

absolute india

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WOMEN CONSTITUTE JUST 19% OF THE SALES WORKFORCE IN INDIA: REPORT

- The IT services and retail sectors have shown to be the most inclusive for women, with 27 per cent and 23 per cent of women respectively working in sales roles.
- On the other hand, the pharmaceutical (10 per cent), manufacturing (14 per cent) and automotive industries (14 per cent) have an opportunity to take more proactive measures to address the gender gap and create a more inclusive and diverse sales workforce.
- The report suggests organisations use a skills-first approach to hiring that can not only ensure sales teams and talent hiring pipelines are more inclusive for women, but also provide them with equal opportunities to pursue a career in sales. It also bodes well for the overall business.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Women are just 19 per cent of the sales workforce in India, according to a report released on Thursday. The report by online professional network LinkedIn shows that women occupy only 13 per cent of sales leadership roles in India. "There remains a concerning gender gap in sales roles across the country but there is hope on the horizon

as employers proactively combat unconscious bias by embracing skills-first hiring. This approach values a professional's ability and contribution over their gender, said Ruchee Anand, Senior Director, Talent and Learning Solutions, LinkedIn India, in a statement. "Diversity is important across all job functions and especially in sales because it boosts creativity, encourages innovation, and inspires a skills-first culture -- all of which is key to business growth and success today.

Adopting this skills-first mindset will also ultimately lay the foundation for increased boardroom diversity, bringing a wealth of fresh perspectives and ideas to India's business world," she added. While there is a gender gap in the sales workforce, the data on women in sales shows that tier-I cities such as Hyderabad (26 per cent), Bengaluru (25 per cent), and Chennai (22 per cent) have the most number of women sales professionals in the country.

But, sales organisations in tier-II cities such as Ahmedabad (14 per cent), Lucknow (13 per cent), and Jaipur (13 per cent) promise vast potential to bring more women into their workforces. Further, the report showed that a majority (62 per cent) of women hired in sales today come from non-sales functions like marketing and business development. This highlights the value of having the right transferable skills, which allows women more opportunities to transition to sales roles. It also indicates that many organisations are already combating unconscious bias by focusing less on degrees, gender, or previous sales experience, and more on finding talent whose skills match the role. The report is based on an analysis of over three million LinkedIn profiles of sales professionals in India.



91 SPRINGBOARD, GOOGLE EMPOWER 183 INDIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A whopping 183 women entrepreneurs are now ready to take their startups to the next level after completing their mentorship programme provided by 91Springboard, a co-working firm in partnership with Google for Startups (GfS), the companies said on Thursday. The 'Level Up' programme is a nationwide virtual accelerator programme aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs. As part of its first cohort, which was formed in August 2022, the companies vetted and selected 183 women founders from 360 applications. About 71 mentors provided masterclasses, peer meetups, tools and expertise for three months to build and scale their businesses. With the start-up culture percolating into deeper pockets of the country, the Cohort 1 included women entrepreneurs from cities, such as Chandigarh, Surat, Indore, Pune and others in addition to the top metro cities. "Lately, we have witnessed a surge of women entrepreneurs becoming self-reliant and independent. It is great that our government is sup-

porting them. This collaboration with GfS for Level Up will boost the confidence of the founders and assist them in their journey," said Anand Vemuri, CEO, 91Springboard, in a statement. "Women founders still comprise a very small fraction of the overall pie and we think programmes that facilitate and enable this representation are very timely and highly important. We are pleased to collaborate with 91Springboard for this," added Nicole Yap, Partnership Manager, Google for Startups. The entrepreneurs were given insights and guidance from accomplished mentors from Google and other leading corporations. The mentors acted as sounding boards, and worked with the women founders on their challenges and to work out strategies to scale their business from X to 10X. Through the course of the programme more than 200 hours were spent on mentoring the founders with over 12 hours in formal networking. The companies are calling for applications for the Cohort 2 of the Level Up programme, scheduled to start in March.

Lily Collins dishes on her obsession with interior design



Los Angeles: Actress Lily Collins has recently become obsessed with interior design. The 33-year-old 'Emily in Paris' actress, who is the daughter of musician Phil Collins and his second wife, Jill Tavelman, has revealed that she loves looking for interior design inspiration on Instagram, reports aceshowbiz.com. Asked about the last "Instagram rabbit hole" she went down, Lily, who is married to director Charlie McDowell, told Glamour magazine: "Interior design." Looking at lamps and chairs because we're redesigning a space right now. And then you start clicking on these amazing homes, and then you're looking at tile colours and wall colours and rugs. "It's so funny because as a kid, I remember my mom always talking about interior design, and I was more interested in clothing and pop bands and stuff. And then she's like, 'One day you're going to care more about interiors and antiques and designs.' I was like, 'No, I'm not.' And now it's literally what I want to spend my money on," she continued. Lily previously admitted to being inspired by the "boldness" of her "Emily in Paris" character. The brunette beauty plays Emily Cooper in the hit Netflix series, and Lily confessed to loving her character's sense of style. She shared: "I think Emily's boldness of choice and not being afraid of mixing things has rubbed off on me." Lily has always been passionate about fashion. However, starring in the show has made her more courageous than ever. She explained: "I always loved fashion growing up, so I've never been afraid of it, but I've just not always thought it would work on me. Throwing in those little influences here and there - Emily encourages me to do it more."

WPL 2023: VERY GOOD CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS WILL COME: ANJUM CHOPRA

Niharika Raina | Mumbai

With women's cricket in India all set to witness a revolution in the form of inaugural Women's Premier League (WPL) starting from March 4 through the clash between Mumbai Indians and Gujarat Giants, former India captain Anjum Chopra thinks the tournament will bring very good changes, improvements and more of respect for the game and players. "Yesterday, when I reached the hotel from airport, I saw big boards with 'Aali Re' written alongside photographs of Harmanpreet Kaur, Pooja Vastrakar, and Yastika Bhatia (of Mumbai Indians). This is the first change as I had never seen hoardings of women cricketers in India. I have seen outside, but not in India before. Hoardings are there in Mumbai and advertising looks beautiful in the whole stretch, especially when it is night," Anjum said. "When one will go through that stretch, the eyes will immediately recognise the players in the hoarding. There is an awareness being created and whether 35,000 or 40,000 come in the stadium, there's an expectation that following of women's cricket will multiply around them to increase the following." "When following increases, then the



respect also increases and when respect word comes in between, then one can think about the societal change which can definitely come in. It's not just about playing; it's about everything else as well. I feel that slowly or even quickly, very good changes and improvements will come, so as more of respect," said Anjum, the WPL Expert for Sports18 and JioCinema, while replying to a question from correspondent in a select virtual roundtable on Saturday. With WPL all set to begin, Anjum also feels that one should now get on the ride to enjoy watching women's cricket and feel the realisation of a long-standing dream.

Hidden corridor discovered in Great Pyramid of Giza

CAIRO | Agencies

The Egyptian government has announced the discovery of a hidden 9-metre-long and 2.10-metre-wide corridor behind the 4,500-year-old Great Pyramid of Giza, known as Khufu Pyramid, which "will lead to further findings". Addressing a press conference on Thursday, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Ahmed Issa said that "the discovery is a result of the international 'ScanPyramids' project that was launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Antiquities to study the structure of the pyramids without using harmful drilling methods", reports Xinhua news agency. "It will lead to further findings," he added. An international team, consisting of experts from Egypt, France, Germany, Canada, and Japan, has been working on analyzing a cavity behind the pyramid's north face that was first discovered in 2016, he added. Scientists used non-invasive and non-destructive surveying techniques called muons radiography. Also addressing the same press conference, Mostafa Waziri, head of the



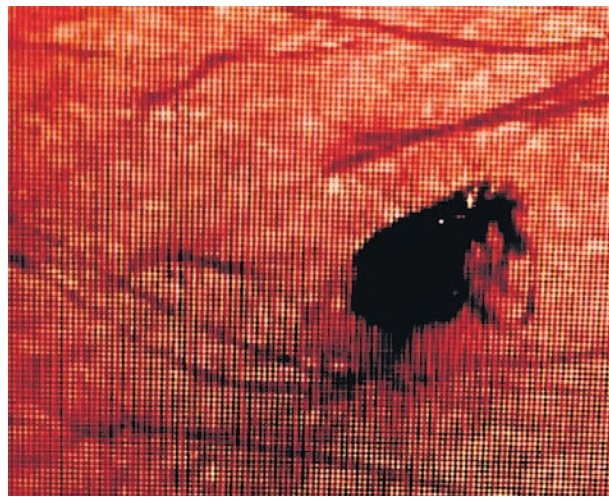
Supreme Council of Antiquities, said that the unfinished corridor was likely created to redistribute the pyramid's weight around either the main entrance now used by tourists, almost seven meters away, or redistribute the weight of the massive structure, he said, adding that it was possible the pharaoh had more than one burial chamber. The Great Pyramid of Giza is the last of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World that is still standing today. It was constructed as a monumental tomb around 2560 BC during the reign of the Pharaoh Khufu, or Cheops. Built to a height of 146 meters (479 feet), it now stands at 139 meters and was the tallest structure made by humans until the Eiffel Tower in Paris in 1889.

Indian researchers find antibiotic combo best for severe scrub typhus

New Delhi | Agencies

Severe cases of the mite borne scrub typhus disease may be better treated by a combination of antibiotics rather than single-drug therapies, according to a study by a team of Indian researchers. Severe Scrub Typhus caused by the bacteria Orientia tsutsugamushi leads to a life-threatening infection, which primarily affects rodents, and is transmitted to humans (zoonoses) by the larvae of trombiculid mites. The disease typically presents as a fever that may be associated with headaches, coughs, shortness of breath, and brain symptoms, like confusion and disorientation. About six per cent of the patients infected with scrub typhus could die in spite of diagnosis and treatment. One-third of the patients develop severe disease that affects multiple organs in the body and leads to lethally low

blood pressure. Death rates in severe disease can reach up to 70 per cent without treatment and 24 per cent with treatment. The team of researchers including from Christian Medical College in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, and PGIMER Chandigarh in a study of 800 adult patients demonstrated that treatment with intravenous doxycycline and azithromycin is more effective than using either drug on its own. The findings, published in The New England Journal of Medicine, showed that antibiotic combo therapy led to an early discharge of patients -- by day seven -- from hospital. The patients also had fewer persisting complications, such as respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), hepatitis, hypotension/shock, meningoencephalitis, and kidney failure. The overall mortality rate in this study was 12 per cent. "This trial provides evidence that combination therapy with



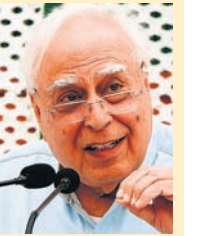
intravenous doxycycline and azithromycin is a better therapeutic option for the treatment of severe scrub typhus than monotherapies of either drug. This new evidence will change treatment guidelines and save the lives of thousands of people with scrub typhus in the future," Prof George M Varghese, from CMC's Department of Infectious Diseases, said in a statement. Scrub typhus is a major public health threat in India and other South Asian countries. It is estimated that in endemic regions, about a billion people are at risk of contracting the infection, while a million people get infected and 1.5 lakh people die from it every year. As Orientia tsutsugamushi

is a bacterium which multiplies and survives inside host cells, it is important that the antibiotic reaches high concentrations within host cells as well. This study found that when both azithromycin and doxycycline were administered together to patients with severe scrub typhus, the bacteria were cleared away quicker and patients improved faster. This could be because doxycycline and azithromycin stop the bacteria from producing proteins through different, but complementary, mechanisms. The combination of the two drugs may have resulted in a more complete blockade of protein synthesis and consequently reduced bacterial growth and multiplication. As combination therapy quickly controlled bacterial growth within the first week of infection, severe disease may have been prevented and resolution of symptoms might have quickened, the researchers said.

Kapil Sibal launches website to help citizens fight injustice

New Delhi:

Independent MP Kapil Sibal on Saturday announced that he will launch a website, titled 'Insaf ke Sipahi', to help citizens fight against injustice and appealed to the opposition Chief Ministers and parties to help him in the initiative. Addressing a press conference here, Sibal said during the official launch on March 11 at the Jantar Mantar, he will also unveil a vision document for the country. He asserted that this was not a political move but a catalyst for change. "Any change which had been brought in the country, lawyers were at forefront and now I want to ask why lawyers are silent?" he said. The Independent MP said lawyers should raise their voices, adding that "I want to start a movement as there is injustice everywhere be it business, journalism, people and opposition". He said in the country there will be lawyers standing in every corner to help the public on every issue. Sibal alleged that the elected government have been destabilised and that among 121 cases of ED, 115 are against opposition leaders





WE HAVE TO IMPROVE OUR SPEED AND MOVE IN TOP GEAR: PM

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Infrastructure development is the driving force of the country's economy", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday while expressing confidence that India will emerge as a developed nation by 2047 by following this very path.

"Now we have to improve our speed and move in top gear", he said.

Noting that PM Gati Shakti Master Plan is a critical tool that integrates economic and infrastructural planning with development, the Prime Minister said, "Gati Shakti National Master Plan is going to change the face of India's infrastructure and its multimodal logistics."

Prime Minister Modi made the observation during a Post Budget Webinar on 'Infrastructure and Investment: Improving logistic efficiency with PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan'.

Addressing the gathering, he expressed happiness that hundreds of stakeholders took part in the webinar along with more than 700 CEOs and



MDs by recognising its importance. He said that this year's Budget will give new energy to infrastructure.

"Infrastructure has a significant role to play in the sustainable development of any country along with development while keeping the needs of the future in mind", the Prime Minister remarked.

He underlined that those who have knowledge of history related to infrastructure are well-versed with this fact. He cited the construction of Uttarapath by Chandragupta Maurya which was carried forward by Ashoka and later upgraded by Sher Shah Suri. Prime Minister Modi informed that

it were the Britishers who turned it into G T Road. "The importance of highways has been acknowledged for centuries in India", the Prime Minister said. Referring to riverfronts and waterways, the PM cited the example of the Ghats of Banaras which were directly connected to Kolkata via waterways. He also gave the example of the still operational, 2 thousand-year-old Kallanai dam of Tamil Nadu.

Noting the obstacles that came in the way of investments in the infrastructural development of the country by previous governments, the Prime Minister highlighted the pre-

ailing mentality that poverty is a virtue. He underlined that the present government has not only been successful in eliminating this mentality but also in making record investments in modern infrastructure.

The PM informed that India's Capex has increased 5 times compared to 2013-14 and the government is moving with a target of investing 110 lakh crore rupees under the National Infrastructure Pipeline.

"This is a time of new responsibilities, new possibilities and bold decisions for every stakeholder, he emphasised.

Prime Minister Modi noted that the results of the PM Gati Shakti Master Plan are becoming visible. "We have identified the gaps that were impacting the logistics efficiency. That is why, in this year's Budget, 100, critical projects have been prioritized and 75,000 crore rupees have been allocated.

He asked the participants to find ways to develop a mechanism for an advanced forecast of the needs of their sectors as various materials are needed for infrastructure development.

Narco-terror module busted in J&K's Poonch; 7 kg heroin, Rs 2 cr in cash recovered

Jammu | Agencies

Seven kg of heroin, cash worth Rs 2 crore, \$15,000 and a pistol were recovered from the house of a drug peddler in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district.

ADGP (Jammu), Mukesh Singh told reporters that a major narco-terror module was busted in the border district of Poonch late Friday evening.

The recovery was made from the house of a notorious drug peddler, Rafi Dhana alias 'Rafi Lala', who was recently detained under the Public Safety Act.

He belongs to Danna Doyiyvan village in Mandi area of Poonch district.

Poonch Police along with personnel of the National Crime Agency and the CRPF raided the house of the drug peddler near the line of control (LoC) on specific information leading to the recovery of seven kg of heroin, more than Rs 2 crore as cash, \$15,000 and a pistol with one magazine, 10 pistol rounds and seven rounds of self-



loading rifle. "The searches are still going on in presence of the magistrate and prominent citizens. The nexus of this module with Punjab-based narcotics smugglers is being investigated," the ADGP said.

He also added that there have been reports that drugs smuggled from Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) through the LoC and international

border were being smuggled to Punjab and proceeds generated from the illegal trade used for spreading terrorism in the Valley and other parts of the union territory.

Police is trying to ascertain the source of cash and the persons for whom it was meant. A case has been registered at Mandi police station in Poonch district and further investigation is going on, Singh said.

BJP's Twitter handle crosses 2 cr followers

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The official Twitter handle of BJP has crossed 2 crore followers, IT cell head Amit Malviya tweeted on Saturday.

Sharing photos of various programmes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in video format, the BJP from its official Twitter account wrote, "And here we write a new chapter of unity, harmony, strength and support! Thank you and congratulations! We 20 million unite, together!"

"In yet another stupendous achievement, BJP has now touched 20 million (2 crore) followers on Twitter," Amit Malviya tweeted.



He also thanked the BJP for giving this number of followers as the highest and largest number of followers for any political party in the world.

BJP only follows three twitter official accounts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Party National President J.P. Nadda.

B.V.R. SUBRAHMANYAM TAKES CHARGE AS NITI AAYOG CEO

New Delhi: B.V.R. Subrahmanyam joined as Chief Executive Officer of the NITI Aayog on Saturday, an official said.

An Indian Administrative Service officer of the 1987 batch (Chhattisgarh cadre), Subrahmanyam has held important assignments over the last three decades in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Jammu & Kashmir, along with a stint at the World Bank.

He has been the Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry; Chief Secretary of Jammu & Kashmir; Principal Secretary of Chhattisgarh, and has held positions in the Prime Minister's Office.

SC Panchayat president in TN complains of harassment due to caste

Chennai | Agencies

A Scheduled Caste Panchayat president of Palaiyur in Madurai district of Tamil Nadu lodged a complaint to the State Chief Secretary and District Collector that she was harassed by upper caste people due to her being from an SC community.

The panchayat president, S.Vidhya in a complaint to the Chief Secretary said that the police have yet to take a case of human excreta found in a drinking water tank in an area dominated by upper caste people.

Vidhya said that the complaint on human excreta in the water tank was raised in December 2022, but the police did not register a case



citing lack of evidence.

The panchayat president also stated that Palaiyur panchayat has three villages - Karisalpatti, Kattarapatti and Palaiyur. Vidhya pointed out that while Palaiyur village has more SC community people, both the other villages are dominated by upper caste

and minorities.

She said that the water tank was deliberately contaminated by someone to tarnish her image as she belong to the SC community.

Vidhya said: "After becoming panchayat president, I've faced several issues. There were instances wherein

human excreta was found when I entered my office room. There were also instances when human excreta was mixed with drinking water and I had lodged complaint but no one was brought to book."

She said that after she assumed office, a compound wall was constructed around the panchayat building and after that, many incidents of throwing human excreta on the walls of the office stopped.

Madurai district collector Dr Aneesh Shekar said that a detailed inquiry is being conducted based on her complaint. The district police superintendent also said that investigation is on regarding the complaint on human excreta in water tank.

Work on key steel bridge to be completed in 3 months

Hyderabad | Agencies

Telangana's Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development K.T. Rama Rao on Saturday directed municipal authorities to complete in three months the work related to a steel bridge which is expected to ease congestion in the central part of Hyderabad.

The minister conducted a surprise inspection of the works related to the steel bridge from Indira Park to VST and other development works.

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation's (GHMC) engineering team is constructing the 2.62-km long four-lane bi-directional steel bridge.

The minister exhorted the officials to complete the works in three



months and asked them to coordinate with Traffic Police to impose traffic diversions needed for the purpose.

He also impressed upon the officials that the safety of workers and the public has to be given priority.

The minister said that the steel bridge will be developed on the lines of other projects completed under the Strategic Road Development Plan (SRDP).

The GHMC is constructing the steel bridge corridor at a cost of nearly Rs 426 crore.

The project will especially serve people in Musheerabad, Khairatabad, Amberpet and surrounding locations. It will ease the flow of traffic at RTC Cross Roads.

Stating that there was a demand for the project from the past two decades, KTR said that a steel bridge is being constructed instead of the traditional concrete bridge so that the works are completed at the earliest. He said that the project will give relief from traffic congestion to lakhs of people.

The minister also inspected the Strategic Nala Development Programme (SNDP) work at Hussain Sagar Surplus Nala. He assessed the retaining wall being constructed at Ashok Nagar.

TWO YOUTH RAPE 60-YEAR-OLD WOMAN IN K'TAKA, ARRESTED

Vijayapura: Two persons were arrested on Saturday on charges of raping a 60-year-old woman in Vijayapura district of Karnataka.

The arrested were identified as Sadda Sheik and Ravi, who work as labourers in a scrap shop. The condition of victim, who is admitted in district hospital, is said to be serious.

The victim used to lead her life with the alms given by devotees at a temple in Jorapura Pet.

According to police, on March 2, when the victim sought accused's help for dropping her home, they readily agreed to it but took her to an isolated place and allegedly raped her.

The accused left the aged victim at the spot in a state of unconsciousness.

The victim after gaining consciousness had managed to come to Jamkhandi Road. After noticing the plight of the woman, the locals informed police.

CBI arrests 'mastermind' in JEE exam rigging case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said on Saturday that they have arrested an absconding accused in a case related to the alleged rigging in Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) (Mains) examination-2021 by private coaching centres.

A senior official said that the accused was identified as Vinay Dahiya and is said to be the mastermind. Absconding since last year, the accused was apprehended from his hideouts in Haryana's Gurgaon.

"During the investigation, it was found that different modus operandi were used which included the alleged leaking of paper a day before



the examination, offering remote access of online examination centres to paid solvers and supplying chits pertaining to answers to the Candidates during the

examination," the official elaborated. Dahiya was produced before the Rouse Avenue District Court, which remanded him to five days CBI's custody.

Odisha: Mining dept official held; DA worth Rs 1.64cr detected



Bhubaneswar | Agencies

The Odisha Vigilance Department on Saturday arrested additional director of mines, Umesh Chandra Jena, after detecting Rs 1.64 crore cash along with other disproportionate assets (DA) in his possession.

An official said that after

his arrest, Jena was taken to the court of a special judge, vigilance for possession of disproportionate assets to the tune of 368 per cent against his known sources of income.

The anti-corruption wing officials on Friday conducted raids on the properties of Jena at 13 places in Odisha's Khurda and Keonjhar dis-

tricts. Apart from the cash, the Vigilance Department has also detected one multi-storey building in Bhubaneswar and three buildings at Keonjhar, five plots in Keonjhar, two four-wheelers, 2 two-wheelers, 650 gram gold from the mining department official, they said.

Arrested for remarks against Mamata, Cong leader Koustav Bagchi gets bail

Kolkata | Agencies

Calcutta High Court counsel and Congress leader Koustav Bagchi, who was arrested by Kolkata Police on Saturday morning for allegedly making derogatory remarks against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, was granted bail by a lower court on the same day.

Senior advocate of Calcutta High Court and CPI(M) Rajya Sabha member Bikas Ranjan Bhattacharya, who appeared as Bagchi's counsel, made a strong argument on behalf of his client.

"Is my client a terrorist? Who gave the right to the police to barging into his residence in the wee hours at around 3 a.m.? There is directive even from the Supreme Court barring police from barging into anyone's residence in the wee hours or late in the night. The arrest was made without serving any notice under Section 41A of CrPC. This is an infringement on the fundamental rights of a person," Bhattacharya argued.

He also said that the investigating officer in the case should be slapped with a show-cause notice for issuing the notice under Section 41A.

"We as legal practitioners are highly terrified. How can the police barging into the residence of a lawyer during the wee hours in a democratic coun-



try? Was that residence owned by a terrorist," Bhattacharya questioned.

In his counter-argument, the public prosecutor said that some comments by Bagchi could trigger

violence, which need to be investigated.

After hearing both sides, the court granted bail to Bagchi against a personal bond of Rs 1,000.

After the results of the bypoll to the Sagardighi Assembly constituency in Murshidabad district was announced on Thursday, in which Left-backed Congress candidate Baryon Biswas trounced Trinamool Congress nominee Debasish Bandopadhyay by 23,000 votes, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had launched a scathing attack against state Congress President Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, referring to his daughter's suicide in 2006.

On Friday, Bagchi held a press conference where he referred to a book written by former IAS officer Deepak Kumar Ghosh, which reportedly has some references about the personal life of the Chief Minister.

Bagchi said that since Banerjee has started making personal attacks by referring to the suicide of Chowdhury's daughter, he would now counter them by circulating soft copies of Ghosh's book through WhatsApp.

The arrest evoked strong criticism from all corners, including from within the Trinamool Congress.

“While the Press must have full freedom to express their ideas, it must realize its own responsibilities. Freedom has its obligations.”

Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel

Influenza A subtype H3N2 major cause of current respiratory illness: ICMR

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has said that the Influenza A subtype H3N2 is the major cause of current respiratory illness in the country.

"Influenza A subtype H3N2 is the major cause of current respiratory illness," the ICMR said, adding that the ICMR-DHR (Department of Health Research) has established pan-respiratory virus surveillance across 30 VRLDs (Viral research and diagnostic laboratories).

About half of all inpatients, admitted for severe acute respiratory infections (SARI), as well as outpatients being treated for influenza-like illness, are found to have influenza A H3N2, said ICMR.

"This subtype appears to cause more hospitalisation than other influenza subtypes. Of the hospitalised SARI patients with influenza A H3N2, about 92 per cent presented with fever, 86 per cent with cough, 27 per cent with breathlessness, 16 per cent with wheezing. Additionally, 16 per cent had clinical signs of pneumonia and 6 per cent had seizures," ICMR said.

The apex research body also said that 10 per cent of SARI patients who have H3N2 needed oxygen, while 7 per cent required ICU care.

Meanwhile, recent data from ICMR also show that H3N2 has been in wide circulation for the last two-three months.



"A sudden increase in the number of patients having symptoms of cough, nausea, vomiting, sore throat, fever, body ache and diarrhoea in some cases has been noticed. While fever goes away at the end of three days, cough can persist for three weeks," said the Indian Medical Association (IMA).

Further, the IMA said that the cases are typically seen in people over the age of 50 and below 15. Some are also reporting upper respiratory infection along with fever. "Air pollution" is also a precipitating factor.

It advised medical practitioners to give only symptomatic treatment as there is no need for antibiotics.

The IMA pointed out that people have started taking antibiotics like Athreycin and Amoxiclav etc without

causing for dose and frequency and they stop once they start feeling better. They added that "this needs to be stopped as it leads to antibiotic resistance." "Whenever there will be a real use of antibiotics, they will not work due to the resistance," the IMA wrote.

The medical association advised avoiding crowded places, practising good hand and respiratory hygiene practices as well as flu vaccination.

Harshal R. Salve, Professor at the Centre for Community Medicine, AIIMS, said the increase in the transmission of flu virus is due to abrupt "climatic conditions currently prevalent".

"Serological surveillance through established mechanisms in the public health system by the government is essential to determine serotype of the

H3N2 flu virus on rise, IMA advises against antibiotic use

Several patients have reported a rise in flu cases with symptoms including high grade fever and persistent cough, said the Indian Medical Association on Saturday, while cautioning against use of antibiotics.

The mounting infections are due to the H3N2 influenza virus, which lasts between five to seven days, the association said in a statement on Twitter, noting that it is seasonal.

virus and its endemic," Salve told IANS.

Doctors from Primus Hospital, Chanakyapuri, noted that patients with asthma, and those with severe lung infections are finding difficulty in breathing. Elderly people, children and pregnant women are most vulnerable to getting infected. Therefore, they must remain extra cautious while venturing outside, the doctors said. "Patients having chronic ailments like asthma have to be extra cautious during such weather transitions as it can trigger severe respiratory issues and asthma attacks. During this time, even a minor respiratory problem must be reported to a pulmonologist or a physician to reduce the risk of escalating the problem," Chhabra added.

Union Minister Shekhawat files defamation case against Raj CM Gehlot

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Saturday filed a defamation case against Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot in a Delhi court over the latter's "misleading statements" against him.

Shekhawat claimed that Gehlot made defamatory statements against him in connection with the Sanjivani Credit Society scam. The Union Minister has said that an investigation was initiated in the case but his name was not mentioned anywhere. Shekhawat has demanded prosecution against Gehlot under the IPC sections. The Union Minister has also demanded appropriate financial compensation for the loss of his reputation. He sought prosecution against the Rajasthan Chief Minister, saying Gehlot should be charged with criminal defamation under sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Senior advocate Vikas Pahwa represented Shekhawat in court on Saturday. Earlier, the war of words between Gehlot and Shekhawat had intensified over the Sanjivani Credit Cooperative Society scam as Gehlot has openly declared the Union Minister "a culprit like the others".



Taking a dig at Shekhawat, Gehlot said: "The Union Minister is trying to mislead the public in the case of the Sanjivani Cooperative Society Limited scam. In the investigation of the Special Operation

Group (SOG), the crime has been proved against him under the same sections as the other arrested accused." Shekhawat had said that Gehlot termed him as an 'accused' in the Sanjivani Credit Cooperative Society scam is akin to his "political assassination to settle scores". He said: "The SOG presented three chargesheets but there is neither my nor my family's name anywhere. Still, the Chief Minister called me an accused."

ED raids 14 locations in connection to app fraud case; seizes diamonds, gold worth Rs 10 cr

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday said raids were recently conducted in 14 locations in connection to the Power Bank app fraud case and seized gold, diamonds and other valuables worth Rs 10 crore.

The searches took place in the premises belonging to Sagar Diamond Limited, a BSE listed company, RHC Global Exports Limited, their director Vaibhav Dipak Shah and associates in Surat SEZ, Ahmedabad and Mumbai.

Besides the gold and diamonds, the ED also seized Rs 25 lakh in cash, digital devices, documents related to bogus import and export.

The probe agency launched the case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act on the basis of an FIR lodged by Delhi Police against the fraud.

"Thousands of common people have been cheated through this app managed by Chinese nationals in connivance with their associates in India which includes



Vaibhav Dipak Shah and Sagar Diamond Ltd," an ED official said.

The official said that during the search operation it was learnt that proceeds of crime generated from the fraud was routed and possessed by Sagar Diamond Ltd and others.

"A number of manufacturing units of the entities at Surat SEZ were found involved in exorbitant over-valuation of import, export of diamond, gem stones and other precious metals and

siphoning of funds abroad in the garb of bogus imports," the official said.

The ED said that during the search, stock to the tune of thousands of crores shown in the books of account was found to be highly overvalued and having actual value of Rs 10 crore synthetic ruby of insignificant value was shown as precious gem.

So far three persons have been arrested in the case and a number of non-bailable warrants were issued.

Delhi court extends Sisodia's CBI custody for two days

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A court here on Saturday extended the CBI custody of former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who was arrested by the agency in connection with the now-scrapped excise policy case, for two days. Special CBI Judge M.K. Nagpal of the Rouse Avenue Court has also listed Sisodia's bail plea for March 10. The AAP leader while addressing the court said that the CBI was asking the same questions again and again and it is mental harassment. "They are not using third degree. But sitting for eight to nine hours and answering same questions again and again, that too, is mental harassment," he told the court. The court had also directed the CBI to conduct his medical exams at regular intervals. The central probe agency had arrested Sisodia on February 26 after eight hours of questioning.

AAP PROTESTS OUTSIDE ROUSE AVENUE COURT AGAINST SISODIA'S ARREST

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi party leaders and workers on Saturday protested outside the Rouse Avenue Court demanding the release of jailed former chief Minister Manish Sisodia. Hundreds of party workers gathered before Sisodia's appearance outside the Rouse Avenue court which is just few metres from the party office on Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg. Sisodia was given five-day CBI custody in the Excise Police case which ended on Saturday and he was brought back to the court. The workers raised slogans like 'Manish Sisodia ko riha karo' (release Manish Sisodia).

The party workers took to the street hours after the AAP's Delhi convener and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh held a meeting with some of the workers at the party headquarters. Meanwhile, heavy security has been deployed and the road outside the party office has been blocked.

Notably, Sisodia was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the excise policy scam matter after a day-long questioning on February 26.

YOUTH DANCES ON UNESCO HERITAGE SITE IN HAMPI, ARRESTED

Vijayanagara (Karnataka)

A youth was arrested for dancing on the UNESCO World Heritage site Hampi in this district on Saturday. Deepak Gowda, a resident of Kalenahalli near Pandavapura town in Mandya district was arrested for dancing on the heritage site for making a dance reel. According to police, the accused during his recent visit to Hampi, had videographed himself dancing on the monuments of Jain temple and surrounding areas. He had uploaded the videos on his Instagram account. Indian Archaeological Department Assistant Conservator M.C. Sunil Kumar had lodged a complaint with the police on February 28 in this regard. The sleuths of Hampi Pravasi Police station had tracked him and arrested him. Vijayanagar District Commissioner T. Venkatesh had also directed the officials to take the matter of dancing on the monument seriously. Recently, an incident involving a group of foreigners consuming liquor in the premises of Hampi Heritage site was reported raising concerns.



NASA spacecraft captures unusual circles of sand dunes on Mars

WASHINGTON | Agencies

NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) spacecraft has captured unusual circles of sand dunes on the Red Planet.

The dunes were snapped by MRO's High Resolution Imaging Experiment (HiRISE) colour camera.

While sand dunes of many shapes and sizes are common on Mars. The MRO captured "dunes that are almost perfectly circular, which is unusual," wrote planetary geologist Alfred McEwen for a HiRISE picture-of-the-day feature.

While being circular, "they are still slightly asymmetrical" and have "steep slip faces on the south ends," McEwen wrote.

He explained that this indicates that "sand generally moves to the south, but the winds may be variable". The dunes were snapped in late November last year - when researchers were studying the area to monitor for seasonal changes in frost



coverage. This image shows frost is absent from the landscape.

MRO, which has higher-resolution instruments than Odyssey, was launched in 2005. It has studied the Red Planet's atmosphere and terrain from orbit since 2006 and also serves as a key data relay station for other Mars missions.

Equipped with a powerful camera called HiRISE that has aided in a number of discoveries, the MRO has sent back thousands of stunning images of the Martian surface that are helping scientists learn more about Mars, including the history of water flows on or near the planet's surface.

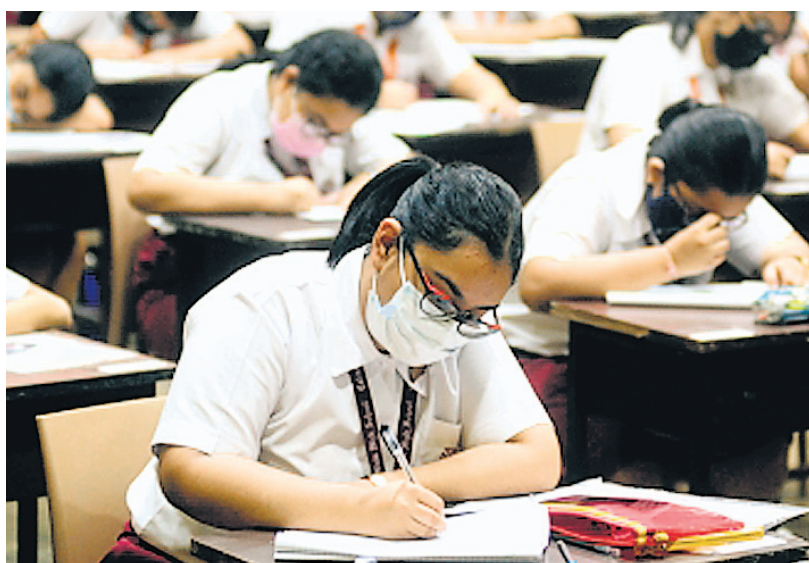
CONTROVERSIES BREW OVER QUESTION ON MAHATMA GANDHI IN BENGAL SECONDARY SCHOOL EXAM

KOLKATA | Agencies

Controversies have started brewing over a controversial question in the history paper in the ongoing secondary examination conducted by the West Bengal Board of Secondary Examination (WBBSE).

The controversies were over essay-type questions, where the examinees were asked to choose one of the three choices pertaining to the question about the Father of the Nation and write an explanatory essay on it.

The main question was whether Mahatma Gandhi always dissociated himself with the worker's movement of the country. The three choices given to examinees on the reasons for this disassociation were a) Mahatma Gandhi always represented the lobby of mill owners b)



Mahatma Gandhi wanted to avoid collision between labour and capital and c) Mahatma Gandhi was worried about the fallout of the movement on law & order situation. Historians and different teachers' associations have

strongly criticised the development and claimed that the question is not only controversial but also disseminates wrong information. "Nowhere in the secondary syllabus there is any mention that Mahatma Gandhi disasso-

ciated himself from the worker's movement. It is evident that the person who drafted this question never had the history in his or syllabus," said a member of All Bengal Teachers' Association. Historian A.K. Das

pointed out that one of the major and successful movements spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi was "Ahmedabad Satyagraha" in March 1918. "This was basically a movement of the textile mill workers in Ahmedabad, where the fatter of the nation even went on a hunger strike in support of the mill workers' demand for a 35 per cent hike in their wage. So, this is nothing but a distortion of history," Das said.

The WBBSE authorities have, however, claimed that at times such questions are posed in a different style to measure intelligence quotient of the students attempting the question. They have also assured that the while evaluation of the answer paper the interest of the examinees will be kept in mind and under no circumstance the examinees will suffer.

JAMMU-SRINAGAR HIGHWAY OPENS FOR PASSENGER TRAFFIC

Srinagar: After remaining closed for a day due to repair and maintenance work, the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway has been opened for passenger traffic from both sides, officials said on Saturday.

Earlier this morning, the Jammu and Kashmir Traffic police said the Highway stands closed due to maintenance work at Shalgidi.

"Passenger traffic plying both side on Jammu Srinagar NH. A People are advised, keep lane discipline," Jammu and Kashmir Traffic police said.

The road was closed for vehicular traffic between Jammu and Srinagar on Friday after the administration declared March 3 and March 10 as Traffic Dry Days for carrying out maintenance and repair work on the National Highway.

The highway is the lifeline of the Kashmir valley and the main road link connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country.

Kashmir-bound trucks laden with essential supplies and other vehicles pass through the highway and fruit carrying trucks from Kashmir head for rest of the country through this road.





CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN ANNOUNCED TO MAKE MAUGANJ A DISTRICT

The state's new district Mauganj will be formed by merging 4 tehsils. Tricolor will be hoisted at Mauganj district headquarters on August 15. Ladli Bahna Yojana Brother's gift to the sisters of the state. Now meritorious girl students will also get e-scooty. One lakh youth will get learn and earn scheme Benefits Chief Minister Shri Chouhan transferred an ex-gratia amount of Rs.605 crore to more than 27 thousand labor families.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the government's promise of making Mauganj tehsil a district is being fulfilled today. Four tehsils Mauganj, Hanumana, Naigarhi and Dev Talab will be merged to form a new district of Mauganj state. The process of making the district will start from today itself and the tricolor will be hoisted at the district headquarters on August 15.

Chief Minister Chouhan participated in the public welfare program at Mauganj in Rewa district today. He transferred an ex-gratia amount of Rs 605 crore to the accounts of 27 thousand 310 labor families of the state with a single click under Chief Minister's Jan-Kalyan (Sambal) Yojana 2.0. The Chief Minister also performed bhoomi-pujan and inaugurated development works worth Rs 738 crore 92 lakh. Chief Minister inaugurated the program with the worship of girls. He also distributed benefits to the beneficiaries of various schemes. Chouhan also observed the exhibition on development, achievements and innovations put up by various departments at the venue.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that he is not a step brother of the sisters of the state but a real brother. I always think of their welfare. One day at 4 o'clock in the morning a resolution came in my mind that I should gift Rakhi to my sisters and this gift should not be given on one day but every month. Ladli Bahna Yojana is the gift of her brother to the sisters of the state. The filling of its forms will start from



March 25 and from the month of June, the sisters will get Rs 1000 every month. Sisters do not need to go anywhere for this. Government employees will come to cities, villages and wards and get the forms filled.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that respect of sisters and daughters is top priority for the state government. Daughters are not a curse but a boon on the land of Madhya Pradesh. There is a provision of death penalty for those who misbehave with daughters. There are 44 lakh 20 thousand beloved Lakshmis in the state. Schemes like girl marriage and maternity assistance are being run. Earlier, laptops were being

given under the Medhavi Vidyarthi Yojana. Along with this, now the daughter who will get the highest marks in class 12th in the village will also be given an e-scooty. Shivraj uncle is getting the fees of higher education filled in the meritorious student scheme. Medical and engineering education has also been started in the state in Hindi.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that Sambal is a scheme for the welfare of the poor. In this, poor families are given various types of help from birth to education etc. 4 lakh is given to the family in case of accidental death, Rs. 2 lakh in case of normal death and Rs. 1 lakh in case of disability. The previous government had stopped this scheme and struck off the names of a large number of beneficiaries. Our government has started the scheme again and has also done the work of adding names. So far 13 lakh deleted names have been added. Chief Minister Chouhan said that a large number of youth are being provided employment opportunities in the state. In the "Learn and Earn" scheme, about one lakh youth will be given benefits in the coming one year. The process of recruitment for one lakh 24 thousand government posts is going on in the state. Apart from this, one lakh youths are being linked with self-employment. Our government will pay the amount of Rs 2 thousand 500 crore towards the interest of the farmers who defaulted in the previous government. Chief Minister Chouhan also announced construction of town hall in Mauganj, development work in industrial area, degree college in Hanumana, construction of ghats, road construction and various works in tribal sub-plan.

Three women of Madhya Pradesh got Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman



Team Absolute | Bhopal

President Draupadi Murmu honored two water warriors of Madhya Pradesh - Anita Chaudhary and Ganga Rajput with the Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman-2023 today for their special contribution in water conservation. The awards were presented at the investiture ceremony held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. Village Sarpanch Neetu Parihar also received the Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman-2023 for her exemplary performance in the field of cleanliness. Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat presented this award. Jal Sakhi Anita Chaudhary of Chhindwara district was awarded in the operation and maintenance category of piped water supply under Jal Jeevan Mission. Due to his efforts, Garhmau village of the district has been

declared as Har-Ghar-Jal Gram.

Jalyodha of Chhatrapur district Ganga Rajput has been awarded under the National Water Mission. With his untiring efforts, he made a special contribution in making the women of Bhojra village alive by dispelling folk misconceptions and making them alive. Sarpanch of Gwalior district Neetu Parihar was awarded under Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin. He has made extraordinary contribution in making Gram Panchayat Pura Banwar ODF plus Adarsh Gram.

A total of 18 awards were presented at the event in different categories in Jal Jeevan Mission, National Water Mission and Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin. Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti Shri Prahlad Singh Patel and Shri Vishweshwar Tudu were also present at the function.

Youth dies after being dragged under SUV, friend gasping for life in hospital

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In yet another horrific incident of speeding and callousness, a SUV driver, reported to be drunk, hit and knocked down two men on a motorcycle in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district on Friday, but did not stop even after one of the victims came under the vehicle and died after being dragged for around seven km.



on their bike when a speeding Bolero hit them from behind.

Due to the heavy impact of the collision, Amjad, who was driving the bike, fell on the road and sustained injuries, whereas, Anas, who was on the pillion seat, got stuck under the speedy Bolero. The man, who was driving the Bolero at high speed, did not stop the vehicle even after the accident.

As per the police, he increased his speed in an attempt to escape, and he dragged Anas Khan for around seven km until he died. Police said the driver of the speeding Bolero was drunk when he rammed into their bike and later, fled after leaving the car at Akhara road. The body of the deceased was handed over to the kin after conducting an autopsy at the health centre.

Police claimed to have arrested the accused driver and the four-wheeler he was driving was also confiscated. "An FIR has been registered against the driver. He was drunk and was smuggling illicit liquor in the vehicle. We are investigating the matter," a police official told reporter.

PLANT A SAPLING, WISH YOU THE SAME ON MY BIRTHDAY: CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN

Message given to the people of the state through electronic media

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that on March 5, he will celebrate his birthday by working for the whole day. Instead of accepting bouquets and other kind of welcome from public representatives and citizens etc., they will start the day by planting saplings. Time is very important, will not spend time in receiving greetings. An important program of launching the Mukhya Mantri Ladli Bahna Yojana is also taking place in Bhopal on Sunday.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that he has requested people's representative workers and common citizens that if they love me, they must plant a sapling on my birth anniversary. Along with this, you can also do the work of helping a needy person. Chief Minister Chouhan was talking to the



representatives of TV channels after planting saplings in the garden located at Shyamala Hills.

"Tree-Ambulance" a commendable initiative started for the care of

trees in Indore

Chief Minister Chouhan said that Indore is a wonderful city. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also says - "Indore is an era that goes ahead of

time." Another innovation has been done by starting tree-ambulance in Indore. Till now ambulances are operated for humans and cattle. Now on the side of the roads in Indore city, Tree-ambulance will be responsible for taking care of diseased plants planted in dividers and urban gardens. This ambulance is roaming around the city doing the work of treating plants and spraying insecticides. On call, an ambulance also reaches to treat house plants. Municipal Corporation Indore has prepared a special green vehicle for this. Chief Minister Chouhan informed that the Panchavati vehicle prepared for the care of plants has been converted into a tree-ambulance. Equipments have also been installed working on the principle of juggling with junk. Chief Minister Chouhan congratulated all the people associated with this initiative.

SC orders release of death row convict found to be juvenile at the time of crime

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court has set aside the death sentence of a rape-murder convict, after it was established that he was a juvenile on the date of commission of the offence.

A top court bench of justices B.R. Gavai, Vikram Nath and Sanjay Karol said: "The conviction of the appellant is upheld; however, the sentence is set aside. Further, as the appellant at present would be more than 20 years old, there would be no requirement of sending him to the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) or any other child care facility or institution. The appellant is in judicial custody. He shall be released forthwith."

The apex court affirmed the trial court order convicting him for the offence of rape and murder, but



set aside the death sentence awarded to the accused, convicted in a December 2017 rape and murder case in Madhya Pradesh.

The bench noted that it is of the view that merits of the conviction could be tested and the conviction which was recorded cannot be held to be vitiated in law merely because the inquiry was not conducted by the JJB.

"It is only the question of sentence for which the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015, would be attracted and any sentence in excess of what is permissible under the 2015 Act will have to be accordingly amended as per the provisions of the 2015 Act. Otherwise, the accused, who has committed a heinous offence and who did not claim juvenility before the trial court, would be allowed to go scot-free," added the bench.

The top court judgment came on a man's plea challenging the Madhya Pradesh High Court's order dated November 15, 2018. The Indore bench of the high court had upheld the death sentence awarded by the lower court and dismissed the appeal filed by the appellant challenging his conviction and sentence.

FORMS OF CHIEF MINISTER LADLI BAHNA YOJANA WILL BE FILLED IN EVERY VILLAGE AND EVERY WARD

Bhopal : Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that there is no need for sisters to wander in order to take advantage of the Mukhyamantri Ladli Bahna Yojana. Sisters will also be given detailed information regarding this scheme in the launch program of the scheme on March 5 in Bhopal.

Chief Minister Chouhan said in a message to the sisters that "My dear dear sisters, there is no need to wander to avail the benefits of Mukhyamantri Ladli Bahna Yojana. Native and income certificate is also not required. Do not worry unnecessarily. To take advantage of this scheme, a team of officer-employees will come to your village, your city and your ward and will sit there and fill the application. You should not worry at all, is your brother? The Chief Minister said that the scheme has been made very simple. In the program to be held on Sunday, March 5 from 1 pm to 3 pm, I will give detailed information on how to take advantage of the scheme. There is nowhere to wander, I am there. Sisters, don't worry at all."

Congress divided on Jitu Patwari issue: MP Home Minister Narottam Mishra

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Home Minister Narottam Mishra said Congress seems to be a divided house over the issue related to its MLA, Jitu Patwari. Leaders like Digvijay Singh are keeping mum over the incident in which Jitu Patwari was suspended from the rest of the budget session of the assembly. State Congress President Kamal Nath had not signed the No Confidence Motion brought by the opposition against Assembly Speaker Girish Gautam. Interacting with the media on Saturday, Mishra said that the Speaker had a very small role in the suspension of Jitu Patwari from the assembly. It was he who had moved the proposal against Jitu Patwari, and if the opposition had wanted to bring the no confidence motion, then it should have been brought against him.

Taking a pinch at Congress, he said that whatever is happening in Congress is its internal feud. The senior Congress leaders like Ajay Singh and Arun Yadav are being ignored,



and through this, one can easily understand the plight of Congress. Notably, on the charges of lying and misguiding the assembly, Congress MLA from Rau (Indore) Jitu Patwari has been suspended for the remaining assembly budget session on Thursday. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Narottam Mishra moved the proposal that Jitu Patwari should be suspended from the assembly, the move opposed by Opposition in strong manner.

CLASS 12 STUDENT ENDS LIFE DUE TO EXAM STRESS IN GUNA

Guna: A Class 12th student body was found dead on a railway track in Guna on Saturday morning. The boy allegedly ended his life due to exam stress. The boy has been identified as Varun Raghuvanshi, a student of Class 12 living in Kokate Colony Guna. Varun was missing since 7 pm on Friday.

The family members kept on searching for him the whole night. Later, the body was found on the railway track near Panchmukhi Hanuman temple on Saturday morning.

Varun was appearing for the CBSE board exam. He had a chemistry exam on February 28, in which he could not perform well. Therefore, he was tense. The footage of Varun leaving home on Friday was captured in CCTV. In the footage, Varun is seen in dire straits and holding his head as he walks out of the city.

Anushka, Virat offer prayers at Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma and star Indian cricketer-husband Virat Kohli were at Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain to seek blessings. Videos and photographs have been doing the rounds on social media, where the couple can be seen sitting inside the temple. The couple sat next to each other as Virat interacted with one of the priests.

In a video clip, Anushka was seen wearing a light pink saree, Virat chose a white number. He seemed to keep his head down as he prayed, with the priest seated beside him. At one point, the priest leans in and talks to him as well.



Anushka and Virat got married in 2017 in Italy. They welcomed daughter Vamika in January 2021.

Anushka will next be seen in 'Chakda Xpress', which is based on the life of cricketer Jhulan Goswami.

Three killed as bike falls into culvert in Agar Malwa

Team Absolute | Agar Malwa

Three persons were killed after the motorcycle on which they were traveling fell into the ditch from the culvert, police said. District Hospital police outpost in-charge RL Panwar informed that the incident took place at around 11 am on Saturday, near Hanuman Nipaniya Fanta.

The deceased were identified as Jitendra, son of Batrilal Tong, Manoj, Puralal Rao, both residents of Kalukhedha village, and Rakesh, Radheyshyam Dholi, a resident of Bada Baora village.

During the preliminary investigation, it was revealed that Jitendra was the husband of Kalukhedha gram panchayat sarpanch Pushpa Bai, while Manoj was the brother of Pushpa Bai, and another Rakesh was their friend.

Trio were heading towards Dhabla Piploon village to attend one marriage ceremony there.

Police claimed that it might be possi-



ble that the person who is riding the motorcycle lost control and their motorcycle jumped off the culvert and fell into the ditch.

Atmosphere of the hospital became inconsolable. On getting the information, head constable Damodar Sharma and constable

Jaswant Singh reached the spot and brought the injured to the district hospital in Agar, where the doctor declared them dead.

Upon getting the information, family members also reached the district hospital, and the inconsolable atmosphere was witnessed for a long time.



WORLD'S FIRST 'BAMBOO CRASH BARRIER' INSTALLED ON MAHARASHTRA HIGHWAY

Team Absolute | Nagpur

In a unique achievement, the world's first 200-metre long bamboo crash barrier has come up on the Vani-Warora Highway in Vidarbha region of eastern Maharashtra, officials said here on Saturday. The bamboo crash barrier in Nagpur has been christened as

'Bahu Balli' and underwent rigorous testing at various government-run institutions on different parameters. These included tests at the National Automotive Test Tracks in Pithampur, Indore, it secured the Class 1 in the Fire Rating Test conducted at the Central Building Research Institute in Roorkee, and has been given accreditation by the

Indian Road Congress. 'Bahubali' is born out of the Bambusa Balcooa bamboo species - which grows in West Bengal and north-east - that has been treated with creosote oil and coated with recycled high density polyethylene (HDPE). The recycling value of the bamboo crash barrier is stated as 50-70 per cent compared with 30-50 per

cent for steel barriers. The achievement has been described as remarkable for the bamboo sector and the country as a whole as this crash barrier offers a perfect alternative to steel. Besides, it addresses environmental concerns and its aftermath and is a rural agro-friendly industry, boosting the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives, said the officials.



DAY AFTER ATTACK, MNS LEADER REJECTS POLICE SECURITY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Hours after the Mumbai Police detained at least two persons in connection with the attack on Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) Spokesperson Sandeep Deshpande, the latter declined to accept police security, here on Saturday. On Friday evening after he was pounced upon from behind with a cricket stump-wielding assailant, Deshpande said that Chief Minister Eknath Shinde called him up, enquired about his health and then deployed two Mumbai Police personal bodyguards. "I thank the CM for this gesture and humbly say that I do not need this security. I shall not be cowed down by such attacks and my activists can look after me. We all know who is behind the assault on me, they might need the security now," Deshpande told mediapersons. He recounted the incident on his Friday morning walk near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Park gate No. 5 when he noticed an unknown man following him closely. "Suddenly, that person hit me from behind and I raised my right arm to protect myself, but his other associates lunged in, one hit me in my



legs and I fell down... As they started assaulting me, members of the public raised a hue and cry and rushed towards me, and seeing this the attackers scooted," Deshpande said. However, despite repeated queries, he declined to pinpoint or name the person/s who may be allegedly involved in the attack. "I have told the police everything... those who came to play 'cricket' with the stumps, and even

their 'coach', everything will emerge in the next few days," declared Deshpande. However, he suspects that the assault may be linked with his complaint lodged a couple of days ago demanding a probe into the BMC's Covid-19 contracts, but refused to elaborate. Soon after the attack at around 7 a.m. on Friday, the Mumbai Police had registered a case and set up at least six teams to probe the issue which kick-started a huge political controversy, and a ruckus in the Legislative Assembly. The police also scanned local CCTV footage and finally zeroed in on two suspects who were identified and picked up from Bhandup suburb early today, and further probe in on. Deshpande sustained grievous injuries in his right arm and legs, including a fracture, and after treatment at the Hinduja Hospital was discharged a few hours later. Alleging the involvement of his political rivals for the attacks, the Bharatiya Janata Party and MNS leaders have demanded a thorough probe into the role of the Sena (UBT) and its leaders MLA Aditya Thackeray, MP Sanjay Raut plus others, and if found evidence is found, then their immediate arrest.

After 10 weeks, actor Sheezan Khan gets bail in Tunisha Sharma suicide case

Team Absolute | Palghar

A Vasai court on Saturday granted bail to teleserial actor Sheezan Khan who was arrested and spent nearly 10 weeks in jail for his alleged involvement in the suicide case of his ex-girlfriend and co-actress Tunisha Sharma. Sharma, 21, was found dead during the shooting of the serial, 'Ali Baba: Dastaan-E-Kabul' on the morning of December 24, 2022, and a day later, Khan, 27 was nabbed for alleged abetment of her suicide, which sparked a huge controversy. Additional Sessions Judge R. D. Deshpande has granted a conditional bail of Rs One Lakh to Khan, ordered him to deposit his passport, not to leave the country without the court's permission. Sharma committed suicide on the sets of the teleserial erected at Naigaon in Vasai town after which the Waliv Police Station arrested Khan on charges of abetment. Khan and Sharma were in a relationship but had broken off just a couple of weeks before the latter's death, ostensibly caused as she was in a deeply disturbed state of mind. Later, Tunisha's mother Vanita Sharma and her uncle Pawan Sharma had alleged that Khan and his family were pressurising her to adopt Islamic practices, plus other contentions that drove her to end her life,



and demanded their arrest on charges of abetment to suicide. Khan's mother and actor-sisters Falak Naaz and Shafaq Naaz hit back at the Sharma family for falsely implicating them, and addressed the media on how Tunisha was allegedly subjected to suffering by her own family, not giving her money, neglecting her mental health problems, among others. In mid-February, the Waliv Police filed its voluminous 524-page chargesheet in the case, naming Khan as an abettor to Sharma's suicide, besides listing 31 witnesses and other evidence, and are likely to file a supplementary chargesheet later. Arguing for bail, Khan's lawyer Sharad Rai had pointed out that the investigations are over, the chargesheet has already been filed and hence his client should be granted bail, though there was opposition from the Special Public Prosecutor Sanjay More on various grounds.

Vande Bharat train to run on Mumbai-Goa route soon: Minister

Team Absolute | Thane

A Vande Bharat semi-high speed express train will be operated on the Mumbai-Goa route soon, Union Minister of State for Railways Raosaheb Danve has informed a delegation of legislators from Maharashtra. This information was shared by Niranjana Davkhare, a member of the Maharashtra Legislative Council representing the Konkan graduates constituency. The delegation of legislators met Danve on Friday. During the meeting, the Union minister told the group that a Vande Bharat Express train will be operated between Mumbai and Goa, Davkhare said in a release. This express train will be



operated between Mumbai and Goa on the lines of the ones introduced recently on Mumbai-Shirdi and Mumbai-Solapur routes to curtail travel time, Danve said. The electrification of the Mumbai-Goa railway route has been completed and the new train service will be introduced following an

inspection, the minister told the delegation. The delegation discussed several issues concerning railways in Thane and Konkan region with the minister during the meeting. Issues like allotment of stalls to the railway project-affected persons or their relatives, mobile stalls at each railway station for farmers,

raising the height of platforms to reduce the gap between them and trains, taking measures to prevent flooding due to the railway bridge at Mahad in Raigad, also came up for discussion, the release said. The delegation discussed with Danve the demand to extend the Sawantwadi-Diva train service till Dadar, rehabilitation of those residing along the railway tracks under the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) scheme, and other issues, it added. The legislators also demanded that the Mumbai station in Thane be renamed as Mumbra Devi station. Danve assured them that action will be taken after the state government submits a proposal to this effect.

"Winds Of Change": Sharad Pawar on BJP's defeat in key Maharashtra poll

Team Absolute | Mumbai

With the Bharatiya Janata Party losing its bastion of Kasba Peth in Pune city to the Congress in the recently-held Assembly bypoll, Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar said the development indicated that winds of change were blowing across the country. The former Union minister was speaking to reporters at Baramati, his hometown in Pune district. "BJP's defeat in the Kasba Peth Assembly bypoll proves that people are considering an alternative. Winds of change are blowing across the country," he said. The BJP on Thursday failed to retain the Kasba Peth Assembly seat, its stronghold for nearly three decades, as Congress candidate Ravindra Dhangekar defeated the saffron party nominee Hemant Rasane in a keenly contested bypoll, which had become a prestige battle between the ruling coalition



and the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). The BJP has represented Kasba Peth in the state Assembly for the last 28 years. Girish Bapat, the current BJP Lok Sabha MP from Pune, won the prestigious seat five times till 2019. The bypoll was held on February 26 and votes were counted on Thursday. Mr Pawar said, "BJP has negligible presence in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra

Pradesh, Telangana, Punjab, Delhi, West Bengal and Karnataka, which goes to polls this year. At the time of casting their votes, people will remember how BJP topped the Congress governments." He termed the Supreme Court's verdict on the appointment of election commissioners (ECs) a good decision for democracy. In a far-reaching verdict, the top court on Thursday ruled that the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and ECs will be done by the President on the recommendation of a committee, comprising the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India (CJI), to maintain the "purity" of the electoral process. Sharad Pawar said the NCP has done well in Nagaland as it won seven of the 12 seats it contested in the recently held polls to the 60-member Assembly. "We are the number two party there. Party general secretary Narendra Verma has been deputed to Nagaland as an observer," he said.

Licences of 6 cough syrup makers suspended in Maharashtra

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The licences of six manufacturers of cough syrups in Maharashtra have been suspended for violation of rules, the state government has told the Legislative Assembly. Food and Drugs Administration Minister Sanjay Rathod gave this information in the Assembly on Friday while replying to a calling attention notice by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Ashish Shelar and others. A cough syrup made by a firm based in Uttar Pradesh's Noida was alleged to have caused the death of 18 children in Uzbekistan last year. Noida police on Friday said they had arrested three employees of the firm. Rathod said the Maharashtra government had initiated an inquiry against 84 out of 108 manufacturers of cough syrups in the state. Four of them were directed to stop production while the licences of six companies were suspended, he said. As many as 17 firms were served show-cause

notices for violation of rules, the minister added. Shelar referred to the deaths of 66 children in Gambia allegedly because of cough syrups imported from India. But the minister said that the company which was facing the charge of violation of rules, in that case, was based in Haryana and did not have any manufacturing unit in Maharashtra. "We have, however, taken strict action against the violators of rules. We are ensuring that the World Health Organization's GMP (good manufacturing practices) certification-related rules and Certificate of Pharmaceutical Products are complied with while exporting products (from the state)," he added. Presiding officer Sanjay Shirsat said if 20 per cent of manufacturers faced raids because of suspected violation of rules, it needs to be taken very seriously as it was akin to playing with people's lives. Rathod said of the 996 allopathic drug manufacturers in the state, 514 export their products.

Western Railway to run summer special trains on special fare

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Western Railway on Saturday in a press release said that it has decided to run four summer special trains on special fare for various destinations and one Holi special train between Bandra Terminus and Bhavnagar. The decision is taken "for the convenience of passengers and with a view to meet the travel demand," it said. The trips of Bandra Terminus - Jabalpur are also being extended, it said in the release. Train No. 09075/09076 Mumbai Central - Kathgodam (Weekly) Superfast Special (34 TRIPS) Train No. 09075 Mumbai Central - Kathgodam Superfast Special will depart from Mumbai Central every Wednesday at 11.00 hrs. & will reach Kathgodam at 14.30 hrs., the next day. This train will run from 08th March, 2023 till 28th June, 2023. Similarly, Train No. 09076 Kathgodam - Mumbai Central Superfast Special will depart from Kathgodam every Thursday at 17.30 hrs. & will arrive Mumbai Central at 20.55 hrs., the next day. This train will run from 09th March, 2023 till 29th June, 2023. This train comprises AC 2-Tier, AC 3-Tier, Sleeper Class, and



General Second-Class coaches. This train will run from 12th March, 2023 till 25th June, 2023. Train No. 09185/09186 Mumbai Central - Kanpur Anwarganj Superfast Special (Weekly) (32 Trips) Train No. 09185 Mumbai Central - Kanpur Anwarganj Superfast Special will depart from Mumbai Central every Saturday at 11.05 hrs. & will reach Kanpur Anwarganj at 15.35 hrs., the next day. This train will run from 11th March, 2023 till 24th June, 2023. Similarly, Train No. 09186 Kanpur Anwarganj - Mumbai Central Superfast Special will depart from Kanpur Anwarganj every Sunday at 18.40 hrs. & will arrive Mumbai Central at 22.30 hrs., the next day. This train will run from 9th March, 2023 till 29th June, 2023. This train comprises AC 2-Tier, AC 3-Tier, Sleeper Class, and General Second-Class coaches. Train No. 09091/09092 Udhna - Hisar (Weekly) (34 TRIPS) Train No. 09091 Udhna - Hisar Superfast Special will depart from Udhna every Wednesday at 01.10 hrs and reach Hisar at 22.25 hrs, the same day. This train will run from 8th March, 2023 till 28th June, 2023. Similarly, Train No. 09092 Hisar - Udhna Special will depart from Hisar every Thursday at 00.15 hrs and reach Udhna at 00.05 hrs, the next day. This train will run from 9th March, 2023 till 29th June,

18 BANGLADESHI NATIONALS ARRESTED IN MAHARASHTRA FOR ILLEGAL STAY



Thane: Police have arrested 18 Bangladeshi nationals, including 10 women, from Maharashtra's Thane district after they were found living illegally in the country, an official said on Saturday. The arrest was made by the Navi Mumbai police during the intervening night of March 1 and 2, he said. "The police had received a tip-off that some Bangladeshi nationals will gather to celebrate the marriage anniversary of one of them at a building in Navi Mumbai's Ghansoli area. Acting on it, the officials of Navi Mumbai police's crime branch raided the premises at night," the official of Rabale police station said. Ten women and eight men were held during the operation as they were found residing in the locality since the last around one year without any valid documents like visa and passport, he added. An offence under the Foreigners Act, 1946 and also the Passport (Entry into India) Rules, 1950 was registered against them and investigation is on, the police said.



KIM IS READY TO DATE AGAIN BUT DOESN'T WANT A RELATIONSHIP WITH A CELEBRITY

Los Angeles | Agencies

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian is ready to date again but has told her friends she doesn't want a relationship with a celebrity.

The mother of four has asked friends to set her up, but insisted she doesn't want to date any celebrities, reports female-first.co.uk.

A source told PEOPLE: "Kim hasn't been dating, but is ready again. She took a breather after Pete (Davidson), but she is interested now. She would love to date someone who isn't famous in Hollywood. She thinks someone in finance would be perfect."

"Kim has a lot of things going on that make her happy. She would love to share it all with a partner too."

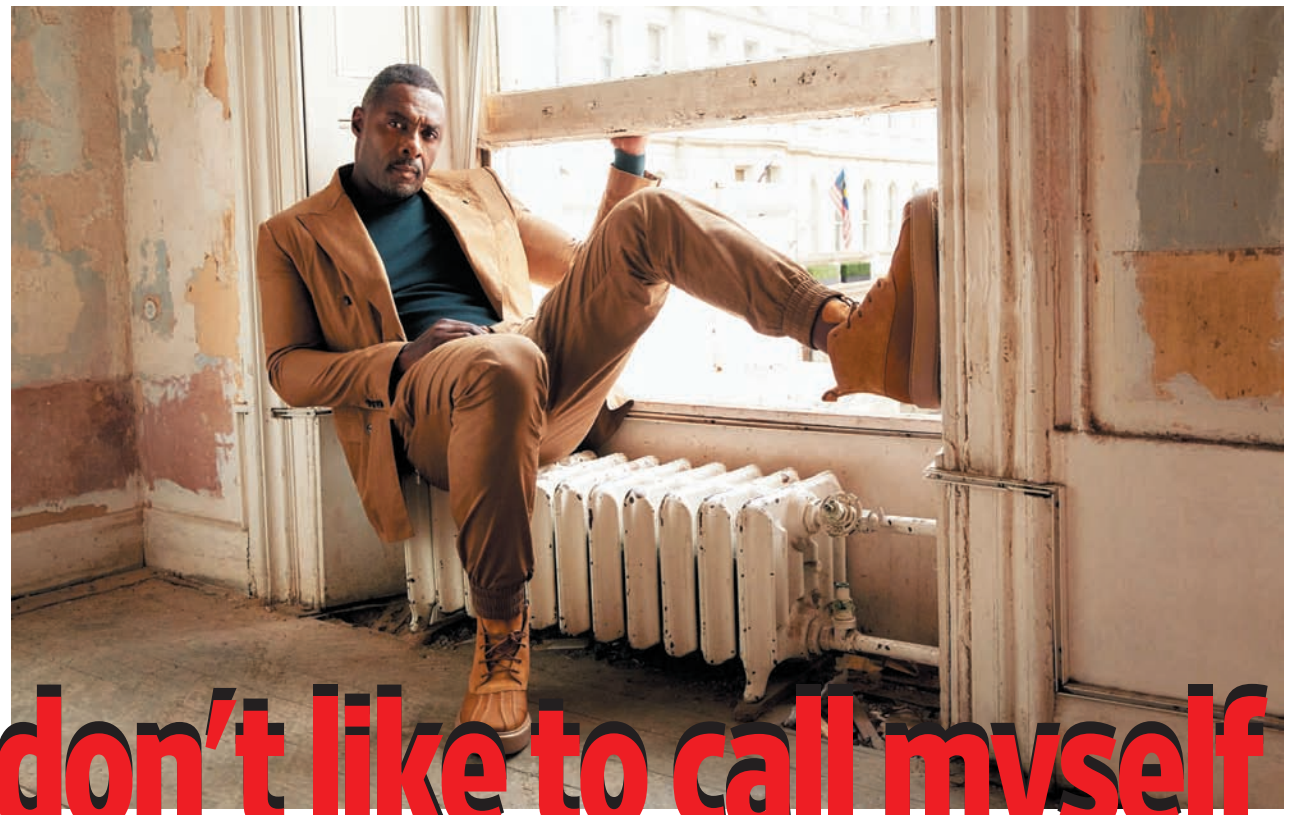
Thrice-married Kim recently revealed she is open to having more kids and remarrying one day.

She said: "I am. I am (such a romantic). I have this fantasy in my head, like fourth's time's a charm, it's gonna -"

"I feel, like honestly, my last marriage was my first real (one) - the first one, I just don't know what was happening. The second one, I felt like I wanted to be married so badly because all my friends were at that place and that's where I should have been, and I didn't accept that that just wasn't where I was and see that that was okay." "And now, I feel like I would definitely take my time - and I would be okay for a forever partnership as well. I would want a marriage, but I'm so happy to take my time."

Kim was previously married to music producer Damon Thomas from 2000 to 2004, and former NBA player Kris Humphries from 2011 to 2013, although she famously filed for divorce just 72 days after they wed.

WITH A CELEBRITY



I don't like to call myself a Black actor: Idris Elba

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Idris Elba created a tizzy on social media in February after he said that he stopped calling himself a "Black actor" because it created limitations for his career.

The Luther actor was immediately accused of renouncing his blackness, although actors such as John Boyega came to his defence and argued that critics weren't paying attention to his message about damning Hollywood stereotyping, reports Viral.

"I feel as I get older - I'm 50 now - we all have fears of saying too much, over-sharing and whatnot," Elba now told The

Guardian in a new interview.

"And in this day and age, it's really difficult to have an opinion if you're in the public eye because it gets overly scrutinised, taken out of context, thrown into some sort of bullshit, zeitgeisty social media argument."

Elba pointed to the controversy around his "Black actor" comment as proof that social media is a "conflict incubator," adding, "Me saying I don't like to call myself a Black actor is my prerogative."

"That's me, not you. So for you to turn around and say to me, I'm 'denying my Blackness', on what grounds? Did you hear that? Where am I denying it? And what for? It's just stupid. Whatever."

In his Esquire U.K. interview, Elba noted that "as humans, we are obsessed with race and that obsession can really hinder people's aspirations, hinder people's growth. Racism should be a topic for discussion, sure. Racism is very real. But from my perspective, it's only as powerful as you allow it to be."

"I stopped describing myself as a Black actor when I realised it put me in a box," the actor said.

"We've got to grow. We've got to. Our skin is no more than that: it's just skin. Rant over."

As Elba's detractors accused him of renouncing his Blackness, Boyega took to Twitter to re-direct the discourse to the kind of stereotyping that Elba was calling out in the first place.

"I think we should fixate on who is typecasting and putting actors in boxes because of this," Boyega wrote. "Not on making weird adjustments for them. We continuously focus on what we have to do so they don't do this or that. Very worrying. We BLACK and that's that."

Elba took to Twitter after his Esquire interview to tell off his detractors, writing: "There isn't a soul on this earth that can question whether I consider myself a BLACK MAN or not. Being an 'actor' is a profession, like being an 'architect,' they are not defined by race. However, if you defines your work by your race that is your Prerogative."



'I love my face tatt'

Cardi B's new ink has divided her fans but she insists she's loving the design

Los Angeles | Agencies

Cardi B has no regrets about her recent huge tattoo despite disapproval of fans. The 'Bodak Yellow' rapper showed off her latest tattoo on social media and was immediately met with a mixed reaction. The songstress posted the first close-up of her hugely visible face marking, which is a tribute to her one-year-old son, reports Mirror.co.uk. The red ink across her jawline spells out the tot's name Wave and she's revealed how much she loves the artwork. In the caption of her post, she wrote: "I love my face tatt," before adding a red-heart emoji.

The image she used was taken from her latest venture alongside hubby Offset as they took part in a McDonald's campaign. Cardi stunned in the snap as she glammed up in a halter neck white gown with crystal details. Her makeup and hair were immaculately presented, while her nails were over-the-top in length as she fed her man a chip. Mirror.co.uk further states that the picture wasn't met with overwhelming support - even though the official McDonald's account liked the post. One user wrote: "Why? What was the reason?," while another questioned: "Is this some early april fools?" Another joked that she will soon be covered in face tattoos, sharing an image of another woman with an array of visible markings.

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LADY GAGA MIGHT DISAPPEAR FROM THE SPOTLIGHT

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-actress Lady Gaga hints at quitting spotlight after 15 years. She explained that she prefers life away from the red carpet at home, reports Mirror.co.uk. The pop sensation exploded onto the global stage back in 2008 with the release of her chart topping single 'Just Dance'. She then grabbed attention on red carpets around the globe by dressing in bizarre outfits - from dresses made from Kermit - the Frog puppets to clothes made of meat.

All the while she continued to release pop tunes that sold millions of copies and segwayed into the world of acting by nabbing starring roles in movies and TV shows including 'A Star is Born' and 'House of Gucci'. Mirror.co.uk further stated that Gaga said she prefers a slower pace of life these days - and wishes she knew that she didn't have to be jumping for attention all the time like she was in her younger days. She told 'Wallpaper' magazine: "I'm interested in living more of a life of solitude. It's really nice to just have time to be alone, and be expansive, and know that you're enough. I wish I could tell my younger self that."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Kaz Crossley

Jonathan Krisel to direct 'Pokemon Detective Pikachu' sequel

Los Angeles | Agencies

Jonathan Krisel will be directing 'Pokemon Detective Pikachu' sequel. Jonathan Krisel, co-creator of 'Portlandia', is in negotiations with Legendary Entertainment to direct the sequel to the live-action 'Pokemon' movie from 2019. Chris Galletta will write the script, reports Variety.

Krisel co-created, wrote and executive produced IFC's sketch comedy show 'Portlandia', which starred fellow co-creators Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein in a multitude of oddball situations around Portland, Oregon.

He also co-created, wrote and directed FX's 'Baskets', starring Zach Galifianakis as a rodeo clown. Previously, Galletta wrote the 2013 coming-of-age comedy 'The Kings of

Summer'.

The original 'Pokemon Detective Pikachu' starred Ryan Reynolds as a talking, coffee-loving Pikachu who fancied himself as a Sherlock Holmes. The electric mouse teams up with Tim Goodman, a down-on-his-luck Pokemon trainer played by Justice Smith, to find Tim's missing dad. The cast included Kathryn Newton, who's currently starring in 'Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania', Suki Waterhouse, Ken Watanabe, Rita Ora and more.

It was the first live-action 'Pokemon' movie ever made, after the hit video game franchise has sold more than 440 million video games sold worldwide, tens of billions of Pokemon cards, and more than 1,200 episodes of the popular anime series.





BARCA, REAL MADRID FOCUS ON LA LIGA FOR KEY MATCHES

Madrid | Agencies

FC Barcelona and Real Madrid are back in La Liga action as thoughts turn from their Copa del Rey semi final on Thursday to the race for the league title.

Barca's 1-0 win in the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, thanks to Eder Militao's unfortunate own goal, gives them the upper hand in the cup, although Xavi Hernandez's side claimed the win with a very untypical performance.

Xavi's men had just 35 percent of the ball on Thursday, which is the lowest possession that has ever been recorded for Barca, but they won't be able to play the same way when Valencia visit Camp Nou on today afternoon, a Xinhua report said.

Valencia, third from bottom of the table, travel to Barcelona with their 1-0 home win over Real Sociedad last



weekend but missing players such as Gabriel Paulista, Jose Luis Gaya and Edinson Cavani.

This time Barca will have to do the attacking, but they are still without the injured Robert Lewandowski,

Pedri and Ousmane Dembele, while Gavi is suspended and Xavi Hernandez can't sit in the dugout after completing a cycle of five yellow cards.

Players such as Franck Kessie,

Raphinha, Sergio Busquets and Ferran Torres will have to be careful as all of them are just one booking away from suspension that would see them miss next weekend's visit to Bilbao. With Barca's options limited, Sergi Roberto will probably step into midfield while Ansu Fati starts in attack.

A win for Barca would see them go 10-point clear of Real Madrid, who have a difficult visit to play fifth-placed Betis. Ferland Mendy and David Alaba are Madrid's only absences for the game and Carlo Ancelotti will refresh his side with players such as Rodrygo, Marco Asensio and Aurelian Tchouameni. Lucas Vazquez also has options to start. Betis will be without creative midfielder duo Nabil Fekir and Sergio Canales due to injury but still have a potent attacking threat through Borja Iglesias, Luiz Henrique and Juanmi.

WPL 2023 On paper, Mumbai look more stronger than Gujarat: Anjum Chopra

Mumbai | Agencies

Former India captain Anjum Chopra feels Mumbai Indians look stronger on paper than Gujarat Giants ahead of the first-ever match of Women's Premier League (WPL) at DY Patil Stadium.

Australia opener Beth Mooney is leading Gujarat, while India captain Harmanpreet Kaur will be captaining Mumbai. "I find Mumbai Indians stronger on paper and Gujarat got a jolt in Deandra Dottin being ruled out of tournament, with Australia's Kim Garth coming in as a replacement."

Asked on who could be the winner of the inaugural edition of the WPL, Anjum remarked, "I did a review and I thought that RCB, MI look very balanced on paper. I am just saying it as I saw the auc-



tions, foreign as well as domestic players. But having said that, no team looks 100% complete in covering all the bases." "It's an Indian league being played in Indian conditions and that Indian players should be made captain of all teams, if they can be made. I felt that Deepti Sharma should be captaining UP Warriorz because she had led Velocity in the Women's T20 Challenge last year. Australian players have lots of experience of leading

teams, which is absolutely fair and that will remain as call of the teams as they will say, we need more experienced captains."

"Like, Jemimah Rodrigues can't be captaining Delhi ahead of someone like Meg Lanning. As compared to Australia, there aren't many leaders in the Indian team that they can stand ahead of the Australians. If there was captain of some other country, I could have been surprised."

Joburg Ladies Open PRANAVI URS WITH 4-UNDER 69 MOVES TO 9TH

Joburg | Agencies

Pranavi Urs shot one of her best rounds outside India as a pro as she scored 4-under 69 at the Joburg Ladies Open.

That put her in line for her first-ever Top-10 on the Ladies European Tour.

Pranavi moved to 5-under 214 totals after 54 holes with rounds of 71-74-69 and is tied ninth at the Par-73 Modderfontein Golf Club. She was tied 17th at the halfway stage. There is one more round to go.

Last week made her first cut in South Africa's Sunshine Ladies Tour at the Jabra Classic and finished tied 13th.

Ridhima Dilawari, the only other Indian golfer to make the cut, shot 6-over 79 and dropped 30 places to tied 59th. The other Indian girls, Vani Kapoor (75-78),



Amandeep Drall (76-78) and Diksha Dagar (78-77) missed the cut.

Moa Folke (65) of Sweden had a sizzling finish with 2 birdies and an eagle in last three holes to take the lead over Denmark's Nicole Broch Estrup (71).

Folke was now 12-under and led by two strokes over Estrup, who is 10-under. Pranavi bogeyed the third

but had four birdies in a row from fifth to eighth. She made the turn in 3-under. On the second nine, she had a birdie on 10th, a double bogey on 12th and an eagle on 13th followed by five pars for 69. If Pranavi finishes well, she will get into next week's high-profile Women's South African Open. The event was won by India's Diksha Dagar in 2019.

'Incredibly rewarding'

SMITH LAUDS TEAMMATES AFTER AUSTRALIA QUALIFY FOR WTC FINAL

Indore | Agencies

Australia's stand-in skipper Steve Smith was all praise for his players and support staff after the side qualified for the ICC World Test Championship 2023 final.

Australia's convincing nine-wicket triumph over India helped them book a place at this year's ICC World Test Championship Final.

They have been a dominant side in the ongoing World Test Championship cycle, having won 11 out of 18 contests. Presently placed at top of the standings with 68.52 percent of their possible WTC points, Australia will remain at the first position regardless of the remaining results in the event.

The seasoned batter, who stood



in for Australia's regular captain Pat Cummins in the third Test, applauded the side for booking a berth in the WTC final.

"It's incredibly rewarding to qualify for our first ICC World Test Championship Final. It has been a goal of ours for quite a while now. The players and staff deserve a lot of credit for the standard of cricket we have played over the past two years. It would be a great reward for everyone to finish as World Test Champions," Smith told ICC. "To also be able to play the WTC final ahead of the Ashes means it will be a great opportunity for our fans to lengthen their stays to come and watch us at The Oval. We still have one Test to play here in India where we hope to maintain this momentum," he added.

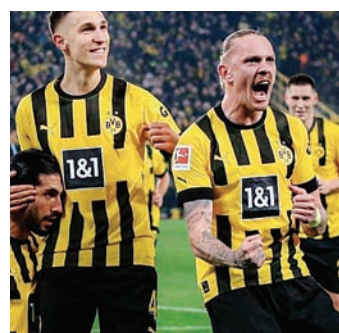
Dortmund overpower Leipzig to jump atop in Bundesliga

Berlin | Agencies

First-half goals from Marco Reus and Emre Can helped Borussia Dortmund go top of Bundesliga after moving 2-1 past resilient Leipzig at the curtain raiser of the 23rd round.

Leipzig caught the better start on the road and came close with five minutes played when Dominik Szoboszlai unleashed a hammer from long range before Christopher Nkunku pulled wide from a promising position two minutes later, reports Xinhua news agency.

The hosts thought they had opened the scoring out of the blue, but Julian Brandt's goal was ruled offside by the video assistant referee in the 15th minute.



Dortmund eventually broke the deadlock five minutes later as Leipzig goalkeeper Janis Blaswich fouled Reus inside the box. The Germany veteran stepped up and converted the subsequent penalty to open the scoring in the 21st minute.

Leipzig had the chance to level

the score at the half-hour mark but for all that Marcel Halstenberg's volley attempt missed the target narrowly wide.

Dortmund staged a clinical chance conversion and made it two after Can's long-range drop-kick stunned Blaswich in the 39th minute. After the restart, Leipzig assumed control but couldn't do any damage while the BVB had the chance to put the game beyond doubt, but Blaswich's diving save denied Reus the second goal of the night in the 67th minute.

Leipzig increased the pressure as the match progressed and halved the deficit in the 74th minute when David Raum flicked on Mohamed Simakan's cross to the back post, where Emil Forsberg tapped home from very close.

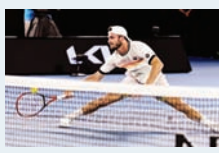
TOMMY PAUL REACHES MEXICAN OPEN FINAL

Buenos Aires |

Seventh seed Tommy Paul advanced to the final of the ATP 500 Mexican Open with a 6-3, 6-7 (2), 7-6 (2) win over fellow American Taylor Fritz.

Paul hit seven aces but also committed five double faults as he prevailed in three hours and 25 minutes at the Fairmont Acapulco Princess resort, reports Xinhua news agency.

The 25-year-old will meet either Australian eighth seed Alex de Minaur or fourth seeded Holger Rune in Saturday's final. This year's edition of the Mexican Open played on outdoor hard courts will offer total prize money of more than two million euros. Saturday will mark only the second time that Paul has featured in an ATP final as he bids to repeat his triumph at the 2021 ATP 250 event in Stockholm last November.



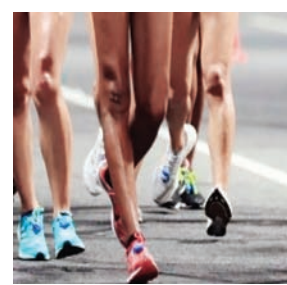
China's He Xianghong breaks men's 35km race walk Asian record

Huangshan, Anhui | Agencies

Chinese race walker He Xianghong dominated the men's 35km race at the opening leg of the Chinese National Race Walk Grand Prix, improving the Asian record by 20 seconds.

The 24-year-old He, who finished fifth at the Oregon World Athletics Championships in Eugene, built up a comfortable sole lead soon after the start. He maintained a fast and steady pace throughout the race and kept extending the gap to the chasers, wrapping up the overwhelming victory in two hours, 22 minutes and 55 seconds, reports Xinhua news agency.

His winning mark not only shattered his own national



record of 2:24:45, but also beat the Asian record of 2:23:15 set by Japan's Masatora Kawano at the Oregon worlds, and is 19 seconds faster than Italian world champion Massimo Stano's winning mark in Eugene.

Wang Qin of Shanxi finished second in 2:26:10, followed by Zhaxi Yangben from Qinghai, husband of Olympic champion Qieyang Shijie, in 2:29:36.

record of 2:24:45, but also beat the Asian record of 2:23:15 set by Japan's Masatora Kawano at the Oregon worlds, and is 19 seconds faster than Italian world champion Massimo Stano's winning mark in Eugene. Lagging behind Bai by one minute, Qieyang had to settle for second place in 2:41:59. Her Qinghai teammate Li Maocuo, the 50km silver medalist at the 2019 worlds in Doha, finished third in 2:42:39.

NAPOLI CONCEDE FIRST HOME DEFEAT IN SERIE A



Rome | Napoli were forced to slam the brakes on their winning streak as they fell to Lazio 1-0, their first home defeat in Serie A this season.

The Partenopei were a sensation since the start of the season, as they only conceded one defeat in the domestic league and ran away from the table with a huge 18-point advantage before Friday's game, reports Xinhua news agency.

The home side entered into the Stadio Maradona with eight consecutive Serie A wins and dominated the game with a 65 per cent ball possession, but Matias Vecino stole the show in the 67th minute as his thunderous strike out of the box silenced the stadium.

Despite the defeat, Napoli still led the table with 65 points, while Lazio temporarily moved to the second with 48.

Brazil name nine uncapped players for Morocco friendly

Rio De Janeiro | Agencies

Chelsea midfielder Andrey Santos is among nine uncapped players named on Brazil's squad for a friendly against Morocco later this month, the Brazilian Football Confederation said.

Interim manager Ramon Menezes also included newcomers Andre (Fluminense), Arthur Augusto (America Mineiro), Joao Gomes (Wolverhampton), Vitor Roque (Paranaense), Mycael (Paranaense), Robert Renan (Zenit Saint Petersburg), Raphael Veiga (Palmeiras) and Rony (Palmeiras) in his 23-man squad, reports Xinhua news agency.

"We are going to face a very well-prepared team so it's going to be a big test," Menezes told a news conference.

The March 25 friendly in Tanger will be the first outing for both sides since the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.



Brazil was eliminated on penalties by Croatia in the quarterfinals while Morocco became the first African team to reach the semifinals of football's showpiece event, falling to France 2-0.

"Everyone who went to the World Cup could be part of this squad," said Menezes, who was

Brazil's U-20 coach before replacing former senior team manager Tite on a caretaker basis after the World Cup. "But right now (I want) to look at new players, those players who have been in good form for their clubs, playing in important championships and taking part in finals," he added.

PGA Tour Indian-American Theegala moves up 30 places to tied 20th

Orlando, Fla | Agencies

Indian-American golfer Sahith Theegala moved up 30 places at the midway stage of the Arnold Palmer Invitational.

Theegala, who reached right up to the Tour Championship, but is still looking for his first individual win on the PGA Tour, shot 72 in the first round added 70 in the second to be 2-under and tied 20th.

Theegala was tied 20th alongside the likes of Rory McIlroy (73-69), Tom Kim (72-70), Shane Lowry (72-70) and Tony Finau (70-72).

Kurt Kitayama (67-68) chasing his first PGA TOUR victory, Kitayama was at 9-under 135 and he faced the challenge from Jordan Spieth (68-69). Jon Rahm, the first round leader by two shots, had a rough round for the first time this year. His last

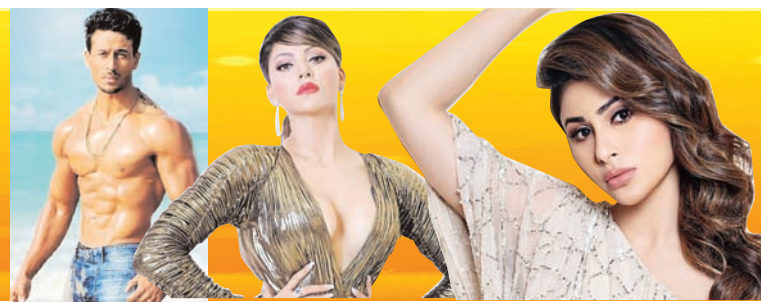


five holes had a double bogey, three bogeys and a birdie and he shot 76, his highest card since the 76 he had in the third round of the PGA Championship last May. From being a leader Rahm is now six shots behind Kitayama. The course was demanding as it was hard and the wind was blowing at around 30 miles an hour.

Cameron Young, the 2022 Open runner-up, was one shot behind till four holes to go and then found a pair of bogeys and on the 18th, he hit

a shot from the thick rough into the water for a double bogey and a 73. He was suddenly five behind.

Xander Schauffele shot 70 and was three behind along with Corey Connors, who had the best round of the day at 66. Justin Thomas logged eight birdies and then finished bogey-bogey in his 67. He was 5-under 139 and tied alongside Patrick Cantlay (71) and U.S. Open champion Matt Fitzpatrick, whose 69 included birdies on his last three holes.



'I MISS PLAYING HOLI'



Shraddha Kapoor recalls celebrating Holi at Big B's residence in her childhood

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Shraddha Kapoor, who is busy promoting her film 'Tu Jhoothi Main Makkar' along with her co-actor Ranbir Kapoor, expressed excitement over the release of the film coinciding with the festival of colours, Holi. She recalled celebrating the festival at megastar Amitabh Bachchan's place during her childhood days.

She shared: "I miss playing Holi. Our film is releasing on Holi, so I am very excited about it. But I'm not sure if I'll get a chance to play or not. As a child, I used to play in the building, and one memorable Holi for me was when I went to Amitabh Bachchan ji's place."

The actress, who is known for her movies such as 'Luv Ka The End', 'Aashiqui 2', 'Ek Villain', 'Haider', 'Chhichhore', among others, shared further that what she loved most about the Holi celebration at

Big B's place was the huge gathering of people and they used to pick up each other and threw them in the tub.

"I remember how people used to pick up each other and throw them in the tub, and I thought to myself, someone should pick me up and throw me in the tub but unfortunately that never happened," she added.

She appeared on Kapil Sharma's reality show along with Ranbir Kapoor to talk about their film 'Tu Jhoothi Main Makkar'.

Kangana calls 'power couple' Virat-Anushka a 'good example' on visiting temple

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma and star Indian cricketer-husband Virat Kohli were at Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain to seek blessings.

Videos and photographs have been doing the rounds on social media, where the couple can be seen sitting inside the temple. The couple sat next to each other as Virat interacted with one of the priests.

In a video clip, Anushka was seen wearing a light pink saree, Virat chose a white number. He seemed to keep his head down as he prayed, with the priest seated beside him. At one point, the priest leans in and talks to him as well.

As star couple Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli paid a visit to a temple in Ujjain, actress Kangana Ranaut couldn't stop praising the two calling them a "good example".

Kangana shared their video of their visit to the temple on Saturday and also called them a 'power couple'.

She wrote on her Instagram story: "Such a good example this power couple is setting, not only it brings them the blessings of Mahakaal, but also in some way it glorifies the Dharma and a civilisation, which is built on Sanatana."

"Also on micro level this increases tourism in the temple/state and over all helps the nation with its self-esteem and economy both."

Anushka and Virat, who are fondly called 'Virushka', visited the temple on Saturday morning, a day after the third Test match between India and Australia in Indore.

On the work front, Kangana is currently shooting for Chandramukhi 2. Helmed by P. Vasu, it is the sequel to the

Tamil horror comedy film Chandramukhi which features Rajinikanth and Jyothika.

'SUCH A GOOD EXAMPLE THIS POWER COUPLE IS SETTING'



I fear that my daughter may not recognise me after I shave: Ranbir

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood couple Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt welcomed their daughter last year in November and the actor is often seen talking about their first baby, Raha Kapoor. Recently, he spoke about his bond with his daughter and how she is used to his look with a beard and that is why he is scared that she might not recognise him with a clean shaved face.

He said: "I have grown this beard for the movie. Since my daughter Raha was born, she has only seen me in this look. I don't have the fear that my beard will prick her, but I do fear that she may not recognise me after I shave."

Ranbir came on the singing reality show, 'Indian Idol 13', to promote his film 'Tu Jhoothi Mein Makkar' along with his co-star Shraddha Kapoor.

For Ranbir, his daughter's love is most special to him and her smile makes him happy.

"She has this habit of only looking into my eyes while giving me a smile, and I believe that she has not really looked below my eye level. I am sure she will get used to my clean-shaved look as well, but it will break my heart if she does not recognise me," he added.

As Holi is around the corner, the 'Wake Up Sid' actor enjoyed performances by the contestants on the 'Holi special' episode of the singing reality show.

Ayodhya's Rishi Singh performed with the 'Superstar Singer 2' contestant Sayisha Gupta on the popular Holi song 'Balam Pichkari' from the film 'Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani' and Ranbir was so impressed with their performance that he joined them on stage and shook his legs along with Rishi and Sayisha.

After the performance, he remembered shooting for the song for eight days and the challenges of completing it. He also praised the contestants for their performance.

"In those 8 days of shooting, Aditya Roy Kapoor, Kalki, Deepika, and I had a blast. We would drink bhang (cannabis), hiding from everyone so that no one gets to know. I have many fond memories of this song and I get to relive those memories because of this wonderful performance," he added while recalling his shooting experience for 'Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani' along with his co-actors.



Rutuja Sawant shared her dreadful casting couch experience

Team Absolute | Mumbai

'Pishachini' actress Rutuja Sawant shared how she once encountered the casting couch in the initial years of her career and called it one of the scariest incidents of her life.

Rutuja said: "It's an ordinary thing for a struggling actor to audition a lot, so at the age of 20 when I was looking for work, one day I got a call from an agent who asked me to come to his office for a meeting. The agent, instead of discussing the work, tried to get close to me and grab me. I got so scared that I ran away from that place."

She said: "That incident gave me a lesson to be

more careful when I meet people whom I don't know. I stopped going to any meetings alone after that incident, I always used to take a friend along to meetings. Even today, I usually cross-check the details of the person I am going to meet regarding work." "Unfortunately, many new actors had to face such bad experiences and newcomers easily fell victim to it. But I believe that there are good and bad people everywhere, you just have to play safe and keep yourself a priority," Rutuja concluded.

Rutuja Sawant is known for her roles in shows like 'Mehndi Hai Rachne Waali' and 'Choti Saardarni'.



Sharvari