

# absolute india

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## Why truck-bus-tanker drivers are up in arms against new law for hit-and-run cases?

# GOVT BOWS DOWN

The truck drivers' associations called off their nationwide protest against the new penal provisions regarding hit-and-run cases in the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS), Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said Tuesday. This came after the Ministry of Home Affairs held discussions with representatives of the All India Motor Transport Congress on January 2, the second day of the strike. During the discussion, the Centre clarified that the new laws and provisions regarding hit-and-run cases in the newly-launched BNS has not yet come into force, and the decision to invoke them will be taken only after consultation with the All India Motor Transport Congress.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With nation-wide strikes by truck drivers entering the second day on Tuesday, the country is grappling with fuel crisis that is causing widespread panic besides drawing criticism from the opposition leaders. The transporters are protesting against change in the hit-and-run law introduced by the recently-enacted Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS), which replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC).



### Impact of the protest...

The impact of the agitations is palpable, with approximately 2,000 petrol pumps in western and northern India running out of fuel stocks. Cities like Chandigarh are implementing measures to manage the limited fuel supply, including temporary restrictions on petrol and diesel sales for two-wheelers and four-wheelers. The situation raises concerns over potential disruptions to essential supplies like vegetables, fruits and milk if the strike persists or escalates into a large-scale pan-India movement.

### What the new law says...

The new hit-and-run law imposes stricter penalties on drivers who flee accident spots. According to the law, a driver who flees the scene after an accident will face up to 10 years in jail or a fine of Rs 7 lakh. This law also applies to private vehicle owners. Earlier, under IPC Section 304A, the maximum prison term was for two years.

### Why truck, bus and oil tanker drivers protesting against the law?

They argue that these harsh measures will jeopardise their livelihoods, discouraging the drivers and potentially exposing them to mob violence when transporting the injured. Their demand for the repeal of these provisions has led to a nationwide strike.

### Advocate's view...

Speaking with reporter, advocate Shashank Dewan said: "Punishment is specifically designated for cases of rash and negligent driving, excluding those not engaging in such behaviour. It is crucial to bear in mind this specific clause. The prosecution must ultimately prove factors like intoxication, over-speeding, or engaging in rash and negligent driving."

He said the threat of hit-and-run is significantly greater, prompting a sense of responsibility among the drivers. "Accidents can happen without necessarily involving rash or negligent driving," Dewan added. On protesters saying the owner of the vehicle should be made responsible, Dewan said that the responsibility lies with the driver.

"Consider a scenario where a driver, perhaps under the influence of alcohol, drives at 140 kmph

and causes an accident. It's not possible for the vehicle owner to personally monitor every driver. In instances where rash driving is not observed, such as a pedestrian crossing the highway without precautions, the prosecution might not be warranted. However, acknowledging this perspective may seem idealistic," he said. "Navigating prosecutorial challenges is a current issue with ambiguous definitions of what constitutes rash and negligent driving. There's a lack of consensus, with some arguing that over-speeding alone is not rash driving. The criteria for rash and negligent driving remain arbitrary and unclear," he added. Issues arise, Dewan said, when in an attempt to prove allegations like over-speeding, the authorities often rely on subjective claims. "Some judgements suggest the need for skid marks as evidence, but this alone may not define rash and negligent driving," he said.

## 6 security personnel injured in attack by militants in Manipur

Imphal | Agencies

Five Manipur Police commandos and a BSF jawan were injured in an attack by suspected Kuki militants at bordering Moreh in Tengenoual district on Tuesday, officials said.

Police officials in Imphal said that the suspected Kuki militants targeted the vehicles carrying police commandos and Border Security Personnel as they were en route to the border town Moreh close to Myanmar injuring five police commandos and a BSF rifleman. The militants fired on the security forces from their various sophisticated weapons while the police commandos and the BSF jawans were jointly conducting search operations to nab the rebels.



All the injured security personnel were airlifted to Imphal for better medical treatment. Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh condemned the attack and visited the hospitals where the injured security personnel were undergoing medical treatment. With this

Tuesday's incident 11 security personnel have been injured in different incidents of extremists' attacks in the same Tengenoual district since Saturday.

On Monday evening, in a separate incident, four people were killed and 14 others injured by armed attackers at Lilong Chingjao in Thoubal district. The armed attackers wearing police uniforms came in four vehicles and opened fire from their sophisticated weapons at people following a quarrel over the forcible collections of money from the people, mostly belonging to Muslims. The identity of the killers has not yet been ascertained.

"Elements who continuously engage in violence should be held accountable if the government takes any stringent action, including reimposition of the unwanted AFSPA... I am highly upset (sic). The government cannot watch all this forever."

N. Biren Singh, CM, Manipur

## Transactions via UPI cross 100 bn mark in 2023: NPCI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Transactions via the unified payments interface (UPI) platform surpassed the 100 billion-mark in 2023 to close at around 118 billion, representing 60 per cent growth as compared to 74 billion transactions recorded in 2022.

The total value of UPI transactions in 2023 stood at around Rs 182 lakh crore, up by 44 per cent as compared to Rs 126 lakh crore in 2022, according to data shared by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

In December, UPI recorded 12 billion transactions, totalling Rs 18.23 lakh crore.



As per NPCI data, the number of UPI transactions each day in December was over 387 million. Meanwhile, the NPCI has announced the launch of "UPI for Secondary Market"

from January 1 in its Beta phase for the equity cash segment. The launch of 'UPI for Secondary Market' is set to commence next week, with the collaborative support of key stakeholders including clearing corporations, stock exchanges, depositories, stock-brokers, banks, and UPI app providers.

Initially, this functionality will be available for limited set of pilot customers, the NPCI said in a statement.

During this pilot phase, investors can block funds in their bank accounts, which will only be debited by the Clearing Corporations upon trade confirmation during settlement.

## INDIA RECORDS 573 FRESH COVID CASES, TWO DEATHS

New Delhi: India recorded 573 fresh cases of Covid and two deaths in the last 24 hours, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said on Tuesday. According to the Ministry, the new cases take the total number of active cases to 4,565. It said that two deaths were reported, one each from Haryana and Karnataka. The ministry also said that the total 4,44,76,550 people have been discharged till date, reflecting a national recovery rate of 98.8 per cent. India has reported a total of 145 cases of the Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 as of December 28, 2023. These cases were detected in samples collected between November 21 and December 18, 2023. The JN.1 subvariant is derived from the Omicron subvariant known as BA.2.86 or Pirola, with Kerala being the first state to report a case. The country has administered a total of 220.67 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines as per the available data.

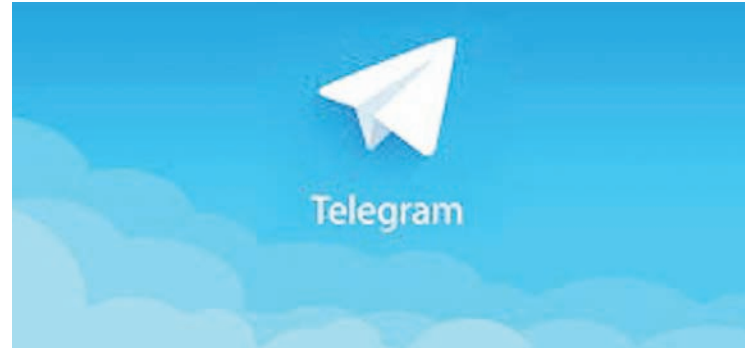
## Telegram announces colourful calls, largest bot update

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Encrypted messaging platform Telegram on Tuesday unveiled new updates, featuring a range of exciting enhancements aimed at elevating user experience.

The update introduces colourful calls, a visually stunning Thanos Snap Effect for deleted messages, and the largest Bot update for over 800 million monthly active users. Telegram introduced a significant overhaul to its calling feature, allowing users to engage in conversations, activate their cameras, or share their screens - all within the secure confines of end-to-end encryption, accessible across every platform.

The redesigned calling interface marks a new step forward, featuring new animations and beautiful backgrounds that adapt to the call's status-



whether it's ringing, active, or concluded. "This update addresses numerous bugs and interface glitches, underlining Telegram's commitment to providing a seamless user experience," said the company. Building on the experimental vaporize animation introduced on iOS last month, Telegram brought energy-

efficient Thanos Snap Effect to both iOS and Android. This animation accompanies the deletion of any message, adding an extra layer of visual delight to the messaging experience.

Telegram also announced an update to its Bot Platform, marking a pivotal moment in the platform's evolution.

## Ready to work with Congress, says Sharmila

Kadapa (Andhra Pradesh) | Agencies

YSR Telangana Party (YSRTP) President Y. S. Sharmila on Tuesday announced that she has decided to work with the Congress.

She told media persons at Idupulapaya in YSR Kadapa district that valuing the YSRTP's sacrifice in Telangana, the Congress has invited her to join it. "I have no objection in working with the Congress. As Congress is the largest secular party in the country and it is working to provide security to everyone, I have decided to strengthen the party," she said. Sharmila said she would be leaving for New Delhi on Wednesday.

"You will get answers to all your queries in a day or two," she said while declining to answer any queries.

She claimed that Congress came to power in Telangana because of her party's support. "YSRTP played a key role in defeating anti-people government of KCR. In 31 constituen-



cies, the Congress won only by a majority of 10,000 votes. This was because we did not contest the elections.

"Had the YSRTP contested, the Congress would have been in big trouble. This sense of gratitude is also there in the Congress," she added.

## Indian pharma firm launches oral solution for prostate cancer

Chennai | Agencies

Drug maker BDF Pharmaceuticals on Tuesday said it has introduced the world's first oral solution in 32mg/mL for management of prostate cancer.

The drug BDENZA will be available at Rs 27,000 for 150 mL.

As per a company statement, this innovative formulation marks a significant step forward in providing an effective dosage form and the dose reduction owing to tolerability of the product by patients is a big advantage of this oral solution, as dose regimen can be adjusted based on the volume of consumption.

Prostate cancer is a growing concern, with an estimated 1.2 million new cases diagnosed globally each year and an estimated 375,000 deaths, according to the WHO.

In India, a total of 37,416 cases of prostate cancer were reported in 2016 and the number was projected to increase to over 47,000 cases by 2025. Considering the majority of the



population suffering from prostate cancer is geriatric, certain aspects

like taking high dosage medication is difficult, the company said.

## Gujarat-based illegal immigration racket busted; 66 deported from France

Ahmedabad | Agencies

In a crackdown on illegal immigration, the CID Crime in Gujarat has unearthed a large-scale operation involving illegal transportation of Indian citizens to the United States.

An order from the Additional Director General of Police, CID Crime and Railways, revealed that a flight from Dubai, which halted for refueling at the Vitry Airport in France, was found carrying 303 passengers, including 260 Indian nationals.

Notably, 96 of these passengers were identified as residents of Gujarat.

The deported individuals, identified through an email from the FRRO Bureau of Immigration in Mumbai, included 66 Gujarati citizens. Most of them have studied till 8th-12th grade and are from Mehsana and Ahmedabad.

The CID Crime's investigation brought to light a complex network of agents facilitating such illegal migration.



These agents, primarily operating from Gujarat, targeted individuals with education levels ranging from 8th to 12th grade, promising them illegal entry into the United States.

The journey, routed from Ahmedabad to Dubai and then to Nicaragua, cost each person between Rs 60 lakh to Rs 80 lakh. The investigation also revealed that the agents were paid \$1,000 to \$3,000 just for crossing the American border. The investigation also delved into the financial transactions for the flight tickets and the process through which visas were obtained. It was found that these individuals' passports lacked the necessary stamps.



Delhi's winter puzzle

# MAXIMUM TEMPERATURES PLUNGE BELOW NORMS, MINIMUMS DEFIES WINTER CHILL!

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As winter tightens its grip on the city, Delhi residents are experiencing an unusual weather phenomenon where the maximum temperatures are consistently falling below the season's normal, while the minimum temperatures appear to resist the declining trend. According to the latest observations from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), this peculiar weather pattern can be attributed to feeble Western Disturbances and the formation of an inversion layer.



An IMD official said that every year brings unique weather conditions, and the current scenario is distinct from the previous year. Contrary to January 2023, where

Delhi witnessed eight instances of cold wave conditions, experts predict that there is minimal likelihood, at least for the next week, of a significant drop in minimum temperatures or the onset of

a cold wave. December 2023 marked the warmest last month of the year in six years for the city, with an average maximum temperature of 24.1 degrees Celsius and an average minimum of 8.6 degrees. Surprisingly, not a single cold-day condition or cold-wave day was recorded during the month. The IMD official said that as we move upwards from the Earth's surface, temperatures generally decrease. "Yet, in particular scenarios such as the presence of thick clouds or mist, an inversion layer forms, causing an unforeseen rise in temperature. This inversion phenomenon clarifies the elevation of temperature with height, going against the expected decrease," he said. The official emphasised that the weather varies each year, influenced by factors such as wind patterns. He further said that the maximum and minimum temperatures in the first week of January are generally the lowest for the entire year.

# Mumbai: 2 brothers repeatedly rape, impregnate 13-yr-old cousin

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Two brothers in Mumbai have been arrested for allegedly repeatedly raping and impregnating their 13-year-old cousin for the past eight months when she used to be alone at home, police said.



The accused are a 22-year-old man and his 18-year-old sibling - who would frequent the home of their minor cousin in the Vikhroli area of northeast Mumbai, where she lived with her parents.

Not suspecting anything amiss, the parents, both working, permitted them to mingle freely with her and the brothers even visited her unhindered in the couple's absence.

However, last Sunday, the victim's mother noticed that the girl's stomach was apparently protruding and asked her about it, but she did not respond properly. Concerned, the woman

took her daughter to a local hospital where the doctors gave her the devastating news - that the girl was 23 weeks pregnant.

Later, the stunned family lodged a complaint with Parkside Police Station which recorded the girl's statement and initiated the probe into the shocking case.

Among other things, the victim revealed that the younger cousin first raped her in May, and the older one started raping from August, both on mul-

multiple occasions. They also forced her to watch pornographic materials and videos before committing molestation and sexual assault.

Both the accused were arrested on Sunday and Monday and sent to custody. They have been slapped under charges of rape, gang-rape, sexual harassment on repeated occasions, showing objectionable video content and other offences under the IPC plus invoked various sections of the POCSO Act.

# Supreme Court to deliver its verdict in Adani-Hindenburg matter today

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court will deliver on Wednesday its verdict on a batch of pleas concerning the Adani-Hindenburg controversy.

In November last year, a bench, headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud and comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, had reserved its verdict in the case.

CJI Chandrachud had also expressed displeasure over the use of information from reports by organisations like the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) and Hindenburg Research by the petitioners and said that the court will have to rely on "our investigative agencies".

AS advocate Prashant Bhushan raised questions on the credibility of investigations undertaken by the SEBI in the matter, the CJI said: "Where is the material before us to doubt the SEBI's investigation? The SEBI is a statutory body entrusted to investigate stock market violations. Is it proper for the highest court -- without any material -- to reconstitute an SIT of our own?" During the hearing, Solicitor General



Tushar Mehta, appearing for the SEBI, had said that the government is considering "constructively with open mind" the suggestions made by the court-appointed expert committee.

"Wherever we found short selling, we will take action and we are taking action," Mehta had apprised the apex court. He had said that 22 out of 24 investigations have already been finalised and in relation to the remaining two cases, the reports are interim in nature, adding that the SEBI has sought information from foreign agencies and has no "control on time limit".

# BUMS student, CSC owner among 3 held for printing, circulating fake currency notes totalling crores

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Police's Special Cell has busted an interstate fake currency racket with the arrest of its three key members, including an under-training Bachelor of Unani Medicine and Surgery (BUMS) doctor and a Common Service Centre (CSC) owner, said an official on Tuesday.

The official also said that they have also recovered fake currency with a face value of Rs 50 lakh from the accused identified as Asif Ali, Danish Ali, and Sartaj Khan, all residents of Uttar Pradesh's Badaun.

The official said that the accused have printed and supplied more than fake notes with a face value of Rs 5 crore in the last five years.

Special Commissioner of Police, Special Cell, H.G.S. Dhaliwal said that on December 30, specific information was received that Asif, along with his 2-3 associates, would reach near the Akshardham Metro Station with a huge quantity of the fake Indian currency notes (FICN) to supply to their other associates in Delhi.

"A trap was laid and Ali along with his two associates -- Danish Ali and Sartaj Khan -- were apprehended after a brief scuffle," he said.

On a search, fake Indian currency notes with face



value totalling Rs 50 lakh in the denomination of 500 were recovered from their possession.

"During police custody remand, a complete FICN printing set-up, including raw materials, high-quality laptops and printers, and other equipment, was unearthed from their hideout in Sahaswan in Badaun," the Special CP said. Ali had started working with a Unani medicine doctor at Ujhani, Badaun, and

it was there that he gained knowledge about medicine. In 2016, he started giving medicines to people in his native village, but his earnings were not sufficient to support the large family. "Then he found the printing of FICN to be very lucrative work to earn quick money. He roped in his associate, Sartaj Khan, as he was tech-savvy in computer software and other computer work to print fine-quality FICN," said Dhaliwal. The accused purchased high-quality software for scanning and printing the fake currency notes.

"His old friend and associate Danish Ali arranged a secret hideout in Sahaswan for establishing a printing set-up. They would supply the FICN to their associates and clients in Delhi/NCR, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, and other areas," said Dhaliwal. Danish Ali is studying BUMS (Bachelor of Unani Medicines and Surgery) while Khan, about four years ago, opened a CSC centre in his village.

"Later, he, along with Asif Ali and Danish Ali, started printing FICN. Initially, he used to operate the scanning, formatting, and printing of the currency notes at his CSC shop in his native village. Later, they rented a premises in Sahaswan for the purpose," Dhaliwal added.

# All 25 mins in Rajasthan are crorepatis, average assets worth Rs 7.08 cr: Report

Team Absolute | New Delhi

All the 25 ministers in the Rajasthan Government are crorepatis and their average assets are to the tune of Rs 7.08 crore, while eight of them are facing criminal cases.

This was revealed by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Rajasthan Election Watch report released on Tuesday, which analysed the self-sworn affidavits of all 25 ministers, including the Chief Minister from the Rajasthan State Assembly Elections, 2023.

The report stated, "Out of the 25 ministers analysed, eight ministers have declared criminal cases against themselves, while four ministers have declared serious criminal cases against themselves."

The report added, "All 25 ministers are crorepatis and the average assets



analysed are to the tune of Rs 7.08 crore. "The minister with the highest declared total assets is Gajendra Singh from Lohawat constituency with assets

worth Rs 29.07 crore, while Babulal Kharadi from Jhadol (ST) constituency has the lowest declared total assets worth Rs 1.24 crore.

The report also said that 19 ministers have declared liabilities out of which the minister with the highest liabilities at Rs 4.91 crore is Sanjay Sharma of Alwar Urban constituency.

"Four ministers have declared their educational qualification to be between fifth class pass and 12th class pass, while 18 ministers have declared educational qualification of graduate and above and three ministers are Diploma Holders," the report said.

It also said that six ministers have declared their age to be between 31 and 50 years while 19 ministers have declared their age to be between 51 and 80 years. There are only two women ministers in the Cabinet.

The report also said that Surender Pal Singh is currently not an MLA in the Rajasthan Assembly and he is a BJP candidate for the January 5 bye-election to the Karanpur Assembly constituency.

# K'taka sculptor Yogi Raj's Ram Lalla idol chosen for installation at Ayodhya: Pralhad Joshi

Bengaluru | Agencies

On Tuesday, Union Minister for Mines, Coal, Law, and Parliamentary Affairs, Pralhad Joshi, confirmed that the Ram Lalla idol sculpted by Karnataka artist Arun Yogiraj has been finalised for installation at the Ayodhya Sri Ram Mandir on January 22.

Taking to social media, Joshi stated, "The statue for the Prana Pratishthana of Sri Ram at Ayodhya has been finalised. The statue, sculpted by renowned artist from our land (Karnataka), our pride Arun Yogiraj, is going to be installed at Ayodhya. It is also a standing example of the cherished relationship between Lord Hanuman and Lord Ram. It won't be wrong to say that this is a great service to Ram Lalla from Karnataka, which is regarded as the land of Lord Hanuman."

Karnataka BJP State President BY Vijayendra and MLA S Suresh Kumar have also congratulated sculptor Arun Yogiraj and expressed their happiness over the development. Meanwhile, workers of the Karnataka Congress party visited Arun Yogiraj's residence in Mysuru city and felicitated his family members following the



development on Tuesday.

Congress MLA Harish Gowda, former MLA MK Somashekar, leader Dr. Sushruth Gowda, and party workers felicitated Arun Yogiraj's wife Vijetha and mother Saraswathi.

His mother expressed happiness and stated that she wished that Arun Yogiraj's father had been alive to see this achievement of his son.

Arun Yogiraj had completed the idol of Ram Lalla and handed it over to the Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust last week. Arun had taken six months to create the Ram Lalla idol. He stayed in Ayodhya for the entire period and worked for 12 to 14 hours a day.

# PIET, Jaipur Forges Global Collaboration with Asia University, Taiwan

Lalit Sharma | Jaipur

Poornima Institute of Engineering and Technology (PIET), Jaipur, has recently solidified its international standing through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Center for AI and Cyber Security Research and Innovation (CCRIAU Taiwan) at Asia University, Taiwan.

The MoU, ceremoniously signed by Director, PIET, Jaipur Prof. (Dr.) Dinesh Goyal and Director of CCRIAU Taiwan Prof. (Dr.) Brij B. Gupta, heralds a new era of academic cooperation. The agreement aims to foster direct collaboration between the faculties, researchers, and administrative staff of both institutions. The cooperative initiatives will span a diverse array of mutually agreeable areas, facilitating joint programs and activities to enhance academic interaction.

Among the key provisions outlined in the MoU are provisions for faculty and student visits and exchanges. These exchanges are poised to enrich the academic experiences of both PIET and CCRIAU Taiwan, providing a platform for cross-cultural learning and research collaboration.

Prof. (Dr.) Dinesh Goyal, Director of PIET, expressed enthusiasm about the partnership, stating, "This collaboration opens avenues for joint initiatives, such as training programs, faculty development programs, and knowledge-sharing endeavors. The synergy between our institutions and CCRIAU, Taiwan will enable us to leverage each other's resources for the benefit of our students and faculties."



The MoU not only signifies a commitment to academic excellence but also underscores the global perspective that both institutions are keen to instill in their educational frameworks. This collaboration is expected to pave the way for a myriad of opportunities, fostering innovation, research, and international exposure for the academic communities at PIET and CCRIAU, Taiwan. The Registrar, Prof. (Dr.) Gautam Singh, The Heads of Departments, Prof. (Dr.) Anil Kumar (CSE) and Prof. (Dr.) Budesh Kanwar (AI & DS) commented on the significance of the occasion, stating, "It opens up avenues for collaborative research, faculty development, and knowledge exchange, reinforcing our dedication to academic excellence."

# NCPA invites Indian Classical music students to partake in another promising edition of 'Citi NCPA Scholarship for Young Musicians'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai & Citi India have announced the return of its 'Citi NCPA Scholarship for Young Musicians' and is open for applications from students undergo-



## Scholarship Details:

Application for - Advanced training in the field of Hindustani Music (vocal - khayal / dhrupad, and melody instruments - flute, harmonium, violin, sitar, sarod, etc.)  
Scholarship value - Rs. 10,000/- per month for two years (April 2024 to March 2026) Send application on indianmusicsscholarships@ncpa-mumbai.com Last date to apply - 10th January, 2024  
Audition for Short-Listed candidates will be conducted in February 2024 on the basis of video recording Contact No: 8928001896 (only between Mon to Fri. 10.00 am to 5.00 pm)  
Age Limit for Khayal & Melody Instruments - 18 to 30 years (as off 1st March 2024)  
Age Limit for Dhrupad - 18 to 35 years (as off 1st March 2024)

ing advance training in the field of Hindustani music. This scholarship is primarily meant to encourage young and aspiring music learners (age group: 18-35), (vocal - dhrupad & khayal, instrumental music - melody).

Scholarships will be awarded to nine shortlisted candidates to enable them to pursue full-time advance training in Hindustani music.

## DETAILS TO BE MENTIONED:

Kindly mention the category (khayal / dhrupad / name of the melody instrument) you are applying for in your bio-data.  
The application must contain all details including candidate's name, date of birth, address, contact number/alternate contact number, email ID, professional qualification, details of musical training including teachers/gurus, number of years of total training, details of achievements/prizes/scholarships and performances, and other noteworthy details. Please do not send any scanned copies of the certificates / audio or video clips of musical performances. Bio-data containing all details in the listing format will be sufficient. Shortlisted candidates will be informed via email or telephone.

## Eligibility Criteria & General Instructions:

- The candidate's bio-data will be considered as his/her application. There is NO separate form to be filled.
- Candidates who are beneficiaries of other scholarship/grant in the field of music during April 2024 to March 2026, are not eligible
- Candidates who are full-time / part-time working professionals need not apply. Professional musicians including those with 'A' grade from All India Radio are not eligible
- Applications received through courier will not be accepted. Only the applications received on email id mentioned above will be considered
- Only Indian citizens are eligible to apply
- Applications received after 10th January, 2024 will not be entertained
- The decision of the NCPA Selection Committee will be final
- For information, contact: 8928001896 (Only between Monday to Friday from 10:00a.m-5:00p.m)



## 'Hit-and-run law'

# DRIVERS STRIKE IN MP ENTERS DAY 2, MINISTER SAYS STRIKE NO SOLUTION

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The state-wide strike by drivers in Madhya Pradesh has entered second day against the new law which increases the jail term in hit-and-run cases.

The strike has affected various services in Madhya Pradesh since Monday.

Reportedly, almost every third petrol pump in Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior, Ujjain, and Jabalpur went dry on Tuesday while in some cities people were seen in long queues for hours to get the fuel.

While there is a shortage of petrol and diesel due to the strike, milk and vegetables are also not easily available. The effect of the drivers' strike is visible from the state capital Bhopal to small towns.

In these difficult times, taxi and auto drivers are taking advantage, charging more, while petrol and diesel are being sold in black. The effect of shortage of petrol and diesel is also visible on schools. Many schools in the capital have declared holiday.

Trucks are parked at various places



on the roads and the wheels of buses have also stopped. Travelers are not able to reach from one place to another easily, and for those coming by train, taxis and autos are also not being provided to take them home.

Most of the people have been restricted to their homes as the public transport remained off-road in the state capital for the second consecutive day on Tuesday. Many people were stuck on roads

and forced to pay a hefty amount to book private cars; besides the daily commuters and officer-goers, school going children also face a lot of problems. Several schools which were supposed to open from Tuesday in the state remained closed as buses could not ferry the students.

According to the new law, hit-and-run cases will now attract a 10-year jail term and a fine of Rs 7 lakh.

On Monday, the drivers union submitted a memorandum to the district administration with a 12-point demand in protest against the new law.

The crisis comes at a time when new transport minister Uday Pratap Singh took over the department. Singh, a former MP -- was inducted as ministers in Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's cabinet for the very first time.

Responding to the strike, Singh has said that strike is no solution to any problem.

"The agitating drivers should have a dialogue with the government so that a solution can be found. The law has been framed keeping in mind the seriousness of the crime," the minister said.

# Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's new style, first cabinet meeting to be held in Jabalpur

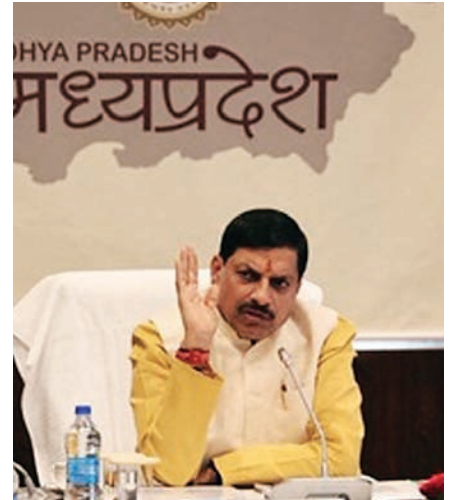
Team Absolute | Bhopal

Dr. Mohan Yadav, the head of the new BJP government in Madhya Pradesh, is in a new style, his decisions and actions are in the news. Now he is going to hold the first cabinet meeting outside Bhopal in Jabalpur.

Changes are clearly visible in the state since the formation of the government. While new experiments are being done, efforts are also being made to send a message to the administrative machinery and the general public through strict decisions. To streamline the administrative machinery, on one hand, Dr. Yadav has assigned the responsibility of divisional level monitoring to Additional Chief Secretary level officers, while on the other hand, Inspector General of Police level police officers have also been deployed to control crime.

If the Chief Minister has started the process of holding meetings at the division level, then in the coming time the exercise of meetings will be intensified at the district level also. Recently, a major bus accident took place in Guna, in which 13 people were burnt alive and the Chief Minister took strict action against the officials responsible for this accident. From Transport Commissioner to Guna Collector and Superintendent of Police were changed.

The decisions of the Chief Minister were appreciated not only by the ruling party but



also by the opposition. Former Chief Minister Digvijay Singh praised the working style of Mohan Yadav and wrote on X, Thank you Chief Minister. By taking prompt action, you taught the culprits a lesson. It is hoped that such accidents due to negligence will not happen again.

On one hand, the government is trying to give the message of change, on the other hand, the first cabinet meeting of the state government is also going to be held in Jabalpur instead of Mantralaya in Bhopal. Many important decisions are expected to be taken in this meeting also.

# Demand for public holiday on 22 January in Madhya Pradesh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The statue of Ramlala is going to be consecrated on January 22 in the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Many people want to witness this event without reaching Ayodhya.

The employees of the state have written a letter to Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav and the Chief Secretary demanding declaration of public holiday.

An official of the Government Teachers Organization says that for Hindu religion, the establishment of Ramlala's temple in Ayodhya is a supernatural and faith-related issue. Everyone wants to witness



the supernatural occasion, hence he has demanded to declare 22nd January as a public holiday across the

state so that all the people can indirectly participate in this event without any kind of restriction and feel blessed.

# 'Dagna Pratha' - a superstition among tribals that's costing infants' lives in MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

'Dagna' -- a superstitious treatment ritual followed by some sections of the tribal community in Madhya Pradesh -- has taken the lives of at least three infants in the past two weeks in the state.

It has been seen among the tribal communities, especially among the Baiga tribe, that if a child suffers from pneumonia or any other similar disease, the family members would prefer to go for a traditional treatment ritual called 'Dagna' in which the stomach of the infant would be branded with hot iron or hot bangle ('kada').

All three cases of infant deaths were reported from the tribal-dominated Shahdol district in the Vindhya



region of Madhya Pradesh. In the latest case, a 45-day-old

infant, who was branded with hot iron and was later admitted to the

government hospital in Shahdol, died last Saturday. As per reports, the child was suffering from pneumonia and the family members followed the 'Dagna' process to treat him.

As per reports, over 50 marks (dots) were found on the infant's belly and later, when his health deteriorated, he was taken to the hospital on November 21.

"The child was admitted to the PICU of the district hospital. He was unable to breathe and his ribs were found broken. He died of complications caused due to the infection," said a doctor on condition of anonymity.

Before this, two other infants who were suffering from pneumonia and were branded with hot irons, had reportedly died last month.

# Due to bus strike, holiday declared in many schools, online classes will be held

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Due to the ongoing strike against the Hit and Run law, holiday has been declared in many schools of Bhopal. Classes will not be held in some schools for two days and in others for one day. At the same time, some schools have sent messages to parents asking them to bring their children to school themselves. Apart from this, classes will be held online in many schools. In the message sent to the parents by the school management, the reason for the holidays has been stated as drivers' strike. There has also been talk of shortage of diesel.

A message was sent to parents from Carmel Convent School informing them that the school will remain closed on January 2 and 3 due to the bus drivers' strike. At the same time, IES Public School had declared a holiday on Tuesday. This has been confirmed by Manisha Kavthekar, Group



Director of IES Public School. At the same time, St. Paul's School of Anand Nagar was also remained closed on Tuesday.

On Monday, Delhi Public School shifted the classes of students to online mode from January 2 due to the strike of bus drivers.

According to the management of Mount Carmel School, annual functions are going on in our school. Therefore, we have messaged the parents to bring their children tomorrow and also take them back, so that the children do not face any inconvenience.

St. Joseph's School spokesperson Vasundhara Sharma said that we are not closing the school, there is no holiday in our school. The children who come to school come by buses run by private bus operators. Operators have been told to solve this problem themselves.

# Case of attempt to murder registered against BJP MLA's son in Gwalior

Team Absolute | Gwalior

A case of attempt to murder has been registered against Dinesh Lodhi, son of BJP MLA Pritam Lodhi, elected from Pichhor assembly constituency of Shivpur district of Madhya Pradesh.

According to information received from the police, on the night of 31 December, Ravindra Yadav of Old Cantonment police station area of Gwalior accused BJP MLA's son Dinesh Lodhi of trying to crush him with a Scorpio. The accused hit his Activa. But, he narrowly escaped. In the CCTV footage of the incident that has surfaced, a Scorpio was seen hitting the Activa and trying to carry out the incident again.

Ravindra Yadav alleges that the vehicle was being driven by Dinesh Lodhi, son



of BJP MLA Pritam Lodhi. The victim also recorded the audio of Dinesh's earlier threat and lodged a complaint at the police station.

Police have registered a case against the accused. The police officer has told that the incident took place on

Sunday night around 10 pm, in which the accused tried to run over the complainant by hitting his car with his car, not only this, he also tried to damage his house, the police arrested the accused and have been taken into custody.

# Threat of bomb blast in Khandwa on 26th January! The letter wrote - Will massacre

Team Absolute | Khandwa

A school in Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh has received a threatening letter. In the letter, it has been written that on January 26, bombs will be blasted at various places and the Prime Minister will be bombed. There is also mention of terrorist organization ISIS in this. The letter was received on 28 December. The matter came to light on Tuesday. The police is investigating the matter.

According to Sunil Jain, Principal of Patajan Higher Secondary School, Khalwa, on the morning of December 28, when the school staff opened the main gate, a letter was found stuck. The staff brought it to me. When I looked at the letter, the first thing that was written was Allah Hu Akbar. I informed the police without reading the letter. The police came and took away

the letter. After this the police did not give any information. It is written in the letter - Pakistan Zindabad, Allah Hu Akbar. Do not take this letter lightly. On 26th January you people will celebrate Republic Day and we will bomb the school. There will be explosions at many places including Anand Nagar, Mata Chowk, Ramnagar, Budhwara Bazaar, Bus Stand of Khandwa. Our aim is to liberate Delhi. For which we will kill. We will blow up the Prime Minister also. ISIS will take responsibility for the teachers and students who die in schools.

At the end of the letter, it is written that blasts will be carried out in 8 states on 26th January. The date of 30 January was given in Delhi. The police are investigating at their level. According to the police, initially it appears to be someone's mischief.

# 'All necessary measures should be taken to ensure that citizens do not face problems in getting essential items'

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav discussed with Commissioners, Collectors, SP through VC in view of the truck drivers' strike.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav discussed with the Commissioner, Collector and SP in the Ministry through VC, obtained information about the necessary measures being taken in view of the truck drivers' strike and gave necessary instructions. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that all necessary measures should be taken to ensure that citizens do not face problems in getting essential items.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that the supply of petrol and diesel in the state should not be affected. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that if anyone creates any obstruction regarding petrol and diesel, it will not be tolerated. For this,



all necessary measures should be taken to ensure that the public does not face any kind of trouble. Supply should be ensured through petrol pumps and LPG gas dealers who have their own vehicles. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan

Yadav, while discussing with the Collectors and SPs of various districts including Jabalpur, Gwalior, Katni, Rewa, Ujjain, Sagar, said that there should not be any obstruction and hindrance on any route. Ensure road safety.

Hold a meeting with all dealers, associations. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that movement should be seen in our field. Information about normalcy should be given using platforms like social media, electronic media etc.

# Vision of AIIMS Bhopal for the year 2024

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On the first day of the New Year, AIIMS Bhopal Executive Director Professor (Dr.) Ajai Singh along with faculty members, officers and other employees of AIIMS Bhopal reviewed the activities done throughout the year and also took resolutions for the year 2024. On this occasion, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal, Professor (Dr.) Ajai Singh, while discussing some of the achievements of the last year, said that the number of patients in OPD has increased by 56%, the patients admitted in IPD have increased from 32000 to 50000. While emergency cases have increased by 170%. Bed occupancy has increased from 62 to 77%, while beneficiaries of Ayushman Bharat scheme have increased by 53% to 13337. Similarly, AIIMS Bhopal has achieved remark-



able progress in the field of research also. Apart from this, many meaningful initiatives have also been taken for the welfare of students. But we should not be satisfied with our achievements but should work with more hard work and dedication for the future. Presenting his vision for the year 2024, Professor (Dr.) Singh said that this year the goals include starting Renal and Liver Transplant, setting up transplant centre, starting transgender clinic, Drone facility for delivery of medicines in remote areas and collection of blood samples., inauguration of new administrative building, establishment of Apex Pediatric Center and Critical Care Unit etc.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Middle East slipping towards precipice of a regional war

The Middle East has been slipping towards the precipice of a regional war ever since the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October and the ferocious Israeli response in Gaza, the media reported. The past week has shown how the cliff edge keeping it from that abyss could quickly crumble away, The Guardian reported. Within hours of the outbreak of the Gaza war, the Hezbollah Shia militia in Lebanon began to fire on northern Israeli towns and villages in solidarity with Palestinians, triggering Israeli air strikes in response, and Houthis forces in Yemen attacked ships in the Red Sea with real or perceived Israeli connections.

At the same time the West Bank erupted in protests at the bombing of civilians in Gaza and extremist Jewish settlers quickly sought to ride the wave of Israeli anger by seizing Palestinian land and terrorising its residents, The Guardian reported. An Israeli airstrike just outside Damascus killed a senior figure in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Sayyed Razi Mousavi, who was responsible for military liaison between Syria and Iran. After Mousavi's death last Monday, the IRGC issued a statement declaring the "usurper and savage Zionist regime will pay for this crime". American warships shot down dozens of drones and also a handful of ballistic missiles, The Guardian reported. US Central Command issued a statement to say that Washington had "every reason to believe that these attacks, while launched by the Houthis in Yemen, are fully enabled by Iran". If a US warship is struck, President Joe Biden would be under intense pressure to deliver a decisive response, as he enters an election year with his tenure hanging in the balance and Republicans looking to focus on any trace of weakness, The Guardian reported.

MARKETS TO HAVE A TOUGH TIME AS NEW YEAR UNFOLDS

Arun Kejriwal

The week has come to an end and this week becomes special because the calendar year 2023 ends at the stroke of midnight as well. The week was a four-day affair with it beginning with a trading holiday on account of Christmas.

Markets contrary to expectation gained on three of the four sessions and had a small dip on the very last day of the year. Nothing to be read into but purely coincidental.

The week saw BSE SENSEX gain 1,133.30 points or 1.59 per cent to close at 72,240.26 points while NIFTY gained 382.00 points or 1.79 per cent to close at 21,731.40 points. The broader markets saw BSE 100, BSE 200 and BSE 500 gain 1.86 per cent, 1.97 per cent and 1.98 per cent respectively. BSE MIDCAP was up 2.67 per cent while BSE SMALLCAP was up 1.60 per cent.

Dow Jones gained in three of the four sessions. It has had a great year and for calendar year 2023 gained 4,484.59 points or 13.53 per cent to close at 37,631.87 points.

In contrast, the Indian benchmark indices have had a great performance and have outperformed the Dow. On a yearly basis, BSE SENSEX gained 11,399.52 points or 18.74 per cent to close at 72,240.26 points.

Similarly, NIFTY gained 3,626.10 points or 20.03% to close at 21,731.40 points. For the week, the Dow was up 303.57 points or 0.81 per cent to close at 37,689.54 points. The rally last year in the markets has been skewed and the bulk of the rally happened in the last couple of months.

The rally in BSE SENSEX was 18.74 per cent of which 26.62 per cent was in the first 10 months and the balance 73.38 per cent in the remaining two months. In the case of NIFTY, the rally in the first 10 months was 26.85 per cent while it was 73.15 per cent in the remaining two months.

Coming to the last week of the calendar year, we saw December futures expire on a positive note. The series fared very well for the bulls and gained 1,645.55 points or 8.17 per cent to close at 21,778.70 points. The week gone by was the week of new listings and as many as eight listings happened during the four trading sessions. There were three listings each on Tuesday and Wednesday followed by one on Thursday and Friday. There are no IPOs pending as of the date on the main board either to open or list.

The first to list was Motisons Jewellers Limited which had issued shares at Rs 55. The discov-



ered price on BSE on Tuesday was Rs 103.90 and at the end of the day, it closed at Rs 101.18, a gain of Rs 46.18 or 83.96 per cent. By the end of the week, the share had lost further ground and closed at Rs 95.89, a gain of Rs 40.89 or 74.35 per cent.

The second share to list was Muthoot Microfin Limited which had issued shares at Rs 291. The discovered price was Rs 278, a loss of Rs 13 or 4.46 per cent. Shares closed day one at Rs 266.20, a loss of Rs 24.80 or 8.52 per cent. By the end of the week, the share had slipped further to close at Rs 251.20, a loss of Rs 39.80 or 13.67 per cent.

The third share to list was Suraj Estate Developers Limited which had issued shares at Rs 360. The discovered price was Rs 343.80, a loss of Rs 16.20 or 4.5 per cent. The share closed day one at Rs 334.30, a loss of Rs 25.70 or 7.13 per cent. By the end of the week, the share lost further to close at Rs 330.60, a loss of Rs 29.40 or 8.17 per cent.

The fourth share to list was on Wednesday the 27th of December. Shares of Credo Brands Marketing Limited which were issued at Rs 280 listed at Rs 282, a gain of Rs 2 or 0.71 per cent. By the end of the day, they had gained further to close at Rs 312.50, a gain of Rs 32.50 or 11.60 per cent. By the end of the week, the share lost some ground and closed at Rs 292.40, a gain of Rs 12.40

or 4.43 per cent.

The fifth share to list was RBZ Jewellers Limited. The share debuted on day one at Rs 100 and closed at Rs 104.99. By the end of the week, the share had gained further and closed at Rs 115.74, a gain of Rs 15.74 or 15.74 per cent.

The sixth share to list was Happy Forgings Limited which had issued shares at Rs 850. The discovered price was Rs 1001.25, a gain of Rs 151.25 or 17.79 per cent. By the end of the week, the share closed at Rs 1,029.10, a gain of Rs 179.10 or 21.07 per cent. The seventh share to list was from Azad Engineering Limited which had issued shares at Rs 524. The discovered price was Rs 710, a gain of Rs 186 or 35.49 per cent. Share closed day one at Rs 677.10, a gain of Rs 153.10 or 29.21 per cent. Share closed the week at Rs 692.40, a gain of Rs 168.40 or 32.13 per cent.

The eighth and final share to list was Innova Cap Tab Limited which had issued shares at Rs 448. The discovered price was Rs 456.10, a gain of Rs 8.10 or 1.80 per cent. Share closed day one at Rs 545.15, a gain of Rs 97.15 or of 21.68 per cent.

It appears that investors who do intraday trading in newly listed shares have gotten caught on the wrong foot in the Innova Cap Tab.

Further, in some of the listings, the grey market premiums have just disappeared post the issue getting subscribed. Probably it's

time to take a fresh look at grey market premiums and their reliability.

Of the eight listings last week, two of them are trading at a discount to the issue price.

Coming to the year, month and week ahead, expect markets to trade in a more circumspect manner. We have seen the best of the markets in the short term and one should expect that January would be a month of sideways movement and correction. There would be no budget on February 1 as this is the election year and there would be a vote on account to take care of government expenditure. The biggest driver for markets would be the quarterly corporate results for the October-December quarter which would begin in the second week of January. Market men are also hoping that FPI buying will continue.

The strategy would be to look to take some money off the table, particularly from the small-cap and midcap space. Sell into rallies and wait for really deep cuts to re-enter. Trade cautiously.

(Arun Kejriwal is the founder of Kejriwal Research and Investment Services. The views expressed are personal)

international

JAPAN QUAKE TOLL CLIMBS TO 48

Tokyo | Agencies

At least 48 people have died after a series of powerful earthquakes, with the major one measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale, hit central Japan and the surrounding areas, causing homes to collapse and triggered tsunami warnings, with search operations currently underway for possible survivors trapped underneath the rubble.

According to national broadcaster NHK, injuries were also reported in the prefectures of Ishikawa, Niigata, Fukui, Toyama, and Gifu, reports Xinhua news agency.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told a press briefing on Tuesday that relief efforts are being hampered by obstructions on the roads.

"This is also making it difficult to send heavy machinery. We're thinking about ways to secure routes and using ships could be one option," the prime minister was quoted by NHK as saying.

According to the Prime Minister, around 1,000 members of Japan's Self-Defence Forces (SDF) were engaged in search and rescue efforts in quake-hit areas.

"We have to race against time to search for and rescue victims of the disaster. Very extensive damage has been confirmed, including numerous casualties, building collapses and fires," he said.

At the same briefing, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi added that Kishida instructed the government to "put lives first" and to "understand the situation" of the devastation caused by the earthquake, reports the BBC.

"To the people of Japan, please be on alert that



there may be earthquakes for about a week of an intensity scale of up to seven. To the people that live in areas where the shake was strong, please look out for evacuation information through local offices, on TV, radio, and internet and take action accordingly," he said.

Hayashi says there are 120 "cases of people" who are waiting to be rescued and then adding "a total of 57,360 people have evacuated".

According to Japan's national news agency Kyodo, a series of building collapses and fires killed at least 30 people dead in the worst-hit Ishikawa prefecture, reports Xinhua news agency. Ishikawa was the epicentre of Monday's 7.6-magnitude earthquake. In Suzu, on the tip of the Noto Peninsula, six people have died, while further south in Nanao five others also lost their lives. Some 33,000 households braved freezing

temperatures overnight due to a lack of electricity.

Many cities are also without running water. Shortly after the quakes, a major tsunami warning was issued by the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) for the Noto region, urging people to evacuate immediately.

Tsunami warnings were also in place for Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa prefectures.

As of early Tuesday morning, the JMA lifted all the tsunami advisories.

Since Monday, Japan has been hit by at least 155 quakes. Japan is one of the most seismically active nations on Earth, owing to its location on the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, where many tectonic plates meet.

The 9.0-magnitude earthquake which hit Japan in 2011 resulted in a tsunami - which tore

through the country's north-eastern coastal communities, killing almost 18,000 people and displacing tens of thousands.

Those tsunami waves triggered a nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima power plant, causing the most serious nuclear accident since Chernobyl.

JAPAN AIRLINES PLANE CATCHES FIRE AT TOKYO AIRPORT; ALL 379 PASSENGERS, CREW ESCAPE

Tokyo: A Japan Airlines airplane was in flames on the runway of Tokyo's Haneda Airport on Tuesday following a possible collision with another aircraft, the country's national broadcaster NHK said in a report.

The NHK report said that all the 379 passengers and crew members have escaped the aircraft which is still in flames.

According to the Japanese flag carrier, the plane has been identified as Flight 516 which flew into the capital city from the New Chitose Airport in Hokkaido.

The airlines said the plane collided with what appears to be a Japan Coast Guard aircraft after landing at Haneda airport, said the NHK report.

Fire fighters are currently trying to douse the flames. Video footage on social media showed the passenger jet moving and then igniting with a large fireball, CNN reported.

The plane is then seen at a standstill with emergency slides open and people running out as firefighters try to douse the flames.

US Navy redeploys world's largest warship from Mediterranean Sea



Washington | Agencies

The US Navy will redeploy the world's largest warship which was ordered to the eastern Mediterranean Sea immediately after the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel, to its home port as scheduled to prepare for future deployments, an official statement said.

In its statement on Monday, the US Sixth Fleet did not give an exact date for the USS Gerald R. Ford's redeployment, but only said that the warship will head back "in the coming days" to its homeport of Norfolk, Virginia, after its first combat deployment -- an eight-month cruise that began on May 2, the USS Gerald R. Ford was commissioned in 2017 and is the US Navy's newest aircraft carrier and the lead ship in the Navy's first new carrier class designed in over 40 years.

The 100,000-tonne warship, with a contingent of F/A-18 Super Hornet jet fighters aboard, arrived off the coast of Israel in the days following Hamas' terror attacks that killed more than 1,200 people.

That movement was ordered so the Ford could contribute to US "regional deterrence and defense posture", the Sixth Fleet said in its statement.

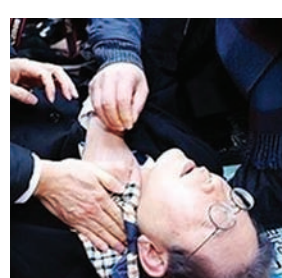
The statement went on to say that the Department of Defense (DoD) continues to evaluate its "force posture globally and will retain extensive capability both in the Mediterranean and across the Middle East".

It added that the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan, which can carry Marine Corps F-35 stealth fighters, as well as the dock landing ship USS Carter Hall and amphibious transport dock USS Mesa Verde were operating together in the eastern Mediterranean.

South Korean opposition leader stabbed

Seoul | Agencies

South Korean Opposition leader Lee Jae-myung was stabbed during a visit to the southeastern port city of Busan on Tuesday and taken to a hospital while conscious.



Lee, chairman of the main opposition Democratic Party, was attacked on the left side of his neck by an unidentified man at 10.27 a.m. (local time) during a question and answer session with reporters after touring the construction site of a new airport on Busan's Gadeok Island, reports Yonhap News Agency.

Lee was transferred to Pusan National University Hospital approximately 20 minutes after the attack. At the time of the

transfer, he remained conscious, but the bleeding continued. The male suspect, pretending to be one of the Opposition leader's supporters, approached the politician asking for an autograph and then carried out the attack with an unidentified weapon approximately 20-30 cm in length, according to eyewitnesses.

Israel's Supreme Court strikes down Netanyahu's judicial overhaul

Tel Aviv | Agencies

Israel's Supreme Court on Monday struck down a highly disputed law passed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government that rolled back some of the high court's power and sparked nationwide protests.

The change would have limited the power of the Supreme Court in overturning laws it deemed unconstitutional, BBC reported.

The Supreme Court's decision to overturn the law passed by the Netanyahu government in 2023 follows months of internal turmoil. In July 2023, the government passed into law what is now known as the "reasonableness" bill. Critics say it would have severely undermined the country's



democracy by weakening the judicial system, BBC reported. This removed the power of the Supreme Court and lower courts in Israel to cancel government decisions it deemed to be "extremely unreason-

able". The law caused widespread anger and division, prompting hundreds of thousands of protesters to take the streets calling for the reforms to be scrapped -- and for the resignation of PM Netanyahu, BBC reported. Organisers said the weekly protests were the biggest street demonstrations in Israel's history. At the time, hundreds of military reservists -- including air force pilots -- threatened to refuse to report for service, which led to warnings that this could impair Israel's military capabilities.

A statement from the Supreme Court said that 8 out of 15 judges ruled against the law, adding it would have caused "severe and unprecedented damage to the basic characteristics of the State of Israel as a democratic state".

16 injured in massive air attack on Kiev

Kiev | Agencies

At least 16 people were injured on Tuesday in a massive Russian missile and drone attack on Kiev, the Ukrainian capital city's mayor Vitali Klitschko said.



In a post on Telegram, the Mayor said Tuesday's attack, which the second in less than a week, caused fires in a high-rise apartment block, supermarket and a warehouse in different parts of Kiev, Xinhua news agency. The debris from intercepted missiles also fell on two other apartment buildings and a non-residential facility, the Kiev City Military Administration (KCMA) said in

a statement. A gas pipeline and a water main were damaged in the central Podil district, it said, adding that the attack also caused power outages in four districts in the capital. The Russian military fired cruise missiles against Ukraine from 16 Tu-95 air bombers and ballistic Kinzhal missiles from several MiG-31 fighters, said Ukraine's Air Force.



# MAHA TRUCKERS CALL OFF FLASH STRIKES IN FOUR DISTRICTS, SNAKY QUEUES AT FUEL PUMPS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Hundreds of truck drivers on Tuesday called off their ongoing impromptu two-day agitation in at least four districts of Maharashtra, but it continues in other districts of the state.

The truckers, owing allegiance to local organisations, have withdrawn their stir in Nashik, Kolhapur, Pune and Nagpur, but their leaders are firm on their main demand.

However, the agitation continued in places like Ahmednagar, Gondia, Nanded, Bhandara, Yavatmal, Hingoli, Washim, Thane, Palghar, Jalgaon, Solapur, Nandurbar, Wardha, Latur, Beed and other locations with truckers staging road blocks, protest marches and raising slogans against the government, leading to traffic snarls on many roads and highways. The truckers are demanding repeal of the new Motor Vehicle Act's stringent provision of 10 years jail and Rs 7 lakhs fine in hit-and-run accident cases. As the agitation spread, State Transport buses in some parts of the state were affected with cancellations or rescheduling, though there are sufficient stocks of fuel at most depots, officials assured.

In parts of Nashik, Pune tourist taxis also joined the agitation to support the truckers and sought rollback of the MV Act rules, while local associations of school buses in major



cities are likely to join the stir from Wednesday.

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) allies Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and

Nationalist Congress Party (SP) have slammed the Centre over the new rules and demanded that these should be repealed immediately. The two-day spontaneous protests have hit supplies of petrol-diesel, milk, fruits and vegetables, foodgrains and other essentials to urban centres like Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Nagpur and other cities, with fears of shortages and consequently price hikes. Taking serious note, the state government on Tuesday decided to give police escorts to fuel tankers from the PSU companies' oil depots to the retail petrol pumps where two policemen shall be stationed to control the massive panicky crowds queuing up for refill.

## MUMBAI WAKES UP WITHOUT MILK & MORNING CUPPA

Mumbai: As the truckers spontaneous stir entered the second day, milk supply to Mumbai was badly disrupted as thousands of trucks carrying chilled milk failed to reach the city and remain stranded at various locations on the national, inter-state or state highways, officials said here on Tuesday. Accordingly, a large number of Mumbaiers had to forego their favourite morning cuppa, either tea/coffee or even plain milk for the kids, as the local retailers could not deliver their daily quota of the creamy white nourisher, or in some areas the deliveries came very late, after 10 a.m. or so. "Mumbai needs around 50-60 lakh litres of chilled milk per day, of which 60 per cent is cow milk and the rest is buffalo milk. Thousands of trucks are stuck midway, some have not started with the consignment for the origin point and many more are delayed en route," MMPA Committee Member Chandan Hausilasingh Singh told reporter.

## Maha LOP Vijay Wadettiwar demands repeal of 'anti-people' MV Act

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Comparing the new provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act with the three erstwhile farm laws, the Congress' Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, Vijay Wadettiwar demanded the repeal of the 'anti-people' laws that will make it impossible for drivers to survive, here on Tuesday.



In a strong statement, Wadettiwar said that three years ago, farmers all over the country had carried out a sustained agitation against the three farm laws which were ultimately scrapped. "This time, the truckers all over India have launched a spontaneous agitation against the MV Act which stipulates a jail-term of 10 years and a fine of Rs 7 lakh for hit-and-run road accidents. This is preposterous, and must be rolled back," said Wadettiwar.

He said truck drivers everywhere are a poor lot and pointed out that "if they had a huge amount like Rs 7 lakh, then why would they drive vehicles." "They are making an honest living and supporting their families by driving trucks and transporting goods all over India. But under the new laws, it will be difficult for them to work and survive," said Wadettiwar.

The Leader of Opposition slammed the Centre saying that the new laws were unjust and anti-poor, and considering the massive resentment against them, "The government will have no option but to withdraw these laws". Wadettiwar also reiterated the Congress' full support to the agitating truckers and urged the government to concede to their demands immediately.

## Sonu Sood voices for specially-abled; urges govt to prioritise their needs

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Sonu Sood has become the voice of the specially-abled, and urged concerned authorities and state governments to reconsider and enhance the basic gratuity and minimum pension for individuals with disabilities.

In yet another demonstration of his unwavering commitment to philanthropy, Sonu continued to champion the cause of the specially-challenged.

The actor took to social media, and shared a video with a specially-abled man sitting by the roadside. In the video, he can be seen saying, "Today I am with Dharmendra, who has come from Bihar. I just found out that the government gives Rs 400 to any specially-challenged person in the country. Just imagine how a person can run his expenses in Rs 400. I am urging the various governments that nothing can be done in just Rs 400, and hence, I request the government to increase the amount of the financial support under this scheme." The post was captioned as: "My New Year Resolution 'RIGHTS FOR THE DISABLED' I Humbly request the concerned authorities and state governments to suitably revise and increase the basic gratuity and



minimum pension of the disabled, to help them meet their basic needs. The inherent challenges they face should be prioritised to alleviate financial strain, so they too can lead more fulfilling lives. @cmobiharmitishkumar #pmo #pmoindia #disabled." On the film front, he will be next seen in 'Fateh', which is being co-produced by Zee Studios and his production company, Shakti Sagar Productions. It also stars Jacqueline Fernandez.

## Dawood Ibrahim's Childhood Home In Maharashtra To Be Auctioned On Friday

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Terrorist Dawood Ibrahim's childhood home and three other properties owned by his family in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri will be auctioned on Friday. All four properties are agricultural and located in Mumbake village, according to Times of India.

The properties were seized by authorities under the Smugglers and Foreign Exchange Manipulators (Forfeiture of Property) Act (SAFE-MA).

According to SAFEMA, the four plots are located in Ratnagiri and have a total valuation of over Rs 19 lakh. Attempts to sell the plots reportedly failed because no one was ready to buy them, owing to their connection with Dawood. Now, SAFEMA has decided to auction them.

The auction will take place in Mumbai on January 5 and deadline



for registration is January 3 (tomorrow). In the past nine years, 11 prop-

erties belonging to Dawood or his family have been auctioned. includ-

ing a restaurant sold for Rs 4.53 crore, six flats sold for Rs 3.53 crore, and a guest house that fetched Rs 3.52 crore.

Dawood Ibrahim, a key accused in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts, had lived in the Mumbake village before moving to Mumbai in 1983. He left India after the series of bomb blasts which resulted in the death of 257 persons.

On March 12, 1993, Mumbai (then Bombay) was rocked by a series of bomb blasts that killed 257 persons, injured more than 700 persons, and destroyed property worth approximately Rs 27 crore. The case was handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) at the request of Maharashtra government.

A number of accused persons were convicted in the case including Mustafa Dossa and Abu Salem on June 16, 2017. Wanted terrorist Dawood Ibrahim allegedly planned the attacks.

## BJP to form seat clusters under senior leaders and hold nationwide rallies: Shelar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai unit chief of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Ashish Shelar, Tuesday said that the party will form separate clusters of three assembly segments and as many Lok Sabha constituencies which will be assigned to senior leaders as part of its nationwide preparations to face 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

"Accordingly, nationwide tour plans have been scheduled wherein the party president JP Nadda, Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh will hold meetings by forming clusters of three to four Lok Sabha constituencies across the country," Shelar told reporters after attending a meeting organised by the BJP.

Before organising mega rallies, the state president will hold meetings in every Lok Sabha constituency by forming a cluster of three Assembly constituencies at a time, he said.



"Maharashtra BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule will

begin his tour soon," Shelar added. He said a meeting of "super war-

riors", a group of BJP workers who will oversee the election process in every Assembly segment, will be held in Mumbai. "The aim is to reach the grassroots level of the BJP organisation. Accordingly, preparations for Lok Sabha elections are in full swing," the BJP MLA said. Queried on a recent meeting of the Sharad Pawar-led NCP faction, the BJP leader said Pawar should clarify how many MLAs, MPs and district presidents are with him now. "I wonder whether the faction led by Pawar is a party or is it a group. Both Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar should accept the fact that they do not head parties anymore but groups," he added.

The Shiv Sena split in June 2022 when Eknath Shinde walked out with several MLAs, toppling the then-MVA government led by Uddhav Thackeray. Subsequently, he took oath as chief minister of Maharashtra.

## Bollywood comedian Rakesh Bedi conned of Rs 85K by fake army man

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood and television comedian-actor Rakesh Bedi has alleged that he was cheated by a purported army man when he attempted to sell his flat in Pune, an official said here on Tuesday.

According to a complaint lodged by Bedi, 69, with Oshiwara Police Station here, the purported army man is one Aditya Kumar who had responded to an online ad for buying the actor's flat.

The accused called up Bedi claiming he was interested in buying the flat and the duo also agreed on the price of around Rs 87 lakhs. The prospective buyer, who also showed his identity card and other documents proving he was in the Indian Army, offered to pay from his 'army account' and asked Bedi to deposit Rs 85,000.

Bedi fell for him as he had earlier sold one of his properties to a genuine defence person- nel without any hassles.

Kumar even shared his account number with Bedi and sought for a test transfer of Re 1, and after it was successful, asked him to transfer Rs 50,000. Then he told the actor that



he had transferred the amount back, but when Bedi said he had not received it, the accused gave evasive replies. He asked Bedi to transfer two amounts of Rs 25,000 and Rs 10,000 from his wife's accounts which he did, but thereafter, the self-proclaimed army man Kumar stopped taking the actor's calls.

Realising that he had been cheated by the so-called army man, Bedi finally lodged the police complaint on Saturday and further investigations are on, said the investigation officer.

## Fire breaks out in Govandi's slum area; no casualties

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A fire erupted in some shops located in a slum area in Govandi suburb of Mumbai on Tuesday afternoon. Nobody was injured in the incident as per the preliminary information and efforts are underway to douse flames, a newswire reported quoting officials.

"The blaze erupted at around 3 pm in four to five shops on the ground floor of a structure in a slum area in Zakir Hussain Nagar. It is mainly confined to electric wiring, electric installation, stock of scrap material and cardboard papers etc.," a civic official said.

At least four fire engines and other vehicles of Mumbai Fire Brigade are at the spot and fire fighting operation was underway, he added. The cause behind the blaze cannot be known immediately. In a separate incident, four motorcycles were gutted in a fire that broke out in a bike showroom in Thane city of Maharashtra on Tuesday morning. Nobody was injured in the incident that took place on



Ghodbunder Road in the early hours, said Yasin Tadv, chief of the Thane Municipal Corporation's regional disaster management cell. "The blaze erupted at around 3 am in the garbage lying near the showroom and soon spread to the outlet. Four motorcycles were gutted in the fire. The personnel of the fire brigade and RDMC rushed to the spot and launched a firefighting operation," he said. The fire was extinguished by around 3.50 am, Tadv said, adding that its cause is being investigated.

## Latur receives water supply once a week as storage level in Manjara dam plummets

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Latur city in Marathwada region of Maharashtra is getting water supply only once a week as the storage level in Manjara dam plummeted to 20 per cent of its capacity, an official said on Tuesday.

Latur used to get water supply twice a week until December 2023 in view of scanty rainfall in the region, a newswire reported.

Manjara dam, which is the prime source of water for Latur, currently has 20 per cent live storage, a municipal corporation official said.

"In a bid to maintain the water stock till June, the administration has curtailed the water supply for Latur city," the official said.

Live storage refers to the volume available in a reservoir for holding stormwater as per the requirements of the design standards.

Until last month, Latur used to get water for around 150 minutes twice a week.

"Apart from restricting the water supply, the timing is also reduced to 90 minutes now," said execu-



tive engineer Vijay Chavan.

The monthly quantity of water lifted from the dam is also reduced to one million cubic meters, he added. In April 2016, parched Latur was supplied water by a special train from western Maharashtra due to drought conditions. The average groundwater level in Maharashtra's Marathwada region has fallen by 1.01 metres. The average depth of groundwater was 4.03 metres post monsoon in the past five years, while it was measured at 5.04 metres after the rains in 2023, an official said.

The official said 61 out of 76 talukas of Marathwada have faced rain deficit between June

and September 2023, including 19 talukas with a deficit of 30 to 50 per cent, newswire reported.

As per a report from the ground water survey department, the average groundwater level in Jalna has gone down from 3.99 metres to 6.68 metres, which means a drop of 2.69 metres. The report is made on the basis of survey of 875 wells across eight Marathwada districts, the official said.

"The groundwater level has gone down by 1.73 metres in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar (formerly Aurangabad) and Dharashiv (formerly Osmanabad) districts. In Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar the depth is 6.88 metres against the earlier 5.15 metres. In Dharashiv, it has gone down from 3.85 metres to 5.58 metres," the official said quoting the report.

In Nanded the groundwater level has gone up by 1.12 metres, the report says.

Districts and the falling groundwater level: Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar- 1.73 metres; Jalna- 2.69 metres; Parbhani- 0.40 metres; Hingoli- 0.86 metres; Latur- 1.20 metres; Dharashiv- 1.73 metres; Beed- 1.38 metres.



## Jennifer Lopez flaunts toned abs, bikini style on New Year vacay

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Jennifer Lopez wrapped up 2023 by showing off her abs. The singer was spotted taking a casual stroll down a white-sand beach in St. Barts in the Caribbean on Saturday, ahead of the new year.

JLo was photographed wearing a black string bikini that highlighted her toned abs and arms, along with a flowy patterned robe, reports.

She paired the look with a cream-coloured, wide-brim hat. Late Sunday evening, the star marked New Year's Eve with an Instagram post featuring a series of photos of herself dressed in a cream-coloured silk suit, dark furry jacket and black, flat-brimmed hat.

As per 'People', JLo and husband Ben Affleck, who rang in 2024 together, could be seen swaying arm-in-arm as they watched a fireworks display outside their window in a video Lopez posted on her Instagram Story on Sunday night.

The singer and actress opted for a more laid-back style while on vacation, which was a stark contrast from the glamorous ensemble she donned for her and Affleck's star-studded Christmas bash at their Los Angeles home last month. For that soiree, Lopez wore a long red Magda Butrym gown, which featured rose appliques on her right shoulder.

She shared three pictures featuring the festive Christmas look on her Instagram at the time. One photo included a shot of Lopez putting on her lip gloss while she showed off her long-sleeved gown. Another closeup shot captured the 'Marry Me' star staring directly at her reflection, displaying her glam: a dark bronzed smokey eye, bright peach blush and nude metallic lip gloss. Lopez's hair was styled with an Old Hollywood glamour-inspired blowout.



Halle Berry rings in New Year with sexy lace bodysuit

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Halle Berry started her new year in style. The actress, 57, shared a jaw-dropping photo on Instagram, showing her standing in an elevator wearing a black lace bodysuit and oversized gold blazer.

The post's comment section was filled with praise from individuals like celebrity trainer Jeanette Jenkins, who wrote, "Halle's out here breaking the internet on Day 1! LFG". Tami Roman Youngblood commented, "Oh now you just showing TF out! And I love it". Taraji P. Henson wrote, "Hubba hubba".

As per 'People', Berry marked the end of 2023 by sharing a recap of her year in an Instagram video, writing, "The story keeps getting better, ready for chapter '24'".

The video contained clips from her travels, photos from events she attended, including the 2023 Oscars, and sweet moments with her boyfriend, Van Hunt.

Although the two have been dating since 2020, a source told PEOPLE in August that their relationship "is on another level".

The source said that the singer-songwriter, 53, is her "dream guy" and that "she feels so lucky to share her life with him".

The source said, "He is incredible. He treats her like a queen. She calls him her 'soulmate'. They love travelling, spending time at her Malibu beach house, and hanging out with her kids".

## Taylor Swift, Travis Kelce kiss on dancefloor

Los Angeles | Agencies

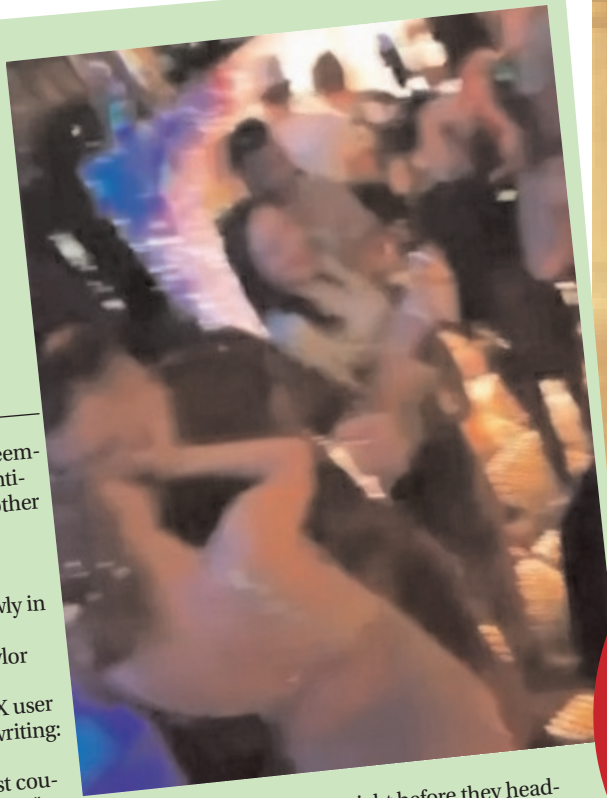
Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift and National Football League player Travis Kelce seemingly shared a very sensual smooch on the dancefloor on New Year's eve. The 'Anti-Hero' hitmaker and her boyfriend have enjoyed the holiday season with one another and their families, reports.

And they rounded off the season with a big smooch on the dancefloor as they welcomed 2024. In a video circulating on social media platform X, erstwhile Twitter, the Kansas City Chiefs tight end can be seen embracing his girlfriend while dancing slowly in a room filled with partygoers.

As per 'Mirror.co.uk', Travis could be seen in a black button-down shirt, while Taylor sported a silver sequin minidress with her blonde locks tied into an up-do.

"Taylor Swift & Travis Kelce New Year's Day (Taylor's Version) kiss", penned one X user who shared the video of the pair. While someone else shared a photo of their kiss, writing, "Taylor and Travis New Year kiss", alongside it.

Fans have since reacted to the video and photo, with one person writing: "Hottest couple of the year", and another writing: "The cutest ever. so happy they found each other". This comes after the songstress seemingly wore her boyfriend's jacket as she attended a Kansas City Chiefs game last night before they headed out together to ring in the new year.



## Madonna celebrates New Year with her six kids

Los Angeles | Agencies

Pop icon Madonna's New Year's Eve was a family affair. The legendary musician rang in 2024 with her six children, Lourdes, Rocco, David, Mercy, and twins Stella and Estere. The 'Hung Up' singer shared a collection of photos from her celebration on Instagram, beginning with several shots of the family enjoying some fun in the sun together, reports 'People' magazine. In one picture, she and son Rocco are backdropped by beautiful blue water, and in another, Lourdes poses for a boat selfie. Elsewhere in the post, Madonna sported a leather corset and a "Happy New Year" tiara as she posed with each of her kids. As per 'People', in one photo, she shares a sweet embrace with mini-me Lourdes, who has followed in her mom's musical footsteps.

Also at her New Year's Eve celebration, the pop star stood side-by-side with Rocco, wrapped her arms around Mercy, and posed with David, Stella and Estere. She also snapped a pic with fashion designer Stella McCartney, who appeared to be partying with the family. In the caption, the singer referenced the song 'Good Life' by Inner City, writing, "Let Me Take You to a Place I know you want to Go - It's A Good Life.....Happy 2024".

Last year, Madonna opened up about the difficulties of parenting. In January 2023, she told Vanity Fair that motherhood "has been the most difficult, the hardest battle," adding that she is "still struggling to understand how to be a mother and do my job." "Because, whoever you are, having children and raising them is a work of art," she told the magazine. "And no one gives you a manual. You have to learn from mistakes. It is a profession that requires a lot of time".

## Toni Braxton slams marriage rumours with rapper Birdman, says they're both single

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Toni Braxton has clarified that there are no secrets in her love life. The R&B icon, 56, cleared up rumours on Instagram that surfaced over the weekend that she and her former fiancé Birdman were married in a private ceremony.

The Grammy winner also confirmed that she and the rapper, 54, are no longer romantically involved, reports 'People' magazine.

Braxton cleared up fan speculation by writing, "#FAKENEWS," over a screenshot of a news story featuring photos of the two music stars and the headline, "Congratulations! Toni Braxton & Birdman married in a private ceremony in Mexico".

As per 'People', in the caption, the 'Un-Break My Heart' singer further noted, "My dear friend @birdman and I are not married... never been married."

"We are both single," Braxton continued, confirming that the two long-time partners are no longer an item.

While the singer-songwriter didn't clarify when she and the rap star (whose real name is Bryan Christopher Williams) called it quits, they have reportedly been dating on and off since calling off their engagement in 2019.

As reported by Complex, less than two months ago in November 2023, Braxton shared a photo of herself and the record producer sharing a kiss in a now-deleted Instagram post.

The 'Another Sad Love Song' singer and the Cash Money Records co-founder began their relationship as friends and collaborators, dating back to when they first worked together on Birdman's 2002 single 'Baby Can You Do It'.

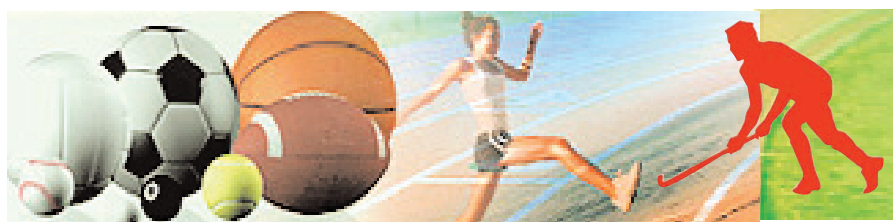
## Congratulations! Toni Braxton & Birdman Married In A Private Ceremony In Mexico



## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Candice Swanepoel



## INDIA HIGHLY OVERRATED IN T20I AND TEST CRICKET: KRIS SRIKKANTH ADVISES TEAM TO STOP RESTING ON PAST LAURELS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former India cricketer Kris Srikkanth unleashed a scathing critique on the Indian side, labelling them as overrated in Test cricket on the backdrop of India's recent inning and 32-run defeat in the first Test match against Proteas at Centurion.

Srikkanth minced no words, asserting that several players in the Indian Test team were overrated and had underperformed, and deserving talents like Kuldeep Yadav were being overlooked. "In T20 cricket India are highly over-rated. ODI cricket, we are a fantastic team. What happens in ODIs, in the semifinals, finals, it's just a one-off match. It's a luck factor, a lot depends on luck in these matches," Srikkanth said on his YouTube channel. "I read Rohit Sharma's statement, for a cricketer, the 50-over World Cup is a huge achievement. We sometimes underperform in the knockout matches, in the semifinals and the final. But we are a gun side in ODI. Regardless of where we play, be it India, Australia or South Africa, we are a gun side," he added.



period of Test cricket under Virat Kohli's captaincy, where India exhibited dominance in England, resilience in South Africa, and triumph in Australia. However, the former crick-

eter contended that since then, the team has been coasting on the laurels of past achievements. "Test cricket, we are over-rated. We have to make sure. I think it was a

phase of 2-3 years...when Virat Kohli was the captain of the team, we were outstanding. We dominated in England, we fought hard in South Africa, we won in Australia. We had a good phase for 2-4 years. Yes, we were dominating in England, in Australia," Srikkanth said.

Srikkanth said it is time for India to forget about the ICC rankings. He also argued that the combination of overrated players and those not living up to their potential had hindered India's progress. Kuldeep Yadav, according to Srikkanth, was a prime example of a quality player left on the sidelines.

"We have to forget ICC ranking. We are always 1-2, 1-2. It's a combination of having over-rated cricketers and people who have not performed up to their potential. Or some players have not enough chances like Kuldeep (Yadav)," Srikkanth said.

India's captain, Rohit Sharma, had previously mentioned the team's success away from home, but Srikkanth dismissed such claims as mere echoes from 18 months ago. The former cricketer urged the team to move beyond past glories and focus on recent performances.

IND-W v AUS-W

## Litchfield's ton fires Australia to highest ODI total; 190-run win over India

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Phoebe Litchfield and skipper Alyssa Healy raised 189 runs for the opening wicket as Australia Women posted their highest total of 338/7 against India and then dismissed the hosts for 148 to win the third and final ODI by a massive 190 runs for a 3-0 clean sweep at the Wankhede Stadium here on Tuesday.

Litchfield's stylish 119 and Healy's commanding 82 propelled Australia to a formidable 338 for 7 setting a new record for the highest total against India in this format breaking the previous record of 332 for 7 back in 2018.

In reply, the Indian innings failed to get going, succumbing to scoreboard pressure as well as some good bowling by Georgia Wareham (3-23), Annabel Sutherland (2-9), Alana King (2-21) and Megan Schutt (2-23) as the hosts were bowled out for 148 in 32.4 overs for one of their worst defeats to the ODI World Cup winners. Yastika Bhatia (6) and Smriti Mandhana (29) raised 32 runs for the opening wicket but both of them departed in quick succession. Richa Ghosh, who struck 96 runs in the second ODI as India lost by three runs, got out for 19 as India slumped to 57/3.

Jemimah Rodrigues (25) and Deepti Sharma (25 not out) pushed the score, but six batters failed to even reach double figures as



the hosts came up with a poor display with the bat. Annabel Sutherland claimed two wickets off successive deliveries in the 30th over as India slumped to 135/9.

Earlier, Litchfield's left-handed elegance, coupled with her effortless footwork, brought a touch of class to the innings.

The young sensation crafted a splendid 119 off 125 balls, a stark contrast to her previous knock of 63 in the second match. Her second ODI hundred was a masterclass in precision, featuring an array of boundaries -- 16 fours and a six. The Healy-Litchfield partnership dictated terms for 29 overs, maintaining a run-rate of around six as Australia eyed a total of 350 at one stage.

However, India's fielding woes continued, with two more dropped catches adding to the tally of ten in this series.

Premier League

## Salah scores twice as Liverpool see off Newcastle

Liverpool | Agencies

Mohamed Salah scored twice as Liverpool moved three points clear at the top of the Premier League with a thrilling 4-2 win over Newcastle United.

Salah scored two and Curtis Jones and Cody Gakpo were also on target as the Liverpool ushered in 2024 with a record-breaking victory at Anfield.

Salah had seen a first-half penalty saved by Magpies goalkeeper Martin Dubravka, with the visitors keeping the contest alive through Alexander Isak and Sven Botman in the second half. The Egyptian forward then made amends for a missed penalty with his 150th Liverpool Premier League goal, by tapping into an empty net in the 49th minute.

The battle between Dubravka and Nunez continued as the goalkeeper made two more saves to deny the Uruguayan. And within six minutes of Liverpool going ahead, Isak stunned Anfield to score the equaliser with a neat run in behind and finish into the far corner.

Liverpool reclaimed the lead in the 74th minute when Jones finished off a fine move that started with Salah, who passed to Diogo Jota, who squared the ball across the six-yard box for the 22-year-old to finish.

Four minutes later Liverpool doubled their advantage as Gakpo scuffed the ball in from Salah's superb cross. Newcastle refused to throw in the towel, though, and they got themselves back in the contest when Botman headed in from Sean Longstaff's corner.

The goals kept coming when Liverpool were awarded another penalty as Jota was brought down by Dubravka. After missing his first effort, Salah stepped up again and went the other way to score his 14th Premier League goal of the season, matching Erling Haaland, in his final match before departing for the Africa Cup of Nations. Liverpool move on to 45 points after 20 matches played, three clear of second-placed Aston Villa. On the other hand, Newcastle, who have lost five of their last six Premier League matches, remain in ninth with 29 points, 11 behind Arsenal in fourth.

## Winning Test series is like World Cup triumph for me: Dean Elgar

Cape Town | Agencies

South Africa Dean Elgar drew parallel to the emotions of a Test series victory to winning a World Cup, as he gears up to bid adieu to Test cricket playing against India in the farewell match starting on Wednesday.

Addressing the media on the eve of his farewell Test against India, Elgar, who has amassed 86 Test caps, expressed his unwavering focus on the ultimate goal -- winning.

"I only play the game to win. I don't care about stats. I care about wins. I care about series wins. That's the greatest memory you can ever share with your team," stated Elgar.

Test series victories, in his view, hold unparalleled significance, serving as the pinnacle of success in the longest format of the game. While he acknowledges that he has never had



the opportunity to lift a World Cup, Elgar emphasises that the Test arena is his World Cup, the stage where he

desires to emerge victorious. "I don't care about stats. I care about wins. I care about series wins."

That's the greatest memory you can ever share with your team, everyone that has got an influential role in the background. Test series wins -- you don't top that. Maybe a World Cup win is up there. I have never had that opportunity but this is my World Cup. This is my arena where I want to win."

The second Test against India starting on Wednesday marks the culmination of Elgar's Test journey, leaving behind a legacy that includes being one of only eight South Africans to surpass 5000 runs in Test cricket. As he stands 167 runs away from catching Mark Boucher and securing the seventh position on the list, Elgar reflects on the significance of leading the side. Given the captaincy reins 11 months after being stood down due to an injury to regular skipper Temba Bavuma, Elgar views the captaincy as one of his proudest achievements.

## Saim Ayub to debut as Pakistan name playing XI for SCG Test; Afridi rested

Sydney | Agencies

Pakistan on Tuesday revealed their Playing-XI for the third and final test against Australia with left-handed batter Saim Ayub set to make his Test debut.

Opener Imam-ul-Haq and fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi are two major missing with 21-year-old Saim and 30-year-old Sajid Khan have been drafted into their place. Saim, who made his T20I debut in March last year comes in the team on back of impressive List A performances for Karachi. This will be his first Test match. In the 8 T20Is he has played so far, he has scored 123 runs at an average of 17.57. Sajid returned to the Test arena, after a gap of nearly two



years, having last during Australia's 2022 tour of Pakistan. has a decent record in Tests with 22 wickets in seven games. Earlier on Tuesday, Australia revealed the playing XI for the Sydney Test against Pakistan, beginning on Wednesday, with the skipper confirming no changes have been made for Pink ball Test. The third Test will be played in Sydney from January 3 to 7. Australia have an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series and are currently No.3 on the ICC World Test Championship table. Pakistan Playing XI: Saim Ayub (Debut), Abdullah Shafique, Shan Masood - (C), Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel, M Rizwan - (WK), Salman Ali Agha, Sajid Khan, Hassan Ali, Mir Hamza, Aamir Jamal

Brisbane International

## Nadal downs Thiem on long-awaited return from injury

Brisbane | Agencies

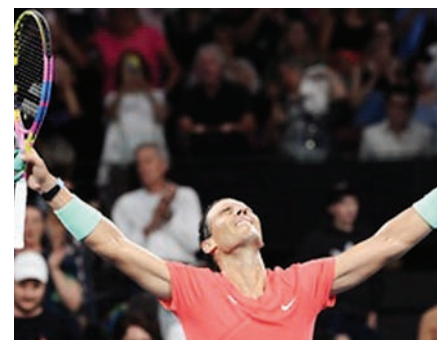
Rafael Nadal impressed on a long-awaited return from injury after almost a year as he beat Austrian Dominic Thiem in the opening round of the Brisbane International in Brisbane on Tuesday.

Playing his first competitive match for nearly 12 months, the 92-time tour-level titlist sealed a 7-5, 6-1 win against the Austrian, who is a multiple major finalist and lifted the silverware at the US Open 2020.

This was Spaniard Nadal's first victory since he beat Jack Draper in his opening match at the 2023 Australian Open.

"Today is honestly an emotional and important day for me after probably one of the toughest years of my tennis career, without a doubt," Nadal said in his on-court interview. "I had the chance to come back after a year and play in front of an amazing crowd and play, I think, at a very positive level."

"On the first day, it is something that makes us feel proud. Myself, all the team and family



that have been there every single day during the past year."

Nadal returned from a serious hip injury that resulted in an 11-month absence, the longest break in the 37-year-old's prolific career. He had last played in the 2023 Australian Open in Melbourne, bowing out to Mackenzie McDonald in a second-round match in which the Spaniard sought treatment many times.

United Cup

## Djokovic-led Serbia edge Czech Republic to set Australia QF

Perth | Agencies

Serbia found a way to reach the quarter-finals at the United Cup on Tuesday when they edged past Czech Republic in the decisive mixed doubles match.

Olga Danilovic and Hamad Medjedovic walked onto the court against Czechs Miriam Kolodziejova and Petr Nouza needing to win one set to advance to the last eight. After losing the opener, Danilovic and Medjedovic rallied to earn a dramatic 4-6, 7-5, 10-8 win. Danilovic and Medjedovic produced big-time tennis to win Group E and set a quarter-final clash against Group C winners Australia on Wednesday night. Novak Djokovic, who made his United Cup debut



this week, overcame a tricky test from Jiri Lehecka to level the tie after Danilovic lost the opening rubber to Marketa Vondrousova 1-6, 6-3, 3-6.

The World No. 1 Serb struggled with a wrist problem throughout the match and recovered from a second-set dip, where he squandered a 3-1 lead, to eventual-

ly defeat the 22-year-old 6-1, 6-7(3), 6-1 in two hours and 18 minutes.

Djokovic holds a standout record in Australia, having won the Australian Open a record 10 times. The 36-year-old has not lost in the country since 2018, when he fell to Hyeon Chung at the hard-court major.

## IPL auction 2024 sees 29% TV viewership growth compared to 2023

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The mini-auction for the 2024 season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) delivered a record-equalling highest viewership on television with 22.8 million viewers, which is 29% higher than last year, tuned in to Stars Sports to watch the live bidding of players, equalling the highest viewership for any 'mini' auction in BARC history.

The auction, which lasted over 6 hours, was held in Dubai at the Coca Cola Arena and was watched for a record-equalling watch-time of 0.92 billion minutes. This represents 57% growth in total watch-time compared to last year for the event.

Star Sports' broadcast of the auction in 5 languages was preceded by extensive lead-up coverage to the auction, which included expert analysis and fan activations across linear and digital platforms. The live broadcast of IPL 2023 was watched by 505 million unique viewers on TV across the Star network, which was the high-



est-ever for any edition of the tournament. An additional 2.2 million viewers tuned in for the overall coverage of IPL Auction 2023 beyond the live event, which included a curtain-raiser on the eve of the auction and "Cricket Live - Auction Special", live shows before, during and after the

event. The live broadcast of IPL 2023 was watched by 505 million unique viewers on TV across the Star network, which was the highest-ever for any edition of the tournament.

The most-watched moments of IPL Auction 2024 were the headline-grabbing bidding wars for Australian stars

Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc, who were bought by Sun Risers Hyderabad and Kolkata Knight Riders respectively for more than 20 Crores each. CSK's winning bid of 14 Crore for New Zealand all-rounder Daryl Mitchell also featured in the 3 most watched moments from the auction.

Speaking on the viewership of the IPL Mini-Auction 2024, a Star Sports spokesperson said: "A record-breaking year for Cricket viewership on Star Sports has ended on a high with the IPL Auction. The response to the auction also serves as a stellar start to the runway for IPL 2024 and reinforces the strong association of the marquee event with Star Sports."

"A distinctive element in this year's auction coverage was the integration of fan sentiment in our coverage, in sync with BCCI and IPL teams' efforts to integrate fans in the proceedings at the venue. The success of the auction has provided an early taster of Star Sports' coverage and substantiated our confidence in continued growth of the marquee Cricket event on TV."



## KJo opens up on his fanboy moment with Sridevi

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood producer-director Karan Johar (KJo), who hosts the popular streaming chat show 'Koffee With Karan' has shared his fanboy moment with the late actress Sridevi, on the show.

The upcoming episode of the show will see the sibling pair, Janhvi Kapoor and Khushi Kapoor taking to the couch. During the course of the episode, KJo opens up about his undying love for their beloved mother, Sridevi.

He also talks about the first time he met Sridevi in person and was simply mesmerised by her aura.

"I have to say one thing you do know and I've said this time and again about how crazy and madly in love I was with your mother. I was her biggest fan."

"You all have lived through different beats of technology. But for me, the video phase was the cinema halls. Nobody in the side of town that I lived in used to go and watch Hindi



movies. That was the phase where your mom and Jeetu ji did movies. I've seen all of them." 'Ae Dil Hai Mushkil' director said.

"The time when I saw her finally, in 'Mr. India', it was a premiere and the next time in cinema, and I was like, Oh God, I think I'm obsessed.

So the first time I met her was actually in 1993 when she did a film for my dad, called 'Gumrah' and I went to this photoshoot that Rakesh Shreshtha was shooting and my knees were rattling, because I was so nervous. My dad introduced me and I don't know what I said or what I have

done and that's also the first day I met Manish Malhotra in my entire life."

"I thought he was really snooty and snobbish because I said, she's looking fabulous. He was like go, tell her and I was like, I can't just walk up to Sridevi and you're looking great. I couldn't do it," KJo added.

## Sonu Sood voices for specially-abled; urges govt to prioritise their needs

Actor Sonu Sood has become the voice of the specially-abled, and urged concerned authorities and state governments to reconsider and enhance the basic gratuity and minimum pension for individuals with disabilities.

In yet another demonstration of his unwavering commitment to philanthropy, Sonu continued to champion the cause of the specially challenged.

The actor took to social media, and shared a video with a specially-abled man sitting by the roadside. In the video, he can be seen saying, "Today I am with Dharmendra, who has come from Bihar. I just found out that the government gives Rs 400 to any specially-challenged person in the country. Just imagine how a person can run his expenses in Rs 400. I am urging the various governments that nothing can be done in just Rs 400, and hence, I request the government to increase the amount of the financial support under this scheme."

The post was captioned as: "My New Year Resolution 'RIGHTS FOR THE DISABLED' I Humbly request the concerned authorities and state governments to suitably revise and increase the basic gratuity and minimum pension of the disabled, to help them meet their basic needs.. The inherent challenges they face should be prioritised to alleviate financial strain, so they too can lead more fulfilling lives.@cmobiharnishkumar #pmo #pmoindia #disabled."

On the film front, he will be next seen in 'Fateh', which is



being co-produced by Zee Studios and his production company, Shakti Sagar Productions. It also stars Jacqueline Fernandez.

## Katrina Kaif, Vicky Kaushal's cozy NYE getaway in Rajasthan

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Katrina Kaif, who recently jetted off with her husband Vicky Kaushal for their New Year celebrations to an undisclosed location, has now shared celebratory pictures from Rajasthan, and shared her wish for the year 2024.

On December 31, Katrina and Vicky were seen walking hand in hand at the airport, as they were flying for the new year's eve.

Taking to Instagram, the 'Race' actress shared a string of photos, which shows the couple romantically ringing in the new year, in each other's arms.

Katrina is looking gorgeous in a white floral dress. Flaunting her natural glow, the diva loosely tied her hair in a ponytail.

Vicky is sporting a black full sleeves sweater and a matching cap. The lovebirds are basking in the winter sun, while they candidly pose for the cameras.

Another photo shows the couple enjoying a musical night with bonfire in the midst of the mesmerising desert.

The last photo features Katrina resting on Vicky's shoulder, while the latter is holding her tightly.

The 'New York' actress captioned the post as: "Wishing Peace of mind, health, happiness and love for everyone in 2024 ...."

Katrina's post was liked by actress Alia Bhatt.

Vicky also shared a picture with his ladylove, and captioned it as: "Love, light, happiness... Happy 2024 everyone!"

Vicky and Katrina had tied the knot in December, 2021 in a traditional Hindu ceremony at Six Senses Resort, Fort Barwara in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan.



## Karan Singh Grover flaunts his washboard abs

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Karan Singh Grover, who is all geared up for the release of his upcoming movie 'Fighter', on Tuesday shared pictures of himself, flaunting his chiseled physique, and washboard abs.

Karan, who is known for his work in the shows like 'Dill Mill Gayye' and 'Qubool Hai', is a fitness enthusiast and is often seen sharing glimpses of his workout routine on social media.

Now, the 'Alone' actor dropped a string of photos, wherein he is seen in the midst of water and showing off his toned biceps, muscles, and washboard abs.

The post was captioned as: "Metamorphosis".

Karan, who will be soon seen in the Hrithik Roshan-starrer 'Fighter', got compliments from the fans, who wrote: "Finally Hrithik ko competition milega".

One user said: "bringing the heat always". Another said: "Fireeeeeee".

Hrithik and Deepika Padukone-starrer 'Fighter', features Karan as Squadron Leader Sartaj Gill.

Directed by Siddharth Anand and



presented by Viacom18 Studios in association with Marflix Pictures, 'Fighter' stands as a testament to cinematic brilliance.

The film promises an immersive narrative seamlessly intertwining adrena-

line-pumping action and fervent patriotism, setting the stage for an unprecedented cinematic experience.

The movie also stars Anil Kapoor, Akshay Oberoi, Sanjeeda Sheikh, and Talat Aziz.

## SHAHID KAPOOR UNVEILS BLISSFUL HOLIDAY ALBUM MOMENTS IN BHUTAN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Shahid Kapoor has shared his holiday album, which features his wife Mira Rajput, kids, mother Neliima Azeem, brother Ishaan Khatter, and his parents-in-law.

The actor has also extended his warm greetings for the year 2024.

Shahid and his family jetted off to Bhutan for the New Year vacation. The 'Jab We Met' actor took to his Instagram account, where he enjoys 44 million followers, and dropped glimpses of his wholesome vacation with his family.

The series of photos shows Shahid having a fun time near the riverbed, with his wife, brother and kids. One picture shows, Shahid and Ishaan posing stylishly with their mother and actress Neliima.

The 'Kabir Singh' actor is wearing a black outfit with a long black jacket and matching boots. While, Ishaan is wearing a white jacket and grey cargo pants.

There is also a glimpse of Mira engaged in a heartfelt conversation with her mother-in-law Neliima. One picture shows Shahid basking in the sun with his mother-in-law.

There is also a happy glimpse of Neliima and Mira's mother. It seems that the mothers are singing songs.

The last one in the album is a smiling solo picture of Shahid's father-in-law.

The 'Jersey' actor captioned the post as: "In 2024, take a little time to smile. Happy new year all."

He gave the geotag of 'Six Senses Bhutan' to his post.

Shahid is the son of actor Pankaj Kapur and Neliima. His parents announced separation in 1984. His mother Neliima later married actor Rajesh Khatter, and they have a son Ishaan.

Shahid and Mira had tied the knot in July 2015. The couple have two children- daughter Misha, and son Zain.



Khushali Kumar