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BEFORE ECONOMY REGAINS PRE-COVID TREND LINE, SLOWDOWN MAY BE SETTING IN

RECESSION...!

Overall, post-Covid economic recovery may be strong in pockets, but remains weak on the aggregate, Nuvama Institutional Equities said in a report. On a 5 year CAGR trend basis, real GDP is growing at 4 per cent, which is sluggish. The weakness is pronounced in manufacturing (2.7 per cent), whereas services (5 per cent) seems to be doing relatively well. Nominal GDP growth stands at 11 per cent on a trend basis, (similar to pre-Covid trend), aided by higher prices.

Sanjeev Sharma | New Delhi

On a trend basis (5YCAGR), real GDP is growing at just 4.1 per cent despite upward revisions in FY21 and FY22. Seen differently, real GDP is running 9-10 per cent below the pre-covid trend line, which is notable given pent-up demand is arguably behind, Nuvama Institutional Equities said in a note.

"But what is more concerning is that even before the economy could regain the pre-Covid trend line; a slowdown may be setting in. Manufactured exports are already in contraction while services exports could slow down next amid a broadening global downturn," the report said.

Domestically, consumption momentum is clearly fading, and capex could follow suit amid slowing prices, rising cost of capital and slowing consumption and exports, it added.

Near term uncertainties are rising due to global geopolitical and economic issues, El Nino and negative noise levels ahead of 2024 General elections, Prabhudas Lilladher said in a report.

High frequency indicators like GST



collection, peak power demand, recovery in air Travel, PV, CV, housing, capital goods and improving capacity utilisation are positive. Rural demand has failed to pick up due to high inflation but strong rabi crop, declining inflation, and likely increase in rural spending ahead of 2024 elections will likely revive demand although EL Nino remains a key risk, it added.

"El Nino is knocking at the doors as temperatures around the country are soaring high and there are significant variations across the globe. We note that some regions in India are recording temperatures 3-5 degrees higher

than normal. Both Skymet and IMD have warned of higher than expected heat in the summer months from April to June," the report said.

Also, winter monsoons were weak this year (deficit of 37 per cent in Nov'22, 14 per cent in Dec'22 and 13 per cent in Jan'23) with major northern states like Punjab, western UP and MP receiving higher rainfall deficit. EL Nino along with weaker monsoons is expected to have multi pronged adverse impact on the Indian agriculture and economy.

"Firstly, it poses a high threat to the standing Rabi crop, especially wheat a higher temperatures can lower out-

put. Secondly, El Nino usually leads to weaker monsoons and hence a threat of poor Kharif crop. Poor Rabi and Kharif crop output can push food inflation further up and delay rural demand recovery. Lastly, higher temperatures will lead to higher power demand which could add to higher coal imports and inflation woes for consumers," the report said.

According to Motilal Oswal Financial Services, an analysis of 12 rural consumption indicators suggests that rural spending rose 5.3 per cent YoY in 9MFY23 v/s 0.6 per cent YoY growth in 9MFY22.

However, consumption grew at a three-quarter low of 4.6 per cent YoY in 3QFY23 v/s 6.5 per cent/5.6 per cent YoY rise in 1Q/2QFY23. The slowdown was primarily led by: four-quarter low growth in real agriculture GVA, continued fall in non-agricultural wages, sharp slowdown (nine-quarter low growth) in two-wheeler sales, continued decline in farmers' terms of trade (negative for eight quarters now), drop in real farm exports (first decline in 10 quarters), and three-quarter low growth in real farm credit in 3QFY23.

Overall, consumption demand has started its southward journey. Both rural and urban consumption grew at a three-quarter low in 3QFY23.

CBI raids Rabri Devi's residence in Patna in land for job scam



New Delhi | Agencies

The CBI on Monday conducted raids at the residence of former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi in Patna in connection with the land of job scam.

"We are doing further investigation in the matter," a CBI source said.

The central probe agency has got the prosecution sanction against former Railway Minister Lalu Prasad in the matter.

In January, the agency furnished the prosecution sanction letter before the concerned court.

The CBI had in October last year charge sheeted 16 accused, including Lalu Prasad, Rabri Devi and their daughter Hema Yadav.

The CBI had said that during the investigation, it has been found that the accused in conspiracy with the then GM Central Railways and CPO, Central Railways engaged persons as substitutes in lieu of land either in their name or in the name of their close relatives.

This land was acquired at prices lower than the prevailing circle rate and much lower than the market rate.

"The candidates have used false TC and submitted false attested documents to the Ministry of Railways," the CBI has alleged in the charge sheet.

The CBI has learnt in the probe that Rabri Devi and Hema Yadav were gifted land in

▶ AFTER A CBI TEAM REACHED HER RESIDENCE HERE ON MONDAY IN CONNECTION WITH THE IRCTC LAND FOR JOB CASE, FORMER BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER RABRI DEVI HERSELF ANNOUNCED SAID THAT THE AGENCY HAD COME TO QUESTION HER. A 12 MEMBER TEAM IN THREE SUVs REACHED RABRI DEVI'S RESIDENCE AT 10 A.M. ON MONDAY AND STAYED FOR 4 HOURS, COMING OUT AT 2 P.M. AFTER THEIR DEPARTURE, RABRI DEVI REACHED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO ATTEND THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE ONGOING BUDGET SESSION. "SUCH A RAID AND QUESTIONING IS A REGULAR PROCEDURE. NOTHING HAS HAPPENED," RABRI DEVI TOLD REPORTERS AFTER REACHING THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

connection with the scam by job seekers who were later appointed in railways.

Haridayanand Chaudhary, a railway employee and Bhola Yadav, the then OSD to former Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav were earlier arrested by the CBI.

Bhola was Lalu's OSD between 2004 to 2009.

The CBI registered a case against the Yadav, the then union railway minister, his wife Rabri Devi, two daughters and 15 others including unknown Public servants and Private persons.

SISODIA TO BE LODGED IN TIHAR'S JAIL NUMBER 1

New Delhi:

AAP leader and former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia will be lodged in central jail number 1 of the Tihar jail, officials said on Monday.



According to prison officials, Sisodia will be lodged in Jail number 1 after the due formalities.

Asked about Sisodia seeking spectacles, Bhagawad Geeta, a diary and a pen inside the prison, which was also allowed by the court, the official said that they will also see the specific order, if any.

A Delhi court on Monday sent Sisodia to judicial custody till March 20 in the alleged liquor policy scam being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Counsel appearing for the central agency said that at this stage, they are not seeking further CBI remand but in the next 15 days, they might seek it.

Maha to open government job avenues for transgenders soon

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a significant move, the Maharashtra government told the Bombay High Court on Monday that it will issue orders within a week providing a third window for transgender persons to access government jobs and education.

State Advocate-General Birendra Saraf said that a committee would also be set up under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2019, and police recruitment rules would be amended to include physical standards for transgender persons in certain posts like constables or drivers.

His submission came before the division bench of Acting Chief Justice SV. Gangapurwala and Justice Sandeep Marne in a petition filed by one Vinayak Kashid, seeking modifications to a recruitment process for 170 vacant posts of the MahaTranso which did not specify reservations for the transgender persons.

Kashid had filed his petition last year seeking compliance of the Supreme Court's verdict of 2014, making and implementing a policy to include transpersons in government jobs.

The Central Rules of 2020 under the Act



were issued to provide for procedures facilitating the identification of a transgender person for employment purposes, formulate policies to implement the Act within two years, and in December 2022, the High Court directed the state government to do the needful in the matter.

Saraf told the high court that the committee will be formed in a week to prepare its report on guidelines for transgenders within two months.

The move will come as a breather for thousands of transgenders hoping to apply for various government jobs in the recruitment drives that are undertaken or will be taken up in the coming weeks.

26 CASES OF H3N2 VARIANT FOUND IN K'TAKA, GOVT ADVISES CAUTION

Bengaluru: Karnataka Health Minister Dr. K. Sudhakar said on Monday that 26 persons have tested positive for the H3N2 variant in the state, and among these two cases are reported from Bengaluru.

"The children below the age of 15 years face more danger from the H3N2 variant. It also infects persons above the age of 60 years," he stated.

Addressing a press conference at the Vidhana Soudha after holding a high-level meeting over the rising Covid cases and H3N2 variant, Sudhakar also advised that pregnant women need to be careful.

Sudhakar also said that a total of 60 cases of Adenovirus, which causes acute respiratory infections (ARI), were found in Karnataka. "For six months, the staff of the Health department have not been wearing masks. Right from this day, the staff who work in hospitals and health care centres must wear masks," he said.

JAIPUR BANK ROBBED IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, PERPETRATORS FLEE WITH RS 10 LAKH

Jaipur | Agencies

In a brazen daylight robbery, two armed, masked men barged in a branch of a government bank in Jaipur on Monday and fled with Rs 10 lakh, police said.

An Indian Overseas Bank branch on Ajmer Road was targeted, police said, adding that checkpoints have been set up across the city to nab the robbers.

According to eyewitnesses, the robbery was carried out by two criminals who came to the bank branch on a motorcycle and fled on it after committing the crime.

A police official said that the two men, wearing masks, entered the bank branch at around 9.45 a.m. when only three employees were present there, and threatened the



staff with a pistol. They forced the staff to open the vault where Rs 10 lakh was kept and fled with the money by 10.30 am.

A local police team reached the spot after bank officials informed them.

The robbers were visible in CCTV and police have taken the footage to identify them while further investigations are in progress, police said.

Amitabh Bachchan suffers a muscle tear during film shoot in Hyderabad

Hyderabad | Agencies

Superstar Amitabh Bachchan was injured during the shooting of his upcoming film, 'Project K', in Hyderabad.

The actor shared his health update on his blog. After consulting a doctor and CT scan at AIG Hospital in Hyderabad, he left for Mumbai, where he is taking rest at his home.

The 80-year-old suffered a muscle tear to his right rib cage during an action sequence of the film. He wrote that after the incident the film shoot was postponed.

"In Hyderabad at the shoot for Project K, during an action shot, I have got injured .. rib cartilage popped broke and muscle tear to the right rib cage .. canceled shoot .. did Doctor consult and scan by CT at the AIG Hospital in Hyderabad and flown back home .. strapping has been done and rest been advocated .. yes painful .. on movement and breathing .. will take some weeks they say before some normalisation will occur .. some medication is on also for pain ..," Amitabh wrote.

"So all work that was to be done has been



suspended and canceled dropped postponed for the moment until healing occurs .. I rest at Jalsa and am mobile a bit for all the essential activities .. but yes in rest and generally lying around," he wrote.

"It shall be difficult or let me say .. I shall be unable to meet, the well wishers at Jalsa Gate this evening .. so do not come .. and do inform as much as you can to those that intend coming .. All else is well..," he added.

It was immediately not clear when Amitabh was injured.

▶ ON DECEMBER 15, 2022, NURSES OF THE STATE-FUNDED NHS CARRIED OUT THEIR FIRST NATION-WIDE STRIKE IN THE UNION'S 106-YEAR HISTORY AMID RISING COSTS AND DEMAND FOR SALARY HIKES.

▶ AN ESTIMATED 100,000 NURSES WENT ON STRIKE AT 76 HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CENTRES, CANCELLING AN ESTIMATED 70,000 APPOINTMENTS.

▶ LAST MONTH, BRITAIN'S LARGEST NURSING UNION WARNED OF A WORKFORCE "EXODUS" WITH TENS OF THOUSANDS OF YOUNG STAFF LEAVING THE PROFESSION.

▶ NEARLY 43,000 NURSES ACROSS THE UK IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THEIR CAREERS HAVE QUIT OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, FIGURES FROM THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING SHOWED - ALMOST EQUAL TO THE RECORD 47,000 NURSING POSTS NOW VACANT IN NHS ENGLAND, THE GUARDIAN REPORTED.

More than 100 Indian healthcare professionals to be hired in UK

LONDON | Agencies

In a bid to address shortage of healthcare workers, more than 100 professionals from India are set to be recruited by the UK's National Health Service (NHS) Trust that runs the York and Scarborough Hospitals.

According to The Scarborough News, the York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has made offers to 107 medical staff, including 97 registered nurses and 10 allied health professionals, following a recruitment trip to Kerala.

The Trust, which has



been facing issues with the recruitment and retention of staff, stated that "work is underway to process applications and support candidates with their English to enable cohorts to be drafted so we can

plan commencement dates across 2023/24". The trust, which runs York and Scarborough hospitals, had an 11.5 per cent vacancy rate for healthcare support workers in adult inpatient areas

and a 14.5 per cent vacancy rate for registered nurses in adult inpatient areas in January this year, according to the news report. The vacancy rate on adult inpatient wards dropped to 7.6 per cent after international nurses joined the trust, the board was told.

She said there was "immense work ongoing around retention" and added that the trust was struggling with staff who were leaving "very quickly", chief nurse Heather McNair said at a previous board meeting. McNair added that the vacancy levels for healthcare assistants remains high.



LS COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES TO HEAR NOTICE AGAINST DELHI POLICE ON MARCH 10

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The privilege committee of Lok Sabha will take up on Friday the matters of breach of privilege against Delhi police officials and a news channel for mis-reporting.

"Notice of question of breach of privilege dated 05 March, 2020 given by Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, MP against the Delhi Police Officials posted at Vijay Chowk, Delhi, for allegedly obstructing him from proceeding towards Parliament House for attending the Session and a further notice dated 6 March 2020 against 'News 18 Network' News Channel and an unnamed senior Delhi Police official for allegedly misreporting the matter," the Lok Sabha Secretariat notice states.

The same day oral evidence on breach of privilege



against Rahul Gandhi will also be heard by the Committee. The Committee of Privileges has called BJP MP Nishikant Dubey to hear his case. Dubey, along with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi, had given notices of breach of privilege against Rahul Gandhi "for making a misleading, derogatory, unpar-

liamentarily and incriminatory statement during a discussion on the motion of thanks on President's Address in the House on February 7 and a further request for expunction of the impugned statements.

However, sources close to Rahul Gandhi have insisted that he has already replied to the notice.

Delhi HC issues notice to MCD over non-payment of salaries to teachers

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Monday issued notice to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on a plea moved by several teachers over non-payment of salaries since January 2023 to various employees, sanitation workers in the Education Department of MCD.

The plea seeks the court's direction to the civic body to forthwith release due salaries to all the teachers and Class IV employees and pay future salaries also in time.

The division bench of Justice Satish Chander Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad, dealing with a bunch of pleas filed in 2020, showed displeasure over the delay in giving salaries.

The court asked the MCD counsel: "When your Commissioner had assured us of timely payment of salaries then why salaries to teachers and class IV employees have not been paid?"



On February 2, MCD had told the High Court that it had paid salaries and pensions to employees and retired staff members till December, and the payment for January would be cleared soon.

The bench issued a notice to the

civic body and listed the matter for the next hearing on March 24.

Appearing for MCD teachers, advocate Ashok Agarwal told the court that due salaries have not been paid to close to 20,000 teachers since January 2023.

On January 30, the High Court had summoned the MCD Commissioner, Delhi Finance Secretary, and Urban Development Secretaries over non-payment of salaries.

The same bench had said that despite assuring them of timely payments, the employees are not being paid, which is "unfortunate".

Even retired employees have moved pleas seeking the release of their pensions.

On December 21, last year, the AAP government and the MCD had promised that all dues will be cleared in four weeks.

Noting the above, the bench during the last hearing had directed the officials: "It is also strange that the pensioners are not receiving the pensions and they are hand to mouth. This court is left with no choice but to direct the personal appearance of the Commissioner of MCD, Finance Secretary and Secretary of Urban Development of the GNCTD."

Kerala HC not to interfere in lower court case order against 'Cyanide Killer'

Kochi | Agencies

The Kerala High Court on Monday refused to interfere with the trial court's decision to frame charges against Jollyamma Joseph, also known as Jolly, who is the prime accused in the Koodathayi cyanide murders.

The Koodathayi cyanide murders refer to the mysterious deaths of six persons (all of whom were related to the accused) in Koodathayi in Kozhikode district.

Three of the persons alleged to have been murdered by Jolly through cyanide poisoning were her then husband Roy Thomas and his parents.

The present plea of Jolly pertained to the murder of Roy Thomas alone.

Hearing the plea of Jolly, the single judge dismissed



the plea filed by Jolly challenging the order of the trial court to adjourn framing of charges against her.

Jolly and Roy Thomas had married in 1997 and were residing together with Roy's parents at Koodathai.

Jolly was supposedly in an extra-marital relationship with another man whom she convinced to get cyanide for her. She is alleged to have mixed the cyanide in the food that Roy was eating with the intention to kill him.

On September 30, 2011, Jolly's husband felt sick after eating, was hospitalised and subsequently passed away.

At the time, Jolly informed the relatives that Roy had died because of a heart attack. The FIR (first information report) then was forwarded to the Sessions Court and further investigation was closed supposedly because there was no suspicion of murder.

However, some other family members were suspicious and the investigation was reopened in 2019.

The investigating agency that reopened the probe decided to exhume the bodies of the deceased, including Roy. With scientific examination indicating foul play, the police arrested Jolly in October 2019, along with two other accused persons.

J&K GOVT TO REGULARISE COLONIES OCCUPIED BY POJK REFUGEES

J&K Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha said on Monday that colonies in which displaced persons from Pakistan occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) are living would be regularised.

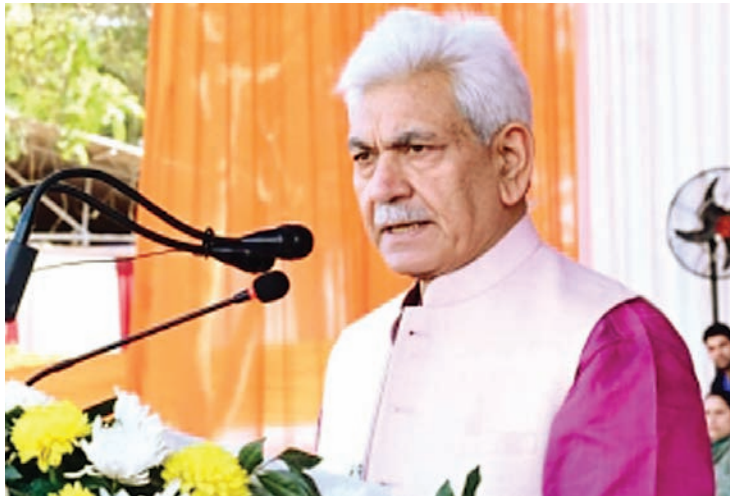
Jammu | Agencies

After attending an official event called 'Special governance for PoJK people', Sinha told reporters that the UT government has identified land for construction of PoJK Bhawan for these displaced people. He added that colonies where these displaced persons have been living would be regularised shortly.

"These people have suffered a lot and their children are the worst sufferers. We will soon have a PoJK Bhawan and the colonies where these people are living at present will be regularised shortly."

"Children of displaced PoJK refugees will be given priority in jobs and education", Sinha said. He assured that the problems faced by the PoJK refugees would be resolved as per their aspirations.

He reiterated that PoJK is an integral part of India and no power on earth can keep it away from the union



for long.

"I urge all the PoJK people, including women and youth will play their part in building a strong and vibrant India. "Industrial boom is coming up

in J&K. Rs 13000 crore work related to industries have already started and more is in the offing. There was a shortage of land which is being looked into.

"A large number registrations from Kashmiri Pandit youth have been received by the administration for entrepreneurship, similarly, PoJK youth should follow the suit."

"Register your youth in the camps and administration will provide all support for your youth to become entrepreneurs who can provide employment to five other youth," he said.

He also said that 50 lakh youths have taken part in sports related activities as huge investment was made to upgrade the sports infrastructure across the UT.

He said a large number of people were deprived of their rights and it was for the first time after the historic decision taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 5, 2019, that these people got all their rights.

He revealed that the administration has directed all the banks to provide support to youths to start their own ventures.

Nikki Yadav murder case: Delhi court extends Sahil Gehlot's judicial custody

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court on Monday extended the judicial custody of Sahil Gehlot, the main accused in the Nikki Yadav murder case, and five others by 14 days.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dwarka courts, Samiksha Gupta extended their judicial custody till March 20.

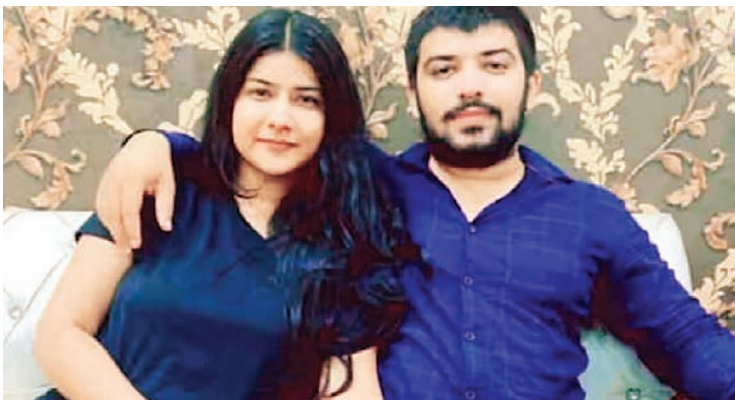
The magistrate also allowed family of co-accused Ashish and Lokesh to meet them in the courtroom.

Appearing for Lokesh, advocate Anirudh Yadav moved an application seeking the marking of the case diary and showed displeasure over manipulation in it.

The judge listed his application for hearing on March 13.

On February 20, Gupta had sent five co-accused to 14 days of judicial custody and two days later, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Archana Beniwal sent Gehlot to 12-day judicial custody.

Four fresh charges were invoked by



police under different Sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Gehlot's counsel D.S. Kumar had said that while the FIR was initially registered under Sections 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence, or giving false information to screen offender) of the IPC, police have now invoked Sections 120 B (criminal conspiracy), 34 (common intention), 202 (inten-

tional omission to give information of offence by person bound to inform), and 212 (harbouring offender).

Gehlot had allegedly strangled 23-year-old Yadav near Kashmiri Gate on February 10 and married another woman on the same day.

Yadav's body was found in a fridge at a dhaba, owned by Gehlot, in Mitraon village on the outskirts of Delhi on February 14.

Gehlot's father Virender Singh; cousins Naveen (a constable in Delhi Police) and Ashish; and friends Lokesh and Amar are accused of hatching a conspiracy to get rid of Yadav, so he could go ahead with his wedding with another woman.

According to a senior police official, Gehlot was interrogated at length during police custody and disclosed that Yadav was trying to stop him from marrying someone else as they had already solemnised their marriage in 2020. "She was pleading with him not to go ahead with the marriage fixed by his family with another girl on February 10. However, Gehlot along with his father, two cousins, and two friends hatched the conspiracy and planned to remove the deceased from their way," the official had said.

"He executed the plan and murdered her and informed other co-accused persons about it on the same day and then all of them went ahead with the marriage ceremony."

Special teams to check drunken driving, over-speeding on Holi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With Holi celebrations around the corner, the Delhi Traffic Police on Monday said that special checking teams will be deployed at 287 major intersections and 233 vulnerable points to check the incidents of drunken driving, over-speeding, reckless driving among others across the city on Wednesday.

According to traffic cops, these special traffic police checking teams will be stationed on various roads and strategic locations or intersections all over Delhi along with PCR and local police teams to check drunken driving, red light jumping, triple riding, driving by minor, driving/riding without helmet, performing stunts on two-wheelers and radar guns will be deployed at various vulnerable roads to check incidences of over-speeding.

"Further, as per the directions of Supreme Court



Committee on road safety, in cases of drunken driving, red light jumping, using mobile phone while driving, dangerous driving and over speeding, driving licence will also be seized and liable for suspension for a period of minimum three months," an advisory stated. "Action shall also be initiated against the registered owners of vehicles

whose vehicles are found to be driven by minors/unauthorized persons, performing stunts, driving without licence," it said.

Traffic cops also appealed to all motorists to avoid traffic violations, especially drunken driving, over speeding, triple riding, riding without helmet, driving in the wrong carriage way, etc.

Women are pillars of society: Himachal CM

Shimla | Agencies

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Monday said women are the pillars of the society, and when they are empowered, the whole world is empowered.

Presiding over the International Women's Day state-level function here organised by the Social Justice and Empowerment Department, several series of awareness programmes were organised all over the state from March 1 to 8 to apprise the women on issues like domestic violence, drug abuse, etc.

The Department has also organised programmes to highlight the social, economic, cultural and political achievement of women.

While extending greetings on International Women's Day, the Chief Minister said the equality of women matters the most.

"Today, the women are equally contributing as their male counterparts and they need to be supported as with the collective efforts of all we can achieve the unachievable." "Women have made a remarkable contribution in giving direction to society and the



civilisations can only progress when women are equally equated with men and given due respect," said Sukhu.

No society can progress without the contribution of women as they play an important role as a mother, daughter, wife and sister and contribute immensely in shaping society, he said.

The Chief Minister announced to increase the amount of Himachal Pradesh Mahila Vikas Protsahan Puraskar from Rs 21,000 to Rs 1 lakh and district-level awards from Rs 5,000 to Rs 25,000.

On the occasion, he also honoured the women who have excelled in various fields.

Will bulldoze houses of offenders if voted to power: Telangana BJP chief

Hyderabad | Agencies

BJP's Telangana unit president Bandi Sanjay Kumar said on Monday that if voted to power in Telangana, the BJP would bulldoze the houses of those indulging in crimes against women.

Exuding confidence that BJP will come to power in Telangana, he said it would follow the model of Uttar Pradesh which is using bulldozers to demolish the houses of offenders.

He was addressing a day-long protest at the party office in Hyderabad to protest against increasing atrocities against women in the state.

Sanjay spoke extensively about the death of Preethi, MD student of Kaktiya Medical College (KMC), who committed suicide due to alleged harassment by her senior.

He reiterated that the government should order a probe by a sitting judge into the death of Preethi. He alleged that the BRS government was siding with Preethi's senior Saif who was harassing her.

Sanjay, who called on the family members of Preethi in Jangaon district on Sunday, alleged that Preethi's murder was being portrayed as suicide. After the meeting, Sanjay had said that all



evidences in the case were destroyed. He claimed that the government was acting in favour of the accused as it fears that the accused will cause communal riots. He also claimed that the government is threatening family members of Preethi to follow their command.

The BJP leader said Preethi would have been alive if her complaint about harassment was taken

up seriously and acted up immediately by authorities.

He slammed state minister K.T. Rama Rao for terming the incident as a small issue. He also questioned if home minister Mehmood Ali is confined to the old city of Hyderabad.

Sanjay said police did not reveal full facts of how Preethi died. He also wanted to know if her mobile phone was unlocked by fingerprints of dead body.

BJP leader and actor Vijayashanthi alleged that Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao was raising the issue of Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's arrest in Delhi liquor policy scam as he fears arrest of his daughter K. Kavitha in the same case. She slammed Chief Minister KCR for speaking about Sisodia while forgetting the safety of women.

She came down heavily on KCR for writing a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with other opposition leaders over Sisodia's arrest.

Vijayashanthi also alleged that the chief minister was promoting liquor consumption in the state, thus turning the state into a curse.

"Women have no protection in the state. What is the government doing when women are being murdered," she asked.



POLICE SERVICE IS THE TEST OF THE TRUST OF COMMON CITIZENS: GOVERNOR PATEL

Contribute in creating a sensitive and professional identity of the police. Trainee IPS of Madhya Pradesh cadre from the Governor. Courtesy visit by officials

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel awarded trainee I.P.S. The officers have been asked to use their talent and knowledge to create such an environment in which instead of being afraid of the law enforcers, the citizens fear and respect the law. No innocent should be punished. He said that the role of IPS in creating a sensitive and professional identity of the police force. The role of officers is important.

Governor Mangubhai Patel was addressing the trainee officers of Madhya Pradesh cadre of 74th batch of Indian Police Service at Raj Bhavan. Governor Patel said that I.P.S. The responsibility of the officers is not limited to law and order and honest conduct to uphold the rule of law and the general concept of our democratic polity, but is also the test of faith of the common citizens. Common, I.P.S. Officers are seen as custodians of law and order and officers who help in the delivery of justice. Governor Patel said that I.P.S. Being an officer, you will have a heavy responsibility on your shoulders. It is a service which is one of the pillars of our national administrative system. He said that I.P.S. The officer gets special rights and powers, which actually become a means of



Patel said that governments keep on coming serving the people. I.P.S. The primary duty of the officer is to serve the common citizens and ensure that the poorest of the poor, the underprivileged and the last man gets justice. Mr. Patel said that

and going, officers are continuity in the system and representative of the constitution. Everyone is also expected to protect the dignity of the law. He said that I.P.S. It's a rare job in which there is an opportunity to make a differ-

ence in the lives of thousands of people, not just a few. It should be used in the form of nation and society building. As an officer of the police forces, one can contribute effectively in building the nation-society by setting one's own example of performing one's duty without fear, favoritism and delay. The Governor appointed trainee I.P.S. Got introduced to the officers. It was told that out of 09 Indian Police Service officers of Madhya Pradesh cadre of 74th batch, 4 from Madhya Pradesh, 2 from Uttar Pradesh and -. The officers are residents of Karnataka, Rajasthan and Delhi. All officers undergo basic training at the National Police Academy, Hyderabad. At present they will undergo practical training for 29 weeks at various places and institutes in their cadre state Madhya Pradesh. They will be given 04 weeks training at Madhya Pradesh Police Academy, Bhopal. The remaining training will be provided in the districts of posting. From the training, the officers will be familiar with the administrative procedures, local legislation, geographical landscape and culture of Madhya Pradesh. Additional Director General of Police Training Anuradha Shankar and Deputy Secretary to the Governor Swaroachish Somvanshi were present. Operation was done by Malay Jain, Deputy Director Training of Police Academy.

PROBATIONARY OFFICERS OF THE INDIAN POLICE SERVICE CALLED ON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that it is a matter of pride and good fortune that the officers selected for the Indian Police Service get the opportunity to serve the country and the people. You can make a career in any field based on your qualification and efficiency. That you have chosen civil service as your career is a reflection of your commitment to serve the nation and the people. "Desh-Bhakti and Jan-Seva" is the basic mantra of Madhya Pradesh Police. Without compromising on the principles, deal with the criminals strictly, treat the gentlemen like a flower and perform your duties. Probationary IPS posted in Chief Minister Chouhan State. He was discussing with the officials at the Samatva Bhavan located at the Chief Minister's residence. 09 probationary officers of the Indian Police Service posted in the state met Chief Minister Chouhan.



Chief Minister Chouhan said that the Madhya Pradesh Police has presented wonderful examples of sensitivity in the management of Simhastha and the arrangements made during the Corona period. Madhya Pradesh Police has a glorious tradition. Probationary officers should work with full hard work and soft behavior keeping a positive attitude and present an example of their working method by keeping a lively dialogue with the general public.

Probationary officers of the Indian Police Service, Abhishek Ranjan, Adarsh Kant Shukla, Anand Kaladgi, Ankit Soni, Ayush Gupta, Krishna Lalchandani, Mayur Khandelwal, Narendra Rawat and Vidita Dagar called on Chief Minister Chouhan. Deputy Commissioner of Police Bhopal Vineet Kapoor was with him.

Chief Minister Chouhan planted saplings of Neem, Saptaparni and Peepal



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Neem, Saptaparni and Peepal in the garden located at Shyamala Hills. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, social worker Pritam Lodhi, representatives of Govindpura Industrial Association of Bhopal and 9-year-old child artist Pranjal Sharma, who

became the mascot of Khelo India event, Mowgli, planted saplings. Sarvashri Amarjeet Singh, Madanlal Gurjar, Vijay Gaur, Neeraj Sharma, Ashok Patel and Nandlal Gupta planted saplings of the association. Child artist Pranjal Sharma's parents Devendra Sharma and Jayanti Sharma also planted saplings. Kamlesh Rajpal also participated in plantation.

MAN CHARGED FOR RAPING 2-YEAR-OLD COW

Rewa: A man has been booked for allegedly raping a two-year-old calf in a village in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa district, police said on Monday.

The accused allegedly committed the act in the backyard of a house in Malaigawa village on Saturday night. He fled the spot after the owner of the calf arrived at the spot, an official said.

A case was registered under section 377 (unnatural offences) of the Indian Penal Code and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Vivek Lal said, adding the accused is yet to be arrested.

3 Tigers to be translocated to Madhav National Park on March 10

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Forest department will begin translocating a tiger and two tigresses to Madhav National Park (MNP) in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh, which is devoid of big cats, from other tiger reserves in the state on March 10, an official said on Monday.

Shivpuri borders Sheopur district which houses the Kuno National Park, a new home for 20 cheetahs brought from Namibia and South Africa under the ambitious Cheetah reintroduction project.

"A tiger and two tigresses from different tiger reserves of MP will be shifted to Madhav National Park, which is spread over an area of more than 350 sq km. The shifting will start from March 10," Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Subharanjan Sen told an agency.

Subharanjan Sen said this is the third time the Madhya Pradesh forest



department is going to re-introduce a tiger in a wildlife sanctuary, which is devoid of the majestic beasts.

Before this, the striped big cats were successfully rehabilitated in the Panna Tiger Reserve and the

Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary in Sagar, he added.

According to Forest officials, Madhav National Park has a good prey base for big cats and the revival programme was cleared by the

Centre. The striped big cats would be most probably picked up from Panna, Satpura and Bandhavgarh tiger reserves for their translocation to the Madhav National Park, they added.

The big cats would be first kept in separate enclosures for some time in Madhav National Park before being released in the wild, the officials said.

"They are going to be radio-collared. Three teams have been formed to keep an eye on these big cats when they will be released in the wild, they added.

Sen said the number of tigers was fairly good in Madhav National Park in 1970.

According to local people, no tiger has been seen in and around Madhav National Park since 2010.

As per reports, tigers from Rajasthan roamed around Madhav National Park for some time in 2010-12. Wildlife experts said the national park had lost its tiger population primarily due to hunting by royals.

GONDWANA PARTY LEADER DEFENDING EXPLOITERS OF GIRL STUDENTS IN DINDORI: NCPCR

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Days after a principal of private boarding missionary school in tribal dominated area in Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh was arrested and four others were booked for the alleged sexual harassment of minor girl students, Chairman of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) Priyank Kanoongo on Monday accused Gondwana Gantantra Party (GGP) leader Radheshyam Kokaria of attempting to save preparators of the crime.

He also accused the Gondwana party leader of threatening the president of the Child Working Committee (CWC).

Kanoongo said anyone found abusing children rights will be punished as per the law and those found creating hurdles to suppress the issue in an attempt to save the preparators of the crime will also be considered an accused. He said that action against the accused was taken following complaints of over a half dozen girls students.

NCPCR, he said, is committed to ensuring the protection children's rights and any one coming against their rights will be punished. "SCPCR rescued children from a preparatory school in Dindori on Saturday. Dabang Radheshyam Kokaria has threatened the CWC president, and is pressuring the child molesters to help them. Action is being taken after taking cognizance, instructions are being given to the police to file an FIR," Kanoongo posted a message on his

official twitter handle. Talking to reporter on Monday, he said, "No matter who that person is. No one can threaten persons working for children's rights. I am reaching Dindori by today evening and will meet the district police and location administration. District CWC will lodge a complaint against Radheshyam Kakariya."

The matter came to the fore on Saturday during an inspection by the Child Welfare Committee State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) at the hostel where around 600 students are residing.

During interaction with the inspection team, a group of girl students alleged physical and sexual harassment by school staff. On Sunday, the school principal Nan Singh Yadav was arrested, while

four others, one of them a woman and a priest were also booked under relevant act. "When we visited the hostel, which is located in a forest, we found the students in very bad condition. During the discussion, eight girl students from classes 6 to 12 alleged that the principal and the teacher used to touch them inappropriately by calling them alone in the classroom.

The girls broke down and said this was going on for the past many years. Some boys also hinted towards harassment with them, but they didn't reveal much," SCPCR member Omkar Singh said.

Nan Singh Yadav was produced before a district court and granted bail on Monday, sources told reporter.

Bhagoriya to be celebrated as a state and cultural festival

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan reached Alirajpur on Monday. Chouhan was seen drenched in the colors of the tribal festival Bhagoriya. He was seen wearing a tribal dress, a turban on his head and a jacket over his kurta. He also wore dark glasses. Shivraj Singh Chouhan joined Bhagoria at Alirajpur. Wife Sadhna Singh was also present with him. She was also seen in tribal getup.

CM Shivraj Singh performed Kanya Pujan in the program organized here. After



this said in his address that it is the month of Falgun. Holi is about to come. Spring season is underway. Our youth are dancing to the beats of Mandali. I salute the tribal culture. The CM said that Bhagoria is an integral part of tribal tradition and a folk festival.

I declare that henceforth Bhagoriya will be considered as a state festival and a cultural festival. He has also announced that a survey will be conducted to bring water to 106 villages of Sondwa in the district. It is BJP government, why to worry.

Thunder and hailstorm in Madhya Pradesh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The weather has changed in Madhya Pradesh since two days. On Monday, several districts including Ujjain, Mandasaur, Ratlam, Rajgarh and Chhindwara received hailstorm along with rain. Heavy hailstorm occurred in Malhargarh, Piplia Mandi, Botal Ganj, Sitamau areas including Mandasaur city. In Piplia Mandi and Malhargarh, there was a sheet of hail on the highway. Due to the hailstorm, standing crops in the fields have been destroyed. In Ratlam, it rained in the afternoon with strong winds. Hail fell in many villages of Namli region with strong wind and rain. It was cloudy in Rajgarh and there was a strong storm. There was heavy rain with thunder and lightning at many places across the district including Rajgarh, Khilchipur, Zirapur, Machhalpur, Bhojpur, Chhaprihera. There was heavy rain with hail in Ujjain's Unhel. There, it rained in Chhindwara's Chaurai and other areas including Jamtara. Hail also fell at many places. Hail fell for 20 minutes at Ikodia, Chandadhana in Sironj tehsil of Vidisha district. There has been a huge loss in the wheat crop.



Morena and Bhind districts. The wind speed will be 18 km per hour. At the same time, there will be a drop in day and night temperatures.

Why did the weather change? Such weather usually happens in the month of Ashadh. Due to the effect of two systems, this situation happened in Phalgun. Meteorologist SH Pandey told that Western Disturbance is active in North India. Along with this, south-west winds are reaching Madhya Pradesh. Due to this, warm and moist winds are coming from the Arabian Sea.

Maharashtra is a bit hot due to change in weather. Warm winds are coming from there and cold winds are coming from the north. Due to the meeting of both, cloud formation is taking place in central India.

Night temperature dropped The night temperature has dropped due to rain, while there is a humid effect in the day. The temperature has come below 16 degrees in Khajuraho, Narsinghpur, Naugaon, Rewa, Umariya, Khandwa, Pachmarhi, Khargone, Dhar. The temperature is running between 32 to 36 during the day. The highest temperature in the day is beyond 37 degrees in Mandla. At the same time, Khandwa recorded the lowest night temperature of 13 degrees.

According to meteorologists, the weather will remain like this till March 9. Only after this there will be a change in the weather and there

will be intense heat. There are chances of rain in 20 districts of the state. These include Bhopal, Raisen, Khandwa, Khargone, Barwani,

Burhanpur, Jabalpur, Narsinghpur, Katni, Narmadapuram, Betul, Harda, Gwalior, Shivpuri, Guna, Ashoknagar Datia, Sheopur,





EDITOR'S SPECS

UNITE, OR PERISH: MAHAGATHBANDHAN'S MESSAGE TO OPPN

Next year's Lok Sabha elections are unlikely to be a cakewalk for the BJP and one of the reasons for this is opposition unity. The opposition leaders are frequently putting up a show of unity at rallies, conventions and birthday parties. It happened during the convention of the CPI-ML in Patna, the Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) rally in Purnea as well as in Chennai on Wednesday when Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin celebrated his 70th birthday with leaders of different political parties, including the Congress -- all on one platform. Next year's general elections are crucial for all the opposition parties. Their leaders are already claiming that the Constitution of the country will come under serious threat if the BJP retains power at the Centre. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his deputy Tejashwi Yadav also know this fact and hence they are not losing any opportunity to unite the opposition leaders. At the CPI-ML's 11th national convention held recently in Patna, Nitish Kumar and Tejashwi Yadav appealed to the Congress leadership to take the initiative in uniting the opposition parties. Nitish Kumar even told Congress' Salman Khurshid to convey his message to the top Congress leadership. He also said that he is waiting for a call from the Congress party. Tejashwi Yadav, during the same event, also advocated for opposition unity with the Congress party. He appealed to the Congress to allow regional parties to stay in the driver's seat where they are in a strong position. Khurshid assured them they are on the same side and everyone is waiting for who will say 'I Love You' first. In the Purnea rally on February 25, Congress state president Akhilesh Prasad Singh assured that his party is with the Mahagathbandhan in Bihar and favours opposition unity. Singh said the Congress party's top leadership is looking keenly at the unity of the Mahagathbandhan.

BHUPESH BAGHEL APPEARS AS POLL STAR OF THE CONGRESS!

Vinod Kumar Shukla

Undoubtedly the presence of the Congress in the country has shrunk in the past decades despite every attempt made to revive the party. Efforts are being made from all across and in this struggle leaders like Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel are giving hope to the party and workers. The way Chhattisgarh chief minister is carrying out things for the party, they are beyond comprehension. Making the list of his achievements longer, the successful organisation of 85th Plenary of the Congress in Raipur reminded the olden days and glory of the Congress. Bagel was at the Centre of its successful execution. It was organised and managed in such a way that he not only stood apart but emerged as one of the dependable regional Satrap for the Congress who is here to deliver. It is not just the good governance in the state, Baghel has constantly been living up to the expectation of the top brass of the party whether in Himachal Pradesh recently or elsewhere in the past. He has many such qualities that make him a leader to reckon with and a hope for the future. A Hindi speaking, OBC leader, CM experience, politically savvy, suave and age by his side at 61 make him a leader for the days to come. The Raipur Plenary has catapulted him in the top league of the Congress when the party is struggling for electoral success and old timers are leaving the party for better deals. Not just governance and organisational responsibilities but Baghel has emerged as a frontline leader by taking on political adversaries while maintaining a firm grip on his home state with his pro-farmer, pro-poor schemes aimed at socio-economic



development of the rural areas. The Congress has gained strength in the last four years in the state after the landslide victory in 2018. It has won all five by-polls held in the state which has made his acceptability at the national level even wider. As the senior observer in the Himachal Pradesh election, he ensured a resounding victory for the party. He spearheaded the poll campaign in HP with the promise to replicate some of the schemes implemented in Chhattisgarh such as the old pension scheme for government employees and procuring cow dung at Rs 2 per kg under Godhan Nyay Yojana. He actually throttled the monopolistic claim of the BJP on cows. Baghel was earlier appointed as party-in-charge and observer in the Assam and Uttar Pradesh polls as well. Baghel has been promoting the 'Chhattisgarh model' of putting money directly in poor people's pockets which has given a boost to the rural economy of the state. The uplift of farmers, poor, scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, who have

been the core constituency of the Congress for decades, is now his core competence once again. Development with the humane face is being recognized both by the people of the state and the party. To say that everything is hunky dory for him in the state is little misplaced as he too faced factionalism within the party and political attacks from outside the party including wrath of central investigating agencies. A power struggle broke out when he completed two and a half years in the office by senior minister T S Singhdeo staking claim for the top job on the basis of rotational chief ministership. The power struggle went on for nearly two and a half months before it subsided, yet it still became the talk of the town during intervals. Chhattisgarh is known as the rice bowl of India but for 18 years since it was carved out from Madhya Pradesh, farmers continued to be in debt trap, labourers migrated to other states for work while women, tribals and the youth saw no change or growth in their lives. His govern-

ment waived loans of farmers, procured paddy at the rate of Rs 25 per quintal and farmers started getting more money. The economic condition of people, including farmers and the poor is enhanced through unique schemes such as Godhan Nyay Yojana under which people can also earn money by selling cow dung. The Congress' claims that achievements of the Baghel government are very long. Coming back to Plenary, Baghel has drawn a bigger line with the successful organisation of the convention of the Congress where Hyderabad Plenary is always praised but he has left that way behind by managing the stay of over 20000 people with no distinction of food provided at the convention. There was nothing as such VIP at the convention. Vehicles were provided to everyone to reach the ground besides every other facility and safety measures from WiFi, lounge, retiring room, fire brigade,

mobile hospital and offices of the senior leaders of the party. Everything was in place beyond the imagination of anyone and its magnanimity was par excellence. Actually, there was a raze for the Chhattisgarh model of governance with books, bags and other literature being made available to delegates without anyone knowing who all had worked for the grand organisation of this convention. Enthusiastic Congress workers were so upbeat and bubbling with confidence to say that unfazed with ED raids, the confident Baghel was busy making the plenary a grand success who was successful at the very outset when he proposed to organise this in Raipur and got the nod from the high command. Unfazed with the arrest of Pawant Khera, ED raid at the premises of the businessman looking after the management of plenary, he made the event a success story and will be remembered in the days to come. On the last day the gathering of over one lakh people overwhelmed the High Command in the presence of leaders like Mallikarjuna Kharge, Priyanka Gandhi, Sukhwinder Singh Sukhkhhu besides many others. Everyone from Kharge to Priyanka praised him for the Chhattisgarh model of governance. After a very long time there appears to be a leader in the Congress who is a good strategist, manager, sharp, fearless and well equipped to run a government. Only time will tell, how much the Congress will be benefited by this 85th plenary but Baghel has not only won the hearts of the Congress high command and delegates but also shown his strength to the government at the Centre. The Congress can certainly count on him for its future endeavors.

international

Nine Balochistan Constabulary personnel killed in suicide blast

Quetta | Agencies

In yet another terror incident, at least nine personnel of the Balochistan Constabulary were killed while nine others sustained injuries in a suicide blast in Bolan, SSP Kachhi Mahmood Notezai told Geo News.

According to the police, the blast occurred near the Kambri bridge area of Bolan and the injured are being shifted to Divisional Headquarters Hospital.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) of Kachhi, Mehmood Notezai, said that the preliminary evidence suggests it was a suicide attack, however, the exact nature of the blast could be ascertained after the investigations, Geo News reported.

He said that a bomb disposal team reached the site of the incident and the area is being searched after the explosion.

The police said that three of the injured are in critical condition and are being shifted to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Sibi.

Balochistan Chief Minister Abdul Quddus Bizenjo condemned the incident, saying that the elements involved in terrorism want to achieve nefarious goals through cowardly actions.

"A conspiracy is being hatched to keep the



province from progressing by creating unrest and instability," he said, assuring that all these conspiracies will be foiled with the support of the people.

He offered his condolences to the families of those who were martyred.

Medical superintendent of Quetta's Civil Hospital said that emergency had been imposed at the facility and all the staff including consultants, doctors, pharmacists and paramedics had been called for duty.

He said that all staff and doctors were present in the general and emergency wards and operation theatres, Geo News reported.

PPP threatens to leave Pak govt coalition over flawed digital census

Hamza Ameer | Islamabad

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), a mainstream political force and a supporting pillar to the current ruling coalition government of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), has threatened to part ways from the federal government if it fails to meet and fulfil its promises of conducting an unbiased digital census and giving relief to the flood victims of the Sindh province.

PPP leader and incumbent Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has stated that it would be very difficult for his party to retain its position as part of the coalition government as there remained many promises pending fulfilment, which he said were coupled with major reservations over the manner the digital census exercise was being conducted.



Bilawal said that it was unacceptable that elections that elections would be held in one province as per the previous census data, while elections in other provinces would be held after completion of the ongoing digital census, which in itself has many flaws in it.

Reminding the federal government of its promises, Bilawal said that his party leadership will take up the

matter with the government in the National Assembly and he would speak to the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, asking him to fulfil his promises of relief aids for the flood hit Sindh province.

As per details of the flood relief for the province, at least 13.5 billion PKR was needed to provide relief to the affected farmers through the subsidy programme. It was decided between the

Sindh provincial government of PPP and the federal government that at least 4.7 billion PKR grant would be provided by the federal government, while the remaining 8.3 billion PKR would be provided by the Sindh government.

"We will take up the issue in the National Assembly. We would also speak to the premier to fulfil the promises made to the flood victims, otherwise it would be very difficult for the PPP to be part of the federal government."

"The digital census was being conducted at a time when general elections were being anticipated. How is it justified that elections to one provincial assembly is held on the bases of 2018 census, while the other on the digital census?" he queried.

Bilawal was referring to the decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan to have elections conducted in the

Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provinces by April 30 after former Prime Minister Imran Khan announced dissolution of both of his controlled assemblies to pressure the federal government to go into early general elections in the country.

PPP has been insisting that a census be done across the country before going into the general elections, highlighting that elections in the country should be held together, after the completion of the census and fresh distribution of constituencies as per population of each province.

The party's threat of parting ways is being considered as a serious challenge for the Shehbaz Sharif government as it cannot afford to tip off any of its coalition political partners.

IRAN PLANS TO LAUNCH SATELLITES IN COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA: MEDIA

Tehran: Iran plans to launch two homegrown satellites into space in cooperation with Russia in December 2023, Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA) reported.

Kowsar and Hodhod, built by an Iranian consortium of knowledge-based companies, are planned to be sent into an orbit 500 km above the Earth's surface by a foreign launch vehicle, said the report on Sunday.

Kowsar is an observation satellite with an imaging resolution of 3.5 metre per pixel, which can be used for agricultural purposes, surveying and demarcation. The satellite has an orbital lifespan of two years, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Hodhod satellite has uses in the area of the Internet of Things as well as agriculture, transportation and crisis management scenarios, according to the report.

Citing Hossein Shahrabi, Head of the Kowsar Space Consortium, ISNA reported that the contract for the launch of the satellites has been signed. ISNA reported in February 2022 that the Kowsar satellite had reached the testing and assembly stage after two years of development efforts by the consortium.

S.Korea offers compensation for victims of Japan's wartime forced labour

Seoul | Agencies

The South Korean government on Monday formally proposed compensating more than a dozen victims of Japan's wartime forced labour through a Seoul-backed public foundation, instead of direct payment from responsible Japanese firms.

The proposal announced by Foreign Minister Park Jin is intended to resolve the issue of compensating 15 Koreans who won legal battles against two Japanese firms accused of mobilising them for hard labour during World War II, reports Yonhap News Agency.

In 2018, South Korea's Supreme Court ordered Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. and Nippon Steel Corp. to pay them compensation.

Under President Yoon Suk-yeol's administration scheme, the Foundation for Victims of Forced Mobilization, affiliated with the Interior Ministry, will collect "voluntary" donations from the private sector.



It also plans to use the foundation, created in 2014, to compensate other plaintiffs who win pending cases.

The government is expected to seek donations from South Korean companies that benefited from a 1965 bilateral treaty, such as steelmaker POSCO, under which Tokyo offered \$300 million in grants to Seoul.

Still, victims and supporting civic groups have strongly protested the plan floated earlier during a public hearing.

Tokyo has maintained that all reparations issues related to Japan's 1910-45 colonisation of Korea were settled in a 1965 deal to normalise bilateral diplomatic ties.

DEVASTATING FIRE ENGULFS REFUGEE CAMPS IN BANGLADESH

Dhaka | Agencies

A devastating fire swept through several camps of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's southeastern Cox's Bazar district, destroying about 2,000 homes and leaving thousands of people homeless. No casualties have so far been reported, according to local media on Sunday.

Emdadul Haque, duty officer at the Fire Service Control Room in Chattogram, told reporters that the fire started at camp No. 10 and subsequently spread to two other camps No. 11 and 12, Xinhua news agency reported.

On information, 10 firefighting



units rushed to the area and brought the blaze under control at around 5 p.m. local time. The cause of the fire, which broke out at around 2:45 p.m. local time, has not been ascertained with officials yet to comment on the accident. Local media reports put the number of shanties destroyed

fully or partially in the fire at about 2,000. Many affected camp dwellers were seen lamenting their loss in the open sky Sunday night as most of them left behind all valuables to save their lives. More than 1 million displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar are living in Cox's Bazar, nearly 300 km southeast of the Bangladesh capital Dhaka, according to local media.



MAHA IS RESTLESS FOR POLITICAL CHANGE: SHARAD PAWAR

Team Absolute | Pune

Nationalist Congress Party supremo Sharad Pawar said here on Monday that the people of Maharashtra are longing for a 'political change' and want all the Opposition parties to come together for this.

The 82-year-old leader recounted how, in the past few weeks, he has been touring different parts of the state and meeting a lot of people.

"The masses conveyed to me that they are desirous of a change in the state... They want the Opposition parties to unite and achieve this," Pawar told mediapersons in Pune.

He also met the Congress-Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) winner Ravindra Dhangekar from the Kasba Peth seat Assembly bypoll last week -- crumbling the ruling ally Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s 28-year-old bastion.

In this context, Pawar reiterated that the MVA allies -- Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena (UBT) -- will contest the next elections together in the state. The NCP chief also admitted



that he was 'unsure' that Dhangekar would be able to wrest the Kasba Peth seat from the BJP where the former legislator Girish Bapat had a lot of influence, but the people took note of the MVA candidate's performance in the region.

Pawar also urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to address the concerns voiced by the national Opposition parties in their letter on Sunday. The eight opposition parties' leaders Sunday shot off a letter to the PM on the misuse of central

probe agencies like the ED and CBI against the non-BJP ruled states and interference of governors into routine administration.

Pawar, whose signature is affixed first in the communication to Modi, said that former Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia has done commendable work in the education and other sectors, but now he is being arrested.

The letter contended that such things suggest that the country had 'transitioned' from being a democracy to an autocracy, how the timing of filing cases against or the arrests of the Opposition leaders 'coincided' with elections proving that they are politically motivated.

Along with Pawar, the much-discussed letter was signed by Telangana CM K. Chandrashekar Rao, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, Bihar Deputy CM Tejaswi Yadav, ex-Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray, former Jammu & Kashmir CM Farooq Abdullah and ex-CM of Uttar Pradesh Akhilesh Yadav.

'Shift Aurangzeb's grave to Hyderabad', demands Shiv Sena MLA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The ruling Shiv Sena legislator Sanjay Shirshat on Monday demanded that the grave of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar should be shifted to Hyderabad.

The city MLA Shirshat's quirky call came in response to the indefinite agitation launched by All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) on Saturday protesting the name change of Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and reverting to the old 'Aurangabad'.

"If they have so much love for Aurangzeb, then shift his grave to Hyderabad... Let them build a memorial there or do whatever they want, nobody will bother, but stop this agitation," declared Shirshat, who belongs to the faction led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Reacting, the local AIMIM President Shareq Naqshbandi dismissed the SS



leader's demand as "only politics and intended to create disharmony among communities to consolidate their position".

"If they have so much hatred for Emperor Aurangzeb, then why did they take the G20 delegates on a tour to view his wife Rabia-ul-Daurani's tomb, the 'Bibi Ka Maqbara', built in 1668, by their son Muhammad Azam Shah," Naqshbandi countered.

Going further, he asked, with so much animosity for the past rulers, why the Bharatiya Janata Party government wants to earn revenues from the Taj Mahal (Agra) and other monuments for its coffers.

Naqshbandi said that since

the BJP and its allies have no issues left to take to the people they are resorting to such politics and driving a wedge among different sections of society.

Last month, the Centre okayed a state government proposal to rename Aurangabad to 'Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar' and Osmanabad to 'Dharashiv'.

However, other parties like Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress, Nationalist Congress Party, have not yet responded to Shirshat's outburst.

Meanwhile, last week the AIMIM state President Syed Imtiaz Jaleel, MP, demanded that the names of Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Kolhapur and Malegaon must also be changed in honour of prominent icons. He has suggested Chhatrapati Shivaji Raju Mahanagar (Mumbai), Jyotiba-Savitri Phule Nagar (Pune), Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Nagar (Nagpur), Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj Nagar (Kolhapur) and Maulana Azad Nagar (Malegaon).

Aditya Thackeray slams Maha govt for bad air quality in MMR

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray has slammed sufferings of the people due to poor air standards in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) as an indicator of "the quality of the unconstitutional government" in the state, here on Monday.

In a detailed tweet, he attacked the Shiv Sena Chief Minister Eknath Shinde regime for having no care for the common man owing to low air grade in the MMR.

"For over 2 months, citizens are falling sick, asking questions, but the absence of a legitimate, sensitive CM and a full time environment minister has led to this situation," alleged Thackeray.

He accused the government



of shelving the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) regime's work of Mumbai Climate Action Plan and National Clean Air Program "due to their political and personal agendas". Justifying his contentions, Thackeray Jr. cited the recent air quality index figures of various prominent cities or towns in the MMR comprising Mumbai, Thane, Raigad and Palghar regions. They include: Mumbai, Thane, Navi Mumbai,

Mhatwali, Dombivali, Mira-Bhayander and Bhiwandi (280), Kalyan, Ulhasnagar, Badlapur (262) and Tarkhad (90), among the worst polluted areas.

Thackeray's scathing comments came days after reports pointing at growing concerns over a huge spike in cases of patients suffering from breathing problems, cold, persistent dry cough, headaches, throat infections, etc. This has gripped a large section of the population in Mumbai and surroundings in the past three months when the AQI has dipped to alarming levels, affecting children and the senior citizens, many hospitalised or in ICU's owing respiratory ailments coupled with a recent surge in Covid-19 cases in the state, as per official data.

PONZI SCAM: ED RAIDS 15 LOCATIONS IN MUMBAI, NAGPUR

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said that they recently conducted search and survey operations at 15 places in Nagpur and Mumbai in a case related to a Ponzi Scheme fraud of around Rs 150 crore committed by one Pankaj Mehadiya and others.

The ED conducted searches on March 3 and seized gold and diamond jewellery worth Rs 5.51 crore, cash of Rs 1.21 crore, digital devices and various incriminating documents during the searches.

The ED said that the searches were held at the residences and offices of Mehadiya, Lokesh Jain and Karthik Jain, who are the main accused in this scam.

The office and residential premises of the main beneficiaries were also raided. The ED initiated PMLA investigation based on an FIR registered at Sitabuldi Police Station, Nagpur, against five people -- Pankaj



Mehadiya, Lokesh Jain, Kartik Jain, Balmukund Lalchand Keyal and Premilata Nandlal Mehadiya.

They allegedly committed a fraud and caused huge loss to their investors to the tune of several crores of rupees.

The ED said that their PMLA investigation has established that Pankaj Mehadiya along with other accomplices were running a Ponzi scheme and lured various investors by prom-

ising to give 12 per cent assured profit after deducting TDS on the investments made from the year 2004 to 2017. "Throughout the period of 2005 to 2016, with the malafide intention of cheating and siphoning off the investors' money, the accused persons ran the Ponzi scheme giving assured returns to win over the investors and thus luring the investors to invest in larger amounts in the associated companies and ulti-

mately did not return the money. "In order to divert the money and to give the transactions a tinge of legitimacy, transactions worth more than Rs 150 crore have been affected in the Bank accounts and it is suspected that most of these transactions are not backed by genuine business deals and are in the nature of accommodation entries," the official said. Further investigation in the matter is on.

Mumbai Court acquits woman of rash driving as cops fail to prove photo evidence

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A court here has acquitted a 21-year-old woman accused of driving on the wrong side of a road, observing that the Mumbai Police has failed to prove that a Twitter photograph of the incident was electronic evidence.

Metropolitan magistrate, Girgaon court, NA Patel, acquitted the woman of the offences registered under Indian Penal Code section 279 (rash driving), 336 (act endangering life and safety of others) and relevant provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act on February 20, 2023.

The order of the court was made available recently.

The police had registered a case against the woman for allegedly driving a two-wheeler on the wrong side of a road in Gaondevi area based on a photo shared on Twitter by a cyclist. The alleged incident had taken place on May 18, 2022.



During the trial, the court examined three persons - a member of the Twitter self-help group, the investigating officer, and the cyclist. The court noted that as far as the evi-

dence of the Twitter helpline group member and the cyclist is concerned, both of them were not present on the spot. "It has been specifically deposed by prosecution wit-

ness one (Twitter helpline group member) that she received the message on WhatsApp that one girl was driving on the wrong side and on the basis of it she has lodged the FIR. The prosecution witness three is just a police officer," the court said in the order.

"In the present matter, the photographs tweeted by the prosecution witness (cyclist) is a crucial one. The copy of the same is also filed on record, as the same is uploaded on Twitter and a printout was taken from a personal computer or mobile; it is electronic evidence," it said, adding a certificate under section 65B of the Evidence Act is a must to prove the same. "However, the prosecution has failed to file the certificate. Thus, the copy of electronic evidence is not proved by the prosecution. Therefore, in the absence of crucial evidence the story of the prosecution is lying in the shadow of a doubt," the court added.

HomeIndia News'Anger, Desperation In Uddhav Thackeray's Rally Speech': Devendra Fadnavis

Anger, desperation in Uddhav Thackeray's rally speech: Devendra Fadnavis

Team Absolute | Thane

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said only anger and desperation could be seen in Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's speech during his rally in Ratnagiri and there was nothing new in it.

In a rally held in Khed on Sunday, Devendra Thackeray targeted the Election Commission over allotting the party's name and symbol to the rebel faction and termed it a "slave" of people in power.

The Sena leader claimed that it was Bal Thackeray who stood with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) when it was politically "untouchable", and dared the former ally to



seek votes in Maharashtra only in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi without invoking the Thackeray senior. Talking to reporters in Bhiwandi on Sunday night, Fadnavis said, "Same words, same sentences, same taunts, nothing new was said at the meet. As 40 people left the party from under his (Uddhav's) nose,

we could see anger and desperation in his speech. There was nothing more in his speech. It won't be proper to react to such a desperate and taunting speech." Devendra Fadnavis further expressed confidence that the ruling alliance will win all five Assembly seats from Ratnagiri in the next elections.

Farmer burns onion crop, invites CM, writes in blood

Team Absolute | Nasik

A farmer in Maharashtra's Nasik district, furious at the state and central government for not ensuring that he gets the right value for his produce, today set on fire his own onion farms, which took him months to cultivate.

Krishna Dongre, a farmer in Nasik's Yeola taluka, has burnt his entire 1.5 acre onion farm after not getting the right prices for the produce. Speaking to a news channel, he said he has already spent Rs 1.5 lakh on the crop over four months, and will have to spend another Rs 30,000 to transport it to the market. However, all he will get at the current rate being offered for the onions is just Rs25,000.

"I worked day and night for four months to grow these onions in 1.5 acres," Dongre said, adding that he is now forced to burn the crop "due to the mistakes of the state and

union government".

He said he'll have to pay from his own pocket at the current procurement rate. "The state and Center should think about standing with the farmers," he said.

Krishna Dongre claimed that nobody from the state government reached out to them. "They had 15 days, and they didn't even show any empathy. That 'don't do this, we will do something for the farmers'. Nobody came to say even this," he said.

Dongre said he had written a letter with his blood to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde inviting him to the onion burning ceremony so that he could see the condition of farmers himself.

He demanded that the government procure all their harvest at fixed Minimum Support Prices. "For our current losses, they should pay us all Rs 1,000 as compensation," he added.

"LIKE TALIBAN, AL-QAEDA..." SANJAY RAUT ON RAIDS AGAINST OPPOSITION

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After eight political party leaders wrote a joint letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleging "blatant misuse" of central agencies against the opposition, Team Uddhav member Sanjay Raut likened the raids against them by probe agencies with those by the al-Qaeda and Taliban "who use weapons to attack their opponents."

"The way people like the Taliban and the al-Qaeda take up weapons in their hands to eliminate their opponents, in the same way, this government is using weapons like ED-CBI to eliminate its opponents," Raut told reporters.

Raut alleged that the manner they [the central government] us "terrorizing" its opponents by using ED-CBI raids against them is "more than fascism and not democratic."

"That's why yesterday, the nine prominent leaders of main opposition parties wrote a letter to PM Modi and put this matter in front of him," Raut said. The Shiv Sena leader, however, said that the letter was not needed since the PM Modi



was already aware of all this.

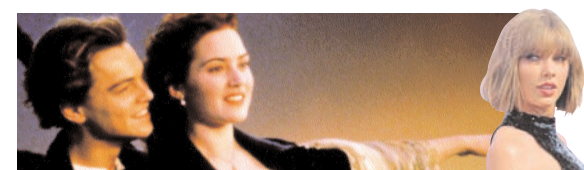
"This [the raids] are happening on his

[PM Modi's] orders," Raut alleged. Earlier on Sunday, nine leaders of eight political parties wrote to PM Modi on the arrest of former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in the excise policy case, and alleged that the "misuse" of the central agencies suggests that the country has "transitioned from being a democracy to an autocracy".

The leaders alleged that the timings of the lodging of cases or arrests of the Opposition leaders "coincided with elections" which makes it clear that the action taken was "politically motivated".

Among the Opposition leaders who were the signatories of the letter included BRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao, JKNC chief Farooq Abdullah, AITC chief Mamata Banerjee, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, Uddhav Thackeray, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav.

However, there were no representations from Congress, JDS, JD (U), and CPM in the letter.



'TECHNICALLY, I'M A NEPOTISM BABY'

Gigi Hadid calls herself 'nepotism baby', but credits parents for work ethics

Los Angeles | Agencies

Gigi Hadid, in her own words, is a "nepotism baby". The model is the daughter of Yolanda Hadid and Mohamed Hadid, and she accepts that she comes from "privilege". However, she insists that she's worked hard for her success in the fashion industry, reports Female First UK. Gigi - who has two-year-old Khai with ex-boyfriend Zayn Malik - told the Sunday Times newspaper: "Technically, I'm a nepotism baby." She also explained that her parents have instilled good work ethics in her. The blonde beauty - who is the sister of fellow model Bella Hadid - shared: "My parents came from very little, (but) I've always acknowledged that I come from privilege." She further mentioned, quoted by Female First UK: "My parents told me, 'Just because you have parents who were successful doesn't mean you shouldn't walk into the job being as nice and as hard-working as you can be.'" Gigi was recently linked to Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio. And the catwalk star admits that it's hard for her to have a healthy relationship. She explained: "I don't know how anyone expects anybody they see in the public eye to have any sort of normal dating experience if you tie people (to one another) so quickly." Last month, a source explained that although Gigi and Leonardo "get along well", they're not dating. The celebrity duo was spotted together in Milan, but a source insisted that they're merely friends.



JOHNNY DEPP SURPRISES STAFF AT AN ANTIQUES SHOP

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Johnny Depp surprised staff at an antiques shop in the UK's Lincolnshire as he dropped in unannounced by helicopter to peruse the items they had on sale. The actor's visit to Hemswell Antique Centres, Hemswell Cliff, was kept a secret, as he wanted to take a relaxed look at the shop's guitars without being noticed by the public, reports 'Mirror.co.uk'.

The visit had been arranged by the store and Pinewood Studios, which have a working relationship. The film studios have produced the Harry Potter and James Bond franchises. Depp, arrived by helicopter at Europe's largest antiques centre.

As per 'Mirror.co.uk', store owner, Robert Miller, described Depp as really "down-to-earth". He had to notify staff that a special guest would be arriving but had to conceal his identity.

Miller said that Depp had tested several different guitars during his visit to the shop, and was overheard talking about Jeff Beck, who he collaborated with for his album "18", which was released last year. The pair had played many gigs together.

Miller said: "He just bought a lot of very quirky items. A desk chair, three guitars, paint sets, easels, a few pictures, posters, just a whole range of things for decorative items for his own personal property."

"He chose a vase with a skull on it. Guitars obviously. He was very friendly with best friend Jeff Beck; he sat and played a few tunes on this guitar... I think just for old times' sake really and then decided to buy three of the guitars that were there," he added.



'IT'S AN HONOUR BUT IT'S NOT THE TRUTH'

Idris Elba opens up on being the next James Bond

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Idris Elba is putting the rumours to rest once and for all. The Golden Globe winner admitted that he was "nowhere" near being cast as James Bond following Daniel Craig's exit from the franchise.

The actor said that although he is very close to the producers of the franchise, they have not explored the possibility of him stepping into the shoes of one of the most iconic characters in cinema, reports People magazine.

He recently spoke to The Guardian about the speculation that he will take on the coveted role. "I love the Bond franchise, I'm very close to the producers," said Elba. "We were all kind of laughing about the rumours because they are just that."

He further said, quoted by People: "I can't speak for [the producers], but from my perspective, there's never been any sort of truth to any of it. It's a compliment, and it's an honour but it's not the truth."

Elba's name entered the mix long before Craig's final bow as 007 in 2021's 'No Time to Die', when Sony Pictures executive Amy Pascal revealed in a leaked 2014 email that she felt "Idris should be the next Bond."



AMBER TURNER ENJOYS WITH DAN EDGAR IN THAILAND WHILE FILMING TOWIE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Amber Turner looked incredible as she packed on the PDA with her boyfriend Dan Edgar while filming The Only Way Is Essex in Thailand. The reality star displayed her incredible figure in a skimpy pink bikini while joined by the 32-year-old on a Phuket beach, who exhibited his ripped physique. Dan couldn't keep his hands off Amber as they enjoyed a smooch, with the former electrician cheekily grabbing her rear. Showrunners have certainly not held back on spending, with the cast staying at the five-star Westin Siray Bay Resort & Spa, having jetted out on business class flights. Courtney Green, Chloe Meadows, Ella Rae Wise and Dani Imbert all put on sizzling displays in their bikinis as they posed up a storm nearby.

James Locke, Jordan Brook and Roman Hackett were also filming scenes. TOWIE will resume for a new series after a string of stars departed the show. Show favourites Liam Blackwell (Gatsby), Pete Wicks and Chloe Sims alongside her sisters Demi and Frankie have all left. But it seems there is plenty of drama already within the cast, as a huge feud has reportedly erupted while in Thailand.

It is claimed there was a 'frosty' atmosphere between some members of the show as soon as they reached the hotel reception after their flight.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Holly Willoughby

'We plan on it'

Michael B. Jordan, Jonathan Majors plan to make more films together

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Creed 3' stars Jonathan Majors and Michael B. Jordan love working with each other and would like to explore opportunities for more films together. The two stars are basking in the success of their latest movie 'Creed 3' and had such a good time working on the project - which Michael also directed, as well as starring in as Adonis Creed - they hope to develop an enduring partnership, reports Female First UK.

Asked if they'll work together again, Michael told the 'New York Times' newspaper: "We plan on it." Jonathan, who plays series newcomer Damian Anderson, quipped: "De Niro and Pacino."

Michael then said: "We're excited about that, and I have those conversations with him. Acting is such a solo journey, where you're fighting



for your place on that call sheet for such a long time."

"So when you've got somebody that doesn't care as much about that stuff, it's like, 'Let's go. How much damage can we do together?'" Jonathan replied: "All of it."

As per Female First UK, Michael admitted that he put pressure on himself as first-time director, including when it came to pitching Jonathan for the role. He said: "I was all in my head, like, 'OK, what are the things I would want to hear? This dude can do a million different things right now. What's going to make him take a chance on this actor-director who hasn't directed (anything)?' I knew I had to be truthful about what this project means to me and I wanted to make sure he knew."

After agreeing to sign up for the film, Jonathan admitted that Michael's perception of his performance was the most important thing to him. He said: "I care most about what he thinks."



Border-Gavaskar Trophy

SMITH TO LEAD AUSTRALIA IN AHMEDABAD TEST AS CUMMINS STAYS IN SYDNEY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Australia has confirmed that stand-in skipper Steve Smith continue to lead the side in the fourth and final Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Ahmedabad, starting from March 9, as regular captain Pat Cummins will stay at home in Sydney to be with his ailing mother.

Cummins, who returned home after Australia's second Test defeat in Delhi, will remain in Sydney to be at the side of his mother Maria, who is in palliative care due to breast cancer.

In the absence of a regular skipper, Smith filled in as captain to lead the visitors to a rare win in Indore Test, keeping their hopes of levelling the series in Ahmedabad alive.

According to cricket.com.au, no call has yet been made on Cummins availability for the three-match ODI series that follows the Tests, with the fast bowler having also been appointed as 50-over captain last year.

Meanwhile, Jhye Richardson, who suffered a recurrence of a left hamstring injury while playing club cricket



on the weekend, has been ruled out of the ODI series against India, commencing from March 17. He has

been replaced by Nathan Ellis in the squad. Richardson has been plagued by injuries in recent times, having

missed the back-end of the recent BBL due to this latest hamstring concern.

La Liga

Barca move nine points clear after win, Real drew to Betis

Madrid | Agencies

FC Barcelona defeated Valencia 1-0 to move nine points clear at the top of La Liga after Real Madrid drew 0-0 away to Betis.

Raphinha's flicked header from Sergio Busquets' pass in the 15th minute was enough to give Barca all three points for another below-par performance, reports Xinhua news agency.

Ferran Torres hit a 54th-minute penalty against the woodwork against his former club, and Ansu Fati also hit the post as Barca looked to double their lead before Ronald Araujo was sent off for a direct red card in the 59th minute after bringing down Hugo Duro when he was clean through on goal.

Valencia were unlucky not to get a penalty five minutes from time when Franck Kessie looked to have fouled Fran Perez on the edge of the Barca area, only for the referee to give a corner.



Barca's win put the pressure on Real Madrid, who kicked off their visit to fifth-place Betis 10 points off the top of the table.

Valladolid took three vital points with a 2-1 win at home to Espanyol after an impressive performance.

Ivan Sanchez and Alvaro Aguado put Valladolid 2-0 ahead with goals in the 24th and 61st minute of the game, although Martin Braithwaite's effort five minutes from time left a nervous end to the game for the home side.

Pandya reaches 25 million Insta followers, becomes youngest cricketer in the world

Team Absolute | Mumbai

India's fast-bowling all-rounder Hardik Pandya has become the youngest cricketer in the world to reach 25 million followers on Instagram. Interestingly, Hardik has more Instagram followers than some of the global stars like Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer, Max Verstappen and Erling Haaland.

"Thank you to all my fans for the love. Each one of my fans is special to me and I would like to thank them for the love and support they have given me over all these years," said Hardik while expressing his gratitude for his fans for his huge social media following.

After recovering from a career-threatening back injury, Hardik has been a vital cog in India's limited-overs set-up since June 2022. The big-hitting right-handed batter had captained India in its home T20I series wins over Sri Lanka and New Zealand earlier this year.



He will be seen in action next in the ODI series against Australia, which starts on March 17 in Mumbai. In the ODIs against Australia, Hardik will act as Rohit Sharma's deputy in series and will captain India in the ODI against Mumbai with the latter unavailable due to personal reasons.

DJOKOVIC WITHDRAWS FROM INDIAN WELLS

New Delhi | World no. 1 Novak Djokovic has formally withdrawn from the ATP Masters 1000 Indian Wells tournament, the organisers said on Monday, which indicates that the Serbs' application for special permission to enter the US might have been denied.

The Serbian great asked American authorities last month for special permission to enter the United States despite being unvaccinated against the coronavirus.

"World No 1 Novak Djokovic has withdrawn from the 2023 BNP Paribas Open. With his withdrawal, Nikoloz Basilashvili moves into the field," organisers said in a statement.

Unvaccinated air travellers are still prohibited from entering the States until the middle of May. The US vaccine requirement for foreign is not expected to be lifted before the main draw begins at Indian Wells and the Miami Open later in the month.



Golf

Bhatia finishes second but gains Special Temporary Membership to PGA

Rio Grande, Puerto Rico | Agencies

Akshay Bhatia did not win the Puerto Rico Open as his quest for a maiden PGA Tour title fell just short. Yet the second place earned him a special Temporary Membership, which allows him to accept unlimited sponsor exemptions for the remainder of the 2022-23 TOUR season.

Bhatia had a win last year on the Korn Ferry Tour, where he plays regularly, closed with a 65 to finish alone in second. Bhatia finished two back of Echavarria, but collected



enough non-member FedExCup points to secure Special Temporary Membership.

For Bhatia this was an amazing result as he did not take the college route and turned pro at 17. His game was good but not consistent at times. This time he shot 7-under 65

with four consecutive closing birdies - including a chip-in at the par-3 16th. He said, "I can't believe I'm crying. It means a lot. Worked really hard; it's been a crazy journey, for sure. Last year was really disappointing; I got hurt and didn't get my card through the Korn Ferry Tour. It's crazy. I have so many people to thank... it's a crazy day. Didn't even know I shot 7 under. Chipped in three times on the same hole through this week." This is a great story, and I want to write a book about my life and my journey. It's definitely going to be a really good chapter, for sure."

'THIS RECORD WAS IN MY MIND SINCE I CAME HERE'

Mohamed Salah becomes Liverpool's highest scorer in Premier League

Liverpool | Agencies

Mohamed Salah became Liverpool's highest goal scorer in the Premier League after the Egyptian international scored his 129th top-flight goal for the Reds against Manchester United, taking him to the summit as the club's most prolific player in the division.

Salah's outstanding achievement came in his 205th appearance as he scored twice in Liverpool's sensational 7-0 win over fierce rivals Manchester United.

The Egyptian moved ahead of Robbie Fowler, who plundered 128 Premier League goals across his two spells, with Steven Gerrard (120) in third place. Michael Owen remains in fourth position on the list having netted



118 times in the league, while Sadio Mane's tally of 90 sits fifth. On becoming Liverpool's record Premier League goal scorer, Salah said: "It's very special, I can't lie."

This record was in my mind since I came here. I think after my first season I was always chasing that record.

To beat it today against United with that result is unbelievable. I'm going home to celebrate with the family, have a camomile tea and sleep. He would go on to total 32 in the division during that debut 2017-18 campaign, winning the Golden Boot for the first of three occasions to date.

Nineteen of his top-flight haul was registered in the 2019-20 season to help Jurgen Klopp's side clinch the Reds' first championship success in 30 years.

DONNA VEKIC CLINCHES MONTERREY OPEN TITLE

Monterrey (Mexico) | Donna Vekic of Croatia captured her fourth career title after defeating top seed Frenchwoman Caroline Garcia 6-4, 3-6, 7-5 in the final of the Monterrey Open.

Her victory sealed a 14-2 start to the 2023 season, just one win shy of the tour's leaders in match wins, with Garcia and Belinda Bencic setting the mark with 15 wins apiece.

Vekic finished the match with 33 winners to 26 unforced errors. Garcia hit 47 winners, including a personal season-high 15 aces, to 34 unforced errors.

"It was a crazy match until the end, (Garcia) was playing so well, playing so deep," Vekic said, after her win. "I was trying to win as many points as I could. It was not easy, but I'm really happy to win."

"It's been a great start of the year for me. If the title didn't come now, I believe that it would have come soon. So I've been playing good tennis, and I just need to keep working hard and hopefully stay healthy, and I'm sure I will keep having good results."



Vaidehi qualifies for singles main draw of ITF Women's Open

Bengaluru | Agencies

India's Vaidehi Choudhari on Monday earned a singles main draw berth in the KPB Trust ITF Women's Open as six Indian players will compete in the \$40K tournament at the KSLTA Stadium.

Vaidehi, who was included in India's Fed Cup squad earlier on Monday, eased past Punnin Kovapitukted of Thailand 6-1, 6-2 in the final qualifying round. Vaidehi will face Indonesia's Madelyn Nugroho in the opening round of the main draw. The tournament is part of the ITF Women's World Tennis Tour and it is hosted by the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association (KSLTA).

Brenda Fruhvirtova, the 15-year-old from the Czech Republic, will be the top seed

in the event and she will take on Taipei's Lee Ya-Hsuan, the organisers informed in a release on Monday.

Top-rated India player Ankita Raina, who is seeded fourth in the tournament, will face compatriot and wildcard entrant local girl Vanshita Pathania. Sahaja Yamalapalli, another player who features in India's Fed Cup squad, will play Latvia's Diana Mircinkevica. Sahaja is also a wildcard entry along with Sharmada Balu of Karnataka and Zeel Desai. Rutuja Bhosale will also represent India in the singles.

Dalila Jakupovic of Slovenia, a former World No. 38, who has appeared in all four Grand Slams, will headline the doubles competition with her partner Amandine Hesse of France.

Serie A ROMA END JUVE'S UNBEATEN RUN



Rome | Agencies

Juventus saw their unbeaten run come to an end as they fell to Roma 1-0 in Serie A, with Moise Kean being sent off seconds after coming off the bench.

Roma were in dire need of a boost after a shock defeat against Cremonese last week, while Juventus were on an unbeaten run of seven games in all competitions, reports Xinhua news agency.

Juve dominated the game and hit the woodwork three times, but it was Roma that tipped the balance of the tie in the 53rd minute when Gianluca Mancini collected

the ball outside the box and immediately unleashed a missile that flew beyond Wojciech Szczesny.

Mancini was involved in Juve being a player down in the dying minutes as Kean, who had just come off the bench, kicked out at the defender after a tussle.

With the win, Roma climbed to fourth place with 47 points, leading AC Milan by virtue of a superior goal difference, while Juve still rank seventh.

Elsewhere, a pair of strikes from Henrikh Mkhitaryan and Lautaro Martinez gave Inter Milan a 2-0 victory over Lecce.

SAN LORENZO GOES TOP OF ARGENTINE TOP FLIGHT

Rio De Janeiro | San Lorenzo raised to the top of Argentina's Primera Division standings following a fractious 1-1 draw at Huracan.

Matias Coccaro put the hosts ahead by converting a 20th-minute penalty after he was brought down by Rafael Perez, reports Xinhua news agency. Jaiel Elias equalised on the stroke of halftime by combining with Malcom Braidia before firing a right-footed shot from outside the box into the bottom left corner. Tension spilled over in second-half stoppage time and both teams finished the match with nine men on the pitch after Fernando Tobio, Nahuel Barrios, Patricio Pizarro and Agustin Giay were shown straight red cards for violent conduct. The result lifted San Lorenzo a point clear of second-placed Defensa y Justicia, who has a game in hand, while Huracan are third with 12 points.

In other Primera Division fixtures on Sunday, Argentinos Juniors won 1-0 at Tigre, Velez Sarsfield prevailed 2-1 at Talleres and Instituto drew 2-2 at Independiente.

Aiden Markram appointed new captain of SA men's T20I team for West Indies series

Johannesburg | Agencies

Cricket South Africa (CSA) on Monday announced that right-handed batter Aiden Markram has been appointed the new T20I captain ahead of the series against the West Indies.

Markram, 28, takes over from Temba Bavuma, who stepped down as T20I captain last month. Markram had previously led South Africa to the 2014 U19 Men's Cricket World Cup trophy in the UAE and more recently, he led Sunrisers Eastern Cape to the inaugural SA20 title.

Other notable selections for the T20I series include all-rounders Bjorn Fortuin and Sisanda Magala, with Bavuma being left out. For the ODI series against the West Indies, South Africa has rested



several core white-ball players for the first two ODIs and will return for the third match.

Fast-bowling pair of Anrich Nortje and Kagiso Rabada has also been given a much-needed break for the series. Fast bowler Gerald Coetzee, batter Tony de Zorzi and batter Tristan Stubbs have

earned their maiden ODI call-ups.

Batter Ryan Rickelton makes his return to the ODI setup following an impressive One-Day Cup campaign which saw the left-hander finish the leading run-scorer with 452 runs at an average of 64.57, including two hundreds and as many fifties.



Harbhajan Singh, Murali Vijay and Paul Collingwood join LLC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Legends League Cricket (LLC) on Monday announced the confirmation of the new set of players joining the Masters' bandwagon.

The India Maharajas, who already have secured the services of a host of notable former players, most recently, Suresh Raina, have further strengthened their squad with the addition of Harbhajan Singh, Murali Vijay, and Stuart Binny. On the other hand, the

Asia Lions have roped in former Pakistan fast bowlers Mohammad Amir and Sohail Tanvir. Lastly, joining the World Giants ranks is the former England captain, Paul Collingwood.

Having announced his retirement from all forms of cricket earlier this year, LLC Masters will be Vijay's first competitive tournament since January. He has been a prominent feature of the Indian test team during his tenure and has also played a key role for his team in the Indian T20 league.

Janhvi shares Telugu debut movie's first look on her birthday

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Janhvi Kapoor treated her fans with her first look from her upcoming film tentatively titled 'NTR 30' on her birthday on Monday. The actress took to her Instagram to share the first look of her character.

In the picture, Janhvi can be seen wearing a saree and sitting against the backdrop of mountains securing a river. Going by the look of the poster, the film seems to be quite dark in its treatment. She will be working opposite Jr. NTR in the film.

The

actress wrote in the caption: "It is finally happening. Can't wait to set sail with my favourite Jr. NTR, NTR30."

The film, which marks the Telugu debut of Janhvi, is touted to be an action-packed entertainer and will be directed by Koratala Siva, who is known for directing films such as 'Bharat Ane Nenu' and 'Okkadunnadu'.

The music will be composed by Anirudh Ravichander and it will be a pan-India release. The film is set to be released on April 5, 2024, and will be available in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam.

The film will be Jr. NTR's 30th film. The actor is currently gearing up for the Oscars as his film 'RRR' continues to be a global rage.



'IT WAS A RESPONSIBILITY'

Ajay Devgn called it a responsibility about his fight sequence with a "Trishul"

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star and filmmaker Ajay Devgn finally gave a glimpse of the action-packed life of 'Bholaa' where he's ready to do anything for a glimmer of his on-screen daughter.

An IMAX theatre was brimming with journalists from all over the country as Ajay unveiled the over a two-minute long trailer in 3D in a Mumbai. Not just journalists, fans too came in to catch a glimpse of their favourite actor. A fan even showcased a tattoo dedicated to Ajay.

The trailer begins with Ajay being tagged as a "chattan". He is seen doing death defining stunts and high on action fight scenes. What made the audience whistle is the dialogue: "Yeh zameen banjar hoker bhi buzdil paida nahi karti."

It also gives a glimpse of villains Deepak Dobriyal and Vineet Kumar among any others.

"This is the first trailer launch which happened in 3D. We had to do a lot running around. I think it's different in 3D," Ajay said during the launch.

Ajay is also seen having a fight sequence using a Trishul, a weapon used by lord Shiva.

On being called the "mass maharaja" by his fans, Ajay thanked for all the love, and called himself as a "simple actor". Bollywood star-filmmaker Ajay Devgn said he had to maintain a "sensibility" and called it a "responsibility" about his fight sequence with a Trishul in 'Bholaa'.

Talking about his fight sequence with a Trishul, a weapon used by lord Shiva in Hindu mythology, Ajay said: "I think it was very interesting. It was a little difficult but not too. We had to design, execute and perform it."

"Had to maintain a sensibility and had a responsibility as I had a Trishul in my hand."

'Bholaa' is a remake of the Tamil film 'Kaithia' which released in 2019. Ajay has directed the film and is starring in it. The film also features Tabu.



NAINA NAIDU IS THE MOST INTENSE ROLE THAT I'VE ESSAYED SO FAR: SURVEEN CHAWLA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Surveen Chawla, who is awaiting the release of her OTT series 'Rana Naidu', has said that the role was quite intense and demanded a lot from her, and that and pulling it off to perfection "empowered" her as an artist.

In the series, the actress plays the role of Naina Naidu - Rana's wife, she is a character with secrets and a strong will that commands attention.

Led by Rana Daggubati portraying the titular character, the show follows the life of a man who does the dirty work for the city's top power players, making the problems of the rich and famous disappear. However, his life takes an unexpected turn when his father Naga (played by Venkatesh) is released from prison, setting off a chain of events that shakes the Naidu family to its core.

Speaking about working on the show, the actress said:

"Playing Naina in Rana Naidu was an incredibly empowering experience. I loved how she was written as a strong, independent woman who was not afraid to speak her mind. I would say the character of Naina Naidu is the most intense role that I've essayed so far. It was challenging to bring out the various layers of her character, but I enjoyed every moment of it. As women, we need more characters like Naina."

The women of Rana Naidu hold equal

power as men. Priya Banerjee, who portrays the role of Mandira, is another strong-headed woman in the show who has been through a lot and is determined to get what she wants.

Mandira and Rana's chemistry is intriguing, and the two work together incredibly well, making them an essential part of the show's dynamic.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

After 'Drishyam' and 'Drishyam 2', Tabu is all set to share screen space once again with Ajay Devgn. She said that it is his intensity that defines him. Talking during the trailer launch of 'Bholaa' to media, Tabu said: "I don't think any other actor would've been fit for this role as much as he fits in it. The image he has is defined by his intensity. It doesn't mean that other roles don't suit him."

"But the way he is in real life he has chosen characters like that too and that's his identity." When does she find Ajay 'Bholaa' (innocent) as an actor or a director? "Kabhi nahi. Waisai toh yeh hamesha Bholaa lagte hai upar se. Lekin hai nahi (never, even though he appears so)," she said with a laugh. How difficult was it for Ajay to convince Tabu to work with him? "It's not

difficult at all. He just has to call and I'll do it. I entered this film with my eyes closed. I just knew there was a lot of action. But I knew I can trust him and nothing will happen to me," Tabu said.

Tabu also thanked her entire action team for "keeping her safe and everyone safe too."

"It's really not easy to execute an action film. It's not easy to physically achieve so much and do so much and do it actually in real time. You need a set of dedicated people and who care of people's life, protect you and make you do the right things."

PARINEETI & DILJIT DOSANJH WRAPS UP THE SHOOTING OF UPCOMING MOVIE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Parineeti Chopra has wrapped up shooting of her upcoming film 'Chamkila', in which she will be sharing screen with Punjabi singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh. The film has been directed by Imtiaz Ali, who is known for films such as 'Jab We Met', 'Rockstar' and 'Tamasha'.

The film marks the first collaboration between Parineeti and Diljit, who are set to portray the greatest singers from Punjab in the movie. While Diljit is set to portray the titular character, Parineeti will be seen portraying the character of Amarjot Kaur. The film has been extensively shot in Punjab.

Parineeti took to the story section of her Instagram and expressed gratitude towards the entire crew of the film and shared her experience on social media. She wrote: "Imtiaz Sir, Diljit, Team Chamkila...My life remains forever changed...the most heavenly crew and experience. Peace, happiness, meditation, Punjab...Will never, ever forget this." Diljit also took to his social media to heap praise on his co-actor Parineeti Chopra. He wrote: "patineeti chopra Film ch Kamaal Kam Kita Parineeti ji ne. Unbelievable." (Parineeti has done an amazing job in the film. Unbelievable)."

Meanwhile, Parineeti also has 'Capusle Gill' in the pipeline.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Pooja Hegde