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Revanth Reddy takes charge as Telangana CM, holds first cabinet meeting

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

New Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday took charge at the state Secretariat. After taking oath at L.B. Stadium, he, along with ministers, reached the Secretariat and took charge in his office located on the sixth floor. Accompanied by his wife, he performed puja amid chanting of Vedic hymns by a group of priests. When he occupied the chair of the Chief Minister, the priests blessed him. Later, he signed certain files brought by Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari and other top officials.

After Revanth Reddy took charge, the first meeting of the State Cabinet began at the Secretariat.

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and 11 other ministers were attending the meeting.



Earlier, officials and Secretariat employees accorded a warm welcome to Revanth Reddy on his arrival. After the Congress stormed to power,

Revanth Reddy had announced that the doors of the Secretariat would be thrown open for people.

The new Secretariat complex, equipped with state-of-the-art features and built with a unique design, was inaugurated on April 30. Then Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao had inaugurated the complex by occupying a chair in his chambers on the sixth floor and signing a few files.

The integrated complex housing the offices of the Chief Minister, ministers, Chief Secretary and all other Secretaries and heads of departments, has been named after Dr B. R. Ambedkar. Built at a cost of over Rs 600 crore, the Secretariat is a six-storey structure with seven lakh square feet of built-up space and equipped with all modern facilities. However, entry into the complex was restricted. Even media persons were not allowed in the premises.

Don't call me 'Modiji', I am Modi: PM gives credit of poll victories to BJP workers

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi while addressing the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting on Thursday said that the recent electoral victories in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan were not solely his triumph but the victory for all party workers.

The meeting was held ahead of the commencement of proceedings of the fourth day of the Winter Session of Parliament.

Modi emphasised that it was not just the victory of the leaders in Delhi but also of the workers who have devoted their lives to serving the party and the people in their areas.

The Prime Minister also asked the MPs to address him as just Modi and not 'Modi ji'.

He said that the public knows him only by the name Modi, so there is no need to create a distance between them by adding formal titles



like 'Adarniya', 'Shri', and 'Ji' to his name.

Modi, while giving directions for the preparations for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, instructed the MPs to actively participate in the 'Viksit Bharat Yatra' in their respective constituencies.

He also emphasised the need to focus on the 'Vishwakarma Yojana' of the central government and ensuring that it reached the people.

To make the 'Sankalp Yatra' successful, all the MPs should contact the workers in their respective areas and also come to the field themselves, the Prime Minister added.

Modi received a rousing welcome as he arrived at the meeting. The party's National President, JP Nadda, welcomed and congratulated him by presenting him a garland while the Central Ministers and MPs shouted slogans and applauded.

\$175 MILLION ADB LOAN FOR UPGRADING MADHYA PRADESH HIGHWAYS OKAYED



Team Absolute | New Delhi

A total of 397 lions, including 182 cubs, have died in Gujarat between 2019 and 2021, with around 10 per cent falling prey to unnatural causes, the Parliament was told on Thursday.

The information was given by Minister of State for Environment Ashwini Kumar Choubey to the Rajya Sabha in a written reply to a question.

As per year-wise breakdown, 66 adult lions and 60 cubs died in 2019, 73 adult

lions and 76 cubs in 2020, and 76 adult lions and 46 cubs in 2021. Approximately 10.53 per cent of these deaths, including 3.82 per cent of cub fatalities, were due to unnatural reasons.

In response to these worrying statistics, Choubey emphasised the Central government's support for lion conservation in Gujarat.

The state receives funding assistance under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats, which focuses on various initiatives,

including the conservation of the Asiatic lions, enhancing public awareness about wildlife conservation, and managing habitats.

Additionally, the Minister highlighted the ongoing legal deliberations regarding the translocation of lions from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh, a matter currently under the purview of the Supreme Court.

The decision to translocate is seen as a significant step towards ensuring the survival and genetic diversity of Asiatic lions.

BJP objects to Nawab Malik 'joining' Ajit Pawar-led NCP faction

Nagpur | Agencies

Exposing a deep schism in the ruling MahaYuti alliance, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday raised strong reservations to former Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik "joining" the breakaway Nationalist Congress Party faction led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

In what is described as an "unprecedented" move by political circles, BJP's Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis shot off a letter to his counterpart Ajit Pawar expressing reservations over Malik's entry to the ruling MahaYuti alliance of Shiv Sena-BJP-NCP-AP.

Fadnis said that considering the kind of allegations of "treason" that Malik is facing, it "would not be proper" to include him in the MahaYuti alliance.

However, he said that as a MLA, it is Malik's right to come to the legislature and he even participated in the proceedings on Thursday.

On his objections on the issue, Fadnis made it clear right in the beginning that he harboured no personal enmity or grudges against Malik.

The BJP leader said that "power comes and goes", but the country is bigger than power.

Fadnis pointed out that Malik - who spent 18 months in jail between February 2022-August 2023 - is presently released only on medical bail and till



the charges against him are proved, he should be welcomed.

"However, given the kind of allegations he is facing, it would not be appropriate to make him a part of the MahaYuti, that is our clear opinion," he said.

However, he added that it was Ajit Pawar's complete prerogative to decide whom he should take in his party.

Justifying his opposition, Fadnis urged that care should be taken to ensure Malik's entry does not cause problems in the MahaYuti alliance and all the allies must bear this in mind.

Taking a swipe at the former Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Chief Minister

Uddhav Thackeray without naming him, Fadnis said that though Malik was arrested and jailed (for 18 months) under charges of 'treason' (desh-drohi), he was kept in the cabinet by the (then) CM, and the BJP could not endorse that decision.

Fadnis signed off by expressing hope that Ajit Pawar would take note of the BJP's sentiments in this regard.

Earlier, in the Maharashtra Assembly, Fadnis had attacked the MVA for retaining Malik as a minister though he was put behind bars for his "terror" links.

"After he was jailed for his links with terrorists, we had demanded Malik's

resignation but the (then) Thackeray government did not act in the matter. First you reply to that, then ask us... You have no moral right to question us now," he said.

Returning to the legislature after an absence of nearly two years, Malik created a flutter in Nagpur when he first visited a senior NCP-AP leader's office and later went to the house, occupying a last row on the treasury benches. This triggered a ruckus both outside and inside the Assembly, with the MVA taking potshots at the BJP.

"Malik, whom the BJP and the CM had called a 'traitor' - which I had condemned - what's the BJP's opinion now? Where have the BJP leaders gone who keep saying 'Mian Mian' to show that they are Muslims? BJP has done the job of destroying the rich and ideal political traditions of Maharashtra. This politics of BJP is terrible," said Congress state General Secretary Sachin Sawant in Mumbai.

"Nawab Sir, you always taught me to fight against injustice and wrong. While debating on TV, you taught me to speak intelligently against my opponents. I will always follow your teachings and fight against the same opponents," said NCP-SP national spokesperson Clyde Crasto in a sarcastic note.

However, Ajit Pawar and his party leaders had not commented on these unexpected political twists till late this evening.

DELHI MAN CARRIES OUT ACID ATTACK ON 17-YEAR-OLD, DRINKS IT TOO AND SUCCUMBS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A 17-year-old girl was attacked with acid by a man in central Delhi, as he sought to coerce her mother into withdrawing a rape case filed against him, police said on Thursday.

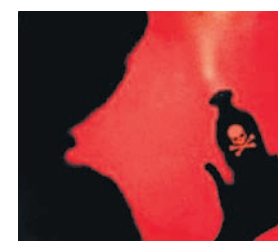
The man, identified as Prem Singh, 54 not only poured acid on the girl but also consumed some of it himself.

He succumbed to his injuries during the treatment. According to police, on Thursday, the police received a PCR call regarding an acid attack.

Upon reaching the spot, a police team found that the injured victim and the alleged perpetrator had already been taken to RML Hospital by PCR.

"The Investigating Officer promptly arrived at RML Hospital and identified the injured as a 17-year-old minor, and the alleged assailant as Prem Singh both receiving treatment in the RML Emergency ward," a senior police official said.

The victim, also the complainant, disclosed that her mother had previously filed a rape case against Singh, their



neighbour, and he was on interim bail, granted on November 29, for a family-related event.

According to the complainant, on Thursday morning, Singh allegedly threatened her to withdraw the rape case filed by her mother against him. When she refused, Singh purportedly poured acid on her.

He also consumed some of the acid himself.

"A case under relevant sections of the IPC was registered at Anand Parbat police station," said a senior police official.

"Prem Singh succumbed to his injuries during treatment at RML Hospital. The victim, having sustained minor injuries, has been discharged from the hospital following medical attention," said the official.

India's Q2 growth has been highest in the world: Sitharaman

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said India's second quarter growth (in the current fiscal year) has been the highest in the world and the economic activity has been good across sectors.

Addressing the Rajya Sabha during the Winter Session of the Parliament while replying to a debate on the economic situation in the country which was held over three days with the participation of many members, Sitharaman said that the manufacturing sector has contributed significantly to the economy on the back of various measures like PLI schemes. She also said that India is the second most sought after manufacturing destination in the world. She said that manufacturing sector contributes significantly to economy on the back of various measures like PLI scheme.

"All sectors are growing significantly. Because of the Make in India programme and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's schemes, the manufacturing sector is also significantly contributing to the economy. The manufacturing sector is contributing 13.9 per cent to the economy. The Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) in November was 56. It is in the expansionary territory, so sustained growth is indicative of growth," she said.



She further said that our second quarter growth has been very high and it is the highest in the world, and we continuously maintained that momentum of being the fastest-growing economy.

"During the same quarter - July to September, 2023, the third and fourth-largest economies of the world contracted. For India to reach 7.6 per cent in the second quarter, it's a very significant number. In just last eight years, India has become the world's fifth largest economy," she told the House.

Meanwhile, former Finance Minister and Congress leader P Chidambaram in

a post on 'X' said: "In her reply to the three-day debate, the Finance Minister did not provide a direct answer to three pointed questions: Will the GDP double to Rs 200 lakh crore (in constant prices) in the 10 years of the NDA government by 2023-24? According to the NFHS, the proportions of children malnourished, stunted and wasted are unacceptably high. Why? Why have net financial assets of households dipped to a historic low of 5.1 per cent? I hope the government will answer these questions and other questions raised by MPs some day," Chidambaram said.

Rishi Sunak in danger of losing his Premiership

Nagpur | Agencies

Rishi Sunak, 42, the Indian-origin British Prime Minister, is fighting with his back to the wall to save his premiership as well as his political career.

Sunak, who has staked his future on passing an immigration bill in the British Parliament, which, he thinks, will ensure asylum seekers to the United Kingdom are sent to Rwanda and consequently deter such people from illegally coming to Britain. The United Kingdom has signed an agreement with Rwanda to despatch illegal immigrants to the east African country.

Summoning a media conference on Thursday, he told journalists the bill will make prospect of courts blocking any deportation decision "vanishingly rare". He said: "That means that this bill blocks every single reason that has ever been used to prevent flights to Rwanda from taking off."

Three weeks ago, the UK's Supreme Court struck down the move as in its view, the policy was unlawful, violated human rights, among other contraventions. It also felt Rwanda was not a safe place. Commenting on this, Sunak said: "You had better believe we've blocked those too (in the bill)." He emphasised the UK was also willing to ignore injunctions from the European Court of Human Rights. However, passage of the bill in the House of Commons next week has boiled down to a confidence vote on Sunak. The main opposition Labour party, the Scottish nationalists and the Liberal Democrats are determined to oppose it. If about 28 ruling Conservative party MPs join them, the legislation could in fact be defeated. Perhaps most vocal among the dissatisfied Conservative MPs is Suella Braverman, whose father is Goan and mother Tamil and who was last month sacked as Home Secretary in the Sunak government. She and her allies want the bill to go further by disapplying the European convention on human rights in entirety. The Guardian newspaper commented: "It is not yet clear whether his (Sunak's) legal arguments are as robust as his rhetoric, and today he sounded more uncertain and defensive than he did when going over this ground last month."





SC asks Centre to inform it about steps taken to prevent inflow of illegal immigrants

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Union government to inform it about the administrative steps taken to prevent the inflow of illegal immigrants into Indian territories from northeastern states, particularly from Assam.

A Constitution Bench, headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud also asked the Centre to submit details regarding border fencing and estimated timelines to complete the fencing exercise. The 5-judge bench, also comprising Justices Surya Kant, M.M. Sundresh, J.B. Pardiwala, and Manoj Misra, asked about the number of Bangladeshi immigrants granted citizenship in Assam between January 1, 1966 and March 25, 1971 under section 6A (2) of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

It also sought to know the



number of foreigners detected under the Foreigners Tribunals Order during the above period and called for an estimated inflow of illegal migrants into India, including Assam, after March 25, 1971.

The top court asked the Union and Assam governments to file a common affidavit on or before Monday.

The Constitution Bench is hearing a batch of challenging the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955. The petitions against Section 6A primarily challenge provisions of the Assam Accord which formed the basis of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, published in 2019.

After taking over as CM, Revanth keeps promises to people

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Soon after taking oath as the Chief Minister of Telangana, A Revanth Reddy signed two files, the first file relating to implementation of six guarantees given by the Congress party to the people of Telangana.

The second file he signed was to fulfil a promise he had made during the election campaign to a woman Rajini who suffers from Dwarfism. The promise was to give Rajini her first job, if the Congress party came to power. On Thursday, she was specially invited and the Chief Minister signed the orders to give Rajini a government job and handed over the same to her.

On October 17, Revanth Reddy had given a written assurance to Rajini that she would be the first person to get a government job and had

also signed a Congress guarantee card and handed it to her when she met him at the party headquarters Gandhi Bhavan. Rajini, a post graduate, had told Revanth Reddy that she was not getting a job even in private companies.

Filling up all vacancies in government departments was one of the key election promises by the Congress party.

Addressing people after the swearing-in, Revanth Reddy promised that the Congress government would be the people's government. "We are not rulers. We are servants of people," he said.

He recalled that Telangana state was formed due to the sacrifices of the people and with the firm determination of Sonia Gandhi in meeting the long-pending demand of the people. He said people of Telangana had many dreams at the time of formation of the



State but during the last 10 years their dreams remained unfulfilled. Stating that during

the last 10 years people of Telangana silently suffered under an autocratic rule, he

announced that the iron fencing in front of the chief minister's official residence Pragati Bhavan had been dismantled by his government immediately after coming to power.

He announced the renaming of Pragati Bhavan as Jyotirao Phule Praja Bhavan and said that Praja Durbar would be held at Praja Bhavan at 10 a.m. on Friday.

He assured the people that he would try to solve their problems as their son and brother.

Revanth Reddy said that Telangana will now usher in Indiramma Rajyam, which can ensure social justice and ensure inclusive development. He promised to do justice to students, the unemployed and families of martyrs. Revanth Reddy said the government would work for both welfare and development of the state.

Raje credits PM Modi for BJP's victory in Rajasthan, MP & Chhattisgarh

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Vasundhara Raje on Thursday credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for her party's victory in the recently concluded Assembly polls in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

According to sources, Raje's gesture is being seen as her willingness to co-operate with the BJP high command.

Sharing a video of a felicitation programme for PM Modi organised by the MPs in the Parliament on 'X', the former Rajasthan Chief Minister wrote: "The massive victories in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh hint that Congress' false promises and



claims did not work in front of PM Modi's guarantees. PM Modi was given a warm welcome by the MPs at the BJP parliamentary party meeting today." Sources said that Raje has sought an appointment from BJP president JP Nadda and Home Minister Amit Shah. She is expected to present her views on the political developments evolving in the state during her meeting with

the two top party leaders.

Meanwhile, Baba Balaknath, who is being considered as a contender for the chief ministerial post in Rajasthan, resigned as a Lok Sabha member on Thursday. Later, he also met Amit Shah.

The BJP has retained power in Madhya Pradesh while it wrested power from the Congress in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

Sitharaman urges India Inc to ride start-ups' tech wave for big push to manufacturing

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday urged the captains of the industry to work towards strengthening the country's manufacturing sector in collaboration with new technologies that were being spearheaded by the nation's start-ups as India's fast-growing economy offered a huge market.

Citing World Economic Forum figures, the Finance Minister said that there would be 140 million middle-income households and over 40 million high networth individuals in India by 2030.

This provides a huge opportunity for manufacturing com-



panies as such a large market can only be found in five or six jurisdictions clubbed together

and it was rare to find it in a single country. Addressing the FICCI's 96th

annual general meeting, Sitharaman said that while the services sector is growing and the country had taken huge strides in the IT sector, there was a need to expand the manufacturing sector, for the nation to march ahead.

She said while there was a long recession looming in the West and exports would be affected, it is important to focus on the domestic market and go for new technology in partnership with local startups which had filed a record number of patents. The number of patents has jumped by 3 times in recent years, she pointed out.

Such a partnership would benefit both industry and startups and take the nation

ahead. Industry must keep a close watch on the innovations that startups were coming up with and avail of this opportunity by forging partnerships, she added.

The Finance Minister said that the government was also providing a technology platform and environment in which all these innovations were taking place.

Sitharaman also said that many western companies would be looking for investments in India to escape the slowdown in their home countries. Talking about climate change, she said the government was aware of the burden that industry may have to bear, and was working to reduce this burden.

Over Rs 100 cr seized in I-T raids at premises of Congress MP's relatives

Ranchi | Agencies

Cash amounting to more than Rs 100 crore has reportedly been recovered in the raids being conducted by the Income Tax Department for two days at the premises of close relatives of Congress Rajya Sabha MP from Jharkhand, Dhiraj Prasad Sahu.

According to Income Tax Department sources, the maximum cash has been recovered from the premises of Boudh Distillery Private Limited (BDPL) in Odisha. Many machines have been installed to count the notes.

The I-T Department has also simultaneously raided half a dozen premises of Sahu in Ranchi, Lohardaga and Odisha. Apart from this, raids are going on at some places in West Bengal also. Apart from the documents related to



income and expenditure, what else has been found in the raid is not yet clear.

There are many companies in the name of Dheeraj Sahu's relatives in Odisha. These include Baldev Sahu Infra Private Limited (Fly Ash Bricks), Kvality Bottlers Private Limited and Kishore Prasad Bijay Prasad Beverages Private Limited.

Bottling of foreign liquor is done at Kvality Bottlers Private Limited and it is marketed by Kishore Prasad Bijay Prasad Beverages Private Limited. Dheeraj Prasad Sahu is also a director in some of these companies. This Income Tax raid is related to tax evasion in the liquor business.

Dheeraj Sahu comes from a prominent business and political family of Jharkhand. He has been elected to the Rajya Sabha twice from the Congress.

5 killed after vehicle falls into gorge on Zojila Pass

Team Absolute | Srinagar

In the second such incident in a week, five people were killed on Thursday in a road accident on the Zojila Pass connecting the Kashmir Valley with the Ladakh region.

Police said that a vehicle coming from Kargil towards the Valley went out of the driver's control at Panimatha on the Zojila Pass and dropped into a deep gorge.

"Five occupants of the vehicle died in this accident. The vehicle was coming from Kargil to the Valley when the



accident occurred," police said.

Five tourists from Kerala were killed on Tuesday when their vehicle met with an acci-

dent on the Zojila Pass. The road on the Zojila Pass becomes highly slippery due to extreme cold during the winter months.

UP MAN HUNG UPSIDE DOWN, BEATEN OVER THEFT ALLEGATIONS; THREE ARRESTED

Team Absolute | Patna

A 25-year-old man was allegedly hung upside down from a tree and beaten over suspicion of mobile theft in the Dramandganj area of UP's Mirzapur.

Three persons have been arrested in connection with the incident after a video of the same went viral on social media.

The victim's mother also reported the matter to the police.

Three teams have been formed to arrest the fourth accused person in the case.

In the purported video that went viral on Wednesday, the man can be seen hanging upside down from a tree and being beaten by one person while some others are standing nearby.

In her complaint, Chandrakali, alleged that on December 3, four persons took away her son Jaishankar Bahelia, tied him up, and thrashed and abused him over suspicion of mobile phone



theft.

Additional SP, Naxal, O.P. Singh said that based on the complaint by the victim's mother, a case was registered and one of the accused, Rajesh Dharikar, was immediately arrested.

Following interrogation of the arrested person, the police nabbed two others, he added.

Three teams have been formed to arrest the absconding accused, who is a resident of Banda district but had been living in Mirzapur for a long time, the ASP said.

Ayodhya: 50 foreign dignitaries invited, entry through barcode passes only

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary, Champat Rai, has said that one representative each from 50 foreign countries would be invited to attend the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple on January 22.

Team Absolute | Ayodhya (UP)

The invitation letter, duly signed by Champat Rai, reads: "You are aware that after a long-drawn struggle, the construction of temple at Shri Ram Janmabhoomi is in progress, and on Paus Shukla Dwadashi, Vikram Samvat 2080, Monday, 22 January, 2024, the new idol of Ram Lalla will be consecrated in the sanctum sanctorum. It is our strong desire that you be present in Ayodhya on this auspicious occasion to witness the consecration and enhance the dignity of this great historical day."

The VVIPs will get entry through barcode passes.

"Out of 7,000 invitees, about 4,000 would be religious leaders. The remaining will include prominent personalities from different fields. A link will be shared with the invitees before the ceremony. Once they register themselves, a bar code will be generated which will act as the entry pass," said VHP spokesman Sharad Sharma.

Families of 50 kar sevaks who lost



their lives during the movement have also been invited. Invitations have

also been sent to judges, scientists, writers and poets. "We have also invit-

ed saints, priests, Shankaracharyas, former civil servants, retired army

officers, lawyers, musicians and Padma awardees," he said.

"Ram Lalla will be seated in the temple in the form of a five-year-old boy. For this, three idols are being made from two stones brought from Karnataka, and one from Rajasthan. The idols are almost ready and are being given final touches. The most beautiful idol will be selected for consecration," said Champat Rai.

VHP spokesperson Sharad Sharma said, "We have also invited journalists who supported the Ram temple movement through their writings and reports. Without them, the struggle for Ram Temple could not have been successful."

Cricketers Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli, industrialists Mukesh Ambani, Gautam Adani and Ratan Tata, Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan, and actors, Arun Govil and Dipika Chikhlia, who played Ram and Sita in popular TV serial 'Ramayana', are among the prominent personalities who have been invited for the consecration ceremony of Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22.



Is BJP's landslide win in Madhya Pradesh polls end of 'one man show' in state?

Praveen Dwivedi | Bhopal

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has registered a thumping victory in the recently concluded Madhya Pradesh Assembly polls by winning 163 of 230 seats, retaining power in the state and handing the opposition Congress a massive defeat.

The results, according to political analysts, have also led to a debate in the state's political circles, with many wondering if this is the end of the "one man show" in the state? So far, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has been seen as arguably the most prominent face of the BJP in the central Indian state, with "Mamaji" -- as the CM is also popularly known -- leading the party from the front since the last one-and-a-half decade.

This time, however, many have been left wondering if Chouhan would be handed the chief ministerial post for the fifth time. Also, it is yet to be learned if a new face will replace Chouhan as CM along with two deputies for the fresh face.

According to political analysts, the 'one man show' in Madhya Pradesh seems to have ended, as several BJP heavyweights who were earlier either sidelined or not seen much involved in Madhya Pradesh politics, have now made a "comeback". And the list is long.

Even as everyone in the state's political corridors acknowledges Chouhan's leadership skills and credits him with the BJP's success, this time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also pitched in several leaders who have considerable influence in the state's politics.

These leaders also include Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, and



senior BJP member Kailash Vijayvargiya.

With PM Modi's move working wonders for the party, the 'one man show' is likely to end this time.

Two Union Ministers - Narendra Singh Tomar and Prahlad Singh Patel, who have won the Assembly elections, resigned from their Lok Sabha membership on Wednesday.

Other BJP Lok Sabha MPs, who won the Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, including former state BJP president Rakesh Singh, have also resigned from Parliament.

If sources are to be believed, Tomar and Patel have put themselves strongly in as the replacement of the incumbent Chief Minister, Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

BJP's national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, who won the Assembly election from Indore-1, and is considered a prominent "political competitor" of Chouhan, is also said to be in the CM race.

Vijayvargiya is an established saffron party leader in Malwa-Nimar region of Madhya Pradesh, and he enjoys a strong

bond with the BJP's second most powerful leader - Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Once, he also used to be seen as the "prime challenger" to CM Chouhan's "one-man show politics".

Besides, Madhya Pradesh unit BJP president V.D. Sharma also seems to be not far behind in taking credit for the landslide victory.

At the same time, CM Chouhan is leaving no opportunity to claim that his flagship - "Ladli Behna Yojana" has been a game-changer.

Sharma, on the other hand, claimed he has strengthened the root-level cadre of the party in the last two-and-half-years.

Sharma, an MP from Khajuraho constituency, took over charge as the state president in February 2020.

His growing influence in politics has been one of the key reasons for the "rift" between him and CM Chouhan.

Sharma has apparently been trying to make his efforts recognised by the party's central leadership.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, who switched to the BJP from the Congress in March 2020, has got a much-needed relief as the saffron party won 18 seats in his turf Gwalior-Chambal region this time, up from 7 in 2018.

With him, the Congress in 2018 won 26 out of 36 seats in the region, and without him in the camp in 2023, managed to secure only 16 seats.

The political circles have already been listening to speculations about Scindia taking over command in Madhya Pradesh. A similar murmur is being heard again, though with some 'if' and 'but'.

Exercise in Delhi regarding the President of Madhya Pradesh Congress, a youth may get command

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The high command now wants to give the command of Madhya Pradesh to a young or influential leader in place of Kamal Nath. However, it is also being said that whichever leader will be made the head of the State Congress Committee, he will be close to Kamal Nath. The high command wants Kamal Nath to also agree on the name of the new president. If a decision is taken to hand over the command of Madhya Pradesh to a young leader, then the most prominent names in it would be Digvijay Singh's son Jaivardhan Singh, Malwa's active leader Jitu Patwari, Mahakaushal's active leader Tarun Bhanot and former Union Minister Arun Yadav from Nimar. is being taken.

After the crushing defeat in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections, the departure of State Congress Committee President Kamal Nath is considered almost certain. There is discussion in the political circles of the state that Kamal Nath may offer to resign from the post of Congress State President in the high level meeting to



be held in Delhi today. It is also being said that the new state president of Congress will be of Kamal Nath's choice.

Let us tell you here that Kamal Nath has been serving as the President of Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee for the last 6 years. In 2018, Congress returned to power in Madhya Pradesh after 15 years by contesting the elections under the leadership of Kamal Nath, but after the rebellion of Jyotiraditya Scindia, he had to leave the post of Chief Minister within 15 months. Despite the departure of the government, Kamal Nath continued to struggle for the strength of the party.

The duo of Madhya Pradesh Congress President Kamal Nath and senior leader Digvijay Singh worked hard for three and a half years so that Congress could once again return to power. But contrary to all predictions, Congress had to face a big defeat in this assembly elections. There is talk in the political circles of Madhya Pradesh that today Congress National President Mallikarjun Kharge has called a meeting in Delhi. In which Kamal Nath can offer his resignation. Leaders in-charge of Madhya Pradesh including Rahul Gandhi and KC Venugopal will also be present in the meeting. In this, the big defeat of Congress in Madhya Pradesh will also be reviewed.

Meanwhile, party leaders believe that Kamal Nath should remain the PCC chief till the Lok Sabha elections. It is being said that considering the results of the assembly elections, there are going to be a lot of difficulties for the Congress in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. During the Congress government, BJP had won 28 out of 29 seats in the state in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Therefore, Lok Sabha elections can be very challenging for the new Speaker.

The suspense will end on Sunday: Kailash Vijayvargi

Team Absolute | Bhopal

BJP has won a bumper victory in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections. With this victory, BJP is going to form the government. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 163 out of 230 assembly seats in the state, while the Congress was limited to only 66 seats. There is now a period of speculation about the CM face in BJP. Meanwhile, a big statement of BJP's National General Secretary and newly elected MLA Kailash Vijayvargiya has come out.

Regarding his name being included in the race for the post of CM, Kailash Vijayvargi said that a dozen names are running in the race for the post of CM. Thank you all for promoting my name. On the question of victory in Madhya Pradesh due to Ladli Behan Yojana, he said that Modi magic worked in all three states.



The magic of all the plans worked. He said that Ayushman card was also launched and other schemes were also launched. A bouquet of schemes were launched in the assembly elections, which also included Ladli Behan Yojana.

Kailash Vijayvargiya said that victory has happened due to the presence of PM Modi ji and only Modi ji. He asked whether there was Ladli Behan scheme in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.. BJP had a big victory in

Chhattisgarh also. He said that victory was achieved only because of Modi ji's leadership, Amit Shah's strategy and the planning done from the polling booth to the Panna Pramukh. On the question of when the suspense for the post of Chief Minister will end, Vijayvargiya said that the suspense will end on Sunday. Right now I have a huge responsibility. Right now I am the National General Secretary. Kailash Vijayvargiya's

statement is being interpreted to mean that Ladli Behan has no influence in Madhya Pradesh elections. They are directly giving credit of victory to the central schemes and planning of Amit Shah along with the presence of Amit Shah, PM Modi. Whereas Shivraj Singh Chauhan is continuously linking the victory in Madhya Pradesh with the game changer scheme Laadli Behan Yojana.

Since brainstorming for the post of CM, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's focus has been on the Ladli Behan Conference along with the Ladli Behan Scheme.

Ladli Behan Yojana is being promoted in family and general meetings also. At present, Prahlad Singh Patel and Narendra Singh Tomar, who are in the race for the post of CM, have not yet come out with a clear statement of their victory under the Ladli Behan Yojana.

Churning on CM in Delhi, Tomar's posters put up in Gwalior

Team Absolute | Gwalior

Bharatiya Janata Party has got a big victory in the assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh and churning is going on in Delhi regarding who will be the Chief Minister. But, big posters of Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar have been put up in Gwalior, on which he has been written as 'Boss'.

Actually, BJP government is going to be formed in the state. There is only one question that who will be the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh? Will Shivraj Singh Chauhan continue on this post or will a new person take over this chair? This is because many veterans have won the assembly elections, whose names are being discussed as the new Chief Minister.

Apart from Chief Minister Chauhan, the names of Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Prahlad Patel and National General Secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya are in the headlines. While the Central Parliamentary Board meeting is being held in Delhi, on the other hand, huge



posters have been pasted in Gwalior, in which, along with congratulating and best wishes to Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, a map of Madhya Pradesh has been made with Tomar's picture. And boss is written in it.

On one hand, posters have been put up in Gwalior calling Tomar the boss, while on the other hand, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan and State President Vishnu Dutt Sharma have said that they are not in the race for CM.

Kamleshwar Dodiya contested elections by traveling on a bike, reached Bhopal after getting MLA written on the same bike



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Bharat Adivasi Party has won its flag in the recent assembly elections and has succeeded in sending one MLA to the assembly. The party gave ticket to Kamleshwar Dodiya from Sailana and he was elected MLA. Sailana seat is the only seat in Madhya Pradesh which has been won by any party other than BJP and Congress.

With Kamleshwar becoming MLA, people of the tribal community are hopeful that

he will present the problems of the tribal community in the Assembly. Let us tell you, MLA Dodiya is in the news after breaking into the Congress stronghold and becoming an MLA from Bharat Adivasi Party. He has also got MLA written on his bike.

Police had sent him to jail before the elections, he was released within a week.

Dodiya had come into the limelight before the elections when the police had arrested him and sent him to jail. Just a week before the nomina-

tion, he had come out of jail and contested the election with a loan of Rs 12 lakh and won the election. MLA Dodiya, who won from Sailana seat of Ratlam district, had campaigned on a bike. Had eaten food sitting on the road and now after becoming MLA, left for Bhopal on bike to submit his documents.

MLA got written on the bike, Bhopal MLA Dodiya who reached there said that the financial situation is not good. I have contested the elections by borrowing

money from friends and colleagues. Now going to Bhopal by bike also. Dodiya believes that soon he will buy a car from the MLA's salary, but for now we will have to travel by bike only. The party's only popular MLA Kamleshwar Dodiya has reached Bhopal after being elected MLA on Wednesday. However, he has not reached the assembly yet. Probably, after reaching the Assembly on Thursday, he will give his victory certificate and along with giving his arrival, he will also get his identity card issued.

Brahmakumaris presented the trophy to Chief Minister Chouhan

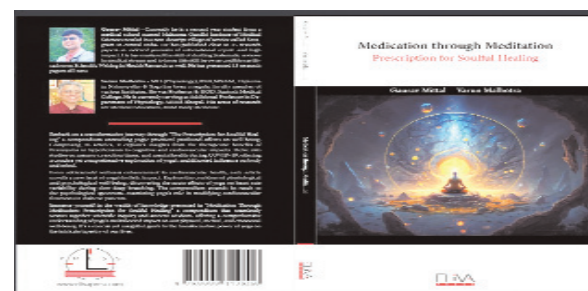
Team Absolute | Bhopal

People's representatives, social workers, social organizations congratulated Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan for his success in the assembly election in the state. In the same sequence, Prajapita Brahmakumari Divine University Bhopal's area head Brahmakumari Awadhesh Didi and friends also congratulated.

Chief Minister Chouhan was presented with a trophy as a symbol of Vijay by Brahmakumaris. Brahmakumari Awadhesh Didi said that the success in the state is the result of Chief Minister Chouhan's tireless work and spirit of service. He wished Chief Minister Chouhan a successful and healthy life and continued progress. Sarita Didi and Jaya Didi were with her.



Book on Yoga published with modern insights on ancient wisdom



Team Absolute | Bhopal

A book on Yoga 'The Prescription for Soulful Healing' written by Gaurav Mittal and Dr. Varun Malhotra has been published. This groundbreaking collection of 26 articles explores the profound impact of yogic practices on physical, mental, and emotional well-being. From managing hypertension to enhancing cardiovascular health, each article unveils a new facet of yoga's influence. Seamlessly blending ancient wisdom with scientific inquiry, the compendium offers a concise yet insightful guide to unlocking the holistic benefits of meditation. Prof. Dr. Ajai Singh, Executive Director, AIIMS Bhopal, congratulated them on this noteworthy contribution.

Chief Minister Chouhan planted Neem, Gulmohar and Guava saplings



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Neem, Gulmohar and Guava trees in the garden at Shyamala Hills. Chief Minister Chouhan is continuously planting saplings every day as part of his resolution. He is also continuously inspiring the residents of the province to plant trees in memory of their birthdays, wedding anniversaries and relatives. As a result, tree planting in the province has taken the form of a public campaign.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Shri Ram Anubhav Kendra to come up in Ayodhya

The Uttar Pradesh government plans to develop Shri Ram Anubhav Kendra and Panchavati Island, on 75 acres of land near Guptar Ghat on the banks of Saryu River. Ram Anubhav Kendra on Panchvati Island aims to instill a sense of pride among the people for Vedic civilisation. The objective of the government is to promote the assimilation of these cultural roots into daily life and foster a path towards happier existence. The construction of Ram Anubhav Kendra will involve the use of temporary structures, which will be dismantled during the rainy season as the centre will be non-operational during this period as a precautionary measure, considering its proximity to the river. After monsoon, the structures will be reassembled and the centre will resume operations. To ensure safety, the structures will be positioned at a considerable distance from the river, creating a 100-foot buffer zone to eliminate any potential accident. Prior to the construction and operation of the centre, all necessary approvals and NOCs from regulatory departments such as the municipal corporation, fire department, electrical safety, and pollution control board, will be obtained. Panchavati Island will be a no-plastic zone. Bio-digestive septic tanks will be used for sewage disposal and water will be treated by STP according to standards and will be used in horticulture and agriculture. 'Shree Anna' (millet) will play a prominent role in this project. Various programmes, including meditation, pranayama, yagya, havan, will be organised for yoga practitioners. Naturopathy and ayurveda centres will also be established. Organic and cosmic agriculture methods will be employed for growing crops on Panchvati Island. Local folk artists will find employment opportunities through traditional folk singing and cultural events. Devotees will be given a chance to plant a sapling in Ayodhya in memory of their ancestors. Panchvati Island will provide employment opportunities for local farmers and labourers, officials said.

Pandemic-stricken villagers revive bamboo art with NGO help in MP

Mohammad Asif Siddiqui

Living in the remote forest village of Gulaimal in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh, Prakash Barole, (41), crafts decorative items from bamboo to earn a living. He acquired this relatively new skill after making up his mind to stop working as a migrant sugarcane cutter and find employment in his own village. Prakash and his wife Sangeeta Barole (34) used to migrate to Beed district of Maharashtra for four months annually to work as farm labourers. Despite working for over 18 hours a day, they could barely make ends meet. During the COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent lockdown of 2020, they found themselves stranded in Maharashtra with their employer denying them full wages. They were forced to return to Khandwa on foot - a journey of over 100 km - along with 10 others from their village. They had no money, not even to buy food. "We both used to get Rs 10,000 per month, but we did not even have a day off. Most of what we earned was spent on lodging and food," he recalls. "Just 10 days into the lockdown, our employer told us that he could not pay us anymore." Prakash then decided to fend for himself in his own village, even if it meant learning a new skill in his late 30s. His determination paid off as both earn around the same amount every month by making bamboo items for Gulaimal-based non-government organisation (NGO) Manmohan Kala Samiti (MKS). "We work for eight hours daily and get a good price for our work," says Prakash, who saves a large part of his income and manages to send his children to school. **Seeds of change** The NGO was established under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and operates under SFURTI (Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries) of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, which assists traditional industries such as khadi, coir, handloom and handicrafts by providing grants of up to Rs 5 crore. The NGO set up operations in the district in 2020 under the nodal agency Council for Handicrafts Development Corporations. A Bamboo Craft Centre was established, with a 90 per cent Central grant under SFURTI and the remaining investment from MKS. Of the 150 families employed by the NGO in Gulaimal, about 60 work directly at the bamboo centre. The rest make the products at their homes. Most of them are Korku tribals. The cen-



tre purchases the bamboo planted by village farmers at a price equal to the minimum support price. Until the establishment of the centre, around 40 per cent (1,100 people) of the village population used to migrate for work. Pradeep Awase (27), a resident managing the bamboo art work under MKS, used to go to Pune. "I worked at a local furniture firm. Most of what I earned was spent there and despite having worked with the employer for a long time, I was deserted when the pandemic struck. I was forced to walk back home. The employer did not even bother to arrange a transport facility for me," he says. Pradeep joined MKS and honed his management skills in the last three years. He now imparts training to new artisans and organises local craft exhibitions with the help of MKS. According to a survey conducted by the NGO, migration has reduced by half since its inception, as the locals earn a monthly salary of Rs 6,000 to 8,000 at the centre. However, not all villagers are into bamboo crafts. Due to the surge in bamboo-related work, other trades and businesses have increased in the village, thereby providing a source of employment to many. To increase their income further, locals have started planting native bamboo varieties such as Katanga (Bambusa Arundinacea) and Deshi (Dendrocalamus Strictus) on the margins of their fields under the guidance of MKS. This will reduce the need to get bamboo from other villages. When needed, the MKS also provides them with bamboo seedlings. Furniture, toys, home decor, reception, office and coffee house items are produced at the centre and sent to NRLM sales centres. They are also exported. MKS director Mohan Rokade tells 101Reporters that the NGO expanded to accom-

modate more artisans in 2021 and that its annual income has soared to above Rs 50 lakh. "Bamboo craft has been a part of the village culture for generations. But people were making only specific items such as mats and baskets that were useful to the village community. When the availability of bamboo reduced, people migrated in search of employment. After the NGO formation, we distributed bamboo seedlings to the locals at a minimal cost, leading to a surge in bamboo production," Rokade says. Earlier, farmers sold their bamboo to the forest department or in the market. Raju Vaskale, a farmer from Dhimaria, located four km from Gulaimal, says he now gets money immediately after selling bamboo unlike in the case of the forest department. "We do not have to bear transportation costs as the centre collects bamboo from our fields. Katanga bamboo is priced at Rs 80 in the market, Deshi at Rs 100 and Assamese bamboo at Rs 220. We get the same price from the centre," he says. Prakash has also planted bamboo saplings on his two-and-a-half acre plot. He plans to sell it to MKS. Apart from Gulaimal, bamboo clusters are functional under SFURTI at Hoshangabad, Betul, Chhindwara, Balaghat, Seoni, Ratlam and Burhanpur. Last year, Harda district was included in the cluster. **Life gets better** When she migrated to Beed, Sangeeta used to leave her five children in the custody of their grandmother Lalitabai. This affected their studies as the older children would often be occupied with taking care of their younger siblings and miss out on school. "I at least had my mother-in-law to help out, but the mothers with newborns and those with

children under five years of age had to take them along when they migrated. Life as a farm labourer is difficult. Sometimes, we have to survive on just one meal. So, even the babies could not be fed since the lactating mothers barely ate," highlights Sangeeta. New mothers who were forced to quit work due to these challenges are now joining the NGO as it has a secure campus for children with proper facilities and caretakers. The centre is spread over five acres of land, where a factory has been built on an acre. "Since new and expectant mothers can stay in the village and make bamboo crafts, they have also registered at local anganwadis, thus bringing them under the government's nutritional programmes. They get fortified milk powder and nutrition-rich food from anganwadis," she adds. Young women who used to be either married off right after school or were forced to join their parents as farm labourers are now enrolling in colleges to find well-paying jobs. "Working on the field with my parents was tiresome. We did not even have enough to fulfill our basic needs, so college was a distant dream. But now I work with the NGO, while pursuing my post graduation in commerce from an open university," says Usha Barole. Madhuri Awase and Aarti Barne earn Rs 7,000 each and are able to keep some money aside for their children's education. Even specially-abled people have got a chance to earn through the NGO. The products such as table lamps, clocks and showpieces produced by the company were showcased in the Parliament House, New Delhi, and exhibited at the Dubai Expo alongside products from 190 countries last year. Artisans add that they were not skilled at anything and were looked down upon, but they enjoy a newfound respect in their communities and feel proud of the work they do when their handcrafted products are admired at both local markets and international exhibitions. "Once awareness about the sustainability of bamboo products versus plastic pollution increases, and the new electricity grid comes into operation, I think we will be able to expand operations and hire more people," says Rokade. (Mohammad Asif Siddiqui is a Madhya Pradesh-based freelance journalist and a member of 101Reporters, a pan-India network of grassroots reporters.)

international

British government makes it tougher for Indians to work in the UK

London | Agencies An estimated 300,000 non-Britons - many of them Indians - will be affected by the British government on Monday raising the bar for people eligible to apply for skilled worker visas for the United Kingdom. The minimum salary that an applicant must now command is 38,700 pounds, up from 26,000 pounds. "Enough is enough," said Home Secretary James Cleverly in the House of Commons. The policy is designed, he added, to reduce net migration to the UK. Net migration - the difference between the number of people coming to live in the UK and the people leaving - was 745,000 in 2022 and has become deeply unpopular with Britons across the board. One of the main arguments for exiting the European Union (EU) was to control immigration - which compulsory free movement of people in the EU could not prevent. This has been defeated by people swamping the UK from other parts of the world, including significantly from India. Those coming on health and social

IMMIGRATION ACTION

BANNING
overseas students from bringing their families to the UK, unless they are on postgraduate research degrees

STOPPING
immigration undercutting British workers

SCRAPPING
the 20% going rate salary discounts offered for shortage occupations

care visas, mostly nurses, will, however, be exempt from the higher salary threshold. They will not, though, be permitted to bring dependents, namely their partners and children, with them. Cleverly stated this will "end the abuse of the Health and Care Visa". Nurses in the UK also come from India as well as from other parts of Asia, Africa, and the West Indies. Cleverly asserted: "Approximately 120,000 dependents accompanied 100,000 care workers and senior care workers in the year ending September 2023. Only 25 per cent of dependents are estimated to be in work, meaning a significant number are drawing on public services and not helping to grow the economy." Earlier this year, tougher rules were announced for students bringing dependents to the UK. Undergraduate students are no longer allowed to

bring their partners or children. Cleverly also indicated that the health surcharge payable by foreign job seekers will rise by 66 per cent - from 624 pounds to 1,035 pounds. Without criticising the move, the opposition Labour party's Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper maintained the new proposals are "an admission of years of total failure by this Conservative government". She slammed Prime Minister Rishi Sunak by saying he is "clearly veering" without "steering" and is being "pushed around all over the place". The Scottish National Party spokesperson said Cleverly's pronouncement will be judged on whether it's "pandering to the right wing of his party". The chair of the Independent Care Group warned: "I think we are going to find more businesses fail, care homes closing." It appears post-study work (PSW) visas available after finishing a masters degree in the UK will not as yet come under the new guidelines. This will come as a relief to Indian students, who numbered 120,000 in 2021-22.

Indonesia's Ibu volcano erupts, ash up to 1,200m

Jakarta | Agencies The Ibu volcano on Halmahera Island in the eastern Indonesian province of North Maluku erupted on Thursday at around 11 a.m. local time for about 90 seconds, throwing ash up to 1,200 metre above its peak, according to the country's Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation (PVMBG). "The ash column was observed to be gray in color with thick intensity towards the southeast," said Efrita Saragih, an officer of the volcano's monitoring post.



Standing as high as around 1,300 metre above sea level, Ibu volcano is classified in

the second danger level, below the highest level of IV. The volcano has erupted 60 times since the beginning of this year, PVMBG said. Saragih called on the public not to have activities within a radius of 3.5 km from the crater, Xinhua news agency reported. "People who have outdoor activities are advised to wear nose, mouth and eye protectors when volcanic ashes fall," she said. Located on the Pacific Ring of Fire, Indonesia is one of the countries with the most volcanoes in the world.

S.Korea, US, Japan hold 1st trilateral working-level talks on N.Korea's cyber threats

Seoul | Agencies South Korea, the US and Japan held their first trilateral working-level talks on Thursday on ways to boost cooperation against North Korea's growing cyber threats, in a follow-up to the summit among their leaders in August, Seoul's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday. The talks in Tokyo were led by Lee Jun-il, the Ministry's director-general for North Korean nuclear affairs, US Deputy Special Representative for North Korea Jung Pak and Ishizuki Hideo, Japan's ambas-



sador in charge of cyber policy. The dialogue was launched as part of a follow-up to an agreement reached among President Yoon Suk Yeol, US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during their Camp David summit to beef up tripartite cooperation in securi-

ty and establish a working group tasked with combating North Korea's cyber threats, Yonhap news agency reported. During Thursday's meeting, the three sides discussed ways to counter North Korea's cryptocurrency theft, and other illegal cyber activities aimed at financing its nuclear and missile development programs. They also agreed to boost cooperation with the international community and the private sector to block illegal North Korean workers in the IT sector, the Ministry said in a press statement.

2 killed, 4 wounded in Russian school shooting

Moscow | Agencies Two people were killed and four others wounded in a shooting at a school in the Russian city of Bryansk on Thursday, the media reported, citing local authorities. The incident occurred at gymnasium No. 5 in the Bezhtitskiy region, with preliminary information suggesting that an eighth-grade schoolgirl, armed with a weapon, initiated the shooting, it said. One of the victims may have been the said girl as she may have killed herself, Xinhua news agency reported. Following the incident, all other students have been evacuated from the building and sent home, and the area has been cordoned off by the police.



Amid slush funds scandal, Japan PM Kishida to quit as ruling party faction leader

Tokyo | Agencies Amid a growing slush funds scandal, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida looks set to step down as chief of his faction in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), local media reported on Thursday. As per Kyodo news, Kishida, also president of the LDP, is set to announce his resignation as the leader of Kochikai, the party's fourth-largest faction, later during the day, Xinhua news agency reported. Kochikai is among the five LDP factions that allegedly understated their revenue from political fundraising parties, from which the extra income may have been returned to some of their lawmakers as kickbacks. Seiwakken, or the Seiwa policy study group, the largest LDP faction previously



led by the late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, was suspected of having pooled secret funds amounting to around 100 million yen (about 679,000 U.S. dollars) over at least the past five years through 2022. At least 10 LDP lawmakers in the Abe faction received kickbacks, the latest media reports showed. Although many prime ministers keep their distance from their faction while in office, Kishida has remained active as the leader of his faction since taking office in October 2021. The decision to quit followed Kishida's request on Wednesday that all LDP factions should refrain from holding fundraising parties for the time being, and as the Japan Times put it, the prime minister is "in damage control mode."



Maha Congress endorses Governor's plea to change school-timings for students

Team Absolute | Nagpur

The Maharashtra Congress on Thursday backed Governor Ramesh Bais' recent call to the government to consider changing the school timings for students to enable them get sufficient sleep.

Leader of Opposition (Assembly) Vijay Wadettiwar said that various parties have been raising this demand for several years, but the state government failed to heed it.

"What the government should have understood and implemented, the Governor has realised and called for giving relief to the student community to ensure their bright and healthy future. We want the school timings to be suitably changed from 10 am onwards," said Wadettiwar.

In a positive suggestion that was hailed widely, the Governor this week urged the state education authorities that considering the modern times, most people including children remain awake beyond midnight, and then they have to get up



early the next morning to go to schools, thus depriving them of the ideal 7-8 hours sleep daily and also reduce the burden of home-work and books while stressing on e-learning and e-classrooms, etc.

Lauding the Governor's observations,

Wadettiwar said that in most urban centres like Mumbai, Thane, Navi Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Nashik, etc, the schools start around 7-8 am.

For this, the students have to get up by 6 am, and make a dash for school with or mostly without even breakfast but in cities like Mumbai, often the children have to commute long distances by multiple modes like bus, metro-rail, suburban trains and on foot to reach their academic classes on time.

Citing experts and psychiatrists, Wadettiwar said if the students are deprived of sufficient sleep, they may be affected by many physical-mental health problems, becoming prone to diseases, including serious ones like diabetes, blood pressure, etc., which are showing a marked increase in incidence among the youngsters in recent times.

Meanwhile, some academic experts have pointed out the Governor's suggestion, though welcome may not be feasible as most schools run in two shifts - one for the primary and for secondary sections, plus extra classes, extra circular activities, and other issues, which need to be considered carefully.

Nawab Malik issue rocks Maha assembly

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Maharashtra assembly on Thursday witnessed ruckus on the first day of the winter session after former Maharashtra minister and NCP member Nawab Malik was seen sitting in the treasury bench.

The Leader of Opposition (LoP) Ambadas Danve asked how can a former minister, who was branded by the ruling BJP as a "terrorist" were rubbing shoulders in the state Assembly, along with the ruling coalition.

Minister for State Excise Shambhuraje Desai objected to the remarks of Danve and insisted that he should not be allowed to speak. He was vehemently



opposed by the senior Shiv Sena (UBT) member, Anil Parab, who pointed out that Danve raised the issue with a permission of the house chairperson and he has no authority to prevent

Danve to speak which led to noisy scenes in the house. Responding to the question, the Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis blamed the MVA for not taking the resignation of Malik despite him being put in jail and his links with the "terrorists".

"We have demanded his resignation when he was put behind bars and there was evidence that he had a terrorist connection. But the Uddhav Thackeray-led government did nothing in this direction," he said.

He said that the opposition has no moral right to ask such a question. Earlier the Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar presented Supplement Demands of Rs 55,520.77 Crores in both Houses of Legislature.

MVA protests outside Nagpur legislature seeks compensation for farmers

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Adopting an aggressive stance, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) leaders staged a vociferous protest outside the Nagpur Vidhan Bhavan where the Winter Session got underway, here on Thursday.

The MVA leaders comprising state Congress President Nana Patole, Shiv Sena (UBT) Leader of Opposition Ambadas Danve, Nationalist Congress Party (SP)'s Anil Deshmukh and other opposition legislators raised slogans against the government, demanding justice for the farmers.

Several MLAs, sporting garlands of fruits and vegetables, said that the farmers have been ruined



by the recent spell of unseasonal rains and hailstorms, but there has been no help forthcoming from the ruling Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party-NCP (AP).

They alleged that while the insurance companies have been enriched the farmers have been reduced to poverty and are shedding tears of helplessness.

The MVA leaders showed black placards with pro-farmer and anti-government slogans and called upon the government to "wipe the tears" of the farmers who have been badly hit in more than 15 districts in the state, to prevent them from lapsing into the vicious loan-debt cycle.

It maybe recalled that in late-November and early this month, many parts of Maharashtra were lashed by unseasonal rains/hailstorms, razing standing crops in an estimated 1.25-lakhs hectares, hitting standing crops of pulses, cereal, vegetables, fruits and cash crops.

Two youths arrested for killing minor boy in Thane

Team Absolute | Thane

The Thane Police have arrested two 19-year-old youths who allegedly killed a boy brutally after a brawl and later buried his body, an official said here on Thursday.

The shocking incident happened on November 25 at Kalher village near Bhiwandi town in the evening when the accused duo - Ayush Virendra Jha and Manoj Narayan Tope got into a fight with the minor boy, Yogesh R. Sharma.

According to a complaint by the Yogesh's mother, the duo left that evening but nursing a grudge against the mother-son, they hatched a conspiracy to take revenge for the insult.

They returned later armed with some sharp-



edged weapons like knives and took away the boy, to a secluded spot in the Retibunder area, and repeatedly stabbed him to death.

Then they carried away his body to an isolated location nearby and buried it to erase all evidence of the crime before decamping from there.

Unable to trace her son, the woman later lodged a missing complaint with Narpoli Police Station which swung into action.

Deploying tech-intel and ground inputs, the police finally nabbed Jha and Tope, according to Investigation Officer Sharad Pawar.

They confessed to the crime, took the police team to the spot where they had buried the boy and the body was exhumed and sent for an autopsy.

They have been charged with Indian Penal Code sections pertaining to murder, kidnap, assault, threat to kill, conspiracy, destroying evidence, etc, and further investigations are on.

Fadnavis warns legal action if Marathi films are denied screens in theatres

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Deputy Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis stated in the legislative council that legal action would be taken against theatres that refused to show Marathi films in the state during Maharashtra Winter Session.

The report stated that Pravin Darekar of the BJP raised the issue, highlighting the difficulties that Marathi actor Prasad Khandekar's recently released film, "Ekda Yeun Tar Bagha," had in securing cinema halls for screenings.

Fadnavis stated that if Marathi films had difficulty finding theatres in Maharashtra, appropriate legal action would be taken. Meanwhile, Opposition Leader Ambadas Danve, at the Maharashtra Winter Session, addressed the issue of farmer shed-net damage caused by strong winds. He emphasised the lack of insurance compensation for such losses suffered by farmers, a concern shared by Shiv Sena (UBT) leader.



In response, Fadnavis stated that Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had already directed the development of a plan to address the problem. Following these discussions, the council adjourned with condolence motions passed. The Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders protested at Vidhan Bhavan in Nagpur demanding farm loan waivers and compensation for the farmers affected by unseasonal rains, etc. To this effect, Congress MLA and Leader of Opposition in Assembly Vijay Wadettiwar also moved an adjournment motion which was rejected. Speaking to the media, Nana Patole, state Congress chief, said that the government was not keen to face questions concerning

farmers. He said that if the government was serious about issues tied to farmers, then it would have allowed the adjournment motion moved by his colleague. He added that the farmers had high hopes from the session's first day.

He said that the Eknath Shinde-led government is ready to discuss issues related to Vidarbha but spares no time to look into matters about farmers in the region and added that the government had come to Nagpur for "tourism" and that the session in a "real sense" will have only five days.

The Winter Session, which started on Thursday, is scheduled to end on December 20.

7 booked for selling adulterated edible oil

Team Absolute | Navi Mumbai

The Navi Mumbai Police registered a First Information Report against seven persons for allegedly selling adulterated edible oil, stated a report. The report added that the accused persons are associated with an agro firm.

According to a report, a team of APMC police station raided the premises of Gautam Agro India at Vashi on September 5 and found that animal fats and other harmful substances were being mixed in palm oil which in turn was being sold as groundnut oil and safflower oil. The report stated that the company did not only endanger consumers' lives but also cheated the government of revenue amounting to Rs 1.09 crore. The case, the report further read, has been filed against Gautam Agro's owner and six others under the Indian Penal Code sections 420 (cheating) and 472 (adulteration), however, no arrests have been made yet. In another unrelated incident from Navi Mumbai, a beggar allegedly assaulted a college student in the Nerul node of the city. According to a report in PTI, the beggar purportedly attacked the girl, aged 21, with a glass bottle causing severe injuries. He attacked her without prior provocation. The incident occurred on December 4, wherein the accused, identified as Imam Hassan Shamsuddin (26) attacked the girl, a resident of Airoli, near a bus stop in Nerul. While waiting at the bus stop, the beggar suddenly hit her with an empty glass bottle. He had reportedly struck her head with the bottle before stabbing her abdomen using its broken piece before fleeing the scene. The motive behind this attack is unknown. The accused was arrested after the cops began analysing CCTV footage and tapped into other sources to track him down. Meanwhile, a teenage boy in palghar was arrested for allegedly killing his next-door neighbour, a minor due to her teasing. According to Pelhar police station officials in Vasai taluka, the victim vanished after leaving her home to buy ice cream. Her family reported her missing, prompting the police to launch a search. Her decomposed body was discovered in a plastic bag in an unoccupied room within the same chawl.

Western Railway collects Rs 115.71 crore during ticket checking drives



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Western Railway on Thursday said that it collected Rs 115.71 crore during various ticket checking drives conducted from April to November 2023. In an official statement, an increase of about 68 per cent in terms of fines generated from intensive checking in AC local trains was witnessed during the said period. The statement said, in order to ensure hassle-free, comfortable travel and better services to all bonafide passengers over Western Railway, intensive ticket checking drives are being carried out continuously over Mumbai local train services, Mail and Express Trains as well as passenger trains and holiday special trains so as to curb the menace of ticketless/irregular passengers. The ticket checking staff worked with full zeal and

the highly motivated ticket checking team under the supervision of senior commercial officers of Western Railway organised several ticket checking drives during the months from April to November 2023, thereby recovering an amount to the tune of Rs. 115.71 Crore, which also includes Rs. 30.06 crore from Mumbai suburban section, the Western Railway said.

According to a press release issued by Sumit Thakur - Chief Public Relations Officer of Western Railway, during the month of November 2023, highest ever monthly ticket checking revenue of Rs. 21.20 crore in financial year 2023-24, was recovered through detection of 2.94 lakh ticketless/irregular passengers, including unbooked luggage cases. Also, in the month of November, Western Railway realised fines amounting to Rs. 5.68 crore through detec-

tion of over 94 thousand cases over Mumbai suburban section. It said, to prevent unauthorised entry in AC local trains, frequent surprise ticket checking drives are carried out. As a result of these drives more than 44000 unauthorised passengers have been penalized during the period April to November 2023 and Rs. 146.43 lakh collected in fines, which is about 68 per cent higher than the same period of last year.

"Western Railway appeals to the general public to travel with proper and valid tickets," the Western Railway said. Meanwhile, in another statement, the Western Railway said, for the convenience of passengers and with a view to meet the travel demand, Western Railway will run Special Trains From Surat to Mahuva and Veraval. These trains will run on Special fare.

SC adjourns till Jan 2024 hearing on activist Jyoti Jagtap's bail plea



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday deferred till January next year hearing on the bail plea filed by activist Jyoti Jagtap, who is behind the bars under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in connection with the Bhima Koregaon case. "List the matter in the third week of January on a Wednesday. We will decide Shoma Sen's appeal first and it will come after that," said a bench headed by Justice Aniruddha Bose. It may be recalled that the apex court has decided to take up Prof. Sen's bail plea for hearing on January 10, 2024. Justice Bose added

that the composition of the bench having Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Augustine George Masih is "temporary" because a 5-judge Constitution Bench is hearing a batch of petitions challenging the constitutionality of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955. Earlier, the top court had remarked that it will have to find out if Jagtap's case falls within the parameters laid down by the top court in granting bail to co-accused Vernon Gonsalves and Arun Ferreira. Gonsalves and Ferreira were ordered to be released by the Supreme Court on bail in July this year considering their 5-year term of incarceration as

undertrial prisoners. Jagtap had petitioned the Supreme Court against an order of the Bombay High Court denying her bail.

The NIA had already filed a charge sheet against Jagtap and others at a special court in Mumbai. The case pertains to inciting people and giving provocative speeches during the Elgar Parishad organised by the activists of Kabir Kala Manch at Shaniwarwada in Maharashtra's Pune on December 31, 2017, which allegedly promoted enmity between various caste groups and led to violence resulting in loss of life and property and a state-wide agitation in Maharashtra.

Two burglars, including a minor, arrested for Rs 2.49 lakh theft

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Charkop police have arrested two burglars, including a minor, for breaking into shops and homes. The police believe that the two are part of a Pune-based gang that may have committed several burglaries in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane. When they arrived in the Mumbai region to commit burglaries they would not reside in hotels and lodges to avoid the risk of coming under police scrutiny. They would reside in rented accommodations spending several days identifying potential targets and engaging in reconnaissance.

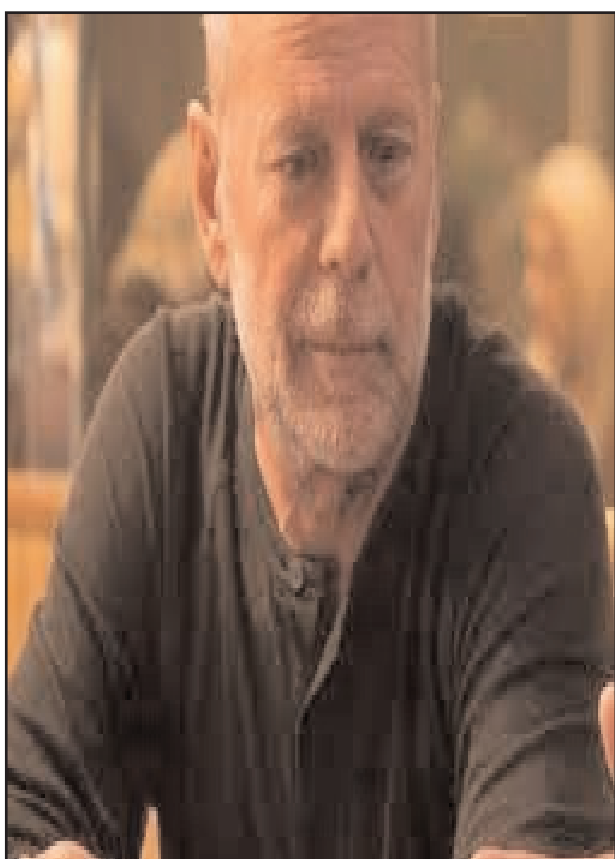
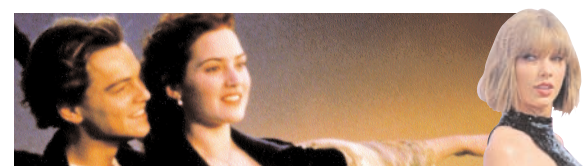
The Charkop police had literally hit a wall when there were no leads in the break-in at the gas agency



in which the burglars had made away with Rs.2.49 lakh in cash. Under the guidance of deputy commissioner of police Ajaykumar Bansal, police sub-inspector Ramesh Wagchure, along with their team, initiated the investigation that led to the successful arrest of the accused, said senior police inspector Jyoti Bagul Bhole of Charkop police station. After an extensive

review of more than 150 CCTV footage recordings across the city, the Charkop police finally traced the duo to Malad. Posing as a lift man and an SRA officer, the police meticulously checked every flat in the multi-story SRA tower. The police apprehended the duo from a flat on the 10th floor of Sairaj Building, SRA Gudia Pada, Sundar Lane at Malad West on Monday.

With the arrest of Vikas Ashok Kamble, 27, the police believe that they arrested the mastermind of the gang that committed several burglaries in Pune and later expanded to Mumbai and its adjoining areas. As the other accused is a minor, aged only 16, the police allowed him to leave after notifying his parents to make him available for the investigation.



Bruce Willis' family has more bad days than good amid dementia battle

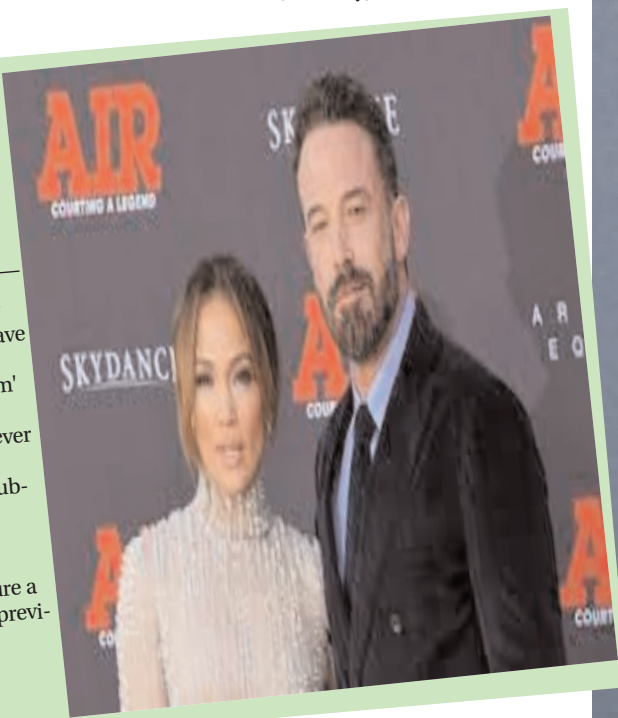
Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Bruce Willis' family is said to be "soaking up every moment" with him while they still can. Hollywood star Bruce Willis' family is said to be "soaking up every moment" with him while they still can. The 'Die Hard' actor, 68, has frontotemporal dementia (FTD), an uncommon form of the disease which causes a deterioration in personality, behaviour, and language. A source told this week's edition of Us Weekly, "Bruce has good days and bad days, but in the last two months, there are many more bad days than good. This experience has brought the whole family even closer together." "No one knows how much time Bruce has left, so they're soaking up every moment they get with him. (Everything) revolves around him, Bruce has around-the-clock care, but at least one family member is always with him." Bruce, who is married to model Emma Heming Willis, 45, but has daughters Rumer Willis, 35, Scout Willis, 32, and Tallulah Willis, 29, with ex-wife Demi Moore, became a grandfather for the first time when his eldest welcomed daughter Louetta in April and a second insider went on to add that the 'House Bunny' star is keen to make sure the little one is "involved" with him as much as possible, reports aceshowbiz.com. The source said, "Once Bruce was diagnosed, everyone came together to keep his memory of the family intact and to be there as a constant reminder (that they) love him."

Jennifer Lopez feels 'grateful' for Ben Affleck's support

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress-singer Jennifer Lopez feels "grateful" to have husband-actor Ben Affleck by her side for her new short film. Actress-singer Jennifer Lopez feels "grateful" to have husband-actor Ben Affleck by her side for her new short film. The 54-year-old star recently announced plans to release "This is Me...Now: The Film" in 2024, and Lopez enjoyed working on the project with her husband. A source told Us Weekly: "He helped her feel safe to share parts of her nobody has ever known." The eagerly-awaited new film has been described as a "visual reimagining of her publicly scrutinised love life", reports femalefirst.co.uk. She "wouldn't have wished for anybody else" to work with her on the project. The insider added: "Nobody knows her better than Ben." The project will stream globally on Amazon's Prime Video platform, and will feature a nod to Jennifer's high-profile romance with the Hollywood star. Meanwhile, Affleck previously joked that Lopez looks like she's "20 years old".



Julia Roberts confesses she's a spirited college mom

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Julia Roberts has shared that she is passionate about her twins' college experience. The 'Pretty Woman' star shares 19-year-old twins Hazel Patricia and Phinnaeus Walter and her husband Danny Moder, reports People magazine. Roberts explained that since the two eldest children embarked on higher education, she "immediately" made supporting their schools her "entire life." "I wear the colors," said the Oscar winner. "I do the whole thing." While Hazel and Phinnaeus are in the midst of their undergraduate experience, Fallon, 49 asked the actress how her youngest son is handling being the only child in the house. "Is Henry loving this? Or is he kind of missing his (siblings)?" "I think it's a good 50/50 split," shared Roberts, quoted by People. "He's loving it. And I think he misses his people." Prior to the twins heading off to college, Roberts shared with Extra how "completely excited" she was for them and their new chapter. "It's really thrilling and I wasn't lucky enough to have a college experience," she said. "And so to see how it's happening for them is really fascinating. And yeah, I'm just, I'm excited for them." The 'Notting Hill' star publicly celebrated the twins' 19th birthday on November 28 via Instagram. Roberts - who rarely shows photos of her children - explained to Extra that their birthdays are "something to be celebrated".



Bradley Cooper serves cheesesteaks at food truck in New York City

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Bradley Cooper recently took a break from Hollywood and stepped into a New York City food truck. A parlour based in Philadelphia which is known for classic and creative sandwiches, fried snacks and breakfast options, shared footage of the actor serving up the city's speciality - Philly cheesesteaks, reports People magazine. "Good afternoon, bread heads," Cooper says with a smile in the Instagram video shared by the eatery. "Come on down, get a cheesesteak!" The person behind the camera is heard saying, "Danny and Coops," which is also tagged in the caption of the post and seen on their clothing. He also lets viewers know that they are situated at West Third Street near Sixth Avenue in New York's Greenwich Village. According to The Philadelphia Inquirer, Cooper and Angelo's Pizzeria owner Danny DiGiampietro have partnered together to open Danny and Coops Cheesesteaks. Although the food truck was serving patrons in New York, DiGiampietro made it clear that he's not leaving Philly anytime soon, and that the team was only in the area "to see if people want cheesesteaks in New York," the outlet reports. He added that he and Cooper have been scouting for locations in the Big Apple for two years, but have yet to settle on a place to call home for their budding business. As per People, all proceeds from the pop-up event - scheduled to reprise on Thursday - are reportedly being donated to a nonprofit organisation focused on helping to feed New Yorkers in need. The pair was first romantically linked in early October, when they were spotted dining together at Via Carota in New York City's West Village neighbourhood before getting into the same SUV.

Halle Berry 'bonded' with Angelina Jolie over their divorces

Los Angeles | Agencies

Oscar-winning actress Halle Berry "bonded" with co-star Angelina Jolie over their "divorces and exes". Berry will star alongside Jolie in her new film project 'Maude v Maude', and she has said that they actually spent some time together discussing their love lives. The 57-year-old actress, who was previously married to David Justice, Eric Benet and Olivier Martinez, told Variety: "We've been talking a lot about divorces and exes. We bonded, let's say that." Despite this, Berry acknowledged that their friendship actually got off to a "rocky start". The Hollywood actress - whose co-star has also been married three times - shared: "We had a rocky start and I think that is going to serve us well in our screen time together." 'Maude v Maude' marks Berry's first directorial project since 'Bruised', the 2020 MMA drama. Halle has described making 'Bruised' as "hell" and she thinks it was a "miracle" that Netflix ever bought the movie, reports femalefirst.co.uk. She added: "Because I was a woman, and a black woman, the treatment I received and the things I had to put up with were unconscionable. If I were a white man or even a black man, it would have been easier. It's amazing I even made it and a miracle Netflix bought it."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Taylor Swift



Shami, Maxwell, Head shortlisted for ICC Men's Player of the Month award for November 2023

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's senior fast-bowler Mohammed Shami, along with Australia's ODI World Cup winning duo of Travis Head and Glenn Maxwell have been shortlisted for the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for November 2023.

Shami topped the wicket-taking charts at the 2023 Men's ODI World Cup, and led India's bowling attack in fine fashion with a number of scintillating displays during the month, though the hosts' ended up as runners-up despite being overwhelming favourites to win the title.

Shami was a late addition to India's playing eleven, but left a huge impact thereafter. He started November with a Player of the Match performance against Sri Lanka at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, tearing through their batting lineup with sterling figures of 5-18, leaving everyone mesmerised.

His highlight of the campaign, though, came in the semi-final victory over New Zealand at the same



venue in Mumbai, taking seven wickets for 57 runs and booking the hosts' ticket to the final in Ahmedabad with the best figures for any bowler in the World Cup knockout games. During the calendar month, Shami took 15 wickets at a remarkable average of 12.06.

Maxwell is shortlisted for the honour for the first time after a prolific November, which included arguably one of the great World Cup performances against Afghanistan in

Mumbai. Chasing 292 for victory after being 91 for seven, Maxwell smashed 31 boundaries in his unbeaten 201 to seal Australia's safe passage to the knockout stages, despite suffering with cramps in his entire body.

Fast forward to the final in Ahmedabad, and Maxwell again made key contributions, bowling a disciplined spell and removing the threat of Rohit Sharma before hitting the winning runs to seal the title for Australia. Maxwell also starred in the

subsequent T20I matches against India, hitting 104 not out in 48 balls in the third encounter in Guwahati, before flying back home.

Meanwhile, Head is nominated for the Men's Player of the Month award for the first time since his match-winning contributions helped Australia clinch the ICC World Test Championship Final in June with a victory over India in London this year.

A similar story unfolded in India, culminating in two Player of the Match performances in the knockout stages. South Africa were thwarted by Head's brilliance with bat and ball in the semi-final in Kolkata; the spinner taking the key wickets of Heinrich Klaasen and Marco Jansen before top scoring with 62 in 48 balls in the thrilling chase.

His crowning glory however came in Ahmedabad, in the chase of 241 Head hit a sparkling 137 off 120 balls to take place in Goa from January 23 to 28, 2024.

National Shooting C'ship: Double gold for Naveen at pistol nationals



Team Absolute | New Delhi/Bhopal

Army Marksmanship Unit (AMU) shooter Naveen, bagged a double gold, winning the men's 10m Air Pistol Individual and Team events, as the 66th National Shooting Championship Competitions (NSCC) for Pistol events, concluded here at Bhopal's M.P. State

Shooting Academy range on Thursday.

The armyman shot 246.2 in the final, to finish ahead of Uttar Pradesh's Vivek (244.0) and the Navy's Ujjwal Malik (221.3). In the team competition, the trio of Sagar Dangi, Bishal Shrestha and Naveen amassed a total of 1742 to leave behind the Navy who had 1737. Haryana won bronze. The highest score in qualification

was also posted by an Army shooter Nishant Rawat, who shot 589 to equal the national record. Naveen shot the same score as four other shooters but bagged the eighth and final qualifying spot with a score of 581 and by virtue of having more inners 10s (25 of them) than the other four. A total of 1213 shooters competed in the men's 10m air pistol discipline.

Australian Open: Nadal, Osaka, Kerber among stars making comebacks; Kyrgios, Raducanu missing from entry list



Melbourne | Agencies The 2024 Australian Open singles entry list was announced on Thursday, with former champions Rafael Nadal and Naomi Osaka plotting their return at Melbourne Park in January. The singles entry will be headlined by world No.1s Novak Djokovic and Iga Swiatek.

World No.2 Aryna Sabalenka returns to defend her 2023 title, as does Djokovic, who will target a record-extending 11th Australian Open men's singles title at Melbourne Park. Nadal and Osaka join Angelique Kerber as three former champions mounting a comeback at Melbourne Park in January, at what has been a pivotal event in their respective Grand Slam journeys.

Nadal announced plans to take his first steps back at the Brisbane International, following almost a year out due to left hip surgery.

The 37-year-old Spaniard, who limped out of his

Australian Open title defence in the second round in 2023 and did not play again all season, has fallen to world No.663 and will use a protected ranking of No.9 to make his return.

The 2019 winner Osaka and 2016 titlist Kerber have both entered via special rankings of No.46 and No.31 respectively. Former champions Osaka and Kerber are continuing their comebacks from maternity leave.

Osaka, who is due to start her comeback in Brisbane, gave birth to daughter Shai in July; Kerber, who will return at the United Cup, gave birth to daughter Liana in February.

Osaka and Kerber are two out of seven women players, who have directly entered the first Grand Slam main draw of 2024 using a special ranking. The other five are Jennifer Brady, Ajla Tomljanovic, Shelby Rogers, Amanda Anisimova and Caty McNally.

Fiery Australian Nick Kyrgios and former US Open

champion Emma Raducanu were notable absentees from the 2024 Australian Open entry list.

Kyrgios, the former world number 13, underwent knee surgery in January. However, plans for his return at Wimbledon were scrapped when he tore a ligament in his wrist.

Raducanu, however, hopes to join the Australian Open 2024 field having not played a match since falling to Jelena Ostapenko at Stuttgart in April.

The 21-year-old Briton will make her return at Auckland in the lead-up in what will be her first competitive event since she underwent surgery on both wrists and an ankle. With a protected ranking of No.103, Raducanu currently sits six places outside the main-draw entry cut-off.

The Australian Open runs from January 14 to 28, with Aryna Sabalenka aiming to defend the women's title and Djokovic looking to secure another victory in the men's category.

WTT Star Contender Goa 2024 to take place from January 23 to 28

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's biggest table tennis carnival is back as the second edition of the WTT Star Contender Goa is slated to take place in Goa from January 23 to 28, 2024.

The tournament will be co-hosted by Stupa Sports Analytics and Ultimate Table Tennis under the guidance of the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI).

One of the top events in the international table tennis calendar, the first edition of the WTT Star Contender Goa took place earlier this year and had some of the world's biggest stars on the show, including the World No. 1 Fan Zhendong, Japanese prodigy Tomokazu Harimoto, World No. 4 Wang Yidi, and World No. 5 Hina Hayata, descending to Goa for the inaugural edition.

Besides that, the tournament also saw participation of 40 Indian players which was the highest for a WTT event.

The Star Contender was first brought to India by Stupa Sports



Analytics, a leading homegrown global sports analytics firm.

"The first edition of WTT Star Contender Goa was a great success. Table tennis is still at a nascent stage in India and tournaments like this not only show the sport's potential commercially but also encourage its overall growth," Stupa Sports Analytics

CEO and Co-founder Megha Gambhir commented.

The high-profile tournament is part of the six-star Contender series events where only the top 30 players are eligible to participate, with six players compulsory from the top 20 in the world rankings. The tournament boasts a massive prize pool of

\$250,000 and allows players to win ranking points and qualify for the WTT Cup Finals and WTT Champions Series.

World Table Tennis (WTT), conceptualised by the International Table Tennis Federation in 2019, serves as the epicentre for professional men's and women's table tennis events globally. The series encompasses a multitude of events throughout the year, with the four Grand Smashes standing out as the highest-ranked tournaments.

"Playing against world-class players or watching them from a close quarter always inspires the younger generation. This tournament is a great opportunity for our Indian players. We, at TTFI, extend full support to Stupa Sports Analytics and Ultimate Table Tennis to make the second edition a grand success," Kamlesh Mehta, Secretary General of the TTFI stated.

China's Liang Jingkun and Yidi had won men's and women's singles titles respectively in the inaugural edition of the tournament.

Legends League Cricket to conduct internal probe in incident involving Gambhir, Sreesanth

Team Absolute | Surat

The Legends League Cricket (LLC) will conduct an internal investigation on the violation of the code of conduct in the incident involving former India teammates Gautam Gambhir and S. Sreesanth. The incident that has been the talk of the cricketing world violates the code of conduct and necessary action will be taken against all that have violated the very clear rules stated by the league's Code of Conduct & Ethics Committee, the Legends League Cricket (LLC) said in a statement on Thursday. Gambhir and Sreesanth got into a furious disagreement during the LLC Season 2 Eliminator match between India Capitals and Gujarat Giants at the Lalbhai Contractor Stadium,



and the umpires had to step in to keep things civil. Sreesanth chastised Gambhir for provoking him needlessly after the Capitals won by a score of 12 runs. Sreesanth attacked him for showing no regard

for his coworkers and expressed how offended he was by Gambhir's remarks. "Just wanted to clear some air on what happened with Mr. Fighter, who always fights with all his colleagues for no reason whatsoever. He doesn't even respect his own senior players, including Viru bhai and a lot of people. That's exactly what happened today. Without any provocation, he just kept on calling me, something which is very rude and something which should not have been said by Mr. Gautam Gambhir," Sreesanth said after the match. "So, I just want to tell you all that I am not at fault. I just wanted to clear the air straight away. Sooner or later, you'll get to know what Gauri has done. The words which he used and the things he said on a cricket field live are not acceptable," he added.

Hockey Pro League 2023-24: Argentina make successful start to Season 5

Santiago | Agencies

Two highly competitive matches on the opening night of the FIH Pro League 2023-24 Season has seen Argentina's Women's and Men's teams secure favourable results against Great Britain in Santiago del Estero.

In a women's game where both goalkeepers were in outstanding form, neither side could find a winner as it finished nil-all at full time, before the home side prevailed 2-1 in the shootout to claim a bonus point. Then in the men's match, two world class finishes from Agustin Mazzilli and Tomas Domene gave Argentina a 2-1 victory and maximum points over Great Britain. On a warm night in Santiago del Estero, Great Britain nearly started the new season in perfect fashion, Giselle Ansley flashing a drag flick narrowly past the top left hand corner. However, it was the home side who had the better of the early exchanges. Argentina's best chance of the opening quarter came when a searching overhead found Eugenia Trinchinetti and she fired a well-timed effort towards goal but the Great Britain defence managed to diffuse the threat. Great Britain goalkeeper Sabbie Heesh was on high alert as she produced a sharp save from a tomahawk. At the other end, a magnificent run from Hannah French that saw her skirt past several Argentina defenders earned Great Britain a penalty corner but goalkeeper Clara Barberi made a superb save with an outstretched right foot to deny



Ansley's drag flick. Heesh was called on again as she closed down a goal bound effort from the dangerous Delfina Thome. Great Britain's cause was not helped when Sophie Hamilton received a yellow card in the shadows of half time but they managed to hold firm. Argentina continued to dominate possession and territory in the second half but Great Britain were defending resolutely. Victoria Manuele almost made her senior international debut one to savour when she advanced into the circle but Heesh again came up big for Great Britain to keep scores level. Ansley sent a drag flick towards the top corner in the 42nd minute but it was well saved by Barberi, before Flora Peel manufactured a circle entry but could not direct an effort on target as Great Britain enjoyed a dominant period. Maria Granatto found some rare space in the

circle and had the best chance to break the deadlock but the encroaching Heesh forced the Argentinean star to rush and Great Britain survived again. After not having a shootout during all of last season, Great Britain did not start this one well as Barberi denied Tessa Howard before Heesh kept out Jalieta Jankunas. Barberi proved the hero as she denied Great Britain's last three shootout attempts to give the hosts a bonus point. "I feel excellent. I was expecting this moment, so I think I did well," said Clara Barberi who was named Player of the Match. Entering the match after contrasting fortunes last season - Great Britain finished runners up while Argentina finished eighth - both sides were looking to make an early statement. After an even first ten minutes, Argentina broke through when Lucas Toscani launched a searching ball from the right into the attacking circle and Agustin Mazzilli made perfect first-time connection, deflecting the ball past Oliver Payne in the Great Britain goal. Having taken the lead, Argentina attempted to take the sting out of the contest as Great Britain looked to manufacture an equaliser. Tomas Domene sent a drag flick inches wide of the post before Great Britain triggered a lightning counter attack but the final decisive pass just missed its mark. The lively James Gall earned Great Britain a penalty corner in the 25th minute, Nicholas Bandurak's resultant drag flick saved by Tomas Santiago.

Ponting offers to help settle differences between Mitchell Johnson and David Warner

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Australian skipper Ricky Ponting has urged former teammates Mitchell Johnson and David Warner to have a "face-to-face conversation" and discuss their disagreement.

New Delhi, Dec 7 (IANS) Former Australian skipper Ricky Ponting has urged former teammates Mitchell Johnson and David Warner to have a "face-to-face conversation" and discuss their disagreement. Amidst the heated backlash that has dominated cricket discourse ahead of next week's first Test against Pakistan at Optus Stadium, Ponting also offered to mediate between the warring teammates following Johnson's harsh editorial in a local newspaper. "I have to get in between these two guys at some stage... I think I need to be the mediator and get them both in a room and let them have it out rather than playing it out in the



media. They're both pretty feisty characters and we know this issue that's come up now goes back six or eight months, back to the Ashes selection. That's where it all started. It sounds like an issue that's gone on without either of them sitting down and having a face-to-face conversation. I'd like to see that happen," Ponting told

Nigeria TV show Sunrise Daily.

"He is not the one that's coming out saying all this stuff about a farewell tour, he just wants to do line up next week in Perth in that Test match and score some runs and he's made it clear he wants to finish off in Sydney," Ponting said while backing Warner.

Johnson expressed his disapproval in a column for The West Australian, questioning over why the left-handed opener is getting a hero's send-off while still not owing up to his role in the infamous 2018 ball-tampering scandal.

"As we prepare for David Warner's farewell series, can somebody please tell me why? Why does a struggling Test opener get to nominate his own retirement date? And why a player at the centre of one of the biggest scandals in Australian cricket history warrants a hero's send-off?" Johnson wrote in a column.



'Dilli ka sidha sadha launda hoon'

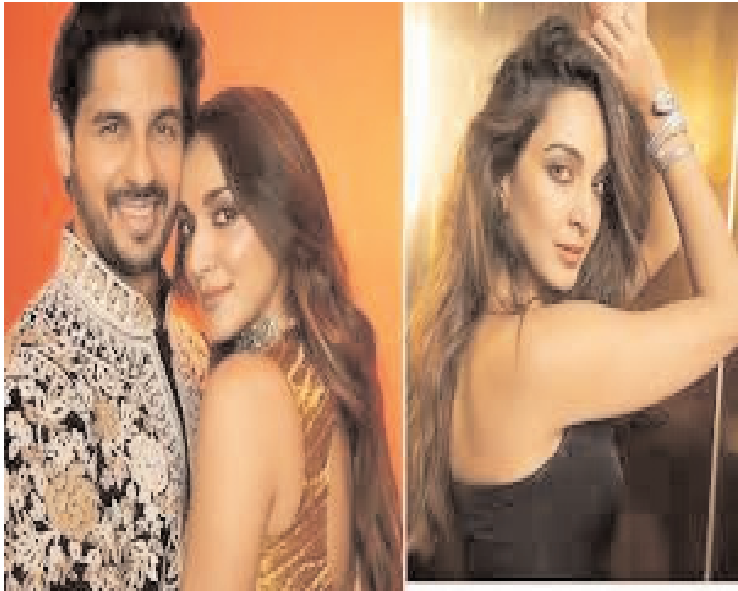
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Kiara Advani, who was most recently seen in the film 'Satyaprem Ki Katha', graced the latest episode of the streaming chat show 'Koffee With Karan' along with Bollywood star Vicky Kaushal. During the episode, KJo revealed that Kiara was late for her wedding with actor Sidharth Malhotra.

Mumbai, Dec 7 (IANS) Bollywood actress Kiara Advani, who was most recently seen in the film 'Satyaprem Ki Katha', graced the latest episode of the streaming chat show 'Koffee With Karan' along with Bollywood star Vicky Kaushal. During the episode, KJo revealed that Kiara was late for her wedding with actor Sidharth Malhotra.

KJo recollected the wedding as he said: "It was such an intimate wedding; they were so filmy when they met, that whole video. I didn't know that any of this was planned."

Vicky reacted to it and did Sidharth's watch act, expressing that it was all so sweet. Karan revealed that the 'watch' gesture was edited later because Kiara was so late! In her defence, the actress said that the baraat arrived too early. She said, "It was the earliest baraat."



Karan laughed, as he said: "You know how Punjabis are at the baraat. The baraat was filled with such vigour and energy which kept increasing. But then it reached a point where we were like, 'Koi Kiara ko bulao ab. Kab aayegi?'. It was getting so hot and all of us were tired. Everyone was actually giving gaalis to Kiara but when she came, she was looking so beautiful that it was all for-

gotten."

The actress also shared the intricate details of Sidharth Malhotra's romantic proposal and revealed that he said the lines from their 2021 film 'Shershaah' to propose to her.

She said: "He's like, 'Dilli ka sidha sadha launda hoon' (I am a simple boy from Delhi) with the full dialogues of 'Shershaah' and I burst out laughing."

I managed to propose to Katrina by going down on my knees a night before their wedding: Vicky

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Bollywood star Vicky Kaushal, who is receiving a lot of positive response to his recently released film 'Sam Bahadur', graced the latest episode of the streaming chat show 'Koffee With Karan' with actress Kiara Advani. During the episode, Vicky revealed that he proposed to his wife, actress Katrina Kaif just a day before their wedding.

Mumbai, Dec 7 (IANS) Bollywood star Vicky Kaushal, who is receiving a lot of positive response to his recently released film 'Sam Bahadur', graced the latest episode of the streaming chat show 'Koffee With Karan' with actress Kiara Advani. During the episode, Vicky revealed that he proposed to his wife, actress Katrina Kaif just a day before their wedding.

Show host Karan Johar nudged Vicky to speak on the proposal, the actor blushed and revealed how their busy schedules became a roadblock for him to plan an elaborate proposal for Katrina.

Vicky shared that he finally managed to propose to her by going down on his knees a night before their wedding in their hotel before their friends and families arrived.

He said: "It was very last minute. I had been warned by everybody that if you don't propose, it's something you'll have to be prepared for for the rest of your life that you got to hear about it. I did that one day before the wedding. It was dinner, just before any of the friends and families could come."



The 'Uri' actor also said that he met Katrina's siblings and mother for the first time just a week before the wedding when they flew down to Mumbai as they couldn't meet earlier due to the pandemic.

Vicky and Katrina tied the knot in an intimate but lavish ceremony at Six Senses Fort Barwara, Rajasthan on December 9, 2021.

Social media and the Internet has made everyone a health expert : Lara Dutta

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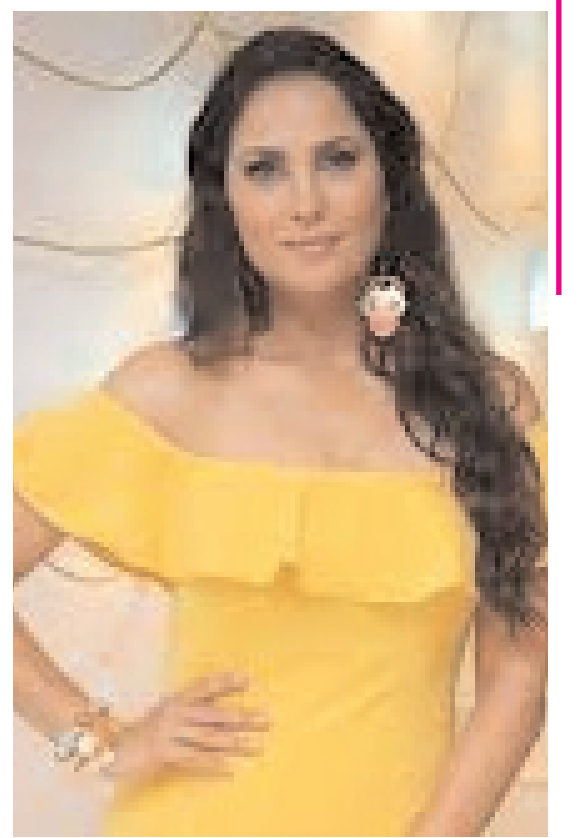
Actress Lara Dutta, who was recently seen in the streaming series 'Charlie Chopra & The Mystery Of Solang Valley', has said that the world of social media and the Internet has made everyone a health expert and that it's a very unsettling precedent.

The actress said that in matters of health one should always consult the professionals who have invested their time and energy in research and have a deep understanding of the subject.

The 'Kaun Banegi Shikharwati' actress attended the Media Roundtable on Empowering Menopause Conversations on Thursday, where she spoke about menstrual health.

She said, "All of us today with everything that we are exposed to, we have all become Google, Instagram doctors. Even for women, we are bombarded constantly with so much information. Today, if you want to know what you're going through even if you mistakenly click on one link, the algorithm will throw up multiple posts about the same thing."

She further mentioned: "They all may sound like the right fixes to what I'm going through. But, at the end of the day, are they the experts? Are they the people who really know what my personal experience is, and just because it has worked for someone, will it work for me? I believe in people, who have put their time, money, research and effort into actually getting the right kind of information."



P Diddy sued by 4th woman for alleged sexual assault

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Another woman has filed a lawsuit against rapper Sean 'Diddy' Combs for sexual assault. This is Combs' fourth sexual assault lawsuit in three weeks.

The woman, known as Jane Doe, claims in her lawsuit that in 2003 she was "sex trafficked" and "gang raped" by Combs; Harve Pierre, the then-president of Bad Boy Records; and a third unnamed person, reports.

She was 17 years old at the time. Combs has posted a statement on social media about the various allegations against him. "Enough is enough. For the last couple of weeks, I have sat silently and watched people try to assassinate my character, destroy my reputation, and my legacy," he said. "Sickening allegations have been made against me by individuals looking for a quick payday. Let me be absolutely clear: I did not do any of the awful things being alleged. I will fight for my name, my family, and for the truth."

In documents obtained by Mirror.co.uk, the lawsuit alleges that Jane Doe met the men in a lounge near Detroit, Michigan. Reportedly Combs "convinced" the woman to accompany them on a private jet to New York City.

They allegedly flew to Teterboro, New Jersey, and were driven to Diddy's House Recording Studio, owned and operated by Combs and his company Bad Boy Records.

As per Mirror.co.uk, throughout the night the alleged victim was given drugs and alcohol where the suit states she was "more and more inebriated, eventually to the point that she



could not possibly have consented to having sex with anyone, much less someone twice her age." In the suit, Jane Doe provided photos of her and Combs in his studio during the night of the alleged assault. The suit claims that while in the studio she was raped by the three men and forced to give Pierre oral sex. She then reportedly was taken back to the airport and put on a plane back to Michigan.

SHAH RUKH SHARED THAT THE KEY TO HIS CHARACTER IN THE FILM DUNKI IS "HONESTY" AND "PATRIOTISM"

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Bollywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan, who is awaiting the release of his upcoming film 'Dunki', has shared that the key to his character in the film is "honesty" and "patriotism". SRK recently engaged with his fans on X during #AskSRK session. During the session, a fan asked, "When our sweetest Raju nd Abhijat sir came to u with this role for #Dunki nd u started your preparation by giving each shot in 25 different ways.. what did u feel was the key to this character Shah Rukh Bhai? Love u (sic)." Responding to the tweet, SRK wrote, "Goodness. Honesty. Loyalty. Patriotism. #Dunkitrailer." "Dunki", directed by superstar director Rajkumar Hirani, also stars Boman Irani, Taapsee Pannu, Vicky Kaushal, Vikram Kochhar and Anil Grover. Another fan asked, "#AskSRK Dunki looks like having SRK from every decade since you're working. How tough was the transformation? or VFX was used? Also, plans for 2024?" SRK replied, "One has to work on physical attributes to play different ages... prosthetics and vfx and whole lot of team members have to work very hard to try and get it right. Months of work. #DunkiTrailer."

A JIO Studios, Red Chillies Entertainment and Rajkumar Hirani Films presentation, produced by Rajkumar Hirani and Gauri Khan. Written by Abhijat Joshi, Rajkumar Hirani and Kanika Dhillon, Dunki is slated to release on December 21, 2023.



Ameesha Patel