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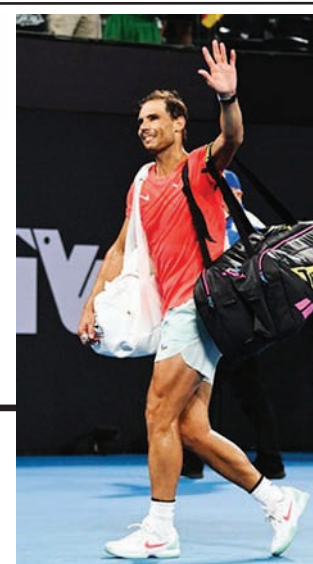
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Dense fog & cold wave to continue for 5 days: IMD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Citing no relief, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday said that dense to very dense fog and the cold wave conditions are likely to continue in North India parts during the next five days.

The weather forecast agency said that cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are likely to continue over plains of Northwest India during the next five days.

In its daily bulletin, the IMD said that minimum temperatures are in the range of 2-5 degrees Celsius over most parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi, in the range of 6-10 degrees Celsius over many parts of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, north Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand.

"These are below normal by 1 to 4 degree Celsius over many parts of Northwest and adjoining east India," said the IMD.

The IMD said that 'jet stream winds' of the order of 140-150 knots are prevailing over the plains of North India and it is likely to cause light rainfall/snowfall at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand on Wednesday.

"Dense to very dense fog conditions are very likely to pre-



vail for a few hours in night/morning over many parts of Punjab and Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi till Thursday night/morning and in some parts during Friday to Sunday morning," said the IMD.

The IMD further predicted that dense to very dense fog conditions are very likely to prevail for a few hours in night/morning in some parts of Uttar Pradesh during Tuesday to Thursday morning and dense fog in isolated pockets for subsequent three days while dense to very dense fog conditions are also very likely to prevail in morning hours in isolated pockets over Uttarakhand and north Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday and Thursday.

"Cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are very likely to continue in many parts of Punjab on Tuesday and Wednesday and in some parts during Thursday and Saturday," said the IMD.

It also said that cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are also very likely to continue in some parts of Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi during Tuesday and Saturday.

"Cold wave conditions are very likely in isolated pockets of north Rajasthan during Tuesday and Thursday and over West Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday," the IMD predicted.

The IMD also said that ground frost conditions are very likely over Uttarakhand on Tuesday and Wednesday.

TAX REFORMS RESULTED IN RECORD TAX COLLECTION: PRIME MINISTER MODI

Puttaparthi (Andhra Pradesh) | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that reforms brought in the tax system in the country during the last 10 years have resulted in record tax collections.

He said that the government simplified the income tax system and introduced a modern system in the form of GST.

He was speaking at the inauguration of the new campus of National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes & Narcotics (NACIN) at Palasamudram in Sri Sathya Sai district of Andhra Pradesh.

The Prime Minister recalled multiple, non-transparent tax systems of earlier times the tax system not easily understandable to the common people. "We gave the country a modern system in the form of GST and simplified income tax and introduced faceless assessment. All these reforms have resulted in record tax collection," Modi said.

He said that the government was returning to people their money through various schemes. He noted that the IT exemption limit was raised from the income of 2 lakh to 7 lakh rupees.

Modi said that tax reforms after 2014 have resulted in tax savings of about 2.5 lakh crore rupees for the citizens. He said that the number of taxpayers is



consistently increasing in the country as they feel happy that their tax money is put to good use.

"Whatever we took from people, we returned it to people and this is good governance and the message of Ram Rajya," he added.

Modi also mentioned Swami Tulsidas's description of the tax system in the Ram Rajya. Quoting Ramcharit Manas, the Prime Minister highlighted the welfare aspect of taxation and said every paisa of tax received from people would go into the welfare of the people to stimulate prosperity.

Quoting Mahatma Gandhi, the Prime Minister said that the very idea of Ram Rajya is the notion behind true democracy. He highlighted Mahatma

Gandhi's life experience as the reason behind his backing of the Ram Rajya ideology and spoke about a nation where every citizen's voice is heard and everyone gets their due respect. Quoting a Sanskrit shloka the Prime Minister said, "Ram Rajya Vasi (citizen), Keep your head high and fight for justice, treat everyone as equal, protect the weak, hold Dharma on the highest level, You are Ram Rajya Vasis." He underlined that Ram Rajya was established on these four pillars where everyone could walk with their heads held high and with dignity, every citizen is treated as equal, the downtrodden are protected, and Dharma holds paramount importance. He mentioned the latest report of NITI Aayog which states that almost 25 crore people have been lifted out of poverty in the last 9 years by the efforts of the present government. Calling it a historic and unprecedented achievement, especially in a nation where slogans for eradicating poverty have been raised for decades, the Prime Minister said that it is the result of the government's priority for the welfare of the poor since coming to power in 2014. The Prime Minister expressed the belief that the poor of this country have the potential to defeat poverty if they are given the means and resources. "We can see this becoming a reality today," he said.

Builder can't take over 10% project cost from buyer as advance or application fee: RERA

Gurugram | Agencies

The Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) said on Tuesday that no promoter should accept more than 10 per cent of the cost of a flat, plot or building as an advance payment or application fee.

Following Section 13(1) of the RERA Act, 2016, and Rule 8(1) of the Haryana Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Rules, 2017, all prospective and existing allottees are hereby informed by the Authority about the regulations governing the acceptance of advance payment or application fee for real estate projects.

According to the RERA Act, 2016, no promoter should accept a sum exceeding 10 per cent of the cost of an apartment, plot or a building without a written agreement for sale and registration of the said agreement.



The agreement for sale should specify various project particulars, payment details, possession dates and other relevant information as prescribed under the Act.

Additionally, as per Rule 8(1) of The Haryana Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Rules, 2017, the agreement for sale will be

as per Annexure "A", which can be accessed through the following link: Haryana RERA Rules 2017.

"All allottees are advised to take note of the aforementioned regulations when purchasing any unit/plot/apartment for residential/commercial/industrial/IT/any other usage," it said.

India's trade deficit may turn volatile due to Red

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's trade deficit may turn volatile in the coming months given the supply-side disruptions in the Red Sea due to the attacks on commercial ships by Houthi rebels in retaliation to Israel's action in Gaza, according to a report by Global Investment Bank, Nomura.

The report said that India's merchandise trade deficit narrowed to \$19.8 billion in Dec from \$20.6 billion in November as exports posted a 0.96 per cent growth while imports contracted by 4.9

percent. "However, with the escalation in the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, ships are now being forced to avoid the Suez Canal route to Europe. This impact is expected to show up in a slowdown in exports during Jan," the report said. It said that the sharp rise in transit costs and transportation times are likely to hit Indian trade, especially with Europe and the US, with news reports suggesting that some 65 per cent of exports to Europe are now having to use the longer route around the Cape of Good Hope."

IRAN FIRES MISSILES AT PAKISTAN, TARGETS BALUCHI GROUP BASES

Islamabad: Two bases of Baluchi group Jaish al Adl in Pakistan were targeted by missiles on Tuesday, Iranian state media reported, a day after Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards attacked targets in Iraq and Syria with missiles. The group has previously mounted attacks on Iranian security forces in the border area with Pakistan. "These bases were hit and destroyed by missiles and drones," Iranian state media reported, without elaborating.

PM STAYED SILENT ON MANIPUR, DID NOT SOLVE NAGA PROBLEM IN 9 YEARS: RAHUL

Kohima | Agencies

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said despite a big tragedy in Manipur, Prime Minister Narendra Modi remained silent and despite his commitment nine years ago, he did nothing to resolve the Naga political issue in Nagaland.

On the third day of Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra (BJNY) which reached Nagaland on Monday evening, the Congress leader said: "Nagaland had been given a commitment by the Prime Minister nine years ago and it has not been fulfilled. I've been speaking to Naga leaders, and they are perplexed as to why no progress has been made." "We're not even clear about what the Prime Minister envisions in terms of a solution. Clearly, there's a



problem that will require conversation, listening to each other, and working on implementing a solution, and that is lacking as far as the PM is concerned. The Prime Minister promises things without thinking them through," he said while addressing a gathering in Nagaland's Wokha.

"It doesn't matter if you're a small

state, you should feel equal to all other people in the country." A delegation of Naga HOHO, one of the most influential organisations in Nagaland, met Rahul Gandhi and expressed their concerns over the government of India's failure to implement the 2015 Framework Agreement. "We assured them of our unwavering commitment

to seek justice for the people of Nagaland. When PM says something it should be executed," Rahul Gandhi said. He said that considering the northeast region a most important part of India and after the big tragedy in Manipur, the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra was started from the region to seek justice for all religions, all states and communities in the country. The former Congress President said that despite tremendous violence, huge bloodshed, and hatred in Manipur, the Prime Minister remained silent and it is a shame for humanity. Hundreds of men and women wearing traditional dresses cheered on Rahul Gandhi as his customised Volvo bus made its way along several markets and inhabited areas. Gandhi also walked for some distance meeting people and enquiring about their issues.

Violence unacceptable, but what of Indigo's unprofessionalism: Passenger on assault case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In the midst of the storm over a passenger assaulting a pilot of Indigo airlines following a 13-hour delay in take-off on Sunday, a fellow-passenger Sanal Vij on Wednesday came forward and gave his first-hand account of the incident on social media.

Vij is the second passenger to come forward and slam the airline after Indo-Russian model-cum-actress Evgenia Belskaia on Tuesday accused the pilot of blaming the flyers and escalating the tension in the aircraft.

The Delhi to Goa flight (6E-2175) that was scheduled to depart at 7:40 am on Sunday, encountered an unexpected delay of 13 hours at the Delhi airport, causing frustration and anger among passengers.

The Indigo pilot was assaulted inside the aircraft by a passenger while making an announcement of a delay and the video of the attack went viral on social media. Giving his account of the incident on social media Sanal Vij posted on X, "I don't support



violence, but the airline took advantage and hid all their mismanagement and mistakes behind what the passenger did. Below is a first-hand account of the incident." "A series of news articles have covered the recent assault on an Indigo Flight 6E2175 pilot on January 14. As a co-passenger, I feel compelled to share my first-hand account of the incident. Before I proceed, it's crucial to clarify that I do not support violence. I intend to share my experience and shed light on the events," he tweeted.

"Flight 6E2175 was scheduled for take-off at 7:40 a.m. but faced multiple delays, eventually depart-

ing at 05:35 pm. Boarding commenced around 12:20 p.m. (after a delay of five hours due to bad weather) with approximately 186 passengers, including infants, children, and elderly individuals," he wrote.

His tweet further stated that at 1:30 p.m., the pilot announced they were waiting for a crew member, assuring that the flight would depart shortly. "It became evident that ground staff and crew had misinformed us. The crew members were observed being unprofessional, engaging in lengthy conversations with ground staff, as evidenced by plane recordings. Multiple requests from elderly passengers for water were ignored, and the crew members seemed preoccupied with their own conversations," said Vij in the post.

He said that the delayed crew member arrived at around 2:40 p.m., and the plane doors closed. However, the plane did not push back for some time, leading to passenger enquiries and a verbal altercation with crew members. Around 3:20 p.m., the assistant Captain was addressing the passengers on the delay when the assault occurred.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena-UBT President and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday asked that if he was not the validly elected (undivided) party President, "then why did the Bharatiya Janata Party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi" seek his support in 2014 and 2019.

Addressing the media in the "Peoples' Court" to analyse the recent ruling of Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar, Thackeray referred to the ruling in which the (undivided) Shiv Sena party constitution of 1999 was upheld.

"If that is true, then why did Prime Minister Modi ask me for support in 2014 and later in 2019? Why did Amit Shah come to my house for support... Why did the PM say that in the absence of my father, the late Balasaheb Thackeray, he always turns to me for guidance? With whose support did Devendra Fadnis become the CM in 2014?" he thundered.

Attacking the Speaker's verdict of January 10 on the disqualification of MLAs by the two rival party factions, Thackeray demanded that the Governor should convene a special session of the state legislature. "Chief Minister Eknath Shinde

should move a no-confidence against the Speaker in the special session... we shall support it... the Speaker must be removed," he declared.

Throwing the gauntlet at Shinde-Narwekar, Thackeray challenged them "to come out in the open and the people will show you which is the real Shiv Sena." "I had no lust for power so I quit immediately (in June 2022). I also left the CM's official bungalow. The Shiv Sena was founded by my late father Balasaheb Thackeray (in 1966). It's our party... It belongs to all of you, and nobody can grab it from us," said Thackeray grimly.



DESPITE 'WAR ROOM' DELHI AIRPORT CHAOS CONTINUES, OVER 90 FLIGHTS DELAYED

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Despite the establishment of 'War Rooms' at six metropolitan airports, chaos at Delhi airport continued for the third day on Tuesday with the departure of over 90 domestic flights either delayed or rescheduled by a few hours.

"From 6 am onwards over 90 domestic flights departing from the Delhi airport were rescheduled while over three were reported cancelled," the Delhi airport's official website managed by GMR, <https://www.newdelhiairport.in/showed>.

As per sources, the delays were attributed to dense fog in the morning leading to air traffic congestion.

Meanwhile, Union Minister of Civil Aviation, Jyotiraditya Scindia, on Tuesday said that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to alleviate passenger inconvenience were issued to all airlines on Monday.

"In addition to these SOPs, we have sought incidence reporting thrice daily for all the six metro airports. Implementation of the



@DGCAIndia Directives, SOPs, and CARs will be monitored and reported regularly," the Minister tweeted.

To address issues promptly, Scindia mentioned the establishment of 'War Rooms' at the six metropolitan airports, where airport and airline operators will work collaboratively.

These 'War Rooms' will be dedicated to resolving any problems related to passenger inconvenience in real-time. Furthermore, Scindia assured

round-the-clock availability of sufficient CISF manpower to ensure the security and smooth functioning of operations at the airports.

"Sufficient CISF manpower availability will be ensured round-the-clock. RWY 29L at @DelhiAirport has been made CAT III operational today. Operationalisation of RWY 10/28 as CAT III at Delhi Airport after re-carpeting will also be undertaken," Scindia added in his post on X. However, the minister's tweet

received a lot of backlash on X as irate citizens and flyers vented their ire on the micro-blogging site.

"You seem to get caught by the surprise element. There are numerous procedures and rules but on day 1 of the worst fog, the system collapses. Then on a war footing new procedures are made which will be forgotten next year and the same exercise will repeat. #Antifragility needed," Amit Singh, an aviation expert, replied to Scindia's tweet.

"Where is the SoP on @DGCAIndia website sir? Only a tweet - How as a passenger will I know my rights? When for donkey's years it is known that fog disrupts flights in December & January why till date is there no mechanism?," said another X user in his reply to the Union Minister.

"War Rooms' are useless when passengers don't even have an airport authority they can file a complaint to and expect redressal. How many complaints against airlines have been acted upon by your Ministry?" one more X user replied to the Minister's tweet.

Varanasi's Gyanvapi mosque: SC allows cleaning of 'wazukhana'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed cleaning of the 'wazukhana' (ablution pond) in Varanasi's Gyanvapi mosque complex which had remained sealed since May 2022 after a 'Shivling' was stated to be found there.

A Bench, presided over by Chief Justice of India, DY Chandrachud, asked the district administration to supervise the cleaning and removal of dead fish from the water tank. In their application filed before the apex court, the Hindu plaintiffs said that there was a putrid smell coming from the tank due to the presence of dead fish and the District Magistrate should be directed to get the sealed area cleaned. "Since there exists a Shivling which is sacred to Hindus, it should be kept away from all dirt, grime,



dead animals, etc. and it must be in a clean condition. It is currently in the midst of dead fish which is hurtful to the sentiments of the devotees of Lord Shiva," the application read. Hindu plaintiffs had instituted a suit in Varanasi court demanding the right of unhindered worship at the Maa Shringar Gauri Shal. However, the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid

Committee refutes that the mosque was built over a temple, maintaining the structure at the spot was always a mosque.

Recently, the Archaeological Survey of India after surveying the mosque complex (excluding the 'wazukhana') has filed the scientific survey report in a sealed cover before the district court.

Pannun threatens to assassinate Punjab CM on Republic Day

Chandigarh | Agencies

Khalistani terrorist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun on Tuesday issued a threat to assassinate Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and DGP Gaurav Yadav on Republic Day, asking gangsters to unite for an attack.

This is the latest threat the Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) founder Pannun has issued against Indian authorities.

Responding to the threat, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann told a news channel that he doesn't take threats seriously.

"We are moving among the public and will continue to do so," he added.

Last month, Pannun had released a video in which the



Khalistani terrorist said he would attack the Indian

Parliament on or before December 13.

Flat fraud case: Nusrat Jahan directed to be physically present in court

Kolkata | Agencies

A Kolkata court on Tuesday ruled that the actress-turned-Trinamool Congress MP Nusrat Jahan will have to present at the court in the case related to her association as a director with a shady financial entity which duped senior citizens of several crores of rupees by promising them flats at reasonable rates.

In September last year, a court had ordered physical presence of Nusrat Jahan in the matter. However, she challenged the order in a higher court, but it, on Tuesday, upheld the order.

In September last year, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) questioned Nusrat Jahan in connection with her directorship with 7 Sense Infrastructure Private Ltd, the financial entity accused in the duping case.



The firm is accused of collecting several crores of rupees from senior citizens promising them residential flats at lucrative rates. However, as per the complaint, instead of providing them flats, their money was used for purchase of personal residential accommodation by the directors, including Nusrat Jahan.

Nusrat Jahan had, however, denied allegations and claimed that she took a loan of around Rs 1.16 crore from the said corporate entity, where she resigned in March 2017, and repaid the loan along with interest amounting to over Rs 1.40 crore in March 2017 only.

However, at that point of time she did not give any reply to media queries on why she preferred taking the local from a private entity instead of any bank or registered financial institution offering housing loans.

Bengal: 3 more arrested in ED attack case, total arrests 7

Kolkata | Agencies

West Bengal Police on Tuesday said that they have arrested three more accused in connection with the attack on ED and CAPF personnel which took place at Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district on January 5.

The police have identified the accused as Anarul Molla, Ajijul Sheikh and Hazinur Sheikh.

Police said that they were arrested from the Kanmari and Sarberia areas in Sandeshkhali and were presented at a lower court in North 24 Parganas district. With Tuesday's arrests, the total number of arrests in the case has risen to seven.

On January 15, police arrested Ali Hossain Gharami and Sanjay Mondal. On January 12, police arrested Sukamal Sardar and Mehboob Molla. Police have said that all the accused have been arrested based on the video



footage of the incident. Trinamool Congress leader Sheikh Shahjahan -- the alleged mastermind behind the attack -- at whose residence ED attempted to raid, is still absconding. The ED has issued a lookout notice against Shahjahan. The border outposts of the Border Security Force (BSF)

have also been alerted in anticipation that the absconding leader might escape to neighbouring Bangladesh. The Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari has alleged that the police is aware about Shahjahan and is providing protection to the absconding leader.

SC adjourns hearing on PIL seeking immediate implementation of Women Reservation Bill

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday adjourned, till January 22, the hearing on a PIL seeking immediate implementation of the Women Reservation Bill before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta proceeded to defer the hearing after no lawyer made an appearance on behalf of the Union government.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for petitioner Jaya Thakur, said that there is an urgency in the matter and 1/3rd quota may be implemented in 2024 polls if the PIL is allowed by the apex court.

Ordering the matter to be listed on January 22, Justice Khanna said: "I am not going to say anything. Let the other side come." In November 2023, the top



court had refused to issue notice in the matter and remarked that it will be "very difficult" to strike down the provision of the Nari

Shakti Vandan Adhinyam Bill 2023 which provides that the 33 per cent quota for women in the legislature will not be implemented unless decennial census and subsequent delimitation exercise is carried out. The PIL had contended that there was no requirement of the census and delimitation because the number of seats are already declared and the present amendment gives 33 per cent reservation for existing seats.

The plea said that this is an admitted position in our country that 50 per cent is women population but they have only 4 per cent representation in elections.

On January 12, the Supreme Court refused to entertain a similar plea filed by an advocate saying that it does not want multiplicity of litigation in the matter. However, it asked the petitioner, Yogamaya M.G., to instead file an impleadment application in the pending batch of petitions.

SHARMILA APPOINTED ANDHRA PRADESH CONGRESS PRESIDENT

Amaravati | Agencies

The Congress on Tuesday appointed Y. S. Sharmila as the president of the party's Andhra Pradesh unit.

All India Congress Committee (AICC) president Mallikarjun Kharge appointed her as the president of Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), a day after Gidugu Rudra Raju resigned from the post to pave the way for her appointment.

Kharge has appointed Rudra Raju as special invitee to the Congress Working Committee (CWC).

Sharmila is sister of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and daughter of former chief minister Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy.

Sharmila, who merged YSR Telangana Party (YSRTP) with the Congress party on January 4, thanked Kharge, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and K. C. Venugopal for trusting her with the post of the president of APCC.

"I promise to work faithfully towards rebuilding the party to its past glory in the State of Andhra Pradesh with total commitment and integrity," she posted on X. She also thanked AICC in-charge for Andhra Pradesh Manickam Tagore and said that she is looking forward to working closely with each and every Congress foot soldier.

Sharmila said that she also seeks support of Rudra Raju and every other leader of the party in the state on whose experience and expertise she would like to build on to reach "our set goals".

While joining Congress on January 4, Sharmila



had recalled that her father YSR not only served the Congress party his entire life but also gave his life serving the Congress party. "It was my father's dream to see Rahul Gandhi as the Prime Minister and I am happy that I am going to be a part of making that happen," she said.

Sharmila, who had actively campaigned for YSR Congress Party in 2019 elections, felt sidelined by Jagan after the party came to power with a landslide victory.

In 2021, she entered politics in Telangana and floated the YSRTP.

However, she did not contest the recent Assembly elections in Telangana. She claimed that since Congress stood a chance of winning in Telangana, she graciously withheld YSRTP from contesting Assembly elections as she did not want to divide anti-KCR votes. She said she was happy that they contributed to the Congress victory in Telangana.

Congress MLA Jignesh Mevani, 30 others acquitted in 2017 Guj train obstruction case

Ahmedabad | Agencies

An Ahmedabad court on Tuesday acquitted Congress legislator Jignesh Mevani and 30 others in a case relating to allegedly obstructing a train amid a protest in 2017.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate P.N. Goswami acquitted all the accused, who included 13 women, giving them the benefit of doubt.

Mevani, currently the MLA from Vadgam, and the others were accused of organising and participating in a 'rail roko' demonstration, lasting around 20 minutes, at the Kalupur railway station amid a protest against the state government's policies. The 2017 incident led to charges under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), including unlawful assembly, rioting, voluntarily causing hurt to deter public servants from their duties, and criminal conspiracy.



Additionally, they were indicted under Section 153 of the Railways Act, a statute concerning the endangerment of railway passenger safety through rash or negligent acts. A session court had, in 2021, declined to discharge Mevani in this case.

This recent acquittal comes after another legal clearance for Mevani and six others last November in a case, filed in 2016, of alleged

unlawful assembly, rioting, and causing damage to public property at the Income Tax crossroads in Ahmedabad.

The 2016 incident involved a demonstration, in support of sanitation workers of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, allegedly organised without police permission, during which a police vehicle was reportedly vandalised.



AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE WILL START FROM EVERY DISTRICT OF STATE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Efforts will be made to operate air ambulance service from all the districts of Madhya Pradesh in the coming days. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said this in the inauguration program of new air services between Gwalior to Bengaluru and Gwalior to Delhi and Ayodhya. The Chief Minister participated in the program virtually.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav, who virtually joined the meeting related to Shri Ram Vanagaman Path in Chitrakoot, Satna district, said that it is our endeavor to operate air ambulance from every district, so that serious patients can get the benefit of air facility for treatment in good medical institutions. Air services make it possible to increase tourism, trade-commerce activities and all other economic activities. Along with the efforts of the Central Government, the State Government will also make maximum efforts in this direction.

On this occasion, Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that through the new air services, the people of the state



will get the facility of air connectivity with Gwalior region as well as North and South India. Air services are expanding under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Former Prime Minister Late. The residents of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Gwalior, late Madhavrao Scindia's

land Gwalior and Veerangana Rani Lakshmbai's Karma Kshetra are getting new gifts on the festival of Makar Sankranti. The initiative to upgrade the airport in Gwalior at a cost of Rs 500 crore is historic. This caravan will continue. Upgradation work of various airstrips of the state is also going

Namibian cheetah Shaurya dies, 10th casualty since project introduced at Kuno

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Yet another Namibian cheetah was reported dead at Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday, the tenth fatality since the project was introduced on September 17, 2022.

The cheetah that died on Tuesday has been identified as Shaurya. According to forest officials at KNP, Shaurya was spotted lying in an unconscious state in the afternoon on Tuesday.

The big cat was tranquilised and taken to the veterinarians for treatment immediately. The team of veterinarians made all efforts to save Shaurya's life however, he could not survive.

The exact reason for his death is yet to be confirmed, a senior official said.

"Today, on 16th January, 2024 around 3:17 PM, Namibian Cheetah Shaurya passed away. Around 11 AM in the morning, incoordination and staggering gait was observed by the tracking team following which the animal was tranquilised and



weakness was found. Following this, the animal was revived but complications arose post revival and the animal failed to respond to CPR. Cause of death can be ascertained after Post Mortem," APCCF & Director Lion Project said in a press release.

A total of 20 cheetahs were transported from Namibia and South Africa in two phases, of them 10, including

three cubs born at Kuno, have died so far.

The death of Shaurya came two weeks after Namibian cheetah 'Aasha' gave birth to three cubs, giving an indication of the success of the ambitious 'Project cheetah'. Before that, another Namibian cheetah Siyaya had given birth to four cubs, of which three died and one cub survived.

Stray dogs become a problem in Bhopal, children are the target

Team Absolute | Bhopal

These days, stray dogs are becoming a cause of trouble in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. They target people walking on the road. Children are their biggest target. The Municipal Corporation launched a campaign against these stray dogs, but pet lovers are not allowing this campaign to succeed.

There are reports of stray dogs biting people walking on the road in almost every part of the capital. The cases of biting children are also continuously increasing. On Tuesday, cases of stray dogs biting pedestrians were reported at more than two dozen places. A large number of people injured in dog attacks also reached hospitals.

In the last few days, 320 people received complaints of dog bites to the Municipal Corporation. Let it be known that on January 10, a seven-



month-old innocent boy was mauled to death by dogs in the capital, since then cases of biting by stray dogs are coming to light.

Since then complaints are continuously increasing. The administration also became active and District Collector Kaushalendra Vikram Singh also gave instructions for necessary action. The Municipal Corporation administration also started a

campaign to catch stray dogs. But, the biggest hurdle in this campaign is becoming pet lovers.

Pet lovers are ready to attack the Municipal Corporation team that goes to catch dogs. A complaint has also been lodged in Piplani police station against pet lovers and it has been told that some people beat up the stray dog and vandalized the car.

Interviewer who sought sexual favours sacked, but why he was let off after arrest remains unanswered

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh government employee Sanjeev Tantve, who was arrested for allegedly demanding 'sexual favours' from the women candidates for selecting them for jobs in the Seed Development Corporation, was removed from his post on Tuesday.

It came a day after he was arrested in Bhopal and taken to Gwalior for further investigation in the matter. An official notification regarding this was issued on Tuesday.

A senior police official talking to reporter over the phone said they were trying to find out if any other person or senior official of the state government was involved in the matter. The police are also trying to ascertain if this was the first time that Sanjeev tried to force the women job aspirants or he had been doing so earlier also. "We are trying to find if the accused was alone in his plan or someone else was also part of it. Since, he has been interviewing candidates for the last few years, a detailed investigation will be undertaken in the matter," the official said.



Sanjeev, who was posted as production assistant in the Seed Development Corporation in Bhopal, had often been visiting different parts of the state as an interviewer. On January 3, he had gone to Gwalior for interviews when he allegedly

demanding sexual favours from three girls. The one important question that remains unanswered is why the accused, who was arrested on January 10, was let off by the police after formal interrogation. The complaint was filed on January 8 at a

police station in Gwalior and the accused was arrested on January 10. The complainant has said that Sanjeev, who had come from Bhopal, interviewed her in Gwalior. A few hours later, he called her and sent a WhatsApp message, saying that "I can get you selected, but what will I get in return?" The accused sought to spend a night with the girls and asked them to reply 'Yes or no'.

Crime Branch Deputy Superintendent of Police Siyaz KM said that the interviews were held at the Agricultural University on January 3. Several girl students, including the victim, had been interviewed. Sanjeev Kumar was also part of the interview panel. During the interview, Kumar was accused of obscene acts with the girls on WhatsApp and demanding a physical relationship.

On the complaint of the victim, the Crime Branch registered a case against the accused under Section 354A. The accused also sent the same message to two other students. Before deleting the message, a student took a screenshot of it, which has been made available to the Crime Branch.

Industrial Visit on National Startup Day

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On Tuesday, 16-01-2024, E-cell and Institution innovation council, Sant Hirdaram Girls College, Bhopal has organized a visit to local paper bag industry "Print Mario-Let's Box it, Bhopal. This visit was planned to celebrate foundation day of startup India. With an aim to bring together the country's startups, entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers and other stakeholders, the ministry of commerce and Industry is organizing the startup India Innovation week from 10-18 January 2024 to rejoice the Indian startup ecosystem and National Startup Day.

India startups have been flourishing in the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship in several fields. This visit will provide a platform where students can gain knowledge and broader vision about intricate process of turning ideas into ecofriendly realities, innovation and sustainable packaging which will inspire a new generation of leaders and sustainable business. Total 52 students took advantage of this visit with 2 faculty members



Prof. Sonia Sharma and Dr. Neha Raghuvanshi. The Management and Principal of college have

praised the efforts of the team for encouraging students for skill development and innovations.

Another officer punished for using indecent language

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In Madhya Pradesh, now officers who use indecent language among the common people are being taught a lesson. Now the blame has fallen on the woman Tehsildar of Sonkutch, a video of whom had gone viral on social.

Recently, a video of Anjali Gupta, Tehsildar of Sonkutch in Dewas district, went viral on social media in which she is allegedly using indecent language while ordering the encroachers to remove the encroachment.

The government took this seriously and attached Anjali to the headquarters.



Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has instructed the officials to behave decently with the common people. Chief Minister Yadav has said that officers should use only

decent and polite language while talking to the common people. Rudeness and use of vulgar or obscene language is not acceptable. Good governance is the basic mantra of our government.

The Collector has taken strict action after the viral video of Sonakchh Tehsildar of Dewas district came to the notice of the Chief Minister. Collector Dewas has removed Sonakchh Tehsildar and attached him to the district headquarters. Earlier, the then Collector of Shajapur, Kishore Kanyal, was removed for using abusive language towards a driver.

AIIMS Bhopal to Host National PG Quiz in Forensics at AIIMS Nagpur

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Dr. Raghvendra Kumar Vidua, Professor in the Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology at AIIMS Bhopal, is set to conduct a National Level PG Quiz at AIIMS Nagpur on January 19th, 2024. The event is a highlight of the 45th Annual Conference of the Indian Academy of Forensic Medicine, known as Forensic Medicon 2024.

This year, AIIMS Nagpur will host the largest national conference in the field of forensics, providing a platform for postgraduate students in forensics from across the country. The prestigious quiz will take place at the Bernard Knight Hall at

AIIMS Nagpur, challenging the academic mettle of PG students and fostering healthy competition. It is noteworthy that AIIMS Bhopal, already recognized for its annual UG-level National Quiz for MBBS students, expands its footprint by conducting the PG Quiz at AIIMS Nagpur, further contributing to the academic and research excellence in the field of forensic medicine. Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director AIIMS Bhopal has extended his wishes for the success of the PG Quiz.

In addition to his role as the quiz master, Dr. Raghvendra Kumar Vidua will also present research data derived from a two-year study conducted at AIIMS

Bhopal. The research project, funded by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), focuses on Postmortem Sperm Retrieval. Initial findings from the study suggest the possible recovery of live spermatozoa from deceased bodies for up to 20 hours after death under Indian conditions. This pioneering research marks the first of its kind in India, and in terms of the number of retrievals, it stands as the largest study worldwide. The comprehensive annual report detailing the outcomes of this groundbreaking study has been submitted to the ICMR. Dr. Arneet Arora and Dr. Ashwani Tandon serve as co-investigators in this significant research project.

CAR COLLIDES WITH DIVIDER IN SHIVPURI, FOUR KILLED

Shivpuri: A car went out of control and collided with a divider in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh. Four people have died in this accident. Meanwhile, three others have been seriously injured. According to the information received from the police, seven people from Ashok Nagar were going from Guna to Shivpuri by car. Meanwhile, near Badarwas of Kolaras, the car went out of control and collided with the divider. There were a total of seven people in the car.

The car was badly damaged in the accident. Four people aboard died, while three were seriously injured. According to the injured, everyone was going to Shivpuri to attend a marriage program when the accident happened.

High Court strict on officers for not making arrangements for treatment of Bhopal gas victims

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Jabalpur High Court has adopted a strict stance on the attitude of government officials regarding the health of the victims of the gas accident in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. Also, an order has been given to register a case under contempt against nine officers of the Center and the State.

Rachna Dhigara of Bhopal Group for Information and Action said that the division bench of Justice Sheel Nagu and Devnarayan Mishra of Madhya Pradesh High Court had sued nine high officials of the Government of India and the Government of Madhya Pradesh for not providing proper treatment and research arrangements to the Bhopal gas victims. Orders have been given to register a case of contempt in connection with the continuous disregard of the Supreme Court's order dated August 9, 2012 regarding the health of Bhopal gas victims.

Rashida B of Bhopal Gas Victim Mahila Parush Sangharsh Morcha,



Balkrishna Namdev of Bhopal Gas Victim Destitute Pensioners Sangharsh Morcha, Nasreen B of Bhopal Gas Victim Mahila Parush Sangharsh Morcha and Rachana Dhingra of Bhopal Group for Information and Action said while welcoming the order of the judiciary. That this order should be made an example so that the officials due to whom the gas victims could not get the benefit of health facilities should realize

their mistake. He said that the charge imposed by the division bench on all these officers reads, "It is clear from the July 2023 report of the monitoring committee constituted by the Supreme Court that despite the lapse of more than 10.5 years, all of you respondents have not complied with the Supreme Court. - With no promptness or honesty shown in following the directions of this Court. The gas victims are being left in the lurch. You all have made the concept of (PIL) a joke. This Court sees no other reason except your insensitivity towards the gas victims."

According to organizations fighting the battle for gas victims, the order states that the court is bound to take strict action against contemnors. You have committed civil contempt of the above orders as defined under Section 2B of the Contempt of Court Act 1971, which is punishable under Section 12(10) of the Contempt of Court Act 1971 and is within the cognizance of this court. You should be prosecuted.



EDITOR'S SPECS

'Nagada', weighing 500 kg, reaches Ayodhya

A Nagada, weighing around 500 kg that has reached Ayodhya in a special chariot from Gujarat, will be installed at the 'appropriate' place. The Nagada is accompanied by a letter from Gujarat VHP's Ashok Rawal and was accepted by Champat Rai, General Secretary of Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust. Chirag Patel, who brought the Nagada, said that it is adorned with layers of gold and silver. The structure of Nagada involves the use of iron and copper plates as well. It was constructed by the people of Dabgar community. This huge Nagada, a symbol of Hindu culture, has been constructed in the Daryapur extension of Karnavati metropolis to be installed in the Ram temple. Ayodhya will resonate with the sound of 1,111 conch shells during the Pran Pratishtha ceremony on January 22. According to the information provided by the culture department of Uttar Pradesh, conch shells in such huge numbers have never been blown simultaneously in any event. There are plans to blow the conch shells at 12.20 p.m. as soon as the ceremony begins, and it will continue till the end of the mahurat. The sound of conch shells will be heard far off. "As per Ramayana, the birth of Sri Ram was celebrated in a grand way. Everyone expressed happiness by blowing conch shells. We, too, will try to create the same atmosphere during 'Pran Pratishtha,'" the officials said, adding that in the main event, there is a plan to express happiness by blowing conch shells together so that the happiness of Treta yug appears alive. Meanwhile, ahead of the January 22 Pran Pratishtha ceremony of Ram temple, 21,000 priests will perform a grand yagna from January 14 to January 25.

The 'Other' Axis: Disparate Global South coalition seeks to hold Israel to account

Vikas Datta

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, borrowing from the former US President George W. Bush, calls his "Triple H" adversaries the "Axis of Evil", while the Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis prefer the term "Axis of Resistance". There is another global axis, though, that seems determined to bring Netanyahu's regime to account.

As the Hamas-Israel conflict marks its 100th day of spiralling death and destruction, it is a disparate coalition of African, South American leftists, and Asian countries that has taken the moral high ground.

This grouping, led by South Africa and comprising Brazil and Turkey among others, has not only expressed serious concern about the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, but is also taking action in various global fora, than are most of the Arab regimes in the surrounding areas.

And the less said about the Western powers, which deem themselves the global beacons of rights and well-being but expressing unqualified support of Israel and even staying quiet when it snubs their polite requests for restraint as the toll in Gaza mounts, the better.

There are, however, some notable exceptions - Ireland, Spain, and Norway had expressed disquiet over the current situation in Gaza as far back as November.

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, visiting the Rafah border crossing the same month said the Israel "needs to respect international humanitarian law" and condemned the "unacceptable" destruction in the Gaza Strip, while his Spanish counterpart Pedro Sanchez, who accompanied him, also termed the "indiscriminate killings of innocent civilians" in the Palestinian territory as "completely unacceptable".

As expected, their statements drew Israeli fury but they did not retract.

Among the Arab world, it is Jordan which has taken the most active stand, while to be fair, Egypt and Qatar are engaged in behind the scenes diplomacy, including achieving the first, though short-lived ceasefire/cessation of hostilities. However, it was Bolivia, which, on October 31, announced it had "decided to break diplomatic relations with the Israeli state in repudiation and condemnation of the aggressive and disproportionate Israeli military offensive taking place in the Gaza Strip".

The South American nation, which broke off ties with Israel in 2009 too after its Gaza invasion



then, was not the only one to go to the diplomatic extreme step over the Gaza conflict, and was joined by Belize. Some other South/Latin American countries also recalled their ambassadors.

Among these was Colombia whose President and former guerrilla leader Gustavo Petro had also engaged in a bitter war of words with the Israeli envoy in October, citing how Israeli agents had provided training and equipment to the FARC and other paramilitary groups. The others were Chile, which hosts one of the oldest and largest Palestinian communities outside the Arab world, and Honduras.

Regional giant Brazil was also at the forefront of calling for a ceasefire, also moving a proposal for this in the United Nations Security Council but the US vetoed it.

Among the others freezing diplomatic ties were Turkey and Chad and from the Arab world, Jordan, which had become only the second Arab nation to ink a peace treaty with Israel in the

1990s, and Bahrain, which had come to an understanding with Israel in 2020 under then US President Donald Trump-pushed Abraham Accords. However, the champion was South Africa, which not suspended ties, but, in end December, also dragged Israel to the International Court of Justice for "committing genocide" in Gaza and seeking a halt to the indiscriminate military operations that have left over 23,000 Palestinians, largely children and women, dead. As 2024 dawned, Malaysia, Turkey, Jordan, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia as well as The Maldives, Namibia, and Pakistan expressed support for Pretoria's move.

The reason for South Africa's active stand is not just the warm relations Nelson Mandela and the other ANC leadership enjoyed with PLO chief Yasser Arafat, but something more intrinsic in its recent (apartheid) past.

It was just little over three decades back when the then South African regime proclaimed

itself the only "democracy" and "outpost of civilisation" in the region, drew on its sophisticated military capabilities (including a covert nuclear programme), conscript army, and influential Western friends to make itself feel secure, undertook military operations at will in neighbouring states, while repressing dispossessed natives of the land with institutionalised mistreatment, enforced segregation, and violence.

The parallels with the Israeli-Palestinian situation could not have been more evident, given the sort of siege that Gaza has been undergoing since Hamas came to power in 2006-07 and the "Bantustan" existence that Palestinians of the West Bank are subject to.

The 'Global South' has long been a catchphrase but these nations seem determined to make it a force for rights long ignored by the "enlightened West".

international

Over 60 heads of state to attend WEF conference in Davos

New York | Agencies

Over 60 heads of state will attend the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos this year, media reports said.

Some of the dignitaries include Israeli President Isaac Herzog, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, French President Emmanuel Macron and China's second-in-command Li Qiang.

The US will be represented by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry, CNN reported.

Business executives including Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon, Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan and BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, will also attend the event.

With several major countries approaching pivotal elections this year (half the world's population is going to the polls in 2024), leaders are concerned about how these events might reshape international alliances and economic policies.

Climate change is a hot topic as leaders meet to discuss balancing economic growth with sustainability.

The WEF summit comes just days after scientists around the globe reported that the average temperatures last year reached a new record high. That change has propelled the world just hundredths of a degree away from a critical climate thresh-



old, CNN reported.

The WEF's Global Risks report, published last week, found climate change to be one of the biggest risks facing the world.

The World Bank said last week that the global economy is likely to slow to its worst half decade of growth in the past 30 years. Without "a major course correction," the bank said, this will be "a decade of wasted opportunity."

With conflict in Europe and the Middle East and growing tensions between the US and China, geopolitics will be another

major topic of conversation.

On Sunday, the leaders discussed Ukrainian President Zelensky's 10-point peace plan to end Russia's war with his country. Zelensky is expected to give a speech on Tuesday and meet with JPMorgan's Dimon, CNN reported.

Israeli President Herzog, meanwhile, will participate in a conversation about "achieving security and cooperating in a fractured world," with US Secretary of State Blinken and WEF executive chairman Klaus Schwab later this week.

Icy winds, heavy snowfall disrupt life in US

Washington | Agencies

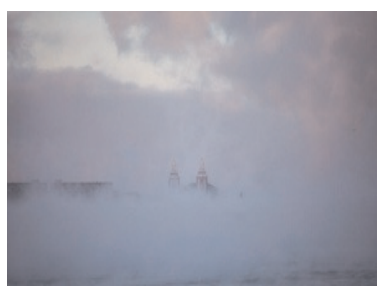
A Polar Vortex in the North Pole has led to several US cities witness severe cold weather conditions with temperatures dipping in the Midwest and the Northeastern region to a freezing minus -41 degrees Celsius, while 125 million people remain under wind chill advisories.

At least 10 people have died due to weather-relation conditions, including three homeless persons in the Milwaukee area, according to media reports.

The three deaths are being investigated as possible cases of hypothermia cases.

The National Weather Service said temperatures could reach minus 30 degrees, with wind chill in the Plains and minus 50 in Montana and the Dakotas.

The weather in Iowa is having an effect on the presidential campaign, with several events canceled ahead of Monday's caucuses.



State capital Des Moines is forecast to have wind chills of minus 20 to minus 30.

Another surge of Arctic air is expected to drop south over the Midwest and the northern Plains states, bringing potentially hazardous weather by midweek, NBC reported.

As rough weather was freezing the East Coast, a public transit bus in Philadelphia slid backward down a city street, NBC Philadelphia reported.

The National Weather Service office that serves Philadelphia said the city was likely to get 4 inches of snow overnight.

As people across most of the US turned up the heat and stayed inside amid frigid temperatures, Montana took the title for the coldest temperature in the country, media reports said.

An area 13 miles north of Sulphur Springs, Montana, recorded a temperature of minus 42 degrees, the National Weather Service said.

The warmest weather was near Sunnland, Florida, around 50 miles southeast of Fort Myers, which had a temperature of 29 degrees, according to the agency.

Meanwhile, 3,071 flights within, into or out of the U.S. were canceled on Monday, according to a flight tracking website, on a day when there were ground stops at some airports due to the winter weather gripping the country.

Singapore's oldest Olympian, Indian origin Gill, dies at 95

Singapore | Agencies

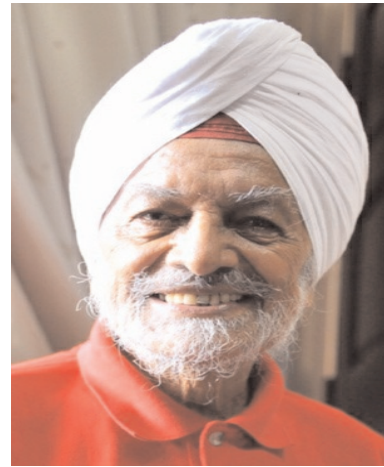
Ajit Singh Gill, Singapore's oldest Olympian and former national hockey player of Indian origin, passed away on Tuesday after battling end-stage renal failure. He was 95.

Gill is survived by his 92-year-old wife Surjit Kaur, five children, 10 grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren, The Straits Times reported.

"I was with him in his final moments. He had difficulty breathing and stared at me, and I believe he wanted to tell me to take care of myself," his son, Mel Gill, told the newspaper.

"That was how he was, always concerned about others' welfare, and very generous in his giving without expecting anything in return."

Extending condolences to the family, Singapore National Olympic Council President Grace Fu said: "Ajit was the quintessential sportsman of his time... he remained active in Singapore sports after his competitive sporting career and partic-



ipated in many activities. He will be greatly missed."

Born in Kuala Lumpur in 1928, Gill was the oldest of 10 siblings, and his family moved to Singapore in 1953, where Gill attended the Teacher Training College. He

played hockey and cricket for the Selangor Indian Association from 1948 to 1951 and for the state of Selangor in 1950.

A short corner specialist, he also played for the Singapore Indian Association from 1952 to 1975. Gill reached the pinnacle of sporting success in 1956, when he was selected to represent Singapore in the Melbourne Olympics. There, Singapore won two of its three preliminary matches, losing only to long-time champion, India.

Going further, he represented Singapore in matches against Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Belgium, Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia.

In the 1960s, he switched to cricket, hitting fours and sixes with ease and thus earning his nickname -- "big-hitting Sikh".

After retiring from coaching cricket and hockey in 1985, he played golf and race walk. In 1990, he topped the Asean Senior Amateur Golf Championship and 26 years later, he claimed gold in the 5,000m race walk at the Asia Masters Athletics Championships on home soil.

48 prisoners escape from Ecuadorian jail amid wave of violence



Quito | Agencies

At least 48 inmates escaped from a prison in the northern city of Esmeraldas in Ecuador amid the "internal armed conflict" in the country declared on January 8.

The escape was "evidenced" on Sunday when the national police and the armed forces carried out a search operation in the prison, Xinhua news agency quoted the National Service of Integral Attention to Adults Deprived of Liberty and

Adolescent Offenders (SNAI) as saying on Monday.

The SNAI also noted that five prisoners were "recaptured".

The Sunday operation in the Esmeraldas prison was part of simultaneous interventions of the public forces in all the prisons of the country.

This was aimed at regaining control after riots broke out in several prisons last week.

Riots erupted on January 8 in several prisons after authorities confirmed the escape of a drug trafficking kingpin from a jail in

Ukraine claims to destroy Russian spy plane



Kiev | Agencies

Ukraine has claimed to destroy a Russian spy plane over the Sea of Azov. Ukraine's Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi initially said on Telegram on Monday that two aircraft had been destroyed, writing: "Warriors of the Air Force of the Armed Forces of Ukraine destroyed an enemy A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft and an enemy IL-22 air control centre," CNN reported.

He also thanked the Air Force for "the perfectly planned and executed operation" in southern Ukraine.

In a statement, the Ukrainian Air Forces called the special operation in the Azov Sea region "successful".

Yuriy Ihnat, a spokesman for the Ukrainian Air Force, later said in a post on Facebook that one of the Russian planes targeted was able to make a landing, but said it appeared "beyond repair".

"So, no matter how you slice it, the target is destroyed, and resuscitation will not help!" he wrote.

"The long-range radar detection aircraft A-50 was and is a priority target for us. And until today, the destruction of this aircraft seemed an impossible task for the Air Force."

Information about the downing of two Russian military aircraft by Ukrainian forces over the Sea of Azov appeared in social media late on Sunday, CNN reported.



MAHARASHTRA'S MOMENT ON THE WORLD STAGE AT DAVOS: CM SHINDE

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday said that the Davos World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting would be a "big chance to showcase Maharashtra" at the global level in the presence of leading personalities from all over the world.

Interacting with the media shortly before boarding for his three-day trip to Davos, Shinde said: "This is a big opportunity... Maharashtra will get a chance for branding and showcasing at the international level at WEF, where prominent people from all over the world, including heads of governments come."

Highlighting the willingness of foreign players to invest in Maharashtra, he said that the state offers a huge potential in the form of infrastructure, connectivity and skilled manpower.

"The state's industry policy is very flexible... This visit to Davos will be more successful than in 2023, more MoUs will be signed and their conversion will also take place," said Shinde.

Last year, the state signed MoUs worth Rs 1.37 lakh-crore and around 76 per cent have been implemented, and in 2024, the Chief Minister is eyeing MoUs worth over Rs 3.10 lakh-crore across sectors and districts in Maharashtra.

Shinde claimed that before his regime took over, the state had plummeted to the third or fourth slot in the country, but after he took over as Chief Minister, the state reclaimed its numero uno position attracting FDI.



"The Prime Minister's dream of a \$5 trillion economy goes through Maharashtra. We have set a target of Rs 1 trillion for the state," he added.

At the 2024 WEF Davos meet (January 15-19), Shinde has lined up an impressive schedule of meetings with top Indian and global corporate honchos, diplomats, world leaders and others attending seminars, besides various WEF programmes.

Soon after landing in Davos on Tuesday, the Chief Minister will inaugurate the state-of-the-art Maharashtra Pavilion set up near the India Hall, where the delegation is expected to hold all important meetings and sign various agreements.

Aiming for effective branding of the state on the world stage, the Maharashtra Pavilion has meeting rooms with all facilities and there will be an audio-visual exhibition providing information on horse-racing in

the state. Officials said that through these MoUs, the state would attract value-adding industries like steel, IT, IT-related sectors, nuclear energy and renewable power, green hydrogens, diamonds and jewellery, data centres, logistics, agro-industrial, agriculture and forest produce, with scope for generating employment and boosting local industries for all-round development of the state.

On Wednesday, the Chief Minister will meet Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani, Michael Zahm of Amazon Web Services, Prince of Liechtenstein Hans-Adam II, the top executives of Hitachi Group, Carlsberg, Dassault Systems, Volvo, and more.

Among those slated to meet Shinde are the Industry Minister of Oman, Finance Minister of Saudi Arabia, Energy Minister of South Africa,

South Korea's Gyeonggi Province Governor Kim Dong-Yeon, executives of DP World, UAE, Louis Dreyfus Company of The Netherlands, Witkowitz Atomica of Czechia, Caggeini SE of France, AP Moller Maersk of Denmark, Ball Corporation, US, and members of the WEF's Agriculture & Food Processing Group.

The CM Chief Minister deliver a speech on 'Challenges in Civil Sector, Innovation & Sustainable Development' at the main event in the WEF convention centre and join a seminar on 'Agriculture, Women's Participation & Food Security', a CII convention and host a banquet for various dignitaries on Wednesday evening.

At the CII conference on Thursday, the state plans to sign 20 MoUs worth around Rs 2.50 lakh-crore, which could increase with major companies, and the investments would come not only to the traditional Mumbai-Pune regions, but also new locations like Raigad, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Nagpur, Jalna and the Maoist-hit Chandrapur and Gadchiroli districts.

The WEF is an international NGO for public-private sector collaboration in Switzerland, and its 54th annual meeting would provide an opportunity to focus on the fundamental principles driving trust, including transparency, consistency, and accountability. The WEF will welcome over 100 governments, all major international organisations, 1,000 partners, civil society leaders, experts, youth representatives, social entrepreneurs, and news outlets at the five-day huddle.

'Did not adhere to SC directives' Legal expert rips Maha Speaker's verdict on Shiv Sena MLAs' disqualification



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maha rashtira Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar did not adhere to the directives of the Supreme Court in his verdict on the disqualification of MLAs' issue, and "has committed grave contempt of the apex court", a leading constitutional expert contended on Tuesday.

Virtually tearing into the Speaker's January 10 ruling at a massive town hall style meeting in Worli, advocate Asim Sarode accused Narwekar of delaying tactics and finally delivering his verdict with political motives. "The decision was ready made like Maggi noodles... The Speaker took 'evidence' like a magistrate court... The decision was unnecessarily delayed for so long with political intentions," he alleged.

Sarode held that contrary to precedents and norms, the Speaker accepted the majority of the legislature party (of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde faction) in his decision and ignored the political party which is supreme. The legislative party has a limited tenure of five years, and later it may change, but the political party is a bigger entity and above the legislature party, which was not considered by the Speaker, he said.

He also pointed out that though the SC

had declared the election of Bharat Gogavale (of Shinde faction) as the Chief Whip as "illegal", the Speaker has declared him as a legal appointment, and by doing so, "renamed injustice as justice".

Sarode expressed serious concern at the Speaker's ruling and said that this is not just about an intra-party dispute, but "portends ill for democracy and constitution" in the country.

He said that long before the verdict of January 10, "it was very clear among the people, right till the remote areas, that there would be injustice done" and their apprehensions came true.

Shiv Sena-UBT Chief Spokesperson and MP Sanjay Raut, slamming the Speaker's verdict, said that "he has handed over the Shiv Sena to a bunch of thieves".

"The Speaker's ruling is a blot on the glorious democratic traditions of Maharashtra... Such a decision would not be acceptable even to his (Narwekar's) wife," he said.

Present at the town hall meeting were SS-UBT President and ex-CM Uddhav Thackeray, his wife Rashmi, sons Aditya and Tejas, top party leaders, office-bearers, and activists as the event was live-streamed across the state.

ELECTION COMMISSION WAS AWARE OF THACKERAY'S ELECTION AS SHIV SENA CHIEF IN 2013-2018: PARAB

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader, Anil Parab said in Mumbai on Tuesday that the election of Uddhav Thackeray as the President of the original and undivided Shiv Sena was as per norms, and the Election Commission of India (ECI) was fully aware of it.

Addressing a mammoth town hall-style meeting in Mumbai, Parab slammed the January 10 verdict of the Maharashtra Assembly Speaker, Rahul Narwekar, on the disqualification of MLAs of the two factions led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and ex-Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

Parab played the videos of the 2013 and 2018 elections held in the (undivided) Shiv Sena which unanimously elected Uddhav Thackeray as the President with full powers, on both occasions. "All the decisions were taken as per the norms and rules, and all relevant papers were submitted to the ECI, with the list of the party's other elected leaders, the national executive and other office-bearers. We have the copies of the ECI's date-stamp, the signature of its receiving official and everything was in the



public domain," said Parab.

Parab alleged that the same documents were submitted to the Speaker also, but despite all this, he chose to ignore everything that was done as per the laws.

"The Speaker has denied everything and lied about it in his verdict... The Speaker had no right to claim that all these documents were not submitted to the ECI or on Uddhav Thackeray's election as party President," pointed out Parab. He said that Uddhav Thackeray's

name as party President was registered with the ECI from March 21, 2013 onwards, along with all other requisite details and required information, yet the Speaker did not consider it while giving his verdict on January 10, which does not augur well for democracy.

Present at the town hall meeting were Uddhav Thackeray, his wife Rashmi, sons Aditya and Tejas, top party leaders, office-bearers, and activists as the event was live-streamed across the state.

UP veggie lawyer gets Mumbai Barbeque Nation's dal-makhani 'garnished' with rat-roaches

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a shocking incident, Adv. Rajeev Shukla, a visiting lawyer from Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj allegedly received a vegetarian meal parcel from Barbeque Nation which contained a dead rat and some roaches, as per his social media posts.

Shukla, 35, had arrived in Mumbai for tourism and placed his dinner order with the Worli outlet of Barbeque Nation -- frequented by the rich and celebs -- for its 'Classic Veg. Meal Box Regular', costing around Rs 641, on January 8.

As the pure vegetarian Brahmin started eating the 'dal makhani' in the meal packet, he noticed a dead rat and some roaches in it.

He suffered food poisoning and had to be admitted to the BMC's BYL Nair Hospital where he spent over three days under treatment.

Adv. Shukla also shot off an email to Barbeque Nation drawing their attention to the

adulterated food of which he had consumed a major portion before discovering the rat-roaches.

He claimed that the Nagpada Police Station was not lodging the FIR against Barbeque Nation, and he has tagged along Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers Amit Shah and Piyush Goyal, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis and others to highlight his plight.

His serial posts read: "I Rajeev Shukla (pure vegetarian) from prayagraj visited Mumbai, on 8Jan'24 night ordered veg meal box from BARBEQUE NATION, worli outlet that contained a dead mouse, hospitalised for 75+



hours.complaint has not been lodged at nagpada police station yet.

"I wanted to explore Mumbai and so I did, coming all the way from Prayagraj but possibly, this might be my last trip. I am a Brahmin and a pure vegetarian, but when my

Barbeque Nation order arrived, it gave me the shock of my life. The food contained a dead rat and cockroaches. I suffered food poisoning and got admitted to Nair hospital," he said. So far there has been no reaction from Barbeque Nation.

KEY RAM TEMPLE CEREMONY TOOK PLACE WHEN RAJIV GANDHI WAS PM: SHARAD PAWAR



Pune: 'Shilanyas', a key ceremony for the Ram temple at Ayodhya was conducted when Rajiv Gandhi was the country's Prime Minister and the BJP and RSS are doing politics on the issue now, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar said yesterday.

The veteran leader was speaking at a public meeting at Nipani in Karnataka. A consecration ceremony would be performed at the Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22.

"The Shilanyas (laying of first stone) was conducted during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure, but today the BJP and RSS are doing politics in the name of Lord Ram," Pawar said.

On Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertaking an 11-day fast ahead of the consecration ceremony, Pawar said, "I respect his faith in Ram, but had he decided to observe a fast to eliminate poverty, people would have appreciated it."

In largest urban development plan, Adani group to provide flats in Dharavi

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In roofs, unplastered walls, cramped rooms, streets so narrow that people can barely pass each other -- Asia's largest slum Dharavi has been waiting for a change for decades. The change is now at hand. In the largest urban development plan in the world, the Adani Group announced yesterday that each eligible resident of the slum will get a 350-square foot house.

The size is bigger than the proposed size of 269 square feet. This is the largest carpet area offered by any developer for this project so far.

Over 10 lakh people live in more than 60,000 shanties in Dharavi. Families with five or six members spend their lives in a 6x8 rooms. Unorganised industries do an annual business of about Rs 10,000 crore. Floors are built haphazardly, factories are set up on top of homes, as people from all parts of India live together cheek-by-jowl on the sides of filthy lanes. Clean drinking water and toilets top of the long list of problems.

"See how we live. When we sleep, my feet rest against the wall. Somehow we are living. A new house is our dream," said one of the residents of Dharavi.

Shaikh Ansari Sahab's life has been spent in a 6x8 room, which he shares with five members of his family. He wants to see the next generation in a new, bigger house. A 350-square feet house a dream for him and many others.

For the home-makers of Dharavi, a new house is an emotional issue. Their children, they say, need clean surroundings and open space.



The Dharavi redevelopment plan is 20 years old, but it had never taken off.

On November 29, 2022, the Adani Group won the bid for the slum rehabilitation project. The 259-hectare area will be redeveloped in phases over seven years.

Under the plan, people living in Dharavi since January 1, 2000, will 17 per cent larger, permanent houses at no cost. Schools, community halls, hospitals and daycare centers for children will also be built.

Seven lakh people who live in the upper floors of Dharavi houses and do not qualify for permanent housing, will get houses on rent under the PM Awaz Yojana within a 10-km radius.

Industrial units will be built over more space and tax benefits for five years as part of the redevelopment project.

"This will be the most challenging project. No one can handle redevelopment projects of this level better than Adani Group. This will set an example in view of the challenges of slum rehabilitation across the world," said real estate expert Vishal Bhargava.

AVIATION MINISTRY ISSUES SHOW CAUSE NOTICES TO INDIGO, MUMBAI AIRPORT

Team Absolute | New Delhi/ Mumbai

The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) on Tuesday issued a show cause notice to Indigo and Mumbai Airport after a video of passengers eating and sitting on the tarmac at the airport went viral on social media.

In another development, the Union Minister of Civil Aviation, Jyotiraditya Scindia also held a meeting with all ministry officials in the late hours of Monday following the traffic congestion at Delhi airport due to dense fog.

As per the notices, both Indigo and MIAL failed to proactively anticipate the situation and arrange appropriate facilities for passengers at the airport. An example of this was the assignment of a remote bay, C-33, to the aircraft instead of a Contact Stand. Contact Stands are designed for passengers to easily walk to and from the aircraft from an assigned boarding gate, ensuring access to basic amenities like rest-rooms and refreshments at the terminal.

This led to an undesirable and unacceptable experience for the fatigued and distressed passengers. The planning and execution of the flight operation did not consider passenger convenience, established security norms, and operational issues.

According to officials, the show cause notice to IndiGo has been issued for the violation of Rule 51 of



the Aircraft (Security) Rules, 2023, AvSec Order 02/2019 and order dated September 21, 2021 regarding failure to observe due aviation security procedures in respect of Flight no. 6E 2195 which landed at Mumbai Airport at 2321 hrs. on January 14 as a diversion case.

The show cause notice to Mumbai airport was issued for the violation of Rule 51 of the Aircraft (Security) Rules, 2023 has been issued regarding the failure to report an incident in respect of Flight no. 6E 2195 which landed at the Mumbai Airport.

The flight 6E2195, en route from Goa to Delhi, was diverted to Mumbai due to operational issues attributed to low visibility conditions in the capital on Sunday.



75TH EMMYS

Succession', 'The Bear' tie with 6 wins, 'Beef' follows with 5



Los Angeles | Agencies

Three shows dominated the 2023 Emmy Awards, 'Succession', 'The Bear' and 'Beef'. Each show nearly swept their respective category in the drama, comedy and limited series races.

'Succession' and 'The Bear' tied with a leading six wins each and 'Beef' followed closely with five awards, reports 'Variety'.

Hosted by Anthony Anderson, the 75th Emmy Awards provided multiple tributes to hit shows of the past as well as the present. The casts of series like 'Cheers', 'The Sopranos', 'Ally McBeal', 'Martin' reunited for the night, while former cast members of shows like 'Grey's Anatomy' and the ever-E Emmy-ignored comedy 'It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia' took the stage to present awards. As per 'Variety', 'Succession' won outstand-

ing drama series, and stars Kieran Culkin (lead actor in a drama), Sarah Snook (lead actress in a drama) and Matthew Macfadyen (supporting actor in a drama) each won awards.

Writer and creator Jesse Armstrong and director Mark Mylod each won for the 'Connor's Wedding' episode, in which Waystar Royco CEO Logan Roy dies. The show also won outstanding drama.

'The Bear' won outstanding comedy for its first season, with Jeremy Allen White (lead actor in a comedy), Ayo Edebiri (lead actress in a comedy) and Ebon Moss-Bachrach (supporting actor in a comedy) taking home prizes. Creator Christopher Storer also won for writing and directing. 'Beef' won the Outstanding Limited Series. Its stars Steven Yeun (lead actor) and Ali Wong (lead actress) won awards, plus creator Lee Sung Jin earned honours for writing and directing.

Sarah Snook is Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series for 'Succession'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Sarah Snook took home the Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series at the ongoing 75th edition of Primetime Emmy Awards for her work in 'Succession'. She plays Siobhan Roy, the only daughter of Logan Roy on the show. She dedicated the award to her newborn daughter who she was pregnant with during the filming of the last season. "It's all for you, from here on out," she said. 'Succession' boasted of the most nominations with 27 nods at the Emmys this year.

The official handle of Television Academy took to their official handle on X, and wrote: "Sarah Snook wins the #Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series for @Succession (HBO / @streamonmax)! #Emmys #75thEmmys." The 75th Primetime Emmy Awards are currently underway at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles, California. The Indian audience can stream the award show on Lionsgate Play.

Los Angeles | Agencies

Late star Matthew Perry, who gained the spotlight for playing Chandler Bing in 'Friends', received an emotional tribute during the 2023 Emmys In Memoriam segment.

The segment also included late stars such as Len Goodman, Andre Braugher, Lance Reddick, Paul Reubens, Barbra Walters, Kirstie Alley, among others.

Pop singer Charlie Puth and singer-songwriter duo The War and Treaty performed during the segment, first starting with a rendition of Puth's 'See You Again' before delivering a stripped-down cover of the 'Friends' theme song 'I'll Be There for You' by The Rembrandts, reports variety.com.

Perry died unexpectedly in October 2023 at 54 years old. He was found unresponsive in a hot tub at his Los Angeles home, according to law enforcement.

There were no signs of foul play or drugs on the scene.

The Los Angeles County Medical Examiner's Office later revealed that he died from "the acute effects of ketamine".

Perry was best known for playing the hilarious, sarcastic Chandler Bing on 'Friends' in the '90s and early 2000s. He starred in more than 200 episodes of the NBC sitcom across 10 seasons.

"We are all so utterly devastated by the loss of Matthew. We were more than just cast mates. We are a family. There is so much to say, but right now we're going to take a moment to grieve and process this unfathomable loss," Perry's 'Friends' cast members Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc and David Schwimmer wrote in a statement following the news of his death.

"In time we will say more, as and when we are able. For now, our thoughts and our love are with Matty's family, his friends, and everyone who loved him around the world."

The award event can be streamed on Lionsgate Play in India.

Matthew Perry honoured with cover of 'Friends' theme song



75th Emmys: Kieran Culkin wins Lead Actor in a Drama Series for 'Succession'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kieran Culkin bagged the Lead Actor in a Drama Series for the show 'Succession' at the 75th Emmy Awards. As soon as Culkin got on stage, he took off his coat and then thanked the cast and crew of the show and then his wife.

He also said that he wanted more children.

Culkin was nominated alongside names such as Jeff Bridges ('The Old Man'), Brian Cox ('Succession'), Bob Odenkirk ('Better Call Saul'), Pedro Pascal ('The Last of Us') and Jeremy Strong ('Succession').

'Succession' is an American satirical comedy-drama television series created by Jesse Armstrong that aired from June 3, 2018, to May 28, 2023.

The series centers on the Roy family, the owners of global media and entertainment conglomerate Waystar RoyCo, and their fight for control of the company amidst uncertainty about the health of the family's patriarch.

Pedro Pascal explains why he has an arm sling

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Pedro Pascal hilariously got his revenge on Keiran Culkin at the 75th Emmy Awards by joking that his recent shoulder injury was because of the actor. Before presenting an award, Pascal said: "Keiran Culkin beat the sh*t out of me."

The Emmys audience erupted in laughter while the broadcast cut to Culkin in the audience looking stone-faced serious, reports Variety. Pascal has attended several awards shows in recent weeks wearing a giant sling because of a fall. He assured press at the

Golden Globes earlier this month that his injury would be fully healed and the sling would be off by the time 'The Last of Us' Season 2 kicks off filming in February.

Culkin started his fake feud with Pascal at the Golden Globes when he won the prize for best actor in a TV drama thanks to his role on the final season of 'Succession.' During his acceptance speech, Culkin said: "I was nominated for a Golden Globe like 20 years ago, and when that moment passed, I still remember thinking, I'm never going to be back in this room again."

"But thanks to 'Succession,' I've been in here a couple times," he continued before cracking up the crowd by saying: "Suck it, Pedro!"



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Gia





BANGLADESH ALL-ROUNDER NASIR HOSSAIN BANNED FOR 2 YEARS FOR ANTI-CORRUPTION CODE BREACH

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Bangladesh all-rounder Nasir Hossain has been banned from all cricket for two years after he accepted three charges of breaching the Emirates Cricket Board's Anti-Corruption Code.

Hossain, who was charged by the ICC in September 2023, admitted to three charges, and has been handed a two-year ban, with six months suspended.

The 32-year-old will be free to resume international cricket on 7 April, 2025, provided he satisfies the conditions in respect to the suspended part of the sanction.

The three charges Hossain admitted are: "Breach of Article 2.4.3 of the Code, in that he failed to disclose to the Designated Anti-Corruption Official (without unnecessary delay)



the receipt of a gift that was offered to him that had a value of over US\$ 750, namely the gift of a new iPhone 12. Breach of Article 2.4.4 of the Code, in that he failed to disclose full details

of the approach or invitation he received to engage in Corrupt Conduct via the new iPhone 12," ICC said in a statement. "Breach of Article 2.4.6 of the Code,

in that he failed or refused, without compelling justification, to cooperate with the Designated Anti-Corruption Official's investigation in relation to possible Corrupt Conduct under the Code, including (without limitation) failing to provide accurately and completely any information and/or documentation requested by the Designated Anti-Corruption Official (whether as part of a formal Demand pursuant to Article 4.3 or otherwise) as part of such investigation," it added.

Hossain played 115 matches for Bangladesh across formats between 2011 and 2018, scoring 2695 runs and taking 39 wickets.

He has since featured largely in the domestic circuit, most recently turning out in the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League for Prime Bank Cricket Club.

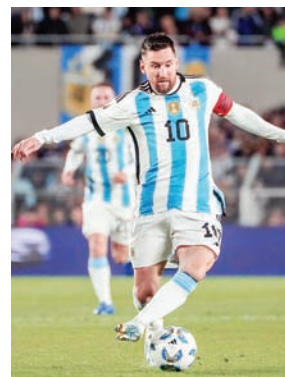
Messi retains FIFA best male player award

London | Agencies

Argentine superstar Lionel Messi retained the best FIFA men's player award here on Monday, two months after he claimed the Ballon d'Or.

The 36-year-old was absent from the ceremony held in London, while Pep Guardiola, who coached Messi at Barcelona, showed up to collect the trophy for the men's best coach, reported Xinhua.

The Spaniard steered Manchester City to the Premier League title, the FA Cup and a first Champions



League last season. The treble also gave bonuses to many Man City players, as Ederson received the goalkeeper award, and six of the

Brazilian's club teammates were named in the men's team of the year. Besides, England manager Sarina Wiegman was crowned the women's best coach while Spain and Barcelona midfielder Aitana Bonmati added the women's best player award to her women's Ballon d'Or.

Marta has been honored with the FIFA Special Award for her outstanding career achievements. The 37-year-old Brazilian scored 17 goals in 23 matches at six World Cup tournaments. She was recognized as the world's best female player six times.

Australian Open: Alcaraz beats Gasquet; Fils, Michelsen earn debut wins

Melbourne | Agencies

World no. 2 Carlos Alcaraz won his first match of the year by wearing down 37-year-old Frenchman Richard Gasquet in straight sets on Tuesday.

Once the second seed from Spain had raised his game in time to edge a tight 72-minute first set on a tiebreak, the two-time major winner pulled away to ease through 7-6(5) 6-1 6-2, his first win in Melbourne since 2022. The Spaniard missed last year's event due to injury, and will be keen to keep building momentum when he next faces Italian Lorenzo Sonogo in the second round on Thursday.

Earlier in the day, Arthur Fils continued his strong start to the 2024 season with a debut victory at the



Australian Open. The Frenchman defeated Jiri Vesely 4-6, 7-5, 6-2, 6-3, turning the opening-round match around with a late surge in the second set.

Fils, who reached the Next Gen ATP Finals title match to close 2023, opened the new year with a quarterfinal run in Hong Kong and a semifinal showing in Auckland. The 19-year-old awaits 28th seed Tallon Griekspoor, who defeated Wimbledon quarter-finalist Roman Safullin 2-6, 3-6, 7-6 (7-3), 6-4, 7-5 in five-setter.

On the other hand, Alex Michelsen also earned a debut win in Melbourne, beating local player James McCabe 7-6(5), 3-6, 6-1, 6-2. The American, who also competed at the 2023 Next Gen ATP Finals, picked up his first tour-level win of 2023 after successful qualifying campaigns in Brisbane and Auckland.

Michelsen's next opponent will be 2022 Next Gen ATP Finals runner-up and newly minted Adelaide champion Jiri Lehecka, the 32nd seed in the men's singles draw.

Another NextGen ATP player who earned a victory on Tuesday was 18-year-old Shang Juncheng, who rallied past American Mackenzie McDonald 6-3, 1-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 after three hours and 26 minutes.

Rafael Nadal partnership with Saudi Tennis Federation draws "inexcusable and "disappointing" criticism

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rafael Nadal has accepted an ambassadorial role with the Saudi Tennis Federation, becoming the latest high-profile athlete to align with Saudi Arabia as the nation seeks to enhance its global influence through sport.

Nadal's decision comes on the heels of his withdrawal from the Australian Open due to injury. In a social media (X) statement made on Tuesday, the 37-year-old expressed his excitement about contributing to the growth and progress he perceives in Saudi Arabia. The former world No. 1 emphasized his desire to help nurture the development of young talent in the sport, intending to foster a genuine passion for tennis among the country's youth.

"Growth and progress that's important to see and the STF is working on that. In a recent visit I saw the interest

in both aspects and I want to be part of that role of growing the sport of tennis around the world. The kids are looking to the future and I saw they are passionate about sports... I want to encourage them to pick up a racket and enjoy the benefits of a healthy living," Nadal wrote on X.

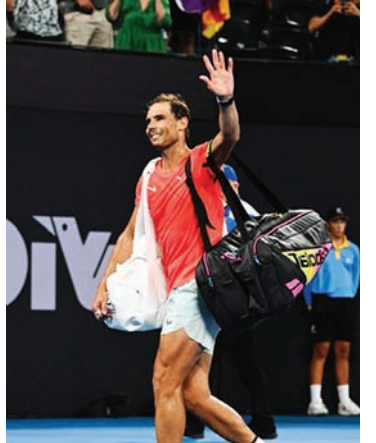
However, Nadal's association with Saudi Arabia has ignited controversy, with critics accusing the nation of "sportswashing" - using prominent athletes to divert attention from human rights and environmental concerns. The move has prompted social media backlash, labeling Nadal's decision as "inexcusable" and "disappointing."

The Saudi Tennis Federation outlined its plans for Nadal's involvement, indicating that he will spend dedicated time in the Kingdom annually to contribute to the growth of tennis, particularly among boys and girls. Saudi Arabia is set to host the ATP's

Next Gen Finals for the next four years, a move that could potentially impact the tennis calendar in Australia. Tennis legend John McEnroe, a vocal critic of the growing influence of Saudi funds in tennis, expressed his disapproval, particularly in light of the potential hosting of the WTA Finals in Saudi Arabia in 2024. McEnroe dismissed the notion that athletes should set moral standards, citing the widespread engagement of businesses and governments with Saudi Arabia. "Let's put it this way: money talks," he told ESPN.

"Personally, I disagree with it completely, with the golf and the tennis. The ladies are going to play the WTA Finals there? Are you kidding me? Because they treat women so well? That part to me is laughable.

"At the same time, which is also laughable, is the people that can criticize tennis players or golfers for doing something that virtually every busi-



ness and the government do, which is deal with Saudi Arabia.

"This idea that tennis players have to set the moral standard, or golfers for that matter, when they're all making for the money, it's a total joke as far as I'm concerned."

India Open: Rajawat, Prannoy kick-off campaign with contrasting wins

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Priyanshu Rajawat came from a game down to upset Commonwealth Games gold medalist Lakshya Sen while Asian Games bronze winner HS Prannoy packed off Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen in straight games on the opening day of the BWF India Open, a Super 750 badminton tournament, here at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium on Tuesday.

Rajawat, who was part of the 2022 Thomas Cup winning squad, showcased remarkable resilience to secure a 16-21, 21-16, 21-13 victory over his illustrious compatriot while Prannoy outplayed Chou 21-6, 21-19 to advance to the second round of the Super 750 tournament.

With the second men's singles berth for the Paris Olympics up for grabs, the clash between Rajawat and Sen was always going to be the highlight of the opening day.

Rajawat will now face eighth seed Prannoy in the second round.



Former champion Sen was the first to get off the blocks as he pocketed the opening game only for Rajawat to step on the accelerator. The 21-year-old, Rajawat, who had lost in the only previous meeting between the two on the BWF circuit at the Japan Open 2023, then showed the maturity to extend the

rallies and temper his aggression to win the 75-minute encounter.

Reflecting on his victory, Priyanshu expressed: "Today marked my first good game in quite a while, especially after the break I took due to my back injury. Lakshya is a very good friend of mine but it was important for me to

win this match against him and progress to the next round. I stuck to my natural playing style throughout and despite losing the first game, I was determined not to let go of the second and third games at any cost. I am looking forward to the next game against HS Prannoy and want to give my 100 percent to win."

Earlier, world no. 8 Prannoy, dominated the opening game against Chou and then fought back from a 11-16 deficit in the second game by winning six straight points to take a 17-16 lead before wrapping up the match in 42 minutes.

"The planning was pretty spot on in the first game. I got to understand that he was not able to get the length properly in the first game, so I had to wrap it up really quickly before he got into that rally mode. In the second game, as expected, he started to push the speed and was able to finish a lot of shuttles from behind. I didn't hit really hard towards the end of the game and was trying to play softer shots," said Prannoy after the win.

Deepti Sharma and Pat Cummins named ICC Player of the Month for December 2023

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a double triumph for India and Australia, Deepti Sharma and Pat Cummins have been crowned the Women's and Men's Players of the Month for December 2023 by the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Deepti Sharma's outstanding contributions in Test matches against England and Australia secured her the prestigious award, while Pat Cummins' stellar performances in the Test series against Pakistan earned him the Men's Player of the Month honour.

Deepti Sharma, the versatile all-rounder from India, showcased her cricketing prowess in the two Test matches in December. Not only did she amass an impressive 165 runs, averaging 55 with the bat, but her bowling performance was equally exceptional, claiming



11 wickets at an average of just 10.81.

A standout moment came in the Test against England, where Deepti's all-round brilliance included a crucial 67 with the bat and a remarkable 9-wicket haul. Her impact extended to the ODIs, where she displayed her bowling prowess by taking a five-wicket haul against Australia. During the T20 International matches against England, Deepti con-

tinued her commendable bowling form, maintaining an impressive economy rate of 5.88 runs per over.

Meanwhile, Pat Cummins, the Australian pace spearhead, capped off a remarkable year by clinching the ICC Men's Player of the Month for December 2023. Cummins played a pivotal role in the Test series against Pakistan, particularly in the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Defending 317 in the final innings, Cummins removed Pakistan's Shan Masood, sparking a collapse that secured Australia's victory.

Cummins' stellar performance in the Boxing Day Test included two five-wicket hauls (5/48 & 5/49), reaching the milestone of 250 Test wickets. His Player of the Match-winning display not only secured the series for Australia but also propelled them to regain the No.1 spot in Tests.

US stun New Zealand to reach SF with all-win record

Ranchi | Agencies

The United States women's hockey team stunned New Zealand 1-0 to finish the Pool B proceedings with three successive wins that secured them the top spot with nine points in the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers here on Tuesday.

Elizabeth Yeager struck the all-important goal in the second quarter and the Americans defended superbly to claim victory at the Marang Gomme Jaipal Singh Astro-Turf Hockey Stadium here. Their goalkeeper Celsey Bing pulled off some superb saves to keep them alive in the math.

The United States dominated possession (54% to 46%), made 10 circle entries to six by New Zealand and had seven shots at target to six by their opponents. The Black Sticks had four PCs as compared to three by the US.

The result meant that the US made it to the semifinals



with nine points from three wins. The second spot in this group will be decided by the result of the match between India and Italy.

The hosts have three points as of now, the same as

New Zealand, and will finish second by beating Italy. New Zealand went into the match knowing that only a win would help them in their pursuit of an Olympic berth.

Shivam Dube with his all-round performance making sure he is in T20 World Cup squad: Sunil Gavaskar

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar has acknowledged Shivam Dube's exceptional form, stating that the all-rounder was not merely a backup for Hardik Pandya but a contender actively working to secure his spot in the T20 World Cup squad.

Shivam Dube's meteoric rise in the T20I series against Afghanistan not only secured victories for India but also positioned him as a formidable contender for the T20 World Cup 2024. As Hardik Pandya's fitness remained a concern, Dube's consistent and impactful performances became the focal point of discussions among cricket enthusiasts and experts.

Gavaskar emphasized that Dube's performances were making it challenging for selectors to consider dropping him, even if Pandya were fit.

"We have been talking about him as, 'Oh, listen, what if Hardik is unfit?', I think what he is doing is making sure that even if Hardik is fit, he is on that plane in that World Cup squad. If you put in performances like this, it is very hard for anyone to drop you. It is going to be a really tough decision for the selectors if they decide to drop him. He is doing all that he can, which is giving the selectors a headache," said Gavaskar.

In Mohali, Dube's unbeaten 60-run knock not only displayed his batting prowess but also highlighted his contribution with the ball, securing a six-wicket win for India. His impressive figures of 1-9 in two overs showcased his versatility. The momentum continued in Indore, where Dube's explosive 63 not out off 32 deliveries propelled India to a command-



ing series lead of 2-0.

The cricket maestro went on to praise Dube's newfound confidence at the international level, noting that the all-rounder had earned the respect of his teammates. Gavaskar observed that Dube now understood his game better and had moved past imitating others, focusing on showcasing his unique skills and strengths. After these two games, I think he now feels that he belongs at the international level. He has got the appreciation and respect of his team-

mates because he put in two absolutely wonderful performances." "I think he is just a lot more comfortable about his own game. He knows his own game better. He is not trying to copy anyone now. He is saying, This is what I can do and what I bring to the table," said Gavaskar. As the cricketing world eagerly awaited the T20 World Cup squad announcement, Dube's story had evolved from being a potential replacement to a player who had carved his own niche, leaving selectors with a delightful dilemma.



"Do aur do milenge. Pyaar ke raaz khulenge! Vidya Balan and Pratik Gandhi have shared a cryptic post

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood stars Vidya Balan and Pratik Gandhi have shared a cryptic post on the social media about an upcoming project, leaving the fans buzzing with excitement and speculation. Vidya and Pratik took to their respective social media handles, and shared an image which seems to be a mathematical equation, with the sum of two and two equating to a heart. The post has a simple yet intriguing caption: "Do aur do milenge. Pyaar ke raaz khulenge! Tomorrow at 11 am, wait for it!" The anticipation is palpable as fans speculate about the possible announcement set to be unveiled on January 17. Fans wrote: "OMG is it your next film?", "so exciting".

Another user said: "can't wait", while one said: "new movie with Vidya Balan". Meanwhile, on the work front, Vidya was last seen in 'Neeyat'. Pratik was last seen in web series 'Scoop', and Gujarati movie 'Vaahlam Jaao Ne'. He has 'Phule',



'Dedh Bigha Zameen', and 'Woh Ladki Hai Kahaan?' in the pipeline.

Aditi Saigal: I'm the kind of artiste who often ignores sensible advice

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Indie musician and actress Aditi Saigal also known as Dot, is the most engaged Gen Z actor-artist of the country, and she has shared how the social media has always been kind to her, calling herself an artist who often ignores "sensible advice".

With a staggering engagement rate of 24-26 per cent on her posts, Dot, who shot to fame with her acting as well as musical talent, in Zoya Akhtar's directorial 'The Archies', has emerged as a breakthrough artiste of the year.

She composes, sings and writes the lyrics of all her songs. Dot has been topping the Indian music charts with her 'Archies' songs too. She has written and sang all four 'Dear Diary' themes picturised on Khushi Kapoor, as well as lent her voice to the character of Betty (Khushi), singing and composing the song 'Asymmetrical'.

She has also sung the other two chartbusters 'Dhishoom Dhishoom' and



'Sunoh'. These two songs are among the top-listened songs of India across all music platforms.

Dot said: "I've always said that I've

been lucky enough that social media has always been kind to me. Since the beginning, the kind of love I've gotten from people about my music has been nothing but heartwarming. I used to call it 'my little corner of the internet'. Of course, since 'The Archies', it's definitely expanding."

"Whether it's music, more films, or some other venture, it's hard not to look back at it all and be grateful to the people following along. Especially since I'm the kind of artiste who often ignores sensible advice and does whatever in the world she feels like," she added.

Dot has recently released a new single titled 'Girls Night' that is going viral amongst music aficionados.

Talking further on her soaring popularity on the internet, she said: "Again, I'm lucky enough that more and more people want to listen to my music. So I guess even when my little corner of the internet is no longer so little, I'll always have a soft spot for the people who engage with the work I put out."

Suniel Shetty to join Madhuri Dixit Nene as a judge on 'Dance Deewane'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Suniel Shetty will be joining forces with actress Madhuri Dixit Nene, in the upcoming season of dance-based reality show 'Dance Deewane'.

This season is set to elevate the entertainment quotient, uniting three generations of phenomenal dancers. Renowned for his diverse journey in the film industry, marked by unparalleled versatility, Suniel is all set to play a pivotal role in identifying the next generation of dance superstars. Taking their seats on the coveted judges' panel, Suniel and Madhuri are ready to share their invaluable insights, offer constructive critiques, and infuse the show with their infectious energy, all in the quest to unearth the nation's next dancing sensation.



RAVEENA TANDON ON 'SPECIAL' BOND WITH VARUN SOOD: DURING BREAKS WE WOULD SIT & CRACK JOKES

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Actress Raveena Tandon has opened up on her offscreen bond with her 'Kamma Calling' co-star Varun Sood, and shared how during the breaks, they cracked jokes, chatted and laughed with each other.

While the onscreen mother-son duo -- Raveena and Varun have some underlying tension in their relationship, their offscreen bond is completely the opposite.

Calling Varun a really sweet guy, Raveena said: "I met him for the first time when we were doing readings with Ruchi. He was very reserved and quiet. I think he was a little nervous, but eventually he opened up. He is a very dedicated actor and knows his craft well."

"During the breaks, we would all sit together, crack jokes, chat and could not even hold our laughter during shots. We developed a special bond and I wouldn't have anyone else play the role of Ahaan Kothari. He is a very promising actor and I feel he will go a very long way," she added.



Aditi Sharma: It's very challenging to shoot with a prosthetic baby bump

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Actress Aditi Sharma, who is leaving no stone unturned to do justice to her role of playing a pregnant woman in the show 'Rabb Se Hai Dua', has opened up on shooting with a prosthetic baby bump which is a completely new experience for her.

The show features Aditi as Dua, Karanvir Sharma as Haider and Richa Rathore as Ghazal.

In the upcoming episodes, the show will take a short seven-month leap where the Akhtar family will be seen hosting a baby shower for Dua. The twist in the tale is when Ghazal makes a grand entry stating that she is also pregnant with Haider's child. Talking about the sequence, Aditi said: "This is the third time I am shooting with a baby bump as Dua is seven-months pregnant in the show. But this time the experience is very different from last two times."

"To be honest, it is very challenging to shoot with a prosthetic baby bump and move around with the added weight. I can only imagine how much more gruelling those nine months must be in a woman's life, of course it comes with a lot of hope and excitement but hats off to women for being able to go through this phase with positivity," added Aditi.



Samarth Jurel eliminated from 'Bigg Boss 17' house; girlfriend Isha Malviya breaks down

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Samarth Jurel aka 'Chintu', who was super entertaining, and had a dynamic presence in the 'Bigg Boss 17' house, has bid adieu to the reality show, due to the insufficient votes from the public.

In a shocking turn of events after 'Weekend Ka Vaar' on 'Bigg Boss' season 17, the house witnessed the eviction of Samarth. His girlfriend and co-contestant Isha Malviya was in tears as she hugged Samarth before he walked out of the house.

The vibe in the 'Bigg Boss' house turned muted as fellow contestants expressed their shock and sorrow at the unexpected departure.

The ousted contestant bid an emotional farewell to the housemates, expressing gratitude for the experiences and memories shared during their stay.

Samarth stepped into the show as a wildcard entrant and took the house by storm, revealing that he and Isha are in a relationship.

This sparked drama as Isha deceitfully denied the relationship at the beginning and admitted being committed to him later. He was celebrated as a green flag because he knew how to cook, stood up



for his girlfriend, respected her individuality, and apologised after making a mistake. Talking about his journey, Samarth shared: "My journey on the show was all about self-discovery, entertaining people, and facing challenges head-on. I showcased my personality in the house without resorting to cheap means of garnering the limelight and made my presence felt beyond my relationship with Isha." The actor said he is proud to never violate the rules of the house despite provocation and lived up to the way his parents raised him. "Being celebrated as a green flag and entertainer by the audience is truly heartening. It speaks volumes about the connection I

forged with viewers and their appreciation for my genuine approach," said Samarth.

Excited to gossip, he was known for his savage replies, energetic dance moves, veteran actor Dharmendra's spot-on mimicry, and mischievous streak.

The show was a golden opportunity to be seen by some of the biggest stars in the film and television industry, individuals I've admired for as long as I can remember," he said.

Samarth shared: "With all due respect and humility, I don't believe my exit was deserved. Every star guest who graced the house acknowledged the entertainment I brought. I hope viewers enjoyed watching the diverse facets of my personality, and I'm looking forward to entertaining them in various roles."

He performed outstandingly as a batsman in a cricket task and won hearts as one of the most entertaining housemates in the mohalla, leaving contestants in splits with his hilarious observations.

"My head is held high because I'm leaving the show with my integrity and sense of self intact. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported me," he added.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Poonam Rajput