absolute Pithampur

massive fire broke out in a plastic factory in 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

ix Olympic medallists, including Olympic championsas 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

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

Delhi International Airport by

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

A fter 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 twotime ex-CM Digvijaya Singh -- seems to have made the cadre take on the ruling BJP strongly again.

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 SRI

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

Aniruddhe 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 diffi culty 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

EDITOR'S SPECS

Mediterranean diet may cut heart disease

T adies follow a Mediterranean diet to improve your heart ■health and reduce your risks of cardiovascular disease and death by nearly 25 per cent, suggests a study.

The Mediterranean diet is rich in wholegrains, vegetables, fruit, legumes, nuts, and extra virgin olive oil; moderate in fish/shellfish; low to moderate in wine; and low in red/processed meats, dairy products, animal fat, and processed foods.

Cardiovascular disease accounts for more than a third of all deaths in women around the world. While a healthy diet, including Mediterranean diet, has been a key plank of prevention, most relevant clinical trials have included relatively few women or haven't reported the results by sex, the researchers said. The new study, published in the journal Heart, is the first to focus on the association between a Mediterranean diet and incident CVD and death, specific to women.

"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

SANTOSH KUMAR PATHAK

IP's thumping victory in the 2022 Gujarat Assembly polls has enthused the party leaders and cadres in Karnataka, which goes to polls in next five

The saffron party in the state seems to be banking on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's magic to do wonders in the upcom ing polls and is confident that under the leadership of Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, the BJP will again form the government in the state.

Former Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa, who was instrumental in bringing the BJP government to power in the state, recently quit electoral politics and is now a member of the BJP Parliamentary Board, party's highest decision-making body.

The saffron party, which claims to have set all political equations right, is busy preparing for the upcoming state elections and is set to target 'Mission 150'.

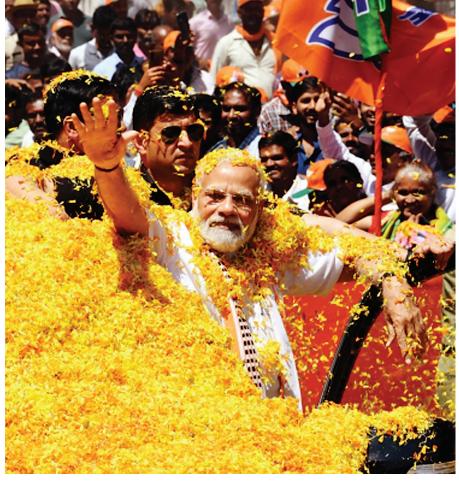
With the BJP refuting rumours of infighting within the party, the fissures within the party's state level are quite visible. The BJP, which is running the government in the state, wants to ensure securing a thumping majority in the coming state polls just like in 2018 Assembly polls.

The BJP is banking on the popularity of its star campaigner -- Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It aims at returning to power in Karnataka for a second time riding on the Modi wave.

Prime Minister Modi is constantly visiting the state and inaugurating infrastructure projects worth crores of rupees.

Modi inaugurated the India Energy Week 2023 by visiting Bengaluru on February 6 and flagged off the Green Mobility rally to spread awareness among people about use of green fuel. He also launched uniforms under Indian Oil's 'Unbottled' initiative, each uniform to support recycling of around 28 used PET bot-

Taking another step towards "selfreliance" 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,



the Prime Minister also laid the foundation stones for Tumakuru Industrial Township and two Jal Jeevan Mission projects in Tumakuru.

On February 13, PM again visited Karnataka where he inaugurated the 14th Aero India 2023 at the Air Force Station in Yelahanka, Bengaluru. Giving a message to the youth of Karnataka through this programme, Modi said that Karnataka is the centre of India's technological progress and this will open up new possibilities for the youth in the aviation sector.

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

Modi visited Karnataka for the third time on February 27 where he inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for various development projects worth more than Rs 3,600 crore in Shivamogga.

Along with the inauguration of the airport at Shivamogga, he also laid the foundation stone for two railway projects.

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.

The Prime Minister also dedicated the redeveloped Belagavi Railway Station building to the country. In Belagavi, he laid the foundation stone of six multi-village projects under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

During his visit on March 12 for the fourth time during the last one-and-a-half months, PM Modi dedicated the Bengaluru-Mysore Expressway in Mandya, laid the foundation stone of the Mysuru-Kushalnagar four-lane highway and later dedicated the IIT Dharwad in Hubli-Dharwad to the nation in different events during the tour.

He inaugurated the longest railway platform -- Shri Siddharoodha Swamiji Hubli station and redeveloped Hosapete station.

Besides, he inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of various projects of Hubli-Dharwad Smart City while laying the foundation stone of Dharwad Multi-Village Water Supply Scheme. During this visit, he also gifted various other projects to the people of Mandya and Hubli-Dharwad.

Sources have said that Prime Minister Modi may visit Karnataka twice next week. The Prime Minister is scheduled to visit Karnataka on March 25 to participate in the concluding programme of the Vijay Sankalp Yatra being held by the BJP in the

During his visit to Karnataka on March 25, the Prime Minister will address a massive rally to urge people to vote in large

According to sources, Modi may also visit Karnataka for an official programme on March 22. The programme of his tour is currently being finalised, possibility of revision of the dates cannot be ruled out.

The Election Commission may announce the dates for the Karnataka Assembly elections in the last week of March. Even after the official announcement of the election, the BJP has planned to field its entire team of senior leaders, central ministers and chief ministers of several states for the election campaign.

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

international

15 KILLED AS 6.7-MAGNITUDE **QUAKE JOLTS ECUADOR**

Quito | Agencies

t least 15 people have been killed and more than 400 injured after an earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale struck Ecuador, the media reported citing officials.

The epicentre was near Balao, about 80 km from Ecuador's Guayaquil city where about three million people live, the BBC reported.

The earthquake occurred at around 12 p.m. (local time) on

The southern province of El Oro was the worst affected and 12 people died there, authorities said.

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.



President Guillermo Lasso asked Ecuadoreans to remain calm as officials assess the damage.

of Machala to meet with some of the injured people.

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

town of Pasaje, in El Oro, and nearly all of them were eventually discharged.

"We ran from the house," Machala resident Exon Tobar told the BBC. Several roads have been blocked by landslides, while some homes, edu-

cational buildings and health centres

have been damaged, authorities said. One person was killed in the city of Cuenca, in Azuay province, after a wall collapsed onto their car, while three persons died when a security

Island, in El Oro province. There have also been reports of the earthquake being felt in several other cities, including Manabi, Manta and the capital Quito.

camera tower came down on Jambeli

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

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

Lilongwe (Malawi) | Agencies

he cumulative death toll from Cyclone while the number of displaced people reached 362,928.

The country's Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) confirmed the figures in its sixth update on Saturday evening, revealing that 918 people have been injured and 282 are missing, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Malawi Defence Force (MDF), the Malawi Police Service and rescue teams are continuing their operations. According to the DoDMA update, the MDF is also airlifting relief items, medical supplies and personnel to places not accessible by road.

In his televised national address on Saturday evening after visiting two affected eastern districts of Zomba and Machinga, Malawian President Lazarus Chakwera said some foreign missions, governments, local and international organisations, companies and individuals have responded to his appeal for support after he declared a state of disaster

in the affected districts and cities. He appealed for more humanitarian sup-



port, saying the situation in the camps and areas affected by the storm is dire.

The country's Ministry of Education has extended the suspension of schools in the southern region until March 31, as about 230 schools have been turned into holding camps for internally displaced communities.

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

Colombo: Sri Lankan central bank governor Nandalal Weerasinghe told media on Sunday that the country's



approve a \$2.9 billion bailout package for the country on Monday.

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.

He also visited a hospital in the city injured, officials. Mask mandate on public transportation in S.Korea to end on Monday

Seoul Agencies

he South Korean government's decision to lift the mask mandate on public transportation and pharmacies in open public spaces will go into effect this week amid a gradual Covid-19 virus downtrend.

The removal of the mask mandate on public transportation, including subways, buses, taxis and planes, on Monday comes two-and-a-half years after the government adopted the mask rule in October 2020, Yonhap news agency reported.

Covid-19 infections have been on the decline since the removal of most indoor mask mandates in late January. On January 30, the government removed the mask requirement for most indoor places, except for public transportation, hospitals and a few other high-risk areas. According to polls conducted in January, seven out of 10 people said they will continue to wear masks due to health reasons even after the lifting of the indoor mask mandate.

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



nursing homes and other infectionprone places. But pharmacies in open public spaces, such as discount stores and train stations, will be exempt from the requirement.

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

Seoul Agencies

orth Korea on Sunday criticised the US and the UN for having raised the issue of Pyongyang's human rights problem recently at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the regime's missile provocation, according to the North's state media.

On Friday, the US co-hosted an informal meeting highlighting the human rights violations in the reclusive nation at the UNSC. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also condemned the North's recent test-launch of an intercontinental bal listic missile as a violation of UNSC resolutions on the same day, Yonhap

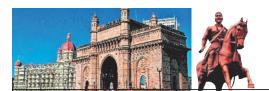
news agency reported. In response to the meeting, the North's mission to the UN said in a statement that Pyongyang "will counter the illegal 'human rights' campaign by the US and its followers with the most powerful means, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). The mission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



the "pressure campaign" as a violation of the dignity and sovereignty of the North, and "resolutely denounces and rejects it," according to the

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.







Bhopal, Monday, March 20, 2023

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

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

7ith 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 Rashtra Samithi President and Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and other

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 ham-

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

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 contend-

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 doubtingthomases, 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.

BEING HIT

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

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

ix 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 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 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 offi-

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

"The woman's arms and legs were 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

 $court in \, Maharashtra's \, Thane \, district \, has \,$ 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

The prosecution told the court that after the mar-

riage, the victim resided with her husband and inlaws at Mumbra. 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 lakk from her parents for the purchase of land, it said. The prosecution also said that the accused strangulated 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 he prosecution to come to the conclusion that t accused persons conspired and committed the murder and nobody else. There is no provision in

LAW MINISTER IS THREATENING JUDICIARY AND JUDGES: SANJAY RAUT

Team Absolute Mumbai

🗬 hiv 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

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

aharashtra 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

SONALI KULKARNI APOLOGISES OVER 'INDIAN GIRLS ARE LAZY' REMARK



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

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

MIDST 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.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

ctress 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 wellto-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



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

fact, I have extensively expressed myself time and again in support of us and what is it being a woman. I'm grateful to all of you for reaching out to me personally to appreciate or to criticize. Hope we will be able to have more open exchange.

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.



Ben Affleck Reveals Jordan Told Him to Cast Viola Davis as His Mom



Tyga" before the crowd started joining in. The commotion began as rapper Travie McCoy gave a speech. He

said: "I just wanted to give all the love I have in my

Melrose Avenue and proclaimed their love for each other. I will say this: he is one of the three most loyal

heart right now to a brother, Mod Sun." He then

escribed how the two ran into each oth

motherf***ers I have ever met in my life," he

March 2022 trip to Paris.

added. Avril and Mod Sun got engaged during a

Los Angeles | Agencies

ollywood star Ben Affleck said that he never would have made 'Air' without Michael Jordan's blessing, but that blessing came with one major request. Her name? Viola Davis.

Directed by Affleck, the movie stars Matt Damon as Sonny Vaccaro, the Nike employee who convinced Jordan (Damian Young) to sign the deal that allowed for the creation of the Air Jordan shoe line, reports Variety.

Affleck also stars as Nike co-founder Phil Knight.Introducing 'Air' at its South by Southwest world premiere, Affleck said: "I had a chance to sit down with Michael Jordan, because I just wasn't going to make this movie without asking him, 'What matters to you?' Interestingly, and tellingly, he had a few things that mattered."

"One of them was that Howard White needed to be in the movie," Affleck said, referring to the vice president of the Jordan brand. Hearing about White made Affleck realize he had an opportunity to cast Chris Tucker, with whom he'd wanted to work for a long time.

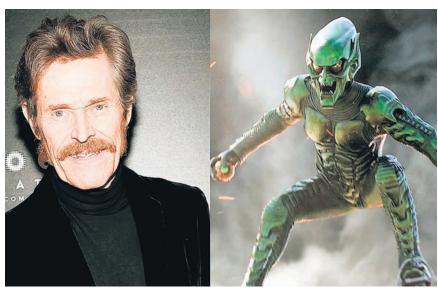
He further mentioned, quoted by Variety: "I got the script and then had the chance again to talk to Michael. Michael Jordan, for those of you who don't know, is one of the most intimidating, impressive men you'll ever see in your life. He told me about is father. And then he talked about his mother. It was the first time I saw this look cross his face."

"It was a look of reverence, of awe, of love, and gratitude, and innocence. He said, 'None of this would have ever happened without my mother.' I said, 'Who would you like to play your mom?' He said, 'Well, it has to be Viola Davis'," Affleck added.

"That's like saying, 'Can I play basketball on your court?' Yeah, if you get Michael Jordan.' Viola Davis is the best actor I've ever seen," Affleck continued. "This is a hard business. It's hard to know if you're successful. It's hard to know if you've accomplished something. But honest to God, I always felt that if I was a director one day, and I had Viola Davis in a movie, that would really be something. That would mean the world to me. And it does."

"This is the best night of my professional life, and I want to welcome the best actor in the world," he concluded, bringing Davis onstage for a brief moment in the spotlight before audiences got their first look at 'Air'," he concluded.

WILLEM DAFOE IS OPEN TO RETURN AS GREEN GOBLIN IN 'SPIDER-MAN' UNIVERSE



Los Angeles | Agencies

scar nominee Willem Dafoe has expressed his willingness to return to the Spider-Man multiverse again, if the right opportunity arises.

The actor is known for his iconic villain

role as Norman Osborne with alter ego
Green Goblin in Sam Raimi's 2000s SpiderMan trilogy and beyond, reports Deadline.
He said as much in a recent interview with

He said as much in a recent interview with Inverse, telling the outlet he'd gladly reprise the part, "if everything was right."

"I mean, that's a great role," opined Dafoe.
"I liked the fact that it's a double role both times. Twenty years ago, and fairly recently, both times (were) very different experiences, but I had a good time on both."

As per Deadline, Dafoe's Spidey character Osborne is a scientist holding the post of CEO at Oscorp who goes mad in Raimi's 2002 trilogy opener 'Spider-Man', coming after the web-slinging superhero of the same name played by Tobey Maguire, after an experiment with strength enhancement goes awry, despite the fact that Spidey is, in his day-to-day life, Peter Parker, the best friend of his own son, Harry (James Franco).

love interest, Mark Ruffalo, as she and Judy rev-

Tagging Mark Ruffalo in the heart-warming

post, Jennifer captioned it: "Were your ears burn-

best loved. She portrayed an adult version of

Jenna Fink who makes a wish to be "30, flirty and thriving" instead of her 13-year-old self.

Jennifer's role in '13 Going On 30' is one of her

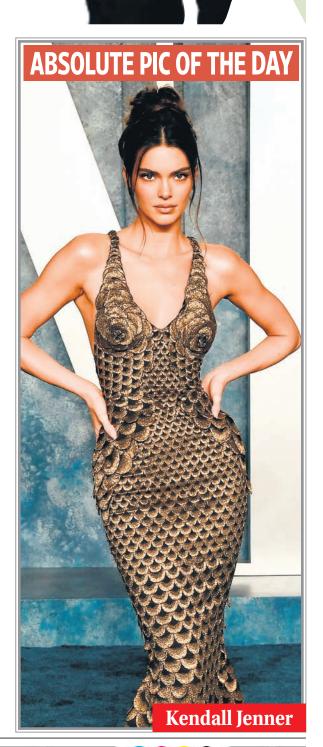
elled in each other's company again.

g markruffalo

While the character meets his end in that film after a failed attempt at killing Parker, Dafoe reprised the part with small appearances in the Raimi-directed sequels, 'Spider-Man 2' and 'Spider-Man 3'.

And Dafoe certainly isn't the only legacy star of the franchise to have expressed excitement about further installments. Maguire himself said in an interview for the book 'Spider-Man: No Way Home The Official Movie Special', released last month, that when he got the call to come back for 'No Way Home', he was "like finally!"

"I got the call and was immediately open about coming to do this. Not without nerves -you know, 'What will this look like and what will the experience be?' But to get to show up with beautiful, talented, creative people and play together? It's just like, 'Yes!' It's fun and exciting," he said.



STARC'S FIVE-FER, FIFTIES FROM MARSH, **HEAD POWER AUSTRALIA TO WIN**

wickets in Power-play for the

first time since the 2019 ODI

World Cup semifinal loss to

for ducks as only Virat Kohli

and Axar Patel could go

were just relentlessly

ments of the game.

New Zealand. Four batters fell

beyond 25. With the ball, they

thrashed by Marsh and Head

as Australia completely out-

Brief scores

India 117 in 26 overs

(Virat Kohli 31, Axar Patel

29 not out; Mitchell Starc 5-

53, Sean Abbott 3-23) lost

to Australia 121 for no loss

66 not out, Travis Head 51

not out) by 10 wickets.

in 11 overs (Mitchell Marsh

played them in all depart-

here was a scare of the second ODI at the Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium failing to start due to heavy rain being forecast for the day. Thankfully, the match began on time, much to the joy of fans in the stadium.

But the spirits were dampened as it turned into a horror show for India as the hosts crashed to 117 all out in 26 overs after being asked to bat first. Left-arm fast-bowler Mitchell Starc emerged as the main architect of Australia bundling out India for their fourth-lowest total at home, claiming his ninth five-wicket haul in ODI cricket.

Starc, who had picked a three-fer in the first ODI in Mumbai, produced yet another stunning exhibition of early swing bowling to scythe through the top order and then took out Mohammed Siraj to finish with 5-53. Sean Abbott was excellent in his 3-23 while Nathan Ellis provided great support through 2-13.



If India's highly disappointing batting wasn't enough, then the bowlers were made to look utterly pedestrian by the tremendous display of spectacular hitting by the opening pair of Mitchell Marsh and Travis Head. The left-right duo thrashed Indian bowlers all around the park to chase down the total with 39 overs to spare, making it the heaviest defeat for the hosts in terms of balls left.

The result meant the series scoreline now stands at 1-1, with the decider to be held in Chennai on Wednesday. India had a game which they would like to delete from their memory forever. They couldn't handle pace and swing from Starc, losing four

WITH THE BAT: ROHIT SHARMA Visakhapatnam | After an embarrassing 10-wicket loss to Australia in the second

WE DIDN'T APPLY OURSELVES

Sports

ODI, India captain Rohit Sharma admitted that his batters never managed to apply themselves with the bat, leading to them being bowled out for 117.

"It is disappointing. No doubt about that. We didn't play to our potential. We didn't apply ourselves with the bat. We always knew that was not enough runs. It was not a 117 pitch at all. By no means. We just didn't apply our-

"(Starc) is a quality bowler. He's been doing it for years for Australia with the new ball.

He kept bowling to his strength and we kept falling to his strength. That's something that we need to understand and play accordingly. All their bowlers bowled really well and put us under pressure," said Rohit in the post-match presentation ceremony.

With the series scoreline at 1-1, India and Australia will face off in the decider at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Wednesday.

Women's World Boxing C'ships

Nikhat, Manisha enter pre-quarters; Lovlina starts campaign on Monday

Team Absolute New Delhi

ndia's top pugilists Nikhat Zareen and Manisha Moun dominated proceedings on Day 4 of the Mahindra IBA Women's World Boxing Championships and advanced to the pre-quarterfinals after securing identical wins by unanimous decision at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex.

Being at her razor-sharp best, Nikhat toppled the top seed Boualam Roumaysa of Algeria with a 5-0 victory in the 50kg category. The reigning World Champion asserted her dominance over the Algerian from the get-go and landed accurate, powerful punches to have the first round to her name.

The 26-year-old maintained her momentum from the first round in scintillating fashion and kept her opponent at bay in the next two rounds as well to earn the win by unanimous decision.

Speaking after her stellar victory, Nikhat said, "My strategy today was to dominate a little from the first round itself as she (Roumaysa) is the top seed and had an advantage. I have never played against her before but I have seen her bouts previously. She is a fighter and she gets aggressive if one goes in close range with her so my strategy was to play from distance. There was some clinching from time to time but in the end, I won so I am happy.

Nikhat will now take on Mexico's Herrera Alvarez Fatima in what will be a rematch of last edition's Round of 32 bout between the

Asian 20km Race Walking C'ships



Similar to Nikhat, the 2022 World Championships bronze medallist Manisha (57kg) also recorded a 5-0 win by ousting Tina Rahimi of Australia. Marking a successful day at the office for India. On Monday, the 2020 Ťokyo Olympics bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) along with Sakshi Chaudhary (52kg) and Preeti (54kg) will take to the ring for their pre-quarters bouts. While Lovlina will face Citalli Ortiz of Mexico, Sakshi and Preeti will square off against Urakbayeva Zhazira of Uzbekistan and Jutamas Jitpong of Thailand respectively.

The ongoing event is witnessing the participation of 324 boxers, including several Olympic medallists, from 65 countries fighting for titles in 12 weight categories. The tournament has a massive prize pool of INR 20

WPL 2023

The experience & love will stay with me for a long time: Sophie Devine

Team Absolute Mumbai

t was a night to remember for long for New Zealand captain Sophie Devine and Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Womens Premier League (WPL).

In the side's incredible chase of 189 against Gujarat Giants at the Brabourne Stadium, Sophie left everyone enthralled through her electrifying 36-ball 99.

Even after Sophie got out on 99, the crowd was on their feet, much like the entire RCB dugout doffing their hat to an outstanding exhibition of power-hitting they witnessed, with every corner of the stadium chanting her name loud and clear. After the match ended, Sophie



was appreciative of the love she got during the match. "I'm so used to hearing chants for Perry and Mandhana, and was feeling a bit left out. To hear your name and experience this atmosphere, it will stay with me for a very long time," she

For the record, this was the third time Sophie scored a 99 in a T20 match. Twice

she has remained unbeaten on 99. In 2010, playing for Wellington Women against Northern Districts and nine years later for Adelaide Strikers against Hobart Hurricanes.

If Sophie would have reached her century, she would have equalled her own record of the fastest century in women's T20s -off 36 balls in the Super Smash 2020-21.

"I think the one I got up there (into the second tier) I was pretty happy with. Cricket can be so fickle. I've been struggling for six to nine months, if I have to be completely honest. To have some freedom on these wickets was good," the New Zealand cricketer said.



Walking Championships 2023. In the men's 20km race walk event, national record holder Akshdeep Singh clocked a timing of 1:20:57 to finish on top of the podium. The athlete from Punjab secured India's second gold medal in the Asian 20km Race Walking Championships after

respectively at the Asian 20km Race

men's and women's categories

Olympian Gurmeet Singh in 2016. South Korea's Choe Byeongkwang finished second with a timing of 1:21:20 while China's Wen Yongjie clocked 1:22:44 to secure the bronze medal in the men's event, an olympics.com report said.

Among the other Indians, Vikash Singh and Paramjeet Bisht clocked 1:20:05 and 1:20:08, respectively, in the men's open category which saw



them breach the 1:20:10 mark -- the qualification standards for both the 2023 World Championships and

Paris 2024 Olympics. Notably, Akshdeep and Priyanka had already qualified for the World

Championships and Paris Olympics at the National Championships earlier this month.

Meanwhile, Commonwealth Games 2022 silver medallist Priyanka Goswami completed her race in 1:32:27 to finish third in the women's event. Lan Gao of China won the gold medal with a timing of 1:29:25. Ayane Yanai of Japan clocked 1:0:58 to finish second ahead of the Indian

With these medals, India's overall tally in the championships rose to nine -- two gold, two silver and five bronze.

India's Suraj Panwar and Hardeep Singh finished with timings of 1:22:31 and 1:25:38 respectively, in the men's

Tokyo Olympian Bhawana Jat logged a time of 1:36:20 in the women's race while her compatriot Munita Prajapati finished her course in 1:33:22. Sonal Sukhwal did not

Indian Wells Masters

Rohan Bopanna, Matthew Ebden clinch men's doubles title

Indian Wells (USA) | Agencies

ndia's Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden won the Indian Wells Masters men's doubles title, defeating World No.1 Wesley Koolhof and Neal Skupski 6-3, 2-6, 10-8 in the The victory marks Bopanna and

Ebden's first Masters 1000 title as a team, and their second in their first season as a pairing. Indian veteran Bopanna, who

turned 43 on March 4, became the oldest man to ever win a Masters 1000 doubles title, surpassing his former partner Daniel Nestor. He is also the first Indian man to claim the Indian Wells Masters doubles title since Leander Paes in 2007.

"I'd like to thank my partner. It's



his first Masters title, and it's my first Masters here at Indian Wells. It's a big moment. Every year we

keep coming back and I pass the locker room near the restaurant and I see the champion's pictures

I first played the semifinal, so I'm glad that I finally got through," said Bopanna after claiming the title. Earlier, the Indian-Australian pairing knocked off defending and two-time desert titlists John Isner and Jack Sock in Friday's semifinals and beat Canadian singles stars Felix Auger-Aliassime and Denis Shapovalov in the quarters. Their opening victory came in a Match Tie-break against Rafael Matos and David Vega Hernandez.

Bopanna was playing in his 10th ATP Masters 1000 final and now holds 24 tour-level trophies following the victory.

A former World No. 3, Bopanna moved up four places to No. 11 in the ATP Live Doubles Rankings behind the trophy run.

Dortmund trash Cologne 6-1 to go top in Bundesliga

Berlin | Agencies

orussia Dortmund cruised to a 6-1 victory over hapless Cologne as four first-half goals paved the way for their 17th Bundesliga win at the 25th round. The BVB dominated pos-

session from the kick-off and opened the scoring with 15 minutes gone as Donyell Malen danced through Cologne's defender before squaring into the path of Raphael Guerreiro, who beat Cologne goalkeeper Marvin Schwabe from a tight angle.

Dortmund gained momentum and made it two minutes later when Sebastien Haller hammered home

LLC Masters



Guerreiro's assist to flabbergast the visitors, a Xinhua report said.

Cologne showed a sign of life and almost halved the deficit out of the blue but for all that Dortmund custodian Alexander Meyer palmed Dejan Ljubicic's dangerous attempt to the left post in the 21st minute.

Dortmund remained unimpressed and tripled its lead at the half hour mark as Guerreiro picked up a loose ball inside the box before setting up for Marco Reus, who chipped the ball into the top left corner. Cologne couldn't hold Dortmund back while the hosts showed no mercy and made it four through Malen in the 36th minute.

Cologne suddenly sparked to life and reduced the arrears against the run of the game as Davie Selke tapped home his own blocked shot from very close range, with three minutes remaining in the first half.

Dortmund's win was never in danger though as the BVB wasn't done with the scoring. Haller and Reus both reaped a brace to round off the 6-1 win on home soil.

AC Milan fall to Udinese despite Ibrahimovic's record

Rome | Agencies

latan Ibrahimovic chalked up another record, becoming the oldest goalscorer in Serie A, but it was not enough as AC Milan capitulated to Udinese 3-1 away.

The Rossoneri were in dire need of a boost after only snatching one point from the previous two rounds. Olivier Giroud sat out, so Ibrahimovic got his first start this season.

The home side took a good start just nine minutes into the game, when Milan defender Ismael Bennacer's wayward pass sparked their counter-attack. Lazar Samardzic charged forward and assisted Roberto Pereyra to finish with a low strike, a Xinhua report said.

The moment came in the 45th minute, when Ibrahimovic converted a retaken penalty, which made him the oldest goalscorer aged 41 years and 166 days. The previous record was set by another Milan legend Alessandro Costacurta who also scored



against Udinese through a spot-kick in 2007. The long stoppage time before the break allowed Udinese to restore the lead as Isaac Success rolled across from the by-line, before Beto turned it in from a close range.

Udinese added another in the 69th minute when Kingsley Ehizibue tapped the ball in at the back post to seal the win, ruining Ibrahimovic's milestone night. Milan still rank fourth with 48 points, but would drop to fifth should Roma beat or draw with Lazio.

ASIA LIONS ROAR PAST INDIA MAHARAJAS TO TAKE ON WORLD GIANTS IN FINAL Doha (Qatar) | Agencies sia Lions roared past India Maharajas with a clinical all-round performance, registering a dominating 85-run win in the eliminator to reach the finals of Legends League

Cricket (LLC) Masters at the Asian Town Cricket Batting first, Asia Lions posted a whopping total of 191 for 5 in 20 overs and then bowled out India Maharajas for a paltry 106 runs in 16.4 overs. India Maharajas supporters had nothing to

cheer about except for their skipper Gautam Gambhir's elegant knock of 32. The architects of Asia Lions' victory were opener Upul Tharanga, who cracked 50 off 31 balls with seven boundaries and a six, and his partner Tillakaratne Dilshan, who scored a run-a-ball 27 runs. Together they put on an 83 runs partnership

in 8.5 overs to set the base for a huge total. The Asia Lions will meet the World Giants in the title clash on Monday.



Asia Lions scored 58 runs losing three wickets for a total, nine runs short of the 200-run mark. In reply, India Maharajas began their chase

with Gambhir striking freely. He hit Sohail Tanvir's third and last delivery of the first over for boundaries -- the first through the covers and the next one also through the covers with exquisite timing. It was a treat to watch Gambhir pick two

more boundaries off Abdur Razzak. He hit the second delivery for a boundary to mid-wicket and on the fourth, he leaned back and cut with elegance to the boundary.

In the 15th over Tanvir struck with successive deliveries. First, he removed Suresh Raina, clean bowled for 18, and then clean bowled Stuart Binny to take a firm grip on the match. Razzak also clean-bowled Ashok Dinda for 2 and had Manvinder Bisla stumped by wicketkeeper Tharanga for 8 in the 16th over. Udana cleanbowled Tambe for a duck in the next over to book his team's place in the final.

Brief scores

Asia Lions 191 for 5 in 20 overs (Upul Tharanga 50, Mohammad Hafeez 38, Tillakaratne Dilshan 27; Stuart Binny 2 for 38, Pragyan 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. Bhopal, Monday, March 20, 2023

entertainment



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

ctress 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

bikini during a family vacation to 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

currently is a part of 'Na Umar Ki

Seema Ho', was recently sporting a

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 seri-

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 conTeam Absolute Mumbai

ollywood 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', 'Pagglait' 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

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.

partition of 1947.

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



Team Absolute Mumbai

ctor 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', 'Zakhm', '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



Team Absolute Mumbai

ctress 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



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

Dhanashree Verma

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