

NATION > 02

SC dismisses Lt Col Purohit's plea against Bombay HC order..



HOLLYWOOD > 06

Adam Sandler, Jennifer Aniston discuss about injuries in...



SPORTS > 07

MI have given me opportunity to showcase myself in different...



State impotent, why can't citizens pledge to not vilify others, says SC on hate speeches

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday orally observed how many contempt actions could it take against people in connection with hate speech, why the petitioner has to first move the apex court, and "why cannot the citizens of this country take a pledge to not vilify others" as it wondered "what kind of pleasures we are deriving by making these speeches".

It observed that the menace of hate speech is a vicious circle which is going on because the state is impotent, powerless, and doesn't act in time.

A bench of Justices K.M. Joseph and B.V. Nagarathna termed hate speeches as a "vicious circle", while adding that fringe elements make these utterances and people should restrain themselves from doing so.

Citing speeches of former Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, it said that people from remote areas used to gather to hear them. Justice Nagarathna observed: "Now fringe elements from all sides are making these statements and we are now asked to take contempt action against these people."

The bench queried the parties on how it could curtail "intellectual deprivation" which comes from lack of knowledge and education. She added, "How many contempt after contempt we can take against these people. That's why I asked the other day, how the apex court will deal with this. Why do you (petitioner) start with the apex court? Should not there be some restraint on speeches else we will not become the India we desire for."

Justice Nagarathna stressed: "Why



cannot the citizens of this country take a pledge to not vilify others and what kind of pleasures we are deriving by making these speeches".

The top court made these strong observations while hearing a contempt petition against various state authorities including Maharashtra for failing to lodge FIRs against people making hate speeches.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta pointed out a hate speech made in Kerala against Hindus and Christians and questioned that petitioner Shaheen Abdullah, a Kerala resident, has selectively pointed at hate speeches in the country but been silent on speech made in his state, and also cited alleged statement made by a DMK spokesperson against Brahmins. Mehta further questioned, why has the petitioner not made them party in the contempt peti-

tion. The bench referred to those speeches and said "every action has equal reaction" and stressed, "We are following the Constitution and orders in every case are bricks in the structure of rule of law".

It added that it is hearing the contempt petition because states are not taking action in time and added, "This is because the state has become impotent, powerless and does not act in time...."

Mehta immediately retorted: "Can't say that about any State but Centre is not. The Centre has banned PFI (Popular Front of India). Please issue notice to the State of Kerala so that they can respond to this."

The top court issued notice to Maharashtra government and scheduled the matter for further hearing on April 28.

SC allows Centre's plea for Rs 5,000 cr from SEBI-Sahara fund to repay depositors

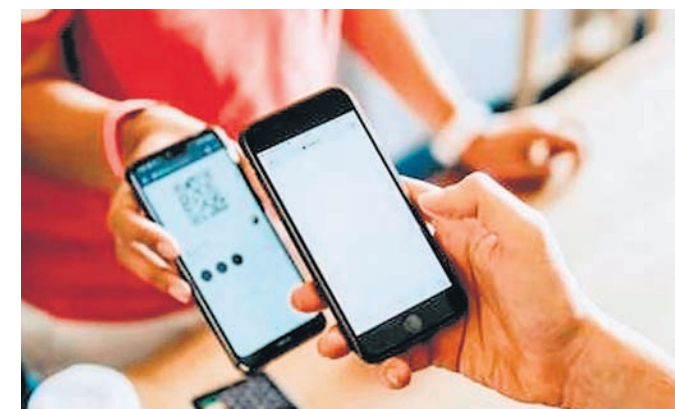
New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed a plea by the Central government seeking Rs 5,000 crore allocations out of Rs 24,000 crore, which was deposited by Sahara group with the SEBI, to pay back to the depositors.

A bench, headed by Justice M.R. Shah and comprising Justice C.T. Ravikumar, passed the direction on the application filed by the government in a PIL by Pinak Mani Mohanty. It said the amount should be disbursed to depositors duped by the Sahara group of cooperative societies and the entire process will be monitored by a former judge of the top court, R. Subhash Reddy.

"Out of the total amount of Rs 24,979.67 crore lying in the 'Sahara-SEBI Refund Account', Rs 5,000 crore be transferred to the Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies, who, in turn, shall disburse the same against the legitimate dues of the depositors of the Sahara Group of Cooperative Societies, which shall be paid to the genuine depositors in the most transparent manner and on proper identification and on submitting proof of their deposits and proof of their claims and to be deposited in their respective bank accounts directly."

It further added that the amount be paid to the respective genuine depositors of the Sahara Group of Cooperative Societies out of the aforesaid amount of Rs 5,000 crore at the earliest, but not later than nine months from today and balance amount be again transferred to the Sahara-SEBI refund account.

CUSTOMERS WON'T BE CHARGED FOR UPI TRANSACTIONS: NPCI



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) on Wednesday said that it has now permitted the Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPI wallets) to be part of the interoperable UPI ecosystem and there is no charge for customers.

Additionally, there are no charges for the bank account to bank account based UPI payments (normal UPI payments).

"The interchange charges introduced are only applicable for the PPI merchant transactions and there is no charge to customers, the NPCI said in a statement.

With this addition to UPI, the customers will have the choice of using any bank accounts, RuPay Credit card and prepaid wallets on UPI-enabled apps. Recently, a fake WhatsApp message went viral, which said that people will have to pay a fee for online UPI transactions.

According to recent regulatory guidelines, the PPI wallets have been permitted to be part of the interoperable UPI ecosystem, according to the NPCI.

"The interoperability among PPIs via UPI will make PPIs more attractive for various use cases

and ultimately increase the number of digital payment transactions," said Mihir Gandhi, Partner and Leader-Payment Transformation, PwC India.

Rajsri Rengan, India Head of Development, Banking and Payments, at FIS, said that the new interoperability guidelines for prepaid payment instruments is a significant step towards building a more inclusive and seamless digital payments ecosystem in India.

"The interoperability of digital wallets and UPI can be a game-changer for the Indian fintech industry, as it opens up new opportunities for innovation, growth, and competition," Rengan said.

As per the new rule, UPI transactions made via PPIs such as wallets, credit cards will have an interchange fee of 1.1 per cent from April 1 and customers will not be charged.

Traditionally, the most preferred method of UPI transactions is linking the Bank account in any UPI enabled app for making payments which contributes over 99.9 per cent of total UPI transactions.

"These bank account-to-account transactions continue to remain free for customers and Merchants," said the NPCI.

'Why BJP jittery about JPC probe into Adani matter', asks Congress

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Congress on Wednesday sought to know why the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at the Centre is scared of a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the alleged scam involving the Adani Group.

Addressing the media here as part of the Congress' 'Democracy Disqualified' all-India campaign, the party's national spokesperson Pawan Khera said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had raised the issue of who has invested Rs 20,000-crore into the Adani Group. "Who has invested this sum in the Adani Group? This investment involves a citizen of China, who is he?"



Rahul Gandhi has also raised this question and the people of the country have the right to know," Khera said.

Accusing the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of bestowing special favours to the Adani Group, he said that the Opposition parties have demanded a JPC to probe the matter.

"However, despite having a '56-inch chest' and a huge majority of 303 MPs, Modi is

afraid of a JPC... on the contrary, the BJP makes false and ridiculous allegations against Rahul Gandhi," he said.

Khera charged Modi of according special treatment to the Adani Group, whenever the PM travels abroad, like in Australia, Gautam Adani accompanies him, Modi shows kindness by getting him contracts and loans from State Bank of India, pressurised Sri Lanka to award power sector contracts to Adani and lobbied for him for energy projects in Bangladesh.

He also raised questions on how the money of 33 crore LIC investors was being invested in Adani's companies, and expressed apprehensions that all this public money could now be at risk.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With the Congress planning to bring a no confidence motion against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday, he could become the third Speaker to face such a motion after G.V. Mavalankar and Balram Jakhar. All the three share a common factor that they headed the Lower House when the treasury benches had a brute majority.

Congress sources said that they are consulting like minded allies on the issue while the party MPs have already started signing the petition for the move.



On Wednesday papers were hurled at the Lok Sabha Speaker's chair when Congress MPs were protesting against Rahul Gandhi's disqualification.

The first resolution against the Speaker was brought in 1954 when G.V. Mavalankar was the Speaker and Jawaharlal

Nehru was the Prime Minister. In 1987, it was against Speaker Balram Jakhar. Rajiv Gandhi was the Prime Minister and the resolution was moved by Somnath Chatterjee. In both the cases the Deputy Speaker presided over the House but in the current Lok Sabha there is no

Deputy Speaker.

Both the resolutions were defeated in the House. The opposition is now mulling to bring a no confidence motion against Speaker Om Birla for 'not allowing their leaders to speak in the Lower House' and for not accepting any adjournment notice, sources said.

The opposition is miffed with the disqualification of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and alleged that the decision has been taken in haste.

The opposition is likely to bring the no confidence motion coming Monday and the signatures of MPs are being taken. The idea was mooted during an opposition meeting.

Om Birla could become third LS Speaker to face no confidence motion

WEATHER CHANGES IN DELHI-NCR, STRONG WINDS AND RAIN IN MANY AREAS



New Delhi: The weather has once again taken a turn in Delhi-NCR. After fine weather for the last several days, on Wednesday evening it started raining with strong winds.

By the evening in Delhi-NCR, dark clouds covered the sky and it started raining with strong winds. While the drizzling continued in Delhi, talking about Noida, it started raining after a thunderstorm. Due to this, the temperature has once again registered a drop.

The Meteorological Department had issued a rain alert for many areas of Delhi-NCR including Rohini, Badli, Model Town, Karawal Nagar, Azadpur, Pitampura, Dilshad Garden, Seemapuri, Mundka, Paschim Vihar, Punjabi Bagh, Kashmiri Gate, Lajpat Nagar, Chhatrapur and Noida and Ghaziabad, Sonapat, Rohtak in some areas of outer Delhi Delhi on Wednesday.

Apart from this, the Met Department has predicted rain, thunderstorm and hailstorm in northwest, east and northeast India from Wednesday till April 1. Along with this, it will rain over Haryana, Rajasthan on March 30; over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, East Rajasthan, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Sikkim on March 31 and over Uttarakhand on April 1, the forecast said. The IMD has advised the farmers to keep the already harvested produce in a safe place.

Probe ordered into fake PMO official's visits to J&K

Team Absolute | Jammu

The Jammu and Kashmir government on Wednesday ordered a probe into the visits of conman Kiran Patel -- who used to pose as a 'PMO official', to the union territory, an official said.

An order issued by the Home Department appointed Vijay Kumar Bidhuri, divisional commissioner (Kashmir) as the inquiry officer who has been asked to submit his report within a week's time.

The order reads: "Sanction is hereby accorded to the appointment of Vijay Kumar Bidhuri as Inquiry Officer to inquire into the various aspects related to the visits of Kiran Patel to Kashmir during the past months and security arrangements made thereof.

"The Inquiry Officer shall identify the lapses on the part of the Officers/Officials concerned and submit a detailed report within one week," the



order read.

Kiran Patel was on his third visit to the Kashmir Valley when he was arrested by police from a 5-star hotel in Srinagar on March 2.

The police have told the court: "He has prima facie forged and manufactured some documents including some visiting cards on the basis of

which he has defrauded not only a single or group of person but extremely elevated class of the society, including high officials of the civil administration and police authorities.

"He succeeded in getting Z Category Security, bullet proof vehicle and enjoyed five-star protocol brazenly for a considerable period of time.

"The documents, visiting cards and cell phone of the accused person have been sent for FSL examination, on the basis of which the alleged crime has been commuted, however the FSL examination report has not been received by the investigating agency," the police said.

The report also said that investigation conducted so far has suggested that the accused has visited most sensitive locations and areas of the Kashmir Valley, which are highly protected and extremely sensitive as far as the present security scenario of Kashmir is concerned.

FUGITIVE AMRITPAL ASKS AKAL TAKHT JATHEDAR TO CALL CONGREGATION OF SIKHS TO SAVE PUNJAB

Chandigarh | Agencies

Fugitive Khalistani radical Amritpal Singh, in a video message, on Wednesday requested the Jathedar of the Akal Takht to call Sarbad Khalsa (congregation of Sikhs) to discuss issues to save Punjab on Baisakhi (April 13) and said he "is not yet arrested".

Daring Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Punjab Police, he slammed the police for arresting Sikh youths during crackdown against him.

In the video, Amritpal Singh said he managed to escape from the police on March 18 and that he is safe. He also expressed his willingness to surrender. The police is expecting him to surrender either before the Akal Takht in Amritsar or Takht Damdama Sahib. Security has been beefed up at both places.

Amritpal Singh and his mentor Papalpreet Singh once again dodged the Punjab Police in a village near



Hoshiarpur town on Tuesday night. An Innova vehicle, with three people onboard, including Amritpal Singh, was stopped by the police at a checkpoint but they managed to flee in the dark, an official familiar with the development told reporter.

The police were chasing the car from Phagwara. The car was later found abandoned near Gurdwara Bhai Chanchal Singh on the Phagwara-Hoshiarpur road, with the occupants having fled on foot.

Police have cordoned off villages in Hoshiarpur district and are carrying out door-to-door search operations.



Malegaon blast

SC DISMISSES LT COL PUROHIT'S PLEA AGAINST BOMBAY HC ORDER

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court has dismissed an appeal by Lt. Col. Prasad Purohit challenging the Bombay High Court, which refused to entertain his petition seeking discharge in the Malegaon 2008 blast case citing lack of sanction under section 197(2) of the CrPc from the Indian Army to prosecute him.

A bench comprising Justices Hrishikesh Roy and Manoj Misra noted that the challenge before it is to the high court order whereby it was observed that sanction is not needed under Section 197(2) of the Cr.P.C. for the prosecution of the petitioner as his impugned conduct does not pertain to any of his official duties.

"Having noted the basis of the impugned judgment, we see no reason to interfere with the same and accordingly, the Special Leave Petition is not entertained," said the



bench. However, the top court clarified that the trial court should not be influenced by observations in the

high court order. "However, as we are informed that the trial against the petitioner is continuing, the observation made in the impugned order for the purpose of examining the issue of sanction should not prejudice either the prosecution or the defence, in the proceedings before the trial court," said the bench, dismissing the appeal filed by Purohit.

The Bombay High Court had dismissed the discharge application filed by Purohit in the Malegaon 2008 blast case.

He moved the high court challenging the Special National Investigation Case (NIA) court framing charges against him in the blast case.

He argued that there was a lack of sanction under section 197(2) of the CrPc from the Indian Army to prosecute him in the blast case. Purohit had contended that the charge framing was not valid against him.

Modi dented democracy to save 'Param Mitra' Adani: Congress



Panaji | Agencies

In a scathing attack on the BJP government at the centre, Congress National Spokesperson Dr Shama Mohamed on Wednesday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of damaging democracy to save his 'Param Mitra' Adani.

She also said that Rahul Gandhi's disqualification was done in a planned manner; however, the Congress will win against the suppression of people's voice.

Addressing a press conference in Goa, Dr Mohamed said that the Modi government is targeting Rahul Gandhi for exposing thieves

and scamsters. Goa Pradesh Congress Committee President Amit Patkar and Media cell Chairman Amarnath Panjikar were also present.

Terming the disqualification of the Congress leader "undemocratic", she said, "They will do everything to weaken Rahul Gandhi, but we all are strong enough to stand with him and save our democracy." "The sentence could have been less than 2 years. But the quantum of sentence was 2 years only because it paved the way for the BJP government to disqualify him," she pointed out, while speaking about the defamation case against him.

Rahul Gandhi has been targeted for asking questions on the Adani Mega Scam in his speech in Parliament.

"During his speech, Rahul Gandhi had said that there are Rs 20,000 crore in shell companies linked to Adani and had asked whose money was it? He had questioned the relationship of Modi with Adani. But the ruling party remained silent over these questions," she said.

"Rahul Gandhi was denied an opportunity to speak in Parliament. It is only because he was exposing the links of Modi and Adani," she said.

She said that Rahul Gandhi was disqualified from the Lok Sabha in a planned manner

Cyber cheat nabbed from TN for duping defence official: Delhi Police

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A 26-year-old cyber fraudster was arrested by Delhi Police from Tamil Nadu for duping people on the pretext of investment in crypto currency, a police official said on Wednesday.

The accused was identified as Dinesh Kumar, a resident of Chinnampalayam in Coimbatore.

According to police, a complaint was received at the cyber police station of South district wherein the complainant, who works in defence services, alleged that in April 2022, he received a phone call from an international mobile number, starting from +44 (the UK) and the caller sought to introduce him to the forex trade market and investment in crypto currency.

"The caller convinced him, following which the complainant deposited Rs. 20 lakhs in various bank accounts. After that, when no response was received from the side of fraudster, then the complainant sensed that he was cheated on the pretext of investment in the USDT, a symbol used to trade Tether



tokens, through Trade FCA via forex market, hence he lodged a complaint," Deputy Commissioner of Police, South, Chandan Chowdhary said.

During investigation, the police teams collected the details of the bank accounts and mobile phone numbers through which the complainant received the call and thoroughly analysed them.

"The trail through which the alleged cheated money was transferred into the various bank accounts were also collected from the bank concerned and analysed. Their other relevant details of bank transactions were also analysed at length and verified. Hence, all possible technical details about accused persons were obtained and sources were deployed to track them," said the DCP.

Police team during analysis found that the accused was available on social media platforms. "The details of the accused were collected from

social media platforms and put on extensive surveillance. Through surveillance and technical analysis, the location of the accused person was zeroed down to Coimbatore," said the DCP, adding that he was immediately arrested.

On interrogation, Dinesh revealed that he opened one current bank account in the name of partnership firm "Empire Enterprises" and the same current bank account was operated in some small sale or purchase articles.

"The cheated amounts were credited in this bank account by the accused and at the very same time, the credited amounts were debited in 26 other bank accounts. The transferred amount was withdrawn from the bank accounts," the DCP said.

"Dinesh earlier worked in a shop where he learnt how to handle the digital process of the bank accounts. He also took the classes for digital marketing processes and then operated the current bank account, which was also used and operated in commission of the above offence and for crediting and debiting the cheated money," the official added.

DELHI REPORTS 300 COVID CASES, POSITIVITY RATE NEARS 14%



New Delhi: Delhi on Wednesday reported 300 new Covid infections in the last 24 hours, against 214 cases reported on previous day, as per the government health bulletin.

Two Covid-19-related deaths have also been reported in the same time span.

The positivity rate of the city has risen to 13.79 per cent. The number of active cases stands at 806 out of which 452 patients are being treated in home isolation.

With 163 patients recovering in the last 24 hours, the total number of recoveries so far has gone to 19,82,029, while Delhi's total caseload is 20,09,361 and the death toll in the city has risen to 26,526.

A total of 2160 new tests -- 1,490 RT-PCR and 670 Rapid Antigen - were conducted in the last 24 hours, taking the total to 4,07,85,433 while 141 vaccines were administered - 27 first doses, 34 second doses, and 80 precaution doses.

The total number of cumulative beneficiaries vaccinated so far stands at 3,74,04,636 according to the health bulletin.

Hyderabad police book 20 trolls targeting public representatives

Hyderabad | Agencies

Hyderabad police have booked 20 cases against owners of various trolling channels for objectionable, defamatory and insulting content with morphed videos against some public representatives, a police official said on Wednesday.

The cybercrime wing of the police have traced eight persons and issued them notices under 41 (A) of the Criminal Procedure Code, directing them to appear before the police.

DCP, Cybercrimes, Sneha Mehra, told reporters that about 20 cases have been registered against the owners/uploaders of various trolling channels, which are spreading objectionable, defamatory and insulting morphed videos against various public representatives.

Those who have been issued notices are Attada Srinivasa Rao of TrollerKuradu (@trollerkuradu4308) from Vizianagaram), Sirasani Manikanta of Massabbayi (@MrMassabbayi) from Kadapa, Baddanj Sravan of Yankamma Tolls from Nizamabad, Motam Srinu of Telugu Trolls New from Warangal, Peraka Nagavenkata Jyothi Kiran of Chintu Trolls from Krishna, Banthipuvvu Trolls Vadluri Naveen



of Team of Trolling from Jagtial, Bolli Chandrashekar of Chandu Trolls from Karimnagar, and Billa Srikanth of Cheviloopuvvu from Kadapa.

Most of the trolls are young men 20-30 years of age who are either studying or dropped out and such attraction and craze of trolling in the long term can lead to and promote even indecency and encourage lawlessness among youth, the DCP said. Police observed that some youth are posting objectionable, defamatory and insulting content with morphed videos against some public representatives with an intention to increase their subscribers and increase their TRP rating, thereby earning money. Such acts attract various penal sections

under IPC and Information Technology Act, the official said. "In the chase of increasing their subscribers and likes they are sometimes posting content which even harms the basic modesty of women," she said.

Police recently noticed such trolls targeting K. Kavitha, a member of Telangana Legislative Council and daughter of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao.

The police have warned all the owners/uploaders of trolling channels not to indulge in any type of such trolls/memes, which are outrageous, abusive and indecent to the modesty of the women in general and the individual in specific. Necessary penal action shall be initiated against all such trolls.



Seven UP govt officials booked in fake Madrasa case

Lucknow | Agencies

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of UP Police has lodged an FIR against seven government officials for getting fake madrasas registered in Azamgarh, some of which had allegedly even received state grants for modernisation, causing a huge loss to government coffers.

These fake madrasas were registered between 2008 and 2010.

A home department meeting was held on December 19, 2022 wherein it was decided that SIT will be asked to probe the fake madrasas.

The FIR was lodged after an internal probe of 313 madrasas, in which 219 were found to be fake.

Thereafter, a case was lodged against

seven officials of the minority welfare department and their aides who granted recognition to the 219 non-existing madrasas by preparing fake documents.

It was alleged that the accused made the important government documents disappear to halt the probe and embezzled government funds by re-paneling the non-existing madrasas and allotting funds to these institutes, said an officer.

Those named in the case were identified as registrar Javed Aslam, district minority officers (DMOs) Lalman, Aquil Ahmad Khan and Prabhat Kumar, clerk Sarfaraz, waqf inspector Munnar Ram, clerk in waqf Om Prakash and other officers.

The case has been lodged against them under IPC 420 (dishonesty), IPC 409 (breach of trust) and other charges.

4 doctors arrested for theft of medical equipment

Varanasi | Agencies

Four doctors from Varanasi have landed in jail for their involvement in the theft of advanced medical equipment worth over Rs 20 lakhs from a hospital to upgrade their establishments located in the city's outskirts.

The accused took help of the nursing staff of a prominent hospital of the city to procure advanced BiPap, electrocardiography (ECG), arterial blood gas (ABG) analyser and infusions machines, stolen from a city hospital. All the five, including the hospital staffer, have



been arrested and sent to jail. Police have seized 14 infusion machines with 10 cables, six BiPap, one ECG and one ABG machine. The cost of the recovered

equipment has been estimated as over Rs 20 lakh and all four doctors have been arrested said, Deputy Commissioner of Police Kashi zone, R.S. Gautam.

ED Dehradun branch attaches asset in SC/ST scholarship scam

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), Dehradun branch, has attached one immovable property worth Rs 1.45 crore belonging to Wali Gram Udhog Vikas Sansthan, Roorkee, which runs the Techword Wali Gram Udhog Vikas Sansthan Group of Institutions, in a case of SC/ST scholarship scam.

The ED initiated the investigation under PMLA based on the FIR filed by the Haridwar police, Uttarakhand, under various sections of the IPC. During the course of investigation it

was revealed that Techword Wali Gram Udhog Vikas Sansthan had fraudulently received a huge amount of scholarship money in the name of SC/ST students from the social welfare department, Haridwar, for the period 2011-12 to 2014-2015. The scholarship amount disbursed by the government to the college for the SC/ST students has not reached the beneficiary students. "The institution had completed all the formalities to obtain scholarship under SC/ST scholarship scheme falsely. It is also evident from the investigation that scholarship under SC/ST scholarship scheme disbursed by

the government has been embezzled, siphoned off by Techword Wali Gram Udhog Vikas Sansthan, through its trustees and caused huge financial loss to the public exchequer and wrongful gain to themselves," said the ED.

The official said that investigation under PMLA revealed that this ill-gotten money was used in the construction of the college and other college related expenses. After identification of the Proceeds of Crime (PoC), a provisional attachment order for attaching the PoC in the form of a piece of land worth Rs 1.45 crore in Haridwar district has been issued.

MAN ROBBED OF RS 4.5 LAKH THROUGH DUPLICATE CREDIT CARD, 5 HELD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Five cyber fraudsters including a woman who allegedly cheated a man to the tune of several lakhs of rupees have been arrested by the North West Delhi police, officials said on Wednesday.

North West Delhi DCP Jitender Kumar Meena said that the mastermind of the gang got a duplicate credit card issued in the name of the victim. The accused took the help of a shopkeeper and swapped the cards showing they bought groceries worth Rs 4.5 lakh, but actually they didn't buy anything.

The shopkeeper was also given a commission and the rest of the amount was kept by the accused.

The official said that the accused were identified as Arun Kumar, Anuj Jindal, Arjun Chaudhary, Amit Chaudhary and Seema.

"Mastermind Arun Kumar got the duplicate credit card issued in the name of the complainant with the help of co-accused Seema and later encashed it on the pretext of purchasing grocery items worth Rs 4.5 lakhs with the help of other associates. They distributed the cheated amount among themselves as per the ratio of their share," said the official.



The police said that they got a complaint in this respect from one Naveen Kumar, a resident of Ashok Vihar. He alleged that he received the statement of his credit card in which two transactions of Rs 3 lakhs and Rs 1.5 lakhs were made, however he did not use his card for any such purchase. His credit card was in his possession and he had not authorized any transaction using his card. He said that someone had fraudulently made these transactions of Rs 4.5 lakhs using the details of his credit card.

After receiving his complaint the police lodged an FIR and a team was formed to probe the matter. "An enquiry was conducted into the matter and

details from the beneficiary accounts were obtained and thoroughly scrutinized. It was revealed that an alleged payment of Rs 4.5 lakhs was made for purchasing grocery items from a mall by two firms," said the official.

He said that during further investigation, these firms were found registered in the name of one Anuj Jindal. During his interrogation, he revealed that one credit card was given to him by Amit Chaudhary to encash it and keep a commission of 2% (i.e. Rs 9,000) as his share. Amit Chaudhary revealed that the credit card was given to him by his nephew Arjun Chaudhary. Both Amit Chaudhary and Arjun Chaudhary took 9 percent commission.

They disclosed the name of the mastermind - Arun Kumar. "A raid was conducted in Johripur, and Arun Kumar was nabbed. He disclosed that he used to work in a credit card calling team for different banks. He got one reference for a credit card of one Naveen Kumar (complainant), so he contacted his associate Seema who works in the credit card department of a reputed bank. She helped Arun Kumar to get the credit card issued using the name and details of Naveen Kumar.



INDIAN ARMY IS ONE OF THE MOST CAPABLE FORCES IN THE WORLD: CHIEF MINISTER SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN

Military Fair and Arms Exhibition is a matter of good fortune for Bhopal and the State. Chief Minister Chouhan inaugurated the Military Fair.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the holy festival of Navratri is the festival of worship of Shakti. Madhya Pradesh and Bhopal are fortunate that we have got the opportunity to worship Shakti through the military fair and arms exhibition during Navratri. I am thankful to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Central Government for organizing the Fauji Mela in Bhopal. The Chief Minister said that India has a known history of thousands of years. Our valor and valor have also been established for thousands of years. India's thoughts, values and culture have shown direction to the world. If we are powerless then no one listens to us. The Indian Army is one of the most capable forces in the world. Our javans are protecting Mother India by living in the most difficult conditions. As a result of the sacrifice and penance of the army, we are able to celebrate festivals. I the valor of my wonderful army,



Chouhan was addressing after inaugurating the military fair and arms exhibition in the grounds of Motilal Science College, Bhopal. Commanding in Chief Northern Army Command Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi and senior officers of the three Services were present. Chief

Minister inaugurated the military fair by cutting the ribbon and releasing balloons. Chief Minister Chouhan was presented a memento of Fauji Mela-2023. Bhopal's Shaurya Smarak has been built in the memory of 30,000 soldiers who were martyred after

independence.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that it is a matter of good fortune that the Commander's Conference of all the three forces is going to be held in Bhopal from March 30 to April 1. Prime Minister Shri Modi, Union Defense Minister Rajnath Singh and senior most officers of the three services will participate in it. He said that our army is dedicated to the victory of religion.

Hitting target with M-4 gun that can hit up to 300 meters

Chief Minister Chouhan inspected the weapons and equipment of the Army, Air and Navy displayed at the military fair. The Chief Minister fired at the target with an M-4 gun that could shoot up to a distance of 300 metres. Also observed the activities of Navy on Laser Target Designator, Fagot Launcher, Virtual Reality Set. Chief Minister also saw the functioning of Siachen Survival Gear, Light Strike Rifle, Communication Rover, Arjun Battle Tank, Air Force Aircraft Operation and got information regarding technology.

Namibian cheetah 'Siyaya' delivers four cubs at Kuno

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Four cubs have been born to one of the cheetahs named Siyaya translocated to India from Namibia, Union Environment Minister Bhopendra Yadav said on Wednesday. He shared the photo of the cubs on Twitter along with a video that shows them letting out some little roars. He termed it a "momentous event in India's wildlife conservation history". The cheetahs were brought to Kuno in Madhya Pradesh from Namibia in September last year as part of the government's ambitious plan to reintroduce the spotted felines in India.



large carnivore to India and for their efforts in correcting an ecological wrong done in the past.

These are the first cheetah cubs born in India in more than 70 years, since the big cats were declared extinct in 1952.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had released the first batch of eight cheetahs - five females and three males - into a quarantine enclosure at Kuno in Madhya Pradesh on his 72nd birthday on September 17 last year. One of the Namibian cheetahs,

Sasha, had died due to a kidney-related ailment on Monday, forest and wildlife officials in Madhya Pradesh said. In a second such translocation, 12 cheetahs were flown in from South Africa and released into Kuno on February 18.

Cheetah is the only large carnivore that got completely wiped out from India due to over-hunting and habitat loss. The last cheetah died in Koriya district of present-day Chhattisgarh in 1947 and the species was declared extinct in 1952.

Narela assembly will be lit with more than one and a half lakh lamps

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Every Teej-festival has been celebrated with full grandeur in Narela Vidhansabha. This time the festival of Ram Navami is also going to be very special for Narela. Medical Education Minister Vishwas Kailash Sarang has appealed to everyone to light two lamps outside their homes on the occasion of Ram Janmotsav, "one lamp in the name of Lord Shri Ram and one lamp in the name of the nation". Sarang told that more than one and a half lakh lamps will be lit in the entire Narela assembly. Minister Sarang said that after a gap of about 500 years, the temple of Ramlala is going to be built again on the birthplace of Ram in Ayodhya. Nearly 25 genera-



Representational Image

tions of India witnessed the country's struggle on the issue of Ram Mandir. He said that our generation is fortunate that the dream of construction of Ram temple is going to come true in front of us. This Ram temple is also a symbol of national self-respect.

Giving best wishes for Ram Navami, Minister Sarang has urged the public to light lamps outside their homes on the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami. And celebrate the birth anniversary of Lord Shri Ram with great pomp in the evening at the main cross-roads of your ward.

FIRE AT INDORE HOTEL, NO CASUALTY REPORTED

Bhopal: A major fire broke out at Papaya Tree Hotel in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city on Wednesday morning.

No casualties were reported in the incident. As per the reports, the blaze started in the early hours of the morning and quickly spread throughout the hotel.

The incident caused panic and chaos among the guests and staff. Around 25 people who were present inside the hotel were successfully rescued with the help of a crane. Some of the guests were reported to have suffered from smoke inhalation and taken to a hospital for treatment.

Chief Minister Chouhan planted saplings of Peepal, Almond and Gulmohar

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Peepal, Almond and Gulmohar in the garden located at Shyamala Hills. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Dr. Vipin Tiwari also planted saplings on his birthday. Dr. Smt. Neelima Mishra, Chandrakali Tiwari, Tania Mishra, Nihal Mishra and Motilal Tiwari were with him. Dr. Tiwari is active in social work and made a remarkable contribution during the Corona period. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Neeraj Chouhan also planted saplings. Niraj is working as a climate finance expert in London. Neeraj thanked Chief Minister Chouhan for the foreign study scholarship provided to him by the state. Naresh Chauhan, Shubham Chauhan, Namita Chauhan and Muazzam Hussain also planted saplings along with Chief Minister Chouhan.



New rates of electricity unit in MP

Rs 25 more on 200 units, minimum charge for domestic consumers abolished

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Domestic electricity rate has been increased by 6 paise per unit in Madhya Pradesh. Rs 38 to be paid more for electricity consumers, consuming 300 units in a month. Those consuming 200 units will have to pay Rs 25 more. The Electricity Regulatory Commission has issued a new tariff order on Tuesday. The new rates will be applicable after a week.

Some relief has also been given to agriculture and high pressure consumers. For these, 10 paise per unit has been increased. Minimum charge will not be taken from those with 30 units. The minimum charge for domestic category consumers is Rs 139 as before. After the new rates are implemented, there will be a difference of 6 paise per unit in the bills of domestic electricity consumers in all the four slabs. Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh



Tomar has said that the Electricity Regulatory Commission has given a marginal increase of 1.65% in the average tariff released for 2023-24, while inflation has increased by 9.3% compared to last year. There has been no increase in the electricity rates of low tension non-domestic

category and low tension industrial category.

No effect on power consumption up to 100 units

The Energy Minister said that due to the subsidy given by the government, this increase will not have any effect on the electricity bills of

domestic consumers and flat rate agricultural consumers who consume up to 100 units of electricity. Minimum charge on domestic consumers has been abolished. Domestic consumers have been increased by Rs 10 on bills up to 100 units, but these consumers will have to pay only Rs 100 as before under Atal Griha Jyoti Yojana. Keeping in view the demands of high tension consumers, the proposed billing on KVAH basis was not accepted this year. Electricity rates have been fixed by creating a separate category for metro rail. Fixed charges for electrical vehicle charging stations have been abolished. Environment conscious consumers, who want to reduce carbon emissions by using only renewable energy, can use electricity from green energy by paying an additional 0.97 per unit. Current rates 1.13 Rs. has been reduced by 16 paise per unit. Consumers will not be charged any metering charges.

Cleanliness torch march for garbage free city, today

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Cleanliness torch march will be taken out in all the urban bodies of the state on the day of "International Zero Waste Day" for a garbage free city. The torch march will be led by women sanitation leaders. It is noteworthy that Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has the intention that every city of the state should take inspiration from Indore and become a leader in cleanliness. Urban Development and Housing Minister Bhopendra Singh has urged public representatives and citizens to participate in the cleanliness torch march.



employees, girl students and citizens will participate in the torch march. The torch march will come out in the evening.

On "International Zero Waste Day", activities related to the promotion and awareness of Zero Waste will be

done in the local bodies. Sale cum exhibition of zero waste based materials produced by self-help groups will be organised. Competitions for making toys etc. from waste will also be organized. At the end of the torch march

Congress accused the state government of 225 scams

Team Absolute | Bhopal

As the elections in MP are coming closer, the allegations and counter-allegations are intensifying in the opposition. While holding a press conference at the PCC in Bhopal on Tuesday, the Congress accused the BJP state government of 225 scams in the last 18 years. Congress also released its list. BJP's state minister Rajneesh Agarwal retaliated on Congress's allegations and called it a party of scams.



made the disaster of the Covid period an opportunity to loot the public. Chaudhary told that by stopping the earning in the name of FAQ, atrocities are being done with the farmers. The government which buys soil is not able to buy wheat. Those farmers who do not need nano urea, they are also being forcefully handed over with urea. Due to nexus with private companies, farmers are forced to buy. This is the continuation of scams in Madhya Pradesh. MLA Kunal said that the 215-month BJP government

in Madhya Pradesh has done more than 200 scams, every month one scam has been made the identity of Madhya Pradesh. Still, Shivraj government is celebrating and telling 3 years-unparalleled. In the Covid era, even for getting a bed in the hospital, the patients had to pay many times the price and in return they got death.

BJP bid - Congress did only scams

On Congress's allegations, BJP's state minister Rajneesh Agarwal says that after independence, Congress has indulged in scams. In 70 years, the Congress has created scams and scams, that's why it sees only scams everywhere. It is the BJP government which has stopped the leakages.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan in action

1 SUSPENDED, 3 LOSE INCREMENT, NOTICE ISSUED TO 10 EMPLOYEES, HOSPITAL BLACKLISTED

Team Absolute | Bhopal

These days big action is being taken on negligence in Madhya Pradesh. Instructions have been given by the Chief Minister to take action against 15 employees. At the same time, 4 officers of 5 districts have been congratulated for their excellent performance. The Chief Minister has issued notices to several officers and employees, including stopping the increment of two engineers. Along with this, a hospital has also been blacklisted.



Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is seen in action on this day. On one hand, announcement is being made by the Chief Minister for the public and the beneficiaries. In the same process, the process of action is going on against the negli-

gent and corrupt employees. Action has been taken against 15 employees for negligence in work by the Chief Minister. 4 employees have been congratulated for the same good work. The work of Samadhan Online was

being reviewed by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. During this, action was taken to stop the suspension and increment on Tuesday. This action has been taken against the officers who were negligent in their work in Samadhan Online. Chief

Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was discussing with applicants from different districts through video conference. During this, CM Shivraj was asking the applicants of different districts about their problems. On the other hand, after the information given by the applicant, a hospital has been blacklisted for not resolving the problem on time. Along with this, punitive action has also been taken against 15 government servants. After the information given by the applicant, a clerk guilty of delay in solving the case in Samadhan Online has been suspended, while the increment of 3 government servants has also been stopped. Not only this, instructions have also been given to deduct 15 days salary of one employee while issuing notices to 10 officer employees.



EDITOR'S SPECS

K'TAKA CONG PROMISES TO SCRAP QUOTAS ANNOUNCED BY BJP

Karnataka Congress on Tuesday pledged to scrap various reservation quotas announced by the ruling BJP in the state immediately after it comes to power. Talking to media persons, State President D.K. Shivakumar stated that the Union Home Minister Amit Shah has given his stamp on the reservations done by the BJP government in Karnataka. But, the people have rejected it and after 40 days, the Congress is going to form the government and scrap the new reservations. The matter of reservation has not only created confusion in the state, but throughout the country. The Supreme Court has given verdicts against such attempts by the other states. In spite of this, two ministers have come together to cheat people and take a call on increasing the quota of reservation, he said. For reservations and internal reservations, they have to be based on proper study and research and amendments have to be made in the constitution. They will not be feasible if it is done as an election gimmick, Shivakumar stated. The reservation has gone up to 56 per cent and let the BJP government give reservations for both the communities by extending the limit. The Congress firmly stands with minorities and we want Muslim reservations to be intact, he maintained. In a bid to win the confidence of major communities of the state, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has made a major announcement that his government has increased the quota of reservation for Lingayat and Vokkaliga communities. The announcement has led to a war of words between the ruling BJP and Congress party. BJP is hoping to polarize Hindu votes through the recent announcement of reservations by withdrawing 4 per cent reservations for Muslims. The BJP has also fixed internal reservation for oppressed classes, in a bid to win their confidence.

Yajurvindra Singh

The uncertainties of cricket have led to one of the T20 and white ball stars, Suryakumar Yadav, SKY, as he is popularly called, for his innovative and unconventional stroke play, have the ignominy of scoring three first-ball ducks in a row. Surya has the talent and skill to break out of this bad patch, as have many great players in the past. The Indian Premier League (IPL) will be just the right platform for him to get back into top gear and bury his failed performances against Australia for good.

One of India's most tenacious cricketers, Mohinder Amarnath, went through a similar sequence of no scores as Suryakumar has recently been through. Jimmy, as Mohinder is popularly known, fought his way through this slump and went on to become one of the top batters in world cricket. He was the Man of the Match in both the semis and finals of India's historic World Cup triumph in 1983.

SKY needs to have a tete-a-tete with Mohinder, as a word of advice from India's most courageous and fighting cricketer would help him immensely to get over any mental dilemma that may have arisen.

Cricket can be a cruel game and the Indian cricket team too became a victim of it. India, looked to have got on to an even keel when they were up 2-0 against the powerful Australian side in the Test series. India looked head and shoulders above their opponents, especially in conditions which were ideally suited for them.

Australia showed how nothing in cricket can be taken for granted. Under the captaincy of Steve Smith, having taken over from Pat Cummins who had to return home on a family matter, the team got a second wind of breath. They won the next Test match and drew the last. Even then, one was not fully convinced as to whether the Australians could sustain the onslaught of a star-studded Indian outfit.

The three ODIs were important for both sides because of the World Cup to be held in India later in the year. India showed their prowess by beating Australia in their first encounter. This they just managed, even though they were chasing a small total.

The defeats, thereafter, and losing the ODI series 2-1 to Australia has put a question



mark on where India truly stands at present. The Indian side seems to flourish when the going is good, however, they seem to mentally crumble when they are put into a tight spot. This has been their problem for the last 10 years and is the prime reason why they have not won a major championship. The Indian side fails to recover when the chips are down.

The last ODI loss in Chennai was a good example of an Indian team, that looks like one full of individuals rather than one which thinks holistically about reaching their goal as a team. Responsibility is the word that seems to have escaped most of them, as many did get set and got out playing shots that would have made even a school coach reprimand one's brood.

Maybe, the thought of the upcoming IPL was uppermost in their minds and more important than ensuring that the present World's top ODI cricket side, Australia, is sent home with plenty to think about. This, unfortunately, did not happen and Australia, beaming with confidence, feel they have the armoury and sufficient knowledge to do well

in India. Confidence has engulfed them and this will carry them through with a very positive mindset when they meet India in the World Test Championship on June 7 at the Oval in London.

In the meanwhile, the Women's Premier League (WPL), has been well-received and successful. This is fabulous for India's women cricketers. However, the pressure of franchise-based cricket has taken a toll on most of them. Having the burden of financial responsibility on their shoulders and the calculation of runs or wickets taken, vis-a-vis one's purchase value has led to disappointing performances from many of the Indian stars.

The WPL has been a very successful platform for several foreign players who seem to enjoy playing in it. Why many of the Indian cricketers have failed is something for one to seriously ponder. Either they were overwhelmed by the aura that surrounded them or were not mentally prepared.

The WPL will, over time, be the ideal setting to unearth India's talented women crick-

eters and it is a matter of time before one will see Indian cricketers taking centerstage. However, the inaugural one has shown several areas of Indian women's cricket that needs attention. Fitness and fielding are definitely ones that need to be seriously looked at, for improvement.

The final of the WPL at the Mecca of Indian cricket the Cricket Club of India (CCI) at the famous Brabourne Stadium on March 26 should be another historical moment etched into the walls of India's foremost cricket club. An Indian cricketer getting the player of the match would be just what the doctor ordered.

The famous line of one of the legendary Indian cricket commentators and a permanent resident of the CCI, Bobby 'Ta'yarkhan, comes to mind, "Do you get me, Steve?"

(Yajurvindra Singh is a former India cricketer. The views expressed are personal)

international

STAMPEDES ACROSS PAKISTAN FOR FREE FLOUR

Islamabad | Agencies

A woman and a man died and several others were injured in stampedes at flour distribution points in different cities of Pakistan.

People staged protests against the government for badly handling flour distribution, The News reported.

The first stampede took place in Sahiwal when a large number of people showed up to get free flour with women also standing in long queues.

As the time passed on, the crowd became impatient that caused a stampede with everyone trying to get flour bag, The News reported.

As a result, the woman was killed while 46 others were injured.

Meanwhile, the Sahiwal deputy commissioner and the district police officer reached the spot.

There were also reports of police baton-charge on the flour seekers, The News reported.

In Rahim Yar Khan, a 73-year-old man was trampled in a bid to get free



flour while several others were injured.

In Jhang, women staged a protest against the alleged torture on an old woman at a flour distribution point at the Government Graduate Boys' College. The women alleged that a discriminatory attitude was being adopted by the staff while disbursing flour bags, The News reported.

Protests and brawls for the supply of free government wheat flour were witnessed at various places in Peshawar as the city's police expressed their helplessness to control the situation, The Express Tribune reported.

Protesters blocked Kohat Road over not receiving the free flour, resulting in a massive traffic gridlock in the area.

They complained that they had to wait in long queues for the entire day and still return home empty-handed and claimed that flour was being distributed on the basis of nepotism, with political affiliation taken into account.

Complaints of not receiving the free government flour are increasing with each passing day, The Express Tribune reported. They said across the province, its southern districts in particular, a large number of women gather at the distribution points to collect free flour, making it difficult for the police to manage the situation. In the Hasilpur tehsil of southern Punjab, at least five women were injured in a stampede at a free flour distribution point.

ISRAELI PREZ URGES IMMEDIATE DIALOGUE BETWEEN PM, OPPN OVER CONTENTIOUS JUDICIAL OVERHAUL

Jerusalem: Israeli President Isaac Herzog has urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and opposition leaders to immediately engage in a dialogue, a day after the government suspended a contentious plan to overhaul the judiciary.

Herzog's office said in a statement on Tuesday that the first meeting with teams of representatives from the ruling coalition, Yair Lapid's centrist party of Yesh Atid and Benny Gantz's National Unity party will meet at the president's residence in Jerusalem later in the day, reports Xinhua news agency.

Herzog said he would work "in broad cooperation for the benefit of forging as broad agreements as possible, with the aim of rescuing Israel from the deep crisis." He urged both coalition and opposition "to show responsibility" and agree to compromise.

INDONESIA'S ANAK KRAKATAU VOLCANO ERUPTS 4 TIMES IN SINGLE DAY

Jakarta | Agencies

Anak Krakatau volcano in Indonesia's Lampung province has erupted four times as of Tuesday afternoon, spewing ash columns up to the height of 2,500 meters above the crater, Indonesian authorities said.

The Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation (PVMBG) reported on Tuesday that the volcano in the Sunda Strait located between Java and Sumatra islands erupted at 04:12 a.m., 05:38 a.m., 07:43 a.m., and 12:21 p.m., respectively. The longest eruption on the day lasted for two minutes and 26 seconds, Xinhua news agency reported.

PVMBG Head of Anak Krakatau Monitoring Post in Lampung Selatan regency Andi Suardi said that the volcanic activity of Anak Krakatau had significantly increased in the last few days. On Monday, the volcano erupted once at 10:50 p.m. and was covered in fog. "The activity of the volcano is still



unstable. We still can observe smoke coming from the crater. The status of Anak Krakatau now is still in level 3 alert. People are not allowed to do activities within a five-km radius from the crater," Suardi said in a written statement.

Anak Krakatau, which means Child of Krakatau, has been sporadically active since it emerged from the sea at the beginning of last century.

The volcano is located far from the densely populated Java Island and Sumatra Island. However, it is near the busy shipping line connecting the islands.

39 KILLED IN FIRE AT MIGRANT CENTRE IN MEXICO

Mexico City: At least 39 people died in a fire at a migrant detention centre in Ciudad Juarez in northern Mexico, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has confirmed.

"This had to do with a protest that they (the migrants) started, we suppose, after they found out that they were going to be deported," Lopez Obrador explained to journalists during his daily press conference, Xinhua news agency reported.

"They put mattresses at the door of the shelter and set them on fire as a protest and they didn't imagine it would cause this terrible tragedy," he added.

The fire started Monday night at a makeshift migrant center in Ciudad Juarez in the northern state of Chihuahua, which borders the United States.

The President detailed that the migrants were mostly from Central America and Venezuela, although authorities had yet to determine the identities of the dead.

Up to 68 people were housed in the center and 29 remained in "delicate, serious" condition, according to a report by immigration authorities.

Russia launches large-scale command-and-staff exercise

Moscow | Agencies

Russia's Strategic Missile Forces on Wednesday launched a large-scale command-and-staff exercise that will involve the Yars intercontinental ballistic missile system along with more than 3,000 servicemen, the Defence Ministry said.

"The exercise will involve over 3,000 servicemen and about 300 pieces of military hardware. A commission of the Strategic Missile Forces' command will assess cohesion among the personnel fulfilling their tasks," the Ministry said in a statement.

The Omsk Missile Formation and the Novosibirsk Missile Formation, equipped with Yars mobile launchers, will participate in the exercise, Xinhua news agency quoted the statement as saying.

The servicemen of the Strategic Missile Forces would carry out a



complex of measures to train concealment and counter-measures against modern aerial survey systems, it added.

The RS-24 Yars, a modification of the Topol-M missile, is Russia's strategic missile system armed with a solid-propellant intercontinental ballistic missile.

It reportedly has an operational range of up to 12,000 km and can carry multiple nuclear warheads.

Maneuvers will take place on the territory of three Russian regions.

Over 15 mn children in US infected with Covid

Washington | Agencies

More than 15.5 million children in the US are reported to have tested positive for Covid-19 since the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, according to a new report.

The report by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Children's Hospital Association said that over 66,000 of these cases have been added in the past 4 weeks, Xinhua news agency reported.

Over 13,000 child Covid-19 cases were reported in the week ending March 23, it added.

Over the past six months, weekly reported child cases in the US have plateaued at an average of about 30,000 cases, according to the report.

Reported cases are likely a "substantial undercount" of Covid-19 cases among children, it noted.

There is a need to collect more age-specific data to assess the severity of illness related to new variants as well as potential longer-term effects, said the report.



It is important to recognize there are immediate effects of the pandemic on children's health, but importantly we need to identify and address the long-lasting impacts on the physical, mental, and social well-being of this generation of children and youth, said the

AAP. With the highest number of cases and fatalities, the US remains the worst-hit country by the Covid pandemic. As of Wednesday morning, the country's caseload and death toll stood at 106,120,651 and 1,153,972, respectively.



'ALL IS WELL, NO WORRIES', SAYS SANJAY RAUT AFTER MEETING SONIA, RAHUL



Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Wednesday called on senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi to resolve the differences over the Savarkar fracas which threatened to spoil relations between the two parties.

Team Absolute | Mumbai/New Delhi

After emerging from the meeting, a relaxed Raut tweeted: "Met Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi today. Discussed several crucial issues with them in detail. Everything is fine There's nothing to worry about."

Earlier on Tuesday, Raut had met Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on the same issue that had driven a chasm among the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) allies Congress, Nationalist Congress Party and Shiv Sena (UBT) in Maharashtra.

After today's meeting followed by his telling tweet, state political circles indicate that the crisis between the Congress-Sena (UBT) may have

blown over and the relations would return to normal.

Taking a tough stance over Gandhi's utterances, the Sena (UBT) had boycotted an Opposition leaders' meeting convened by Kharge in New Delhi.

Subsequently, NCP President Sharad Pawar had unofficially intervened to defuse the crisis, hinting that it could have a fallout on the MVA unity in Maharashtra.

Several senior Congress, NCP, Sena (UBT) and other Opposition parties had also expressed views that the fight is with the Bharatiya Janata Party and how Savarkar is a non-issue.

Reacting to the day's development, Mumbai BJP President Ashish Shelar

said that mere words by Pawar are not sufficient.

"If Pawar has genuine respect for Swatantryaveer Savarkar, then the NCP should organise a big programme in his honour or take out processions in the state," Shelar demanded.

Taking strong umbrage at Gandhi's comments on Savarkar last week, Sena (UBT) President and ex-Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had said that Savarkar is like a 'deity' of Maharashtra and no adverse remarks against him would be tolerated.

As the controversy boiled, the ruling Shiv Sena Chief Minister Eknath Shinde last week announced that his party would take out Savarkar processions all over the state soon.

MVA predicts President's rule in Maharashtra after SC verdict

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) allies Nationalist Congress Party and Shiv Sena (UBT) have forecast the possibility of President's rule being imposed in Maharashtra after the upcoming Supreme Court verdict on the disqualification of 16 MLAs, here on Wednesday.

State NCP President Jayant Patil said that after the apex court judgement, the government of Shiv Sena Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Bharatiya Janata Party Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis is most likely to collapse.

"However, there may not be a midterm election as anticipated in some quarters, but instead, Central rule would be imposed after the SC verdict," asserted Patil, addressing a meeting of party workers in Jalgaon late on Tuesday.



He claimed that the Shinde-Fadnis government is "scared" of holding mid-term elections and is devising methods on how to postpone all elections due, including local bodies, and Market Committees also, as much as possible. Endorsing the NCP leader's stance, Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said here this morning (March 29) that he is in full agreement with Patil's assessment of the situation. "It is very obvious that the SC verdict will ensure the disqualification of 16 MLAs, including Shinde... So, the

state government will fall and there will be no other option left. Hence the likelihood of the President's rule cannot be ruled out," declared Raut.

The Sena (UBT) leader said that his party had absolutely no doubts that Shinde and the other MLAs would be disqualified, "provided everything goes as per the law".

The third MVA ally, Congress has not commented on the latest developments, though its top leaders have said several times in the past that the Shinde government will topple after the SC judgement. Nevertheless, the three parties are optimistic that the apex court outcome could prove to be a turning point for the state politics nine months after the MVA headed by former CM Uddhav Thackeray was ousted following a Shinde-led rebellion in June 2022.

Parineeti turns pink when asked about Raghav Chadha wedding rumours

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Parineeti Chaddha was seen turning pink as she blushed when she was asked about her wedding rumours with Rajya Sabha MP and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Raghav Chadha.

Viral Bhayani, a celebrity photographer, shared a video on Instagram, where Parineeti was seen getting into her car after she was exiting the airport.

Several photographers asked about the "news" about her wedding. Giving just a smile and blushing, Parineeti kept walking towards her car dressed in an all black outfit.

She was asked again and Parineeti replied with just a "Hmm?" When she was prodded again to confirm,



Parineeti said, "Thank you. Bye. Goodnight." Parineeti blushed and smiled again.

On the work front, Parineeti will next be seen in 'Chamkila', directed by

Intiaz Ali. The film, which also stars Diljit Dosanjh, revolves around two popular Punjabi singers Amarjot Kaur and Amar Singh Chamkila.

BJP PUNE MP GIRISH BAPAT DIES AT 72, PM, CM MOURN

Team Absolute | Pune

Former state minister and ailing Bharatiya Janata Party MP Girish Bapat passed away during treatment in a Pune hospital, plunging the party into grief, here on Wednesday.

A BJP veteran for over four decades, Bapat, 72, breathed his last shortly after a medical bulletin issued by Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital & Research Center had described him as "critically ill", and put on life-support systems.

In Bapat's passing, the Pune BJP leadership has suffered the loss of a third prominent sitting lawmaker in the past four months.

On December 22, 2022, the Kasba Peth sitting MLA Mukta Tilak had passed away; on January 3, Chinchwad sitting MLA Laxman Jagtap expired, followed by Bapat's passing.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "sad" at the passing of Bapat and offered condolences to his family and supporters.



"Shri Girish Bapatji was a humble and hardworking leader who served society diligently. He worked extensively for the development of Maharashtra and was particularly passionate about Pune's growth. His

passing away is saddening," said Modi.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, and their cabinet ministers rushed to Pune to offer

respects to Bapat this afternoon.

Shinde and Fadnis paid glowing tributes to Bapat for his social work, public causes, his oratory style that left listeners spellbound in the legislature and other sterling qualities that endeared him across party lines.

State BJP President Chandrashekhar Bawankule, Mumbai President Ashish Shelar, state and union ministers like Chandrakant Patil, Girish Mahajan, Nitin Gadkari, Raosaheb Patil-Danve, state MPs, MLAs, mourned the loss of Bapat. From the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, leaders like Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar, MP Supriya Sule, Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar, Deputy Chairperson of Maharashtra Legislative Council Dr Neelam Gorhe, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut, farmers leader Kishore Tiwari, Congress President Nana Patole, Congress Legislative Party Leader Balasaheb Thorat and others expressed their condolences on Bapat's demise.

Stopped at event over outfit, says queer student leader in Mumbai

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The president of the students' union of the prestigious Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai, who is queer and identifies as a gender-fluid person, has said they were stopped from participating in an event over their outfit.

Pratik Permye, who is from a village in Assam, was invited to the 19th Ambedkar Memorial Lecture as the representative of the students' union. However, according to them, they were not allowed to participate in the event for being "inappropriately" dressed.

Pratik took to social media to share what exactly happened during the event through a video post. In the video, Pratik said that just before five minutes of the event, a professor and few men



from the organising committee told them, "In an event like this, you can't wear something like that." "I was wearing a blouse and a skirt," said Pratik in the video, adding they felt "humiliated, discriminated" and said that their fundamental right to expression was violated. Pratik said, "It is not fine to dictate someone on what they should wear" and "I felt the outfit I was wearing was repre-

senting me in my truest form."

"I am a tribal person from a village, I don't wear so many clothes," Pratik said, defending the outfit. "What happened with me was wrong! And I want people to really stop speculating and controlling how my body will look in public and private spaces. It is my identity and I will express myself how I want to," they wrote.

While there has been no official reaction from the institution on the matter, a professor from TISS told Times of India, "TISS is known for its inclusive nature with all supportive mechanisms in place for students of all genders and identities to co-exist. If there has been any incident where any student feels discriminated against, we will look into the matter. All students are assured of an inclusive atmosphere on the campus."

CYBER FRAUDS DUPE MUMBAI COLLEGE STUDENT OF RS 6 LAKH

Mumbai: A 21-year-old college student from suburban Bandra lost more than Rs 6 lakh to cyber fraudsters who lured her with easy money, an official said on Tuesday.

The complainant on March 19 received a Telegram message from a person who identified himself as one Narenkumar and said she could earn money by clicking on a movie-related website, the official said. He then shared a link with her. The complainant received some money in her bank account after she followed his instructions. A few days later, a woman got in touch with her and offered to pay handsome returns if she deposited money and did the same thing that she had done earlier, he said.

Last week, the student paid more than Rs 6 lakh but did not receive the expected returns. When the man and woman did not respond to her messages, she approached the Bandra police station with a complaint, he said.

A case has been registered and a probe is underway, the official added.

'Family members should lodge complaint officialy'

Cops on suicide note at IIT Bombay student's room

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After the recovery of a note purportedly written by deceased IIT Bombay student Darshan Solanki naming his hostel mate, the Mumbai police are waiting for his family members to lodge a complaint of abatement to suicide, an official said on Wednesday.

Police have started the process to register an FIR (First Information Report) under the relevant section of the Indian Penal Code, the official said. "But we are waiting for Solanki's family members to come forward with a formal complaint," he said. The Special Investigation



Team (SIT) probing Solanki's death on Monday said a note mentioning the name of

Solanki's hostel mate was recovered on March 3 from the room of the deceased. Police are analysing the handwriting in the note by comparing it with Solanki's handwriting, the official said.

"Police are seeking answer papers or some other documents submitted by the deceased in his handwriting to IIT Bombay," he added.

The hostel inmate mentioned in the note is studying engineering and staying on the same floor, an SIT official had said. Solanki's parents and some student organisations had alleged caste discrimination as the cause of his death.

18% HIKE IN MUMBAI-PUNE EXPRESSWAY TOLL TAX FROM APRIL 1

Mumbai: Toll for vehicles on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, the first access-controlled road of the country, will increase by 18 per cent from April 1, officials of the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) said.

A senior MSRDC official said today that though the toll increases by six per cent annually, it is implemented cumulatively at 18 per cent after every three years, as laid down in a government notification of August 9, 2004. The new toll will be Rs 320 for four-wheelers like cars and jeeps instead of the current Rs 270, and Rs 495 for vehicles like mini-bus and tempos instead of the current Rs 420, another official said.

Toll for two-axle trucks will increase to Rs 685 from the current Rs 585. For buses, it will increase to Rs 940 from Rs 797.

Three-axle trucks will be charged Rs 1,630 instead of Rs 1,380 and multi-axle trucks and machinery-vehicles will have to pay Rs 2,165 instead of current Rs 1,835.

Toll would remain the same till 2030 as there would not be any revision after three years in 2026, officials said. About 95 km long, the six-lane Mumbai-Pune Expressway was fully operationalised in 2002. Toll is collected at five toll plazas, of which ones at Khalapur and Talegaon are the main ones.

Disrespect of national anthem complaint BOMBAY HC REFUSES TO GRANT ANY RELIEF TO MAMATA BANERJEE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday refused to grant any relief to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in a complaint seeking action against her for allegedly disrespecting the national anthem at an event here in 2022.

A single bench of Justice Amit Borkar dismissed the application filed by Banerjee challenging a sessions court's order of January 2023 remitting the matter back to the magistrate's court for inquiry and on the issue of issuance of summons.

Banerjee in her application said the sessions court, instead of quashing the summons and remitting the matter, ought to have quashed the entire complaint.

Justice Borkar, however, noted there was illegality in the sessions court's order and hence the HC need not interfere.

A magistrate's court in March 2022 issued a summons to Banerjee on the complaint filed by activist Vivekanand Gupta alleging that during a public function at Yashwantrao Chavan Auditorium at Cuffe Parade in Mumbai, Banerjee had started singing the National Anthem in the sitting position, and later standing up and singing two verses before abruptly stopping and leaving the venue.

The West Bengal chief minister had challenged the summons before the special court.



In January 2023, Special Judge R N Rokade set aside the summons issued by the magistrate on procedural grounds and asked the magistrate to consider the complaint afresh.

In her application in the HC, Banerjee challenged this order claiming that the summons ought to have been quashed instead of directing the magistrate to consider the same afresh.

Gupta in his complaint claimed that Banerjee's acts amounted to an insult and disrespect to the national anthem, and hence they are an offence under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act of 1971.

He had lodged a complaint in the Cuffe Parade police station but moved the court of the metropolitan magistrate after the police failed to take any action.

Maharashtra reports 450 new covid cases, 3 deaths in 24 hours

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra on Tuesday recorded 450 new cases of coronavirus that raised the tally of infections to 81,42,509 and three fatalities, an official from the state health department said.

The daily count of infections has doubled since Monday when the state reported 205 cases. With the addition of the latest casualties, the toll has reached 1,48,438, while the count of recoveries rose to 79,91,728 after 316 patients recovered in the 24 hours, the official said.

According to the health department's report, 10,787 swab samples were tested in the last 24 hours, taking the number of tests conducted across the state to 8,65,96,047.

Of the latest infections, Mumbai circle reported the highest 227, followed by Pune with 138, Kolhapur with 25, Nashik with 22, Nagpur and Akola with 17 cases each, and four from Latur.



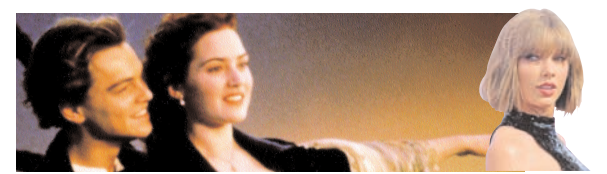
Kolhapur and Latur circles reported two and one casualties respectively, the report stated.

Mumbai city saw 135 new cases, taking its tally to 11,55,662, which includes 19,747 deaths.

With this, Maharashtra now has 2,343 active cases, of which 663 were from the Mumbai district, followed by 605 cases in Pune and 429 in the Thane district.

The recovery rate is at 98.15 per cent and the case fatality rate was 1.82 per cent, the report stated.

Coronavirus figures of Maharashtra are as follows: Positive cases: 79,91,728; fresh cases: 450; death toll 1,48,438; recoveries 79,91,728; active cases 2,343; total tests: 8,65,96,047.



Adam Sandler, Jennifer Aniston discuss about injuries in "MURDER MYSTERY 2"

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actor Adam Sandler, who has done some impressive action sequences in 'Murder Mystery 2', underwent hip replacement surgery not long after he and his co-star Jennifer Aniston wrapped the follow-up to their original 'Murder Mystery' comedy. "My god damn hip, I had to change that at the end of the movie," Sandler told 'Variety' on Tuesday at the film's premiere at the Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles. "I had been doing so many movies in a row. I did 'Spaceman' and I was hanging in harness all the time. I kept saying, 'something's going on with my hip, man. I'm in trouble'. And then during this and this other movie I did I was like, 'yeah, I definitely gotta x-ray that thing', and we were in trouble." Even though 'Murder Mystery 2' director Jeremy Garelick described some of Sandler's work as "Tom Cruise kind of stuff", the funny man insists he's not looking for a part in a 'Mission: Impossible' flick.



"Everything's scary at 56 years old," Sandler said.

"You never know what the hell you're gonna get up from. I'm sluggish, man. My body hurts. Jennifer is in good shape. I didn't think I needed to get in shape before the movie but then when we were shooting, I was like, 'man, I should have gotten in shape'."

It certainly didn't look like anything was wrong before he hit the carpet for interviews.

Sandler spent about 30 minutes signing autographs for most of the fans who lined almost two blocks across the street from the premiere.

"I gotta try to do as many as possible because I don't want someone getting mad that I didn't sign theirs but I signed others," he explained.

Even if Sandler praised Aniston for being in "good shape", the 'Friends' star said she injured herself during her last day of shooting.

"I had a back injury about three years ago and it got really pissed off when I was in the harness," Aniston said.

"It was literally the last thing I shot. It was one of those things where you wake up the next day or two days later and you're like, 'wow, that got bad'."



WHY

PRIYANKA DIDN'T WANT TO DATE NICK IN THE BEGINNING?

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas revealed that she had frozen her eggs in her early 30s as her mother Madhu Chopra, who is an obstetrician-gynaecologist, advised her. "I felt such freedom, I did it in my early thirties and I could continue on an ambitious warpath, I wanted to achieve, and I wanted to get to a certain place in my career," Priyanka, who welcomed her first child Malti Marie via surrogacy in 2022, told Dax Shephard on the podcast Armchair Expert. "Also, I had not met the person I wanted to have children with. So, with that anxiety-inducing, and with my mom who is an ob-gyn going, 'Just do it,'" she added. Priyanka also shared that she did not want to date Nick Jonas at the beginning because she was unsure whether he would want to have kids at 25. "I always knew I wanted kids and that was one of the reasons I didn't want to date Nick because I was like I don't know if he would want kids at 25. "I love kids, I have worked with kids at Unicef, I have volunteered at kids' hospitals, I am like a kid whisperer, and I would rather spend time with children than with adults. I love kids, all our parties are kids and dogs friendly, at our house, you can bring them anytime," she added.

'Succession' favourite Matthew Macfadyen joined 'Deadpool 3'

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Succession' star Matthew Macfadyen has been cast in 'Deadpool 3'. The Ryan Reynolds franchise will welcome Macfadyen, who plays the fan-favourite Tom Wambagans on the HBO water-cooler smash, joining a new sequel that will also revive Hugh Jackman's beloved X-Men character Wolverine, reports 'Variety'.

Shawn Levy returns as director, and Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick will pen the script.

This will be the first 'Deadpool' project made since the intellectual property went to Disney in its acquisition of 20th Century Fox.

All creatives involved insist the film will retain its extreme violence and raunchy tone, as well as a hard R-rating.

"It is such a blast to laugh every day. It is so delicious to hear and write and come up with these scenes where people are just talking foul. And the violence is in your face and hardcore, and it's very much a 'Deadpool' movie," Levy said last year.

It was reported in December 2022 that production on the third 'Deadpool' will commence in May.

The fourth and final season of 'Succession' is currently airing on HBO.



Jeremy Renner to attend 'Rennervations' premiere, first since accident

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Jeremy Renner will appear in person at the 'Rennervations' world premiere, taking place on April 11. The event will mark Renner's first press event since the actor's January 1 snowplough accident, which landed him in the hospital for blunt chest trauma and orthopedic injuries, reports 'Variety'.

In trying to help his nephew out of the snow near his Lake Tahoe home, Renner was run over by his Sno-Cat, which weighs over 14,000 pounds.

All four episodes of 'Rennervations', the actor's new vehicle renovation show, begin streaming April 12 on Disney+.

"I've been on this journey for many years, and I started in my community by



building vehicles for people in need," Renner said about the series. "But a few years ago, I thought, 'How can I plus this up and create a bigger impact on a whole community?' And that's what this show does. This is one of my biggest passions and it's a driving force in my recovery, and I can't wait for the world to see it." Renner broke over 30 bones as a result of his accident, writing on Instagram at the time, "These 30 plus broken bones will mend, grow stronger, just like the love and bond with family and friends deepens. Love and blessings to you all."

This week, the 'Hawkeye' star posted a video in which he walks with the assistance of an anti-gravity treadmill.

Renner confirmed in the video that he is doing all of "the walking motion" himself, with the anti-gravity treadmill taking off a percentage of his body weight as his legs slowly recover. "Now is the time for my body to rest and recover from my will," Renner wrote in the caption.

I ABSOLUTELY THINK AQUAMAN WILL BE INVOLVED IN THE DCU: JASON MOMOA

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Jason Momoa is confident Aquaman will feature in the revamped DC Universe. The actor is reprising his role as the superhero in 'Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom'. The actor doesn't think it will be his final outing despite James Gunn and Peter Safran now at the helm of DC Studios as they lead the DCU into a new era with the character not included in the first round of new titles announced in January, reports 'Female First UK'. He told Total Film magazine: "I absolutely think Aquaman will be involved in the DCU. It's on, bro - there's no one bigger than Aquaman. But, also, I hope people are excited to see

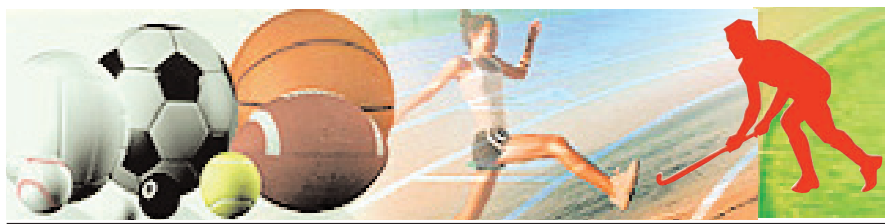
the new one. It's fun. I really enjoy doing comedy. There's some really funny stuff with Patrick Wilson". He said, quoted by 'Female First UK', "I really adore him. We had a great time working together. It's like we're brothers. There's a lot of cool stuff happening in this one." Earlier this year, Momoa confirmed he had met Gunn and Safran after they took over the studios late last year, while there have been rumours he could ditch Aquaman in favour of playing a different superhero called Lobo.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Cara Delevingne



MI HAVE GIVEN ME OPPORTUNITY TO SHOWCASE MYSELF IN DIFFERENT AVATAR: ROHIT SHARMA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma, who has led the team to five titles in the history of IPL, on Wednesday said that the franchise have given him the opportunity to showcase himself in a different avatar.

IPL 2023 will mark the ten-year anniversary of Rohit Sharma taking charge of Mumbai Indians as the skipper. With five titles, he's the most successful captain in the tournament.

Ahead of the 16th season of the tournament, the skipper spoke about his long association with the franchise and said that he had loved every single moment of the journey.

"10 years is a long time. Obviously you are bound to create a lot of memories in 10 years in that period. I have certainly enjoyed each and every moment of it. If you ask me to single out a memory, I won't be able to do that because it is tough," said Rohit in the pre-season press conference. Having first joined MI as a young-



Sharma in the 2011 season, Rohit has captained the team to each of their five titles. He took over the captaincy reins in the 2013 tournament and led

the team to the title in his first year in charge. "We have played some really good cricket over the years. My experience with this team has been phe-

nomenal. This team has given me a great opportunity to come out and express myself, first as a player and then as a leader. I have certainly grown as an individual and as a leader being a part of this team. MI has given me a great opportunity to showcase myself in a different avatar," he said speaking about his long and successful relationship with the franchise.

The 35-year old Sharma explained how the team is focused on breaking the tournament down into stages and setting short-term goals in order to emerge victorious. "Of course that's the end goal but we need to do a lot of things right to get there. IPL is such a long tournament, it goes on for close to two months and you have to play 16-17 games to hold that trophy and we do understand what it requires to do that. The focus of the team will obviously be to break it down into two halves or three parts of the tournament and see where we stand and take things forward from there," the skipper said.

Euro 2024 qualifier

McTominay scores twice as Scotland stun Spain

Glasgow (Scotland) | Agencies

Scott McTominay scored twice as Scotland beat Spain 2-0 in their Euro 2024 qualifier tie on Tuesday night to move top of their group with two wins from two matches.

McTominay scored early in each half as Scotland produced a solid display which left Spain few options in the first defeat of Luis de la Fuente's time as head coach.

Spain were seeing more of the ball now, but the game was also getting niggly, with Robertson and Dykes both seeing yellow cards for Scotland, with Dykes leading with his forearm against debutant David Garcia.

Despite Spain's timid pressure, Dykes should have doubled Scotland's lead on the stroke of halftime when he got behind the Spain defense after timing his run from inside his half. The striker had only Kepa to beat, but Garcia did enough to put him off and his chip went over the bar.

Porro and Mikel Oyarzabal were substituted by Nico Williams and Dani Carvajal in the



second half, while Swiss referee Sandro Scharer was replaced by fourth official Lukas Fahndrich after pulling a muscle.

McTominay doubled Scotland's lead in the 50th minute after Kieran Tierney left Carvajal in his wake, and although his cross was poor, it deflected off Garcia to fall kindly for the midfielder to fire home from the edge of the area. It could have been 3-0 moments later when John McGinn's free-kick whipped against the bar.

Lionel Messi nets hat-trick as Argentina rout Curacao

Santiago del Estero (Argentina) | Agencies

Lionel Messi scored his 100th international goal as Argentina cruised to a 7-0 home win over Curacao in their lopsided friendly.

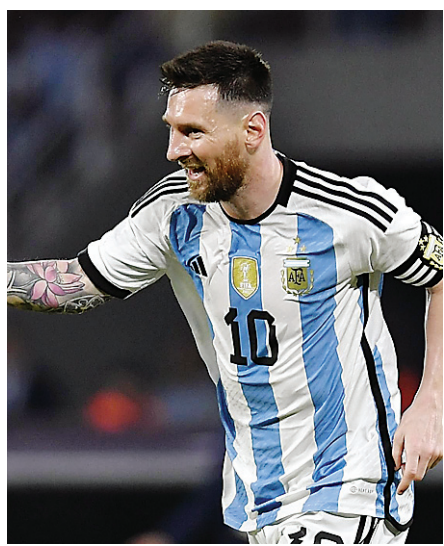
Messi netted a first-half hat-trick as the world champions raced to a 5-0 lead in the first 35 minutes before adding two more goals after halftime against their 86th-ranked opponents on late Tuesday night.

The Albiceleste captain has now scored 102 times in 174 appearances for his country, a Xinhua report said.

Argentina made the perfect start at Estadio Unico as Messi showed deft control before dancing around his marker and firing an unstoppable shot into the bottom right corner with his weaker right foot.

Nico Gonzalez doubled the lead with a header and Messi fired his team's third goal just after the half-hour mark.

The Paris Saint-Germain forward turned provider shortly after as he laid a pass off to Enzo Fernandez, whose first-time effort from 20 yards left goalkeeper Eloy Room with no chance. Messi then defied his 35 years with a dashing run into the box before calmly slotting another shot past Room.



The hosts dropped their intensity after halftime but their superiority remained evident. Angel Di Maria converted a 78th-minute penalty after a handball and Gonzalo Montiel completed the rout by firing home following Paulo Dybala's cross three minutes from time.

WEST INDIES BEAT SOUTH AFRICA BY 7 RUNS, CLAIM SERIES 2-1

Johannesburg | Agencies

A career-best 83 off 44 balls by Reeza Hendricks was not enough for South Africa as they fell to a seven-run defeat to West Indies in the decisive third and final T20I at the Wanderers Stadium, here.

The right-hander thumped two sixes and 11 fours in his sparkling innings, before becoming one of Alzarri Joseph's five victims after falling in the penultimate over as the run-rate began to soar in South Africa's pursuit of 221.

In the end South Africa finished with 213/6, seven short of what would have been another epic chase as they slipped to a 2-1 series defeat to the West Indies.

At the start, the Proteas tried to follow the trend of the series where the chasing side had won each of the previous two games, with captain Aiden Markram winning the toss and bowling first.

Openers Kyle Mayers (17) and Brandon King (36) provided West Indies with a strong start by putting



on 39 in the first 3.2 overs, before Kagiso Rabada (2/50) cleaned up the former and Johnson Charles (0), centurion hero from second T20I at SuperSport Park, in successive deliveries.

King then helped Nicholas Pooran (41 off 19 balls) add 55 for the next wicket to put West Indies in a strong position of 94/2 in the ninth over.

When Anrich Nortje (2/36) struck to remove King, the home side began to claw their way back as Lungi Ngidi (2/45) and Markram (1/21) took key wickets to leave the score on 161 for eight in the 16th over.

But then came trouble for the Proteas in the form of all-rounder Romario Shepherd, who bludgeoned an unbeaten 44 off 22 balls, and together with Joseph slamming 14 not out, played big part in an unbroken 61-run stand for the ninth wicket as West Indies reached 220/8, including 26 runs being hit in the final over of the innings.

Brief scores

West Indies 220/8 in 20 overs (Romario Shepherd 44 not out, Nicholas Pooran 41, Anrich Nortje 2/36, Lungi Ngidi 2/45) beat South Africa 213/6 in 20 overs (Reeza Hendricks 83, Aiden Markram 35 not out; Alzarri Joseph 5/40, Jason Holder 1/42) by seven runs.

BAN vs IRE

Litton Das smashes fastest fifty for Bangladesh

Chattogram | Agencies

Bangladesh opener Litton Das produced a stunning knock in the rain-shortened second T20I against Ireland here on Wednesday, scoring the fastest fifty by a Bangladesh player in the shortest format.

Das completed his half-century off 18 balls, with the help of five fours and three sixes to break the 16-year-old record of Mohammad Ashraful, who had hit a 20-ball fifty for Bangladesh against West Indies in the inaugural ICC Men's T20 World Cup in South Africa.

The 28-year-old batter came close to breaking the record last year when he made a 21-ball fifty against India in Adelaide in the Men's T20 World Cup.

Put in to bat, Das had a lucky reprieve in the fourth over when George Dockrell shelled a catch in the deep off Mark Adair and conceded a six. Das followed it up with back-to-back boundaries and never looked back from there. In the next over, he hit Finn Hand for two fours and a six to edge close to a fifty. He completed the half-century next over off a mere 18 balls. Eventually, Das got out after his



quick-fire 83 off 41 balls, as he nicked a delivery from Benjamin White and was caught by the wicketkeeper. Then, Shakib Al Hasan (38* of 24) and Towhid Hridoy (24 off 13) helped Bangladesh post a mammoth total of 202 for the loss of three wickets in 17 overs.

Earlier, rainfall in Chattogram led to the proceedings starting late as the match was reduced to 17 overs per side.

MIAMI OPEN

Rybakina advances to semifinals with win over Trevisan

Miami (USA) World No.7 Elena Rybakina defeated Italy's Martina Trevisan 6-3, 6-0 to advance to her third semifinal of the season at the Miami Open. The victory extended Rybakina's current win streak to 12.

Rybakina is now two wins away from becoming the fifth woman to complete the "Sunshine Double", sweeping back-to-back titles at Indian Wells and Miami in a single season. The 23-year-old captured her first WTA 1000 title two weeks ago at Indian Wells, defeating World No.2 Aryna Sabalenka in the final to win her biggest title since Wimbledon.

Rybakina will face either World No.3 Jessica Pegula or Anastasia Potapova in the semifinals on Thursday. She is now 20-4 on the season, matching Sabalenka for the tour lead in match wins.



ICC T20I player rankings

Rashid Khan regains top spot among bowlers

Dubai | Agencies

After leading Afghanistan to historic 2-1 series win over Pakistan, leg-spinner Rashid Khan regained the top spot among bowlers in the latest ICC T20I player rankings, released on Wednesday.

Rashid, who took a wicket each in the three matches conceding a total of 62 runs off his 12 overs, surpassed Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga to take the top position. He grabbed the top spot for the first time in his career in February 2018 and was number one most recently in November last year.

Rashid's teammate Fazalhaq Farooqi, who was the standout pacer during the series with a total of five wickets and an economy rate



of just 4.75, shot up an eye-catching 12 spots to third overall on the latest rankings update. Afghanistan now has three players inside the top 10 of the T20I category for bowlers, with spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman rounding out the talented trio in the eighth spot following his four wickets for the series against Pakistan. Pakistan's regular captain Babar Azam, who was given a rest during the Afghanistan series, dropped one position to fourth place on the T20I batters ranking.

Pakistan stand-in skipper Shadab Khan in the Afghanistan series performed exceptionally well and as a result, was recognised with an improved ranking in the latest update. He jumped eight spots to fourth on the T20I all-rounder rankings and gained six places to 12th overall on the list for bowlers.

India opener Shubman Gill rose to a career-high rating of 738 points in fifth place on the list for ODI batters, with skipper Rohit Sharma jumping one spot to eighth overall in the same category. All-rounder Hardik Pandya is up 10 places to 76th among bowlers in the latest update that takes into consideration performances in the final ODI of the three-match series against Australia.

Football

Belgium overpower Germany in friendly

Berlin | Agencies

Two quick first-half goals paved the way for Belgium's first win over Germany since 1954 following a 3-2 away victory.

The Red Devils took the reins from the start and made a perfect start on the road as Kevin De Bruyne's through ball sent Yannick Carrasco, who finished the job with the opener into the roof of the net with six minutes played on Tuesday night.

De Bruyne remained in the thick of things and kept Germany's defense busy as Romelu Lukaku doubled the lead courtesy of De Bruyne's defense-splitting pass three minutes later.

Germany couldn't keep Belgium at bay and were lucky in the 19th minute when Dodi Lukebakio failed to make it 3-0 after missing the target with only goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen to beat.



Just when Germany seemed about to take over, Belgium restored their two-goal lead out of the blue in the 78th minute when Leandro Trossard's square pass allowed De Bruyne to finish off a counterattack with a one-timer.

Germany's resistance still wasn't broken as Serge Gnabry's solo run almost made it 3-2 in the 84th

minute. The hosts kept it going and were rewarded three minutes later when Gnabry latched onto Kevin Schade's cutback.

Hansi Flick's side pressed frenetically for an equalizer, but Belgium's defense stood firm to snatch their second straight victory under new coach Domenico Tedesco.

DC to sign Abhishek Porel as Pant's replacement for IPL 2023: Report

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Capitals are set to sign Bengal wicket-keeper batter Abhishek Porel as a replacement for the injured Rishabh Pant for the upcoming IPL 2023.

As per an ESPNcricinfo report, Porel's signing comes following a series of practice games at a week-long preparatory camp of the franchise in the national capital.

Apart from Porel, the three other uncapped wicketkeepers -- Sheldon Jackson, Luvnith Sisodia and Vivek Singh -- was put through a series of match simulation exercises and were monitored by the Capitals coaching group, headed by director of cricket Sourav Ganguly and head coach Ricky Ponting, over the past week. Eventually, Capitals decided to go ahead with Porel,



who during his first full season with Bengal in domestic cricket, impressed with his glove work. However, he failed to make big scores across formats, scoring just

22 runs in his three outings in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. The batter has slightly better returns in first-class cricket, having managed six half-centuries

across 26 innings with a best of 73. The report further said that though Porel comes as Pant's replacement, Sarfaraz Khan, who featured in six games in IPL 2022 and scored 91 runs with a best of 36, is the front-runner to play and keep wickets.

Sarfaraz, who has been in sensational form with the bat over the past three domestic seasons, was asked by the Capitals' management to be ready for the wicketkeeper's role since Pant is still recovering from injuries sustained in a serious car crash in December.

The 25-year old played as the wicket-keeper batter for Mumbai at the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20s. The other wicketkeeping option Delhi has is England's Phil Salt, who was signed for his base price of INR 2 crore at this year's auction.



"2 superstar together"

SRK-Salman all set for a spy-action film in Jan 2024

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Two of Hindi cinema's biggest characters -- Pathan and Tiger -- are set to square it off in the upcoming spy-action film 'Tiger vs Pathaan', the shooting of which will begin in January 2024. While the audience enjoyed watching the camaraderie of the two characters in the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer 'Pathaan', this time around with the new addition to the spy-universe, the invincibles will be taking each other head-on.

A source has informed that the production house behind the Indian spy universe -- YRF isn't talking about this project just yet because they have huge plans to announce it in a grand way but a lot of work has already started on 'Tiger vs Pathaan'.

"We are expecting the film to start rolling in January 2024. Aditya Chopra is going to keep all details under the wraps because this is the biggest ever Bollywood film that the industry has attempted to make in a long, long time. It is not every day that you get India's biggest superstars SRK and Salman in one film," the source said.

YRF Spy Universe is now one of the biggest IP's in Indian cinema with all projects from the mighty franchises 'Ek Tha Tiger', 'Tiger Zinda Hai', 'War' & now 'Pathaan' being blockbusters. With 'Pathaan', the YRF now also has the highest grossing Hindi film of the country as a badge of honour.

From a timeline perspective, it all started in 2012 when Salman Khan took charge as 'Tiger' in 'Ek Tha Tiger' and reprised his role of a super-spy in the 2017 release 'Tiger Zinda Hai'. Then in 2019, Hrithik Roshan swept the audience off their feet with one of the most stylish films of Hindi cinema -- 'War'. With two agents in place, the idea for the spy-universe came into existence and 'Pathaan' with its colossal collections built the perfect stage for the universe.



Tabu is very spontaneous: Ajay Devgn

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Ajay Devgn, who is currently busy with the run-up to the release of his upcoming directorial 'Bhola', recently shared his experience of directing Tabu in the film. Both the actors have collaborated on numerous occasions as co-actors or in the capacity of actor-director. Talking about directing Tabu, Ajay said: "She is very spontaneous; that's what I like about her. Apart from that, she takes to the tone so perfectly that you don't need to take it any further as a director. There is an emotional scene between Bhola and Tabu's character Diana where I think she's done a fabulous job." The director-actor also spoke about the equipment used in 'Bhola'. He told IMDb during the segment 'On The Scene': "We've created different kinds of cameras in-house to align with the budgets of an Indian film. We designed robotic cameras which moved by themselves to get action shots which are otherwise impossible and too risky for cameramen to shoot." 'Bhola', directed by Ajay Devgn, stars a powerful line-up of actors like Vineet Kumar, Deepak Dobriyal and Sanjay Mishra. The film is set to arrive in cinemas on March 30.



SARA IS LOVELY AND HAS GREAT ENERGY ON SET: CHITRANGDA SINGH



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Chitrangda Singh, who will be seen next in 'Gaslight', says she messaged actor Saif Ali Khan to talk about working with his actress-daughter Sara Ali Khan.

The actress was working with Saif Ali Khan in the 2018 film 'Baazaar' when Sara made her debut into the film industry with 'Kedarnath', starring late actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Having worked with both father and daughter, Chitrangda was all praises for them.

Talking about this, Chitrangda Singh said, "It's so strange that she (Sara Ali Khan) was doing her first film at that time when Saif Ali Khan and I were shooting for a film and now I am working with her."

"I messaged Saif saying how wonderful his daughter is and how happy I was to work with her. She is lovely and has great energy on set. I had a great time working with both of them." 'Gaslight' is a murder mystery and a classic whodunit. Produced by Ramesh Taurani, Tips Films Ltd. and Akshai Puri, 12th Street Entertainment and directed by Pavan Kirpalani, the film releases on March 31 on Disney+ Hotstar.

The thriller also stars Vikrant Massey, Chitrangda Singh, Akshay Oberoi, Rahul Dev amongst others.



ADAH SHARMA SHARES A SCARY EXPERIENCE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Known for her roles in 'Hasee Toh Phasee' and 'Commando 3', actress Adah Sharma has been roped in for the upcoming film 'The Kerala Story', written and directed by Sudipto Sen.

The actress shared that after listening to the story, she could not sleep for a few nights.

She said: "When the story was narrated to me it was so scary I didn't sleep a few nights just thinking about it. I'm grateful that I got to be in a film like this, and got a chance to tell this heartbreaking story."

Adah is playing the role of Fathima Ba, a Malayali nurse, who converts to Islam and joins the Islamic State. She is among the 32,000 women who went missing from Kerala and then turned into an IS terrorist. On being chosen to play the lead role in the film, Adah added: "The Kerala Story is a Hindi film so they wanted a Bollywood actress who can speak Hindi and Malayalam. I'm a Malayali so I speak both languages. That was one of the reasons they felt I fit the part." Speaking about the controversy surrounding the film Adah shared: "The makers Vipul Shah and Sudipto Sen have made several reputed films and they will present all statistics. When people watch the film all their questions will be answered and their doubts will be cleared."



TERENCE LEWIS IS IMPRESSED WITH YOUNG TALENTS OF REALITY SHOW

'Their dance forms are packed with variety & originality'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Dancer and choreographer Terence Lewis talked about the dancing talents and how with time they have become more experimental and not just confined to what has been taught to them by their teachers. He said: "There was a time when students used to come and only do things that their Gurus told them to do. However, now Gen Zs have a distinct level of planning and confidence. They don't appear to have learned anything from anyone." As he is all set to be part of the panel of judges including choreographer Geeta Kapur, and Bollywood actress Sonali Bendre on the dance reality show 'India's Best Dance Season 3', Terence spoke about the emerging talent who will be appearing on the show. Terence, who has judged reality shows like 'Dance India Dance' and 'Nach Baliye' and also choreographed in films like 'Lagaan', 'Jhankaar Beats', and 'Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela', among others, shared: "They infuse their own personality, resulting in a one-of-a-kind expression and innovation. Their dance forms are packed with variety and originality. I am sure the choreographers are going to have a hard time this season." The first season came in 2020 and the second season aired in 2021 with judges Malaika Arora, Geeta Kapur and Terence Lewis. This time Sonali has joined the show as a judge. All the judges appeared on 'The Kapil Sharma Show' as celebrity guests and talked about the new season of the dance reality show. During banter with Kapil Sharma, Sonali also shared that she wanted to take the chair of Archana Puri in his show.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Janhvi Kapoor