

absolute india



VOL. 9, ISSUE 97, BHOPAL | SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2024 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

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Western Himalayan region more prone to climate change-induced risk: IIT Madras

CAUTION: APPLY SAFETY RULES

In a study published in the peer-reviewed International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, the team conducted a risk assessment and ranked 109 administrative districts pan-Indian Himalayan Region based on the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) criteria.

- While the Eastern Indian Himalayan Region housed the top three risk-prone districts, the Western Indian Himalayan Region faced a higher overall risk.
- The Western Indian Himalayan Region also demonstrated elevated rankings in hazards and exposure indices.
- Himachal Pradesh's Shimla was identified as the most hazard-prone district in the Indian Himalayan Region while Kiphire, Nagaland, was identified as the least hazard-prone district.



to climate change and the extent of their vulnerability before addressing risk, said the researchers.

More than two-thirds of Western Indian Himalayan Region districts (32 out of 47) fell into the highest and high-risk categories. In contrast, the Eastern Indian Himalayan Region had more than three-fifths of its districts (39 out of 62) categorised as either low or lowest risk.

"The heightened risk in the Western Indian Himalayan Region results from the western region experiencing higher hazards and greater

exposure compared to the eastern region. Although the Eastern Indian Himalayan Region is highly vulnerable overall, its relatively low scores in hazard and exposure prevent it from being more prone to risk," said Aayush Shah, Research Scholar, IIT Madras, in a statement.

"The Eastern Indian Himalayan Region districts with the highest and high-risk scores exhibit similarities to western Himalayan region districts, displaying elevated rankings in hazard and exposure indices," he added. The Eastern Indian Himalayan

Region is observed to be less inclined to hazards, housing all 25 districts in the lowest hazard district category and 51 out of its 62 districts falling into the lowest, low and medium hazard categories.

Nagaland and Mizoram predominantly have their districts in the lowest hazard districts category and none outside the lowest and low hazard district category, indicating them to be the two least hazard-prone states in the IHR.

"We have used the latest method suggested by the IPCC, making our index a standardised measure acceptable internationally. Further, we have used data from multiple publicly available sources to construct the risk index. This makes our index reliable and replicable," said Krishna Malakar, Assistant Professor (Climate Policy), Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras, in the statement. "The Himalayan region is extremely vulnerable to climate change because of its geographical as well as demographic characteristics. The findings of our work will enable policymakers and disaster managers to identify the regions at risk and the underlying reasons for the risk. Consequently, this will enable them to design their plan of action," Krishna added.

Delhi fire: 8 victims identified, probe points towards short circuit

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Eight persons have been identified out of 11 charred bodies that were recovered from a paint factory cum warehouse in Delhi's Alipur area, where a massive fire broke out on February 15 evening.

The eight victims have been identified as: owner of the factory Ashok Kumar (62), Ram Surat Singh (44), Vishal Gaund (19), Anil Thakur (46), Pankaj Kumar (29), Shubham (19), Mira (44) and Brijkishore (19).

An official privy to the probe said that initial findings suggest the fire likely originated from a short circuit, subsequently spreading to an area storing chemicals, resulting in multiple explosions.

"It is also suspected that the owner of the unit - Om Sun Paint, operating since 2017, used to lock the door from inside and there was no other escape route in case of such an incident in the factory," said the sources.

The deceased included Jain and his 10 employees while the injured, who were vacated from nearby establishments, have been identified as Jyoti (42), Divya (20), Mohit Solanki (34) and Delhi Police Constable Karamveer. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has declared a compensation of Rs 10 lakh for each deceased person's family and has also visited the site to assess the situation. Expressing condolences to the bereaved families, Kejriwal said, "We extend our heartfelt sympathies to the families of the deceased. We pledge Rs 10 lakh for each family. Additionally, Rs 20,000 will be given to those with minor injuries, and Rs 2 lakh to those with severe injuries." A delegation from the Delhi BJP, led by its Chief Virendra Sachdeva, also visited the affected individuals of the Alipur fire incident and announced financial assistance. The BJP leader said that Rs 50,000 will be given to each deceased for funeral expenses and Rs 25,000 for medical treatment



of the injured.

The Delhi BJP President has also urged the Arvind Kejriwal government to provide Rs 25 lakh compensation to the families of the deceased and Rs 10 lakh to the injured.

Atul Garg, Director of Delhi Fire Service (DFS), said that a call regarding the blaze was received at 5:26 p.m. on Thursday. He said that at least 22 fire tenders were rushed to the spot, which managed to douse the flame by 9 p.m. "The fire had engulfed two paint and chemical godowns and eight shops. At least 11 charred bodies were removed and taken to the Babu Jagjivan Ram hospital while four injured were taken to the Raja Harish Chandra Hospital for treatment," he said. The Deputy Commissioner of Police Outer North Ravi Kumar Singh said that a major fire had initially broken out in Nehru Enclave, Alipur in a paint factory on Thursday.

"On receiving the information, the police team reached the spot and saw that the fire had spread to a number of other buildings, including the neighbouring 'Nasha Mukti Kendra', where four to five people were trapped in fire," said the DCP.

Arms loot case: 7 cops suspended in Manipur; internet suspended in Churachandpur

Imphal | Agencies

Seven Manipur Rifles personnel were suspended on Friday for negligence in duty following the looting of arms and ammunition by a mob from the 5th Battalion Manipur Rifles camp in Imphal East district on Tuesday, officials said.

Officials quoting the suspension order said the seven personnel were suspended for "grave negligence and dereliction of duties" after arms and ammunition were looted from the 5th Battalion Manipur Rifles armory.

The police said that six persons have also been arrested in connection with the case, and four INSAS rifles, one AK Ghatak-2, few magazines of self-loading rifles and 16 small boxes of 9



mm ammunition -- which are suspected to have been looted from the armory -- have been recovered from the accused on Wednesday night. Meanwhile, internet and mobile data services have been suspended for five days starting Friday in the tribal-dominated Churachandpur district after a mob numbering around 400 people attempted to storm the office of the district superintendent of police on

Thursday night.

The security forces dispersed the mob by firing tear gas shells and controlled the situation, even though tension ran high in the area till late on Friday night.

On Tuesday, a mob accompanied by some village volunteers had barged into the camp of the 5th Battalion Manipur Rifles at Chingarel in Imphal East district, and fled with arms and ammunition.

Third round of talks with farmers' bodies meaningful: Anurag Thakur

Mumbai | Agencies

Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting and Youth & Sports Affairs, Anurag Singh Thakur, said on Friday that the third round of talks with the farmers' organisations was meaningful.

"We will sit together again on Sunday," Thakur said.

"The government had invited farmers' organisations for talks. Many farmer leaders came and very meaningful discussions took place. We together have scheduled the next talks for Sunday. I am confident that there will be a good atmosphere on Sunday as well. There will be talks and we will move towards resolving the issues," the minister told reporters here. Commenting on the work done by



the Centre, Thakur said, "No government has done more than what the Modi government has done in the last

10 years on fertiliser, water, procurement at MSP, cheap loans from banks and compensation.

"In 2013-14, when the UPA government was in power, the agriculture budget was Rs 27,662 crore. Now the agriculture budget of the Modi government is more than Rs 1,25,000 crore, which is five times more than the agriculture budget of the UPA period. "At that time there was no Kisan Samman Nidhi. We have transferred Rs 2,81,000 crore directly to the bank accounts of more than 11 crore farmers through Kisan Samman Nidhi." The minister added. "The farmers got nothing under the crop insurance scheme of the UPA period. They have received compensation of more than Rs 1.5 lakh crore under the Modi government. Out of 10,000 FPOs, 8,000 have been formed and lakhs of farmers have also joined them."

DAC nod to Anti-Tank Mines, radar, torpedoes worth Rs 84,560 cr for armed forces

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) on Friday approved the proposal for procurement of new generation Air Defence Tactical Control Radar (ADTCR) and heavyweight Torpedoes for the armed forces.

The MoD has also given its approval for Medium Range Maritime Reconnaissance and Multi Mission Maritime Aircraft, Flight refueling aircraft and Software Defined Radios.

The MoD said that its Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), under the chairmanship of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, accorded approval for Acceptance of Necessity (AoNs) for various capital acquisition proposals amounting to Rs 84,560 crore.

The approval lays special emphasis on procurement of equipment from Indian vendors. The DAC has given approval for Anti-Tank Mines having seismic sensors and provision for remote deactivation with additional safety features.

In order to enhance operational efficiency and domination in the Tactical Battle Area for engaging targets that are Beyond Visual Line of Sight by the Mechanised Forces, the AoN under Buy (Indian-IDDM) category has been accorded for procurement of Canister Launched Anti-Air Loiter Ammunition System, the MoD added.

The ministry said that to strengthen the Air Defence Systems, especially the capabilities to detect slow, small and low-flying targets as well as surveillance, detection and tracking of different targets, the AoN has been accorded for procurement of ADTCR under Buy (Indian-IDDM) category. It has also approved strengthening of the



surveillance and interdiction capabilities of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) over the country's vast maritime area. Further, to keep the Indian Navy's ships one step ahead of the threats posed by adversaries, the AoN under Buy (Indian) category has been accorded for procurement of Active Towed Array Sonar having capabilities to operate at low frequencies and various depths for long range detections of adversary submarines. The AoN has also been accorded for

procurement of heavyweight torpedoes for enhancing the attacking capabilities of Kalvari-Class submarines.

The DAC accorded AoN for procurement of Flight Refueling Aircraft for enhancing the operational capabilities and reach of the Indian Air Force.

The AoN under Buy (Indian-IDDM) category for procurement of Software Defined Radios for the ICG has also been granted. This will fulfill the

requirement of the ICG for high-speed communication with secure networking capability for seamless information exchange between the ICG and the Indian Navy units, the MoD added. The MoD said that to create a friendly Defence start-up ecosystem and promote procurement of advanced technologies from start-ups and MSMEs developed under the Innovations for Defence Excellence (IDEX) and Technology Development Fund (TDF) schemes, the DAC has

Haldwani violence: U'khand police release photos of 9 'wanted' rioters

Dehradun | Agencies

Uttarakhand police on Friday released photos of nine rioters, accused of unleashing mayhem in Haldwani's Banbhoolpura area over the demolition of an illegal madrasa earlier this month.

The state government, via its X handle, shared the photos of nine 'wanted' rioters who were allegedly part of the mob to inflict violence on police teams.

Nainital Police are on the lookout for these wanted criminals and have sought 'information' regarding them from the public.

"Whoever gets to know about the whereabouts of these criminals can contact police stations and share information about them," the government said, as it shared the contact details of many police stations.

To recall, the Banbhoolpura area of Haldwani witnessed bloody violence on February 8 after the police moved in to raze an illegally built madrasa, following court directions.

While the police appealed to the masses to maintain calm, a large mob gheraoed



the police station and set it on fire. Many indulged in stone pelting while others hurled petrol bombs at cops, resulted in injuries to more than 100 police personnel, mediapersons as well as municipal corporation workers. As the police teams, including women cops, came under attack, they took refuge in a police station but that was also set ablaze by the restive mob. The Pushkar Singh Dhami-led state government was quick to take action against the rioters and vandals who attacked the police and burnt public property, including police vans. The Chief Minister, days after the violence, also announced setting up of a police station to 'instill fear' in the minds of the rioters.



SHIV SENA BEGINS 2-DAY MEET, EYES ALL 48 MAHA LOK SABHA SEATS

Kolhapur (Maharashtra) | Agencies

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Friday inaugurated the Shiv Sena's two-day convention aimed at spurring the party to capture all the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra.

Industry Minister Uday Samant said that six resolutions were passed unanimously on the first day, starting with one congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the construction of the Ram Lalla temple in Ayodhya and another hailing him for the work done for the progress of India, and the decision to set up a separate Ministry for Cooperation at the Centre.

The third resolution lauded Union Home Minister Amit Shah for the decision to abrogate Article 370 and declaring Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh as Union Territories.

The next resolution congratulated Eknath Shinde's policies that have led to the welfare of the people of the



state, followed by a political resolution that the Shiv Sena would fight the Lok Sabha polls under Shinde's leadership as part of the MahaYuti

alliance. The final resolution on 'Mission 48' said the grand MahaYuti alliance of Shiv Sena-BJP-NCP and other allies

would win all the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra.

"A special sixth resolution lauded Shinde for working with the ideas of the late Balasaheb Thackeray for all these years," said Samant.

The Shiv Sena announced it would institute a series of 'Shiv Samman Awards' from next year in memory of various personalities who contributed to building the party along with Balasaheb Thackeray.

These awards are: Excellence in Labour Award in the name of Dattaji Salvi, Innovative Entrepreneur in memory of Sudhir Joshi, Best Journalist Award in the name of Pramod Navalkar, Adarsh Shiv Sainik Award in memory of Datta Nalawade, Excellence in Education in the name of Vamanrao Mahadik, Excellence in Arts in memory of the veteran comedy actor-filmmaker Krishna 'Dada' Kondke, and the Outstanding Social Worker in the name of Sharadbhau Acharya.

K'taka BJP legislator praises CM Siddaramaiah over Budget

Bengaluru | Agencies

Much to the chagrin of his party members, former Karnataka minister and BJP legislator S.T. Somashekhar on Friday praised Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over the Budget presented in the Assembly.

Speaking to reporters here, Yeshwanthpur MLA Somashekhar said: "A good budget has been presented in connection with the development of Bengaluru. I will congratulate CM Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM Shivakumar."

"Stress has been given to drinking water, garbage management, traffic, white topping, and flyover development. I will thank the government for the Budget. I will not comment on those who have been objecting to the state budget. It is their personal point of view and I



won't comment on that," he maintained.

According to sources, Somashekhar's moves have been causing severe embarrassment to the BJP-JD-S alliance.

He has also been maintaining a distance from the activities of the BJP party.

Somashekhar did not flaunt a saffron shawl when all BJP legislators came wearing saffron shawls to the assembly on the first day of the session.

Somashekhar had recently campaigned for Congress candidate in the MLC election.

Poor people of OBC, SC/ST & Dalit communities not getting justice: Rahul

Patna | Agencies

Criticising the Central government, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said the poor people belonging to the OBC, SC/ST, Dalit and minority communities, as well as the farmers and labourers in the country were not getting justice.

Addressing a rally during Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra at Aurangabad in Bihar, the Congress leader said: "The poor people are turning poorer while the rich are getting richer, and it is happening due to the policies of the Central government." Rahul Gandhi also questioned "how many people from the OBC, Dalit, tribal communities own big companies or high posts?" "The posts are mostly occupied by the people of the upper castes. They are occupying those posts in hospitals, colleges, media and others. This is why poor people belonging to OBC, SC, ST and minorities are not getting justice in the country. To bring justice to them, caste-based census is the tool and we are committed to conduct one if we form the government," he added. Rahul Gandhi



reached Aurangabad from Delhi via Gaya to join the second part of Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Bihar. His flight was around three hours late due to "technical reasons". In the first part, he reached Kishanganj district on January 29 this year. He also visited Purnea, Araria and Katihar districts of Bihar as well. Rahul Gandhi will go to Dehri, Chenari, Tekari blocks in Rohtas district and then go to Kaimur district and further move towards Uttar Pradesh.

LIC OF INDIA INTRODUCED NEW PLAN "LIC'S AMRITBAAL (PLAN 874)"

Team Absolute | Mumbai

LIC of India launched a new product LIC's Amritbaal at the hands of Dr. Vivek Joshi, Secretary, Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, GOI. The Plan will be available for sale from 17.02.2024. The Unique Identification Number (UIN) for LIC's Amritbaal is UIN: 512N365V01

LIC's Amritbaal is an Individual, Savings, Life



Insurance Plan. The plan is specifically designed to have an adequate corpus to meet the higher education and other needs of the child. It facilitates accumulation of corpus through Guaranteed additions at the rate of Rs 80 per thousand basic sum assured at the end of each policy year from the inception till the end of Policy term provided policy is in force

- Minimum Age at Entry is 0 years (30 days completed). Maximum Age at Entry is 13 years (last birthday).
- Minimum Age at maturity is 18 years (last birthday) and Maximum Age at maturity is 25 years (last birthday)
- Short Premium payment Term of 5, 6 or 7 years available.
- Minimum Policy Term for Limited Premium Payment-10 years and Single Premium Payment-5 years
- Maximum Policy Term for Limited/Single Premium Payment is 25 years and for policies procured through POSP-LI/CPSC-SPV is 20 years.
- Minimum Sum Assured is Rs. 2,00,000/- and no limit for Maximum Basic Sum Assured (subject to conditions).
- On date of Maturity, Sum Assured on maturity along with Guaranteed additions will be payable for In-force policy. Maturity Amount can also be received through settlement options in installments over 5, 10 or 15 years.
- The Proposer shall have an option to choose "Sum Assured on Death" as per the two options available under each of Single Premium and Limited Premium Payment.
- During risk cover period, for In-force policy death benefit payable will be "Sum Assured on Death" along with accrued Guaranteed

- additions.
- LIC's Premium Waiver Benefit Rider is available by paying additional premium subject to the eligibility conditions.
- There is Rebate for High Basic Sum Assured as well as for proposal completed under online Sale.
- Loan shall be available during the policy term subject to the conditions.
- The Plan is a Non-Linked, Non-Participating Plan. Plan can be purchased Offline through agents / other intermediaries as well as Online directly through website www.licindia.in.

Rajasthan Royals rope in Poornima University as Official University Partner

Lalit Sharma | Jaipur

Royals Sports Group-owned franchise Rajasthan Royals on Friday announced Poornima University (PU) as its Official University Partner for the upcoming season. As part of the partnership, the University's logo will feature on the back of the caps and helmets of the Royals' players, with a host of on-ground activations also planned at the University's campus in Jaipur.

This collaboration acts as a significant milestone for both institutions; it brings together their shared commitment towards excellence in education and sports. As the Official University Partner of the Rajasthan Royals, Poornima University aims to enhance the academic and athletic experiences of students and fans alike on an international forum. Through this partnership, Poornima University will leverage its expertise in higher education to offer unique opportunities for learning, skill development, and engagement with cricket enthusiasts across the globe.

Rahul Singhi, Co-Founder of Poornima University, expressed his enthusiasm about the partnership, stating, "We are thrilled to join forces with Rajasthan Royals, a team synonymous



with passion, resilience, and excellence. This collaboration aligns perfectly with our vision of empowering the next generation of leaders through holistic education and immersive experiences.

Together, we will inspire students to pursue their dreams on and off the field." Jake Lush McCrum, Chief Executive Officer, Rajasthan Royals,

shared his excitement for the partnership, remarking, "One of our fundamental pillars at the Royals is the local community, and through this association with Poornima University, we are aiming to provide our young and local fan base with the opportunity to connect with the team and feel closer to their favourite players. Through this

association, we intend to promote the importance of integrating sport within the education model. With a host of engaging activations planned for the coming season, we are looking forward to fostering deeper connections with the local students and also provide the University the opportunity to reach a national audience."

Jio-bp launches "You-Deserve-More" campaign

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Jio-bp (the operating brand of Reliance BP Mobility Limited, fuel and retailing joint venture of Reliance Industries and bp), a leading mobility solution provider, today launched their You-Deserve-More campaign showcasing their unique customer propositions to elevate India's fuelling experience.

Marching through the Amrit Kaal towards the 100th anniversary of Independence, India will continue to remain the bright spot for global energy. Offering "More" to India, the You-Deserve-More (YDM) campaign highlights the unique customer propositions on offer from Jio-bp, focusing on three pillars of performance, service, and cutting-edge technology.

The YDM campaign touches upon diesel delivering up to 4.3% higher mileage and petrol that keeps engines up to 10X cleaner through internationally developed bespoke "ACTIVE" technolo-



gy at no extra cost along with a rapidly growing Jio-bp pulse EV charging point network. Also highlighted is the 24x7 shop for snacks, confectionery and travel need items, along with signature coffee under an international on-the-move brand Wild Bean Café, amongst other propositions at the country-

wide network of Jio-bp Mobility Stations. In line with their vision of reimagining mobility for the country with low carbon solutions, Jio-bp also retails a bouquet of energy offerings including compressed biogas, ethanol based E20 petrol, and EV battery charging and swapping.

Delhi: Man robbed of Rs 81 lakh at gunpoint, shots fired

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A 47-year-old man was robbed of Rs 81 lakh here at gunpoint by three unidentified men, who also fired in the air, an official said on Friday, adding the incident took place in Delhi's Narela area.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Ravi Kumar Singh said that on Friday, a call was received at 4.11 p.m., regarding three persons robbing the victim identified as Vinod Kumar, a resident of Safiyabad, Narela, at gunpoint and firing was also reported near the Axis Bank in the area. Acting on the call, a police team rushed to the spot, where the victim, who works as 'Arthiya' (commission



agent) in Narela Anaj Mandi, narrated the incident and stated that three persons chased him on a white TVS Apache bike.

"They robbed him of Rs 81 lakh at gunpoint. He had just withdrawn the money from the Axis bank branch and had started on his scooter. On resisting, one of the assailants hit him with a pistol butt on his

face and fired in the air to scare him. Thereafter they took his black bag and drove away towards Bhorgarh," said the DCP. The DCP further said that CCTVs are being scanned in this incident and a case under sections 394, 397 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and 27 Arms Act is being registered at Narela Police station and investigation is in progress.

Amid account 'freeze and de-freeze' of Congress, here is an account of its tax liability

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress party's bank accounts, including those of Youth Congress were "frozen" and made inoperative by the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), claimed party treasurer Ajay Maken on Friday. However, just an hour later, the party claimed that it was "defroze" by the I-T department.

Congress called it a BJP government's ploy to disrupt party's election preparations by blocking its funds but the "revelation" by tax authorities on Congress tax liability has cleared the air about the entire "account freeze" row.

Sources in the I-T department termed it a "routine recovery measure", the tax authorities said that recovery made by withdrawing



money from accounts is a "routine recovery measure" and the Congress accounts were "neither blocked nor

stopped". Also, the party has many more accounts for its activities," they said.

Congress owes an outstanding balance of about Rs 135 crore for the financial year 2018-19 and this includes demand of Rs 103 crore on account of assessment and interest of Rs 32 crore (approximately).

As per the I-T sources privy to information on Congress tax liability, recovery to the tune of Rs 115 crore has been effected by withdrawing money from various bank accounts of INC. "INC was requested to pay 20 per cent of the total demand (i.e. Rs. 21 crore approx.) as per extant procedure. An amount of Rs 78 lakh only was paid. Since INC failed to pay 20 per cent of the outstanding demand, letter was issued asking it to pay the balance demand of Rs 104 crore. The appeal filed by INC before CIT (A) was later dismissed," the I-T department further said in a statement.



CHIEF MINISTER DR. YADAV DEDICATES CONSTRUCTION WORKS WORTH MORE THAN RS 55 CRORE 24 LAKH INCLUDING SEWERAGE TREATMENT PLANT IN AMARKANTAK

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav reached the origin of the Narmada river in Amarkantak of Anuppur district and offered prayers to Maa Narmada on occasion of Narmada Jayanti. He prayed to Mother Narmada for the welfare and happiness and prosperity of the citizens of the state.

Chief Minister dedicated 11 construction works related to various departments of Anuppur district including Sewerage Treatment Plant in Amarkantak. Rs 55 crore 24 lakh have been spent on these construction works.

The works that Chief Minister dedicated include bridge constructed on Chaidar drain of Kotma-Nigwani-Bijuri road at a cost of Rs 306.66 lakh, bridge on Latguda drain of Kotma-Nigwani-Bijuri road at a cost of Rs 240.29 lakh, bridge on Hasiyan Nala on Jaithari-Seoni-Semarwar road at a cost of 1083.79 lakh, bridge on Son River (Mahuda Ghat) on Rajendragram-Jaithari-Kotma road at a cost of Rs 898.33 lakh, sewerage treatment plant built at a cost of Rs 2115 lakh under



Urban Administration and Development Department (Office of Municipal Council Amarkantak), 10-room Government Higher Secondary School, Beldongri built at a cost of Rs. 376.26 lakh and Tribal Senior Girls Hostel Jaithari

built at a cost of Rs 403.68 lakh under the Tribal Affairs Department, Block Public Health Unit built at Community Health Center Kotma at a cost of Rs 50 lakh and the Block Public Health Unit built at Community Health Center

Pushparajgarh at a cost of Rs 50 lakh under the Health Department. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav performed kanya puja, Participated in bhandara and also offered his services in the Bhandara Prasad Rasoi.

National convention will be held with the resolution of increasing seats to 370: Vishnudatt Sharma

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The opposition parties of the Bharatiya Janata Party have also started believing that the NDA alliance is going to win more than 400 seats in the Lok Sabha elections. But in the public meeting in Jhabua, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given a mantra to the Bharatiya Janata Party alone to win 370 seats. He had said that if we get 370 more votes than the maximum number of votes received by BJP at every booth, then no one will be able to stop BJP alone from winning more than 370 seats.

A two-day national convention of the party is going to be held in Delhi with the resolve to bloom lotus at every booth and get 370 more votes in the Lok Sabha elections. Bharatiya Janata Party State President and MP Vishnudatt Sharma said this during a press conference on Friday. Sharma said that the national convention of the party will be inaugurated



by National President JP Nadda on February 17 at Bharat Mandapam of Pragati Maidan. During the session, political proposals will be discussed and discussions will be held from the point of view of Lok Sabha elections. There will be presentations from different states. The concluding session of the convention will be held on February 18 at 2 pm. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will guide the workers present in this session. As the Prime Minister has said that we will contest elections at every booth, its strategic preparation can also be discussed in the

convention. Sharma said that after the consecration of Lord Ramlala and many such campaigns, this convention, which is going to be held in Delhi in the presence of the world's most popular leader, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will be historic in many ways. State President said that 1226 main workers, public representatives and party officials of the state will participate in this convention. He said that all the workers will reach Delhi by tomorrow morning and will attend the convention and receive guidance from the top leadership.

HEADING: 27 ELDERLY PEOPLE WILL GET VISION BACK



Bhopal: The eyesight of 27 elderly people living in Ward 41 of the capital will return. These patients were sent to the hospital for operation on Thursday morning. These patients were identified after examination in the medical camp organized at Sonia Gandhi Colony under the leadership of State Government Minister Vishwas Sarang on February 11. Health checkup of about 250 people was done in this camp.

ENTRY IN MAHAKAL TEMPLE WILL BE THROUGH NEW TUNNEL

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On Mahashivratri, devotees will be allowed to enter the temple through a new tunnel in the Jyotirlinga Mahakal temple located in the state's religious city Ujjain. Devotees will come out after having darshan from the new exit made near the emergency gate. This time on Mahashivratri, there is a plan to provide darshan to the devotees by running 15 queues simultaneously.

The darshan arrangements were discussed in the meeting of the management committee held under the chairmanship of lecturer Neerajkumar Singh. The final decision will be taken after physical verification of the temple area by the administrative officials along with the Collector and SP. Temple administrator Sandeep Kumar Soni said that the darshan system will be implemented on Mahashivratri on the lines of the



first day of the new year. Devotees will be brought to Ganesh Mandap through the new tunnel from Narsingh Ghat via Chardham Temple, Shaktipath,

Mahakal Mahalok, Mansarovar Facility Center and will be given darshan of God. Devotees coming from all over the country and abroad to see Mahakal have the desire to have the

Bhasma Aarti darshan. On Mahashivratri, thousands of devotees will reach the temple with the hope of seeing Bhasma Aarti.

To ensure that the Shiva devotees coming from all over the country and the world do not return disappointed, it has been decided to arrange for ongoing darshan during Bhasma Aarti on this day. A decision will be taken in the coming days to keep the ongoing darshan system intact during the Bhasma Aarti, which is held once a year on March 9, the next day.

While having darshan, the devotees will come out from the new exit near the emergency and reach Chardham via Harsiddhi intersection in front of the Bade Ganesh temple and leave for their destination. More than 10 lakh devotees are expected to come to see Mahakal on this day. Therefore, for crowd control, there is a plan to conduct darshan by running 15 lines simultaneously.

Now electricity will be generated from waste in Rewa: Deputy Chief Minister Shukla

Deputy Chief Minister inaugurated Waste to Energy Plant. The plant will produce 6 MW electricity

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla has said that now after coal, water and solar, electricity will also be generated from waste in Rewa. The Waste to Energy Plant will generate 6 MW electricity by processing the waste generated from urban bodies.

He said that while the disposal of waste will generate electricity, on the other hand the resolve to make Rewa and Vindhya clean under waste management will also be fulfilled. The Deputy Chief Minister inaugurated the Waste to Energy Plant costing Rs 158 crore 67 lakh under the Integrated Solid Waste Management Scheme in village Pahariya of Rewa.

Shukla said that from this plant the waste of 28 urban bodies of Rewa division will be used to generate electricity. He said that making cities



clean requires awareness as well as infrastructural works. This state-of-the-art plant will manage solid waste and the smoke coming out of its

chimney will not be harmful in any way. The Deputy Chief Minister said that cleanliness is the most important

thing in preventing disease. All citizens should join hands in keeping the cities and villages clean and become partners in fulfilling the resolve of the national movement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Swachh Bharat Mission.

350 TONS OF GARBAGE WILL BE DISPOSED PER DAY

It is noteworthy that the capacity of Waste to Energy Plant is 350 tonnes per day. After generating electricity from the waste, the ash will be reused and the harmful gases generated by burning of waste will be completely recycled and released into the atmosphere. This state-of-the-art plant is the 9th plant in the country which will fulfill the pledge of Swachh Bharat along with generating electricity by converting waste.

Large Goiter successfully removed in AIIMS Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Another complex surgery was carried out under the guidance of Professor (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director, AIIMS Bhopal. Actually, a woman reached the OPD of Bhopal AIIMS due to swelling in her throat and difficulty in breathing. The investigation confirmed goiter in the woman. It was so big that the woman was having serious breathing trouble. In such a situation, the doctors of the General Surgery Department decided to remove it by performing an operation. This was extremely difficult as it involved removing the goiter while preserving the food pipe, airways and nerves present in the throat.

After thorough planning, the team of doctors decided to give a new life to the 56-year-old woman who was suffering from a large goiter



for a long time. Surgery was started for this. The aim of which was to eliminate the difficulty in breathing while maintaining the beauty of the woman's face. Specialist doctors successfully completed the 3-hour long operation without any complications.

Now the woman is healthy. This would not have been possible without the skilled efforts of the anesthetist. The

patient not only got relief from physical pain, but also experienced a significant change in her mental status. She said that the medical system available at AIIMS Bhopal has boosted her confidence in AIIMS. This operation has been successfully performed by Professor Dr. Manish Swarnkar of the Department of General Surgery and his team.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF MORE THAN 80 THOUSAND CHILDREN WILL BE DONE IN MISSION ANKUR

Bhopal: The annual assessment of basic literacy and numeracy of children studying in classes 2 and 3 in government schools in the state will be conducted simultaneously in a sample of 4 thousand 800 schools from February 19 to February 22. For this, the State Education Center has issued a circular. The annual assessment will be done in 322 development blocks of 51 districts. For this, the State Education Center has appointed nodal officers. Aspirational districts have also been included in the assessment work. The teams formed during the annual assessment will go to primary schools and do survey work. Participation of development blocks is also being ensured in the annual assessment. The purpose of annual assessment is to study the learning outcomes in students of classes 2 and 3. 39 thousand students of class 2 and 42 thousand students of class 3 have been included in this annual assessment. On the basis of annual assessment, targets for the academic year 2024-25 will be set and an academic action plan will be prepared. The School Education Department has decided to run this program in the state under the Central Government's Nipun Bharat Abhiyan. State Education Center Bhopal has also given instructions to send the annual assessment report of the districts by 24th February.

BJP to give huge surprise before Rahul's Nyay Yatra in Madhya Pradesh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The two-day national executive meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party is to be held in Delhi and is scheduled to conclude on Sunday. In which BJP will discuss many important proposals. It will set a target of winning 400 seats in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. In this convention, all the top leadership of Bharatiya Janata Party as well as leaders and workers from across the country will gather in Delhi.

After this national convention, BJP is preparing to make a big blast, under which many big leaders of Congress can be given membership of the party. There will be a high level discussion in this regard also in the National Executive Committee. Names of many leaders of Madhya Pradesh are also included in the list of big leaders of Congress which is being seen as a big blast before Rahul Gandhi's Nyay Yatra. This will be the biggest attempt yet for the leaders to leave the Congress before the Lok Sabha elections to weaken the Nyaya Yatra of the Congress and Rahul Gandhi.



If sources are to be believed, efforts were being made for a long time to bring big leaders of Madhya Pradesh to BJP which has reached a decisive position. It is believed that on the last day of the convention, big leaders of Congress can take membership of Bharatiya Janata Party in the presence of the central leadership of BJP. It includes Jabalpur Mayor Jagat Bahadur Singh Annu, former Advocate General of Madhya Pradesh Shashank Shekhar and many district Congress Presidents. Now the action of giving membership of BJP to a national level leader of Congress can be taken before the national level leaders. This could be a big blast even before Rahul Gandhi enters Madhya Pradesh. BJP believes that this will be the biggest blast for Congress so far.

ARBITRARINESS OF OFFICERS, CULVERT BUILT IN FARMER'S FIELD, NEITHER INFORMATION NOR COMPENSATION GIVEN

Team Absolute | Khandwa

An example of how the shortcomings of the government system become a cause of trouble for the farmers can be seen in village Badgaon Piplod. Here, during road construction, a culvert has been constructed in a farmer's field itself. The farmer was not even given any information about this. Now the farmer is searching for compensation. Kriparam Patel, son of Sadashiv Patel, resident of village Badgaon Piplod of Pandhana tehsil, said that a culvert has been constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana from agricultural land Khasra No.

59, area 0.09. This land was registered in the earlier revenue forms in the name of father Sadashiv. A culvert has been constructed on this under the Pradhan Mantri Sadak Yojana. Due to this the entire land has become unusable.

Kriparam told that a culvert has been constructed on his farm land without any information. The farmer said that his only source of income is this agricultural land and he supports his family with the agricultural income, but due to the construction of the culvert, he is incurring financial loss. In this regard, a written application was also given to the Tehsildar a month ago but no action was taken on it.



Government should make Patwari recruitment investigation report public: Jitu Patwari



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Regarding giving clean chit to irregularities in Patwari recruitment, State Congress President Jitu Patwari said that the report should have been made public. Unless this is brought to the fore, doubt will remain. It is the wish of all of us that the selected candidates get appointment soon, but there

should also be transparency. Congress President Patwari said that BJP took the maximum amount in the form of electoral bonds. The Supreme Court has declared it illegal. This kind of decision has never come before today. BJP came to government with the promise of being free from corruption, but the biggest corruption was committed by the government in front of the public.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Yogi gov't renovates 300 temples under its spiritual tourism policy

As part of its spiritual tourism policy, the Uttar Pradesh government has been renovating ancient temples in various districts. Around 300 temples in all the 75 districts of the state are being renovated. A sum of Rs 50 lakh for each of these temples has been allocated for the refurbishment and renovation. In case of big temples, a separate fund of up to Rs 2 crore each has been allocated. The work to renovate the temples was reportedly undertaken soon after the formation of Yogi government 2.0. Some of the reconstructed and renovated temples include Bateshwar Dham temple in Agra district, Rupani Devi temple in Firozabad, Aamani Baba temple in Aligarh, Kailash temple in Etah, Taragarh temple in Hathras, Lalpuri temple in Mainpuri and Laxmi temple in Mathura, Hathiram Baba temple in Ayodhya. The Shiva Baba temple in Ambedkar Nagar, Mahadev temple in Barabanki, Ram Janaki temple in Amethi, Jalhidham temple in Gonda, Baba Bihari Das temple in Bahraich, Maa Pateshwari temple in Balrampur and Jharkhand Mahadev temple in Gorakhpur are also on this list. The infrastructural development around these temples will facilitate the movement of tourists in the area. All the while, the accent was on the quality of work and adherence to standards was ensured before making payments. Singh further said constitution of the Braj Teerth Vikas Parishad, Vindhya Dham Teerth Vikas Parishad, Shree Ayodhya Jee Teerth Vikas Parishad, Shree Devipatan Dham Teerth Vikas Parishad and Shree Shuk Teerth Vikas Parishad will give momentum to renovation of the temples and development of religious spots in various districts. The minister said that the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya was the flagship project of the state government plan to renovate and rebuild the temples across the state.

Film did not fly because people do not fly!

Vinod Mirani

I noticed something curious. Director Siddharth Anand of the film 'Fighter' says that his film flopped because 90 per cent of Indian moviegoers have never sat in an airplane! I was amazed, amused, but, most of all, I was worried. Worried, because this is how the maker of a Rs 400-crore film thinks!

My mind instantly went back to Shakti Samanta's 'An Evening In Paris' (1967), where a bikini-clad Sharmila Tagore is sea skiing as Shamma Kapoor courts her hanging from a helicopter. After learning what Malhotra had said to explain why his film had failed, I wondered how many people hang from a helicopter to court a woman! I don't know anybody who has done such a thing and still, 'An Evening In Paris' was a major hit! I can cite hundreds of such examples.

Of course, the audience must first identify with the subject of a film. The other factor is fantasy -- its content must make a viewer fantasise what the actor is doing on the screen. For instance, Rajesh Khanna driving parallel to a mini train of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in 'Aradhana', another Shakti Samanta film, and on noticing Sharmila Tagore on the train, sings a song ('Mere sapnon ki rani...'). That gives wings to the viewer's fantasy. He would imagine his own self in that scene.

Similarly, when Amitabh Bachchan played his angry young man out to set the world right, it reflected the prevailing mood of the people of that time borne out of a rather authoritarian regime.

The prevailing national mood and the political dispensation usually have an undefined impact on the kind of films that work. Post-Independence, there was a brief period of time when films and songs were imbued with the spirit of nationalism. The period that followed was the celebration of independence. There was no media like the one that exists now and people lived believing that all was fine. All genres, be it a family social, romance, musical, historical or mythological, found an audience. Action was accepted only as a part of the narrative; horror and extra-terrestrial movies held little appeal. People went to a cinema to be entertained and did not like to be burdened with ghost stories.

The second Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, who fought a successful war and won it, brought nationalism back in his short tenure. Manoj Kumar's 'Shaheed' as well as Gulshan Behl's 'Sikandar E Azam', besides I.S. Johar's comic take on Goa's liberation, 'Johar Mehmood In Goa', managed to do well.

It was post the Shastri era that Manoj Kumar picked up the threads and cashed in on the national mood with his classic, 'Upkar'. Jeetendra's spy movie, 'Fazl', struck a responsive chord in the audience because the film portrayed the Chinese as the antagonists.

Manoj Kumar continued driving home his theme of nationalism with 'Purab Aur Paschim', 'Roti Kapada Aur Makana' and 'Kranti', all successful, though the returns compared with 'Upkar' kept receding. Only 'Upkar' is considered a classic.

Then again, just about every genre was working with a new superstar, Rajesh Khanna, dominating the screen. Just as suddenly, anti-establishment films took over and became the norm. Films such as 'Zanjeer', 'Deewaar', 'Trishul', 'Shahenshah', 'Inquilab' and 'Andhaa Kanoon' ruled, all spun around the narrative of a one-man army taking on all that was wrong in the society.

After the Amitabh Bachchan angry young man era, however, no



definite trend could be established that filmmakers could follow. There was only one formula for success and that was the musical love story. The new big stars -- Aamir Khan, Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan -- thrived on love stories. Even some one-film wonders such as Rahul Roy ('Aashiqui') and Vivek Mushran ('Saudagar') came up with hits. So, Mr Director of 'Fighter', true nationalism and patriotism are the formulae that are in the air currently. Earlier, they hardly worked. Do you know that most war films don't work in India unless they have human angles in valour shown by personnel and not machines, notably aircraft?

One of the earliest war films was Chetan Anand's 'Haqeeqat'. A perfectly blended film formula with family, emotions, romance and, most of all, one of the greatest musical scores a war movie could have. The film still got limited appreciation despite its tax-free tag in many parts of the country.

In your film, the family angle was corny. I can't detail it because not many people have seen your film to understand it. You expect them to catch it on OTT so I won't spoil the fun for them. I suppose being privileged enough to fly is not a prerequisite when it comes to watching the film on an OTT platform.

There is a list of war films that did not work and these include 'Prem Pujari', 'Hindustan Ki Kasam', 'Vijeta', 'Aakraman', 'Mission Kashmir', 'Ab Tumhare Hawale Watan Saathiyon', 'The Ghazi Attack' and 'LOC'. 'Uri: The Surgical Strike' was the notable exception.

Is it surprising that 'Fighter' failed to get a decent opening collection? There are people who grew up playing video games flying and downing fighter planes!

The choice of making a Rs 400-plus crore film was wrong on all counts. In which box office would a film with this kind of a budget recover the investment and make a profit? The collection would need to be more than Rs 1,000 crore. Does the Indian box-office business have that kind of a potential?

Even if you believe in the Rs 700 crore and Rs 500 crore business as claimed by the makers of some recent films, what do you think is the take home from these figures? It is less than 50 per cent, for

the multiplex chains demand 52.5 per cent in the first week, 48.5 in the second week, and so on.

Finally, when you say 'Fighter' will be called a classic by OTT viewers, it is just solace you are offering to yourself if you check what has worked on OTT platforms.

Social media is a boon as well as a curse. Boon, because it is many minutes ahead in the business of propagating news before traditional media catches up with it. And it is a curse because that is where people end up being fools and vengeful.

Anand's other excuse is that they made a mistake by releasing the film on January 25, a working day before the Republic Day holiday. He seems to have forgotten that his earlier film, 'Jawan', was released on January 25 in 2023, also a working day. The film is reported to have collected Rs 55 crore on January 25; 'Fighter' could fetch only Rs 20 crore.

Filmmakers, over the years, have come up with many excuses on why their films failed. But this one qualifies for Ripley's Believe It Or Not! In that sense, the southern filmmakers have a more business-like approach. If a film fails to work, they accept it and move on to the next project.

When a plane flies overhead, not only children but also grownups look up instinctively. I have known people who are scared to travel in an airplane but never heard of those who would not welcome the experience of travelling in one or watching a film showing planes! The fact is, people have had enough of this patriotism and war against Pakistan narrative. Indians don't hate Pakistan anymore considering how poorly the country is placed. People pity and have sympathies for our neighbour. So, no use fighting a meek, distressed enemy.

And don't lose heart. Our airlines have ordered some 1,000 new planes and the government is constructing many more airports. More people will fly.

international

Attack on Indian students: US says 'working very hard' to address the issue

Washington | Agencies

Asserting that there is no excuse for violence based on race or gender, the White House has said that the US is working very hard to thwart and disrupt attacks on Indians as well as Indian-origin students.

A series of attacks beginning this year has put the focus back on the security and safety of the Indian students across the country which has witnessed more than four deaths from the community.

"There's no excuse for violence, certainly based on race or gender or religion or any other factor. That's just unacceptable here in the United States," John Kirby, Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House, said on Thursday.

Allaying the fears of parents in India as well as in the US, Kirby said President Joe Biden and his administration are working "very hard" to address the situation.

"The President and this administration have been working very, very hard to make sure we're doing everything we can to work with state and local authorities to try to thwart and disrupt those kinds of attacks and make it clear to anybody who might consider them that they'll be held properly accountable," Kirby said in response to a question.



Five Indian students have died in quick succession in the US since the start of this year, including Shreyas Reddy Benigeri in Cincinnati and Purdue University's Neel Acharya in Indiana.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that the welfare of Indian students abroad is one of the foremost priorities of the government.

Indian students constitute more than 25 per cent of the over one million foreign stu-

dents studying in the US, according to a November 2023 Open Doors report.

The number of Indians who travelled to the US for higher education increased by 35 per cent and resulted in an all-time high of 2,68,923 students in the academic year 2022-23, the report said.

Last year, the US consular team in India issued over 140,000 student visas -- more than in any other country in the world, setting a record for the third year in a row.

Over 20 terrorists who took part in Oct 7 massacre arrested in Gaza hospital: IDF

Gaza | Agencies

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Thursday said they will continue to carry out searches at the Nasser Hospital in Gaza's Khan Younis and have so far apprehended more than 20 terrorists, who took part in the October 7 massacre, media reports said.

Forces from the elite Maglan and Naval Commando Unit also found mortars, grenades and other weaponry belonging to Hamas inside the medical facility, the IDF added as quoted by The Times of Israel



report. In addition, dozens of suspects have been detained for questioning.

IDF troops entered the hospital on Wednesday, saying they had information that hostages had been held there and some bodies may still be at the site.

The Israeli military has said that it will "continue to operate in accordance with international law against the Hamas terror group, which has systematically operated from within hospitals and other civilian infrastructures".

Tulsi Gabbard 'open' to talks on running as Trump's mate, discusses foreign policy

Washington | Agencies

Hindu-American Tulsi Gabbard, a 2020 Democratic presidential candidate, has spoken to Republican frontrunner Donald Trump and his advisors about the country's foreign policy, keeping her options as the former President's 2024 running mate 'open', media reports suggested.

The first Hindu in the US Congress left the Democratic Party in 2022, calling it an "elitist cabal of warmongers" and accusing its leadership of "cowardly weakness".

Now, with the country likely set for a Trump-Joe Biden rematch in 2024, the talks with Gabbard focused on how the Defence Department should be run in case of a second Trump term, The Washington Post reported. Also, with Trump telling his advisors and donors time and again that his personnel choices at the Pentagon cost him, there were broader conversations on how Trump 2.0 would manage things dif-



ferently. A military veteran, who served in the Iraq war between 2004 and 2005 for the Hawaii Army National Guard before entering Congress, Gabbard has long been critical of US intervention overseas and has also blamed Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Biden's failed foreign policy. "She appeals to Republicans who are skeptical of intervention overseas, which is now a

majority of Republican voters," GOP strategist Andrew Surabian told Newsweek. While appearing on Fox News' Fox & Friends recently, the former Hawaii representative said she would be "open" to a conversation with Trump on running as his 2024 running mate. "I'd be open to that conversation. My mission in life is to serve our country and serve the American people and find the best way to be able to do that," Gabbard said. Gabbard recently inked a deal with Elon Musk to host a show on X to "defend free speech", saying she will be sharing stories of those whose "voices have been silenced". Trump, bulldozing his way to grab the crucial GOP nomination for the 2024 presidential race, is yet to announce his vice-presidential pick. While media speculation throws up several candidates, Trump has said very little about whom he or she he has shortlisted or even what qualities he's looking for in a potential candidate, media reports said.

Russian opposition leader Navalny dies in prison

London | Agencies

Russia's most significant opposition leader for the past decade, Alexei Navalny, has died in prison inside the Arctic Circle, the prison service said, the media reported.

Seen as President Vladimir Putin's most vociferous critic, Navalny was serving a 19-year jail term for offences widely considered politically motivated.

He was moved to an Arctic penal colony, considered one of the toughest jails, late last year, BBC reported.

The prison service in the Yamalo-Nenets district said he had "felt unwell" after a walk on Friday.

He had "almost immediately lost consciousness", it said in a statement, adding that an emergency medical team had immediately been called and tried to resuscitate him but without success.

"The emergency doctors declared the prisoner dead. Cause of death is being established," BBC reported.

Navalny's lawyer Leonid Solovoyov told Russian media he would not be commenting yet. In early December he had disappeared from a prison in the Vladimir region, where he was serving a 30-year sentence on extremism and fraud charges that he had called political retribution for leading the anti-Kremlin opposition of the 2010s. He did not expect to be released during Putin's lifetime, The Guardian reported.



Rishi Sunak has suffered a double-blow after losing two by-elections to Labour

London | Agencies

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has suffered a double-blow after losing two by-elections to Labour Party, overturning significant majorities in both, the media reported. Both Kingswood and Wellingborough turned from blue to red, meaning this government has seen the most by-election losses of any Conservative administration since the Second World War, Sky News reported. The losses do not bode well as Downing Street continues its preparation for the general election due this year.

The results also provide some relief for Keir Starmer after a challenging week for



the Labour leader, having scaled back his party's green investment plan and been embroiled in an anti-semitism crisis.

Labour's wins in Kingswood and Wellingborough mean the Conservatives have now lost 10 by-elections in the course

of this Parliament - two more than the eight defeats suffered by the 1992-97 Conservative administration led by John Major, The Guardian reported.

It means the Conservative government has lost more by-elections than any previous government since the 1966-70 Labour administration of Harold Wilson, which endured 15 losses, The Guardian reported.

The size of the majority Labour overturned at Wellingborough -- 18,540 -- is the third biggest Tory majority the party has overturned at a by-election since the war, behind those in Mid Bedfordshire in October 2023 (24,664) and Selby & Ainsty in July 2023 (20,137).



Maratha quotas: BC Commission panel submits survey report to Maha govt



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission on Friday submitted to the state government its voluminous survey report on ascertaining the backwardness of the Marathas ahead of the Special Legislature Session on February 20 to finalise the community's quotas. MSBCC Chairman Justice (retired) Sunil Shukre and other members submitted the bulky report to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde at his official residence 'Varsha', in the presence of Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, this morning. Justice Shukre said this was the biggest survey ever conducted anywhere in the country for which around three-four lakh surveyors contacted over 2.25 crore community people across the state. Accepting the report, Shinde praised the efforts

of the MSBCC teams led by Justice Shukre plus the survey officials from the entire administrative system to conduct the massive survey on a war-footing, in a record time and virtually working round-the-clock. "This report shall be discussed by the state cabinet and after its approval, will be tabled in the Special Legislature Session (February 20) to finalise the reservation for the Marathas," said Shinde. The CM reiterated that the state government is positive on giving lasting Maratha quotas that would stand up to legal scrutiny and also without affecting the OBC reservation. Simultaneously, Shinde appealed to the Shivba Sanghatana leader Manoj Jarange-Patil whose indefinite hunger strike entered the seventh day on Friday to call off his agitation as the government was keen to fulfil its commitments without doing injustice to any community.

Jarange-Patil hails report, but will continue agitation

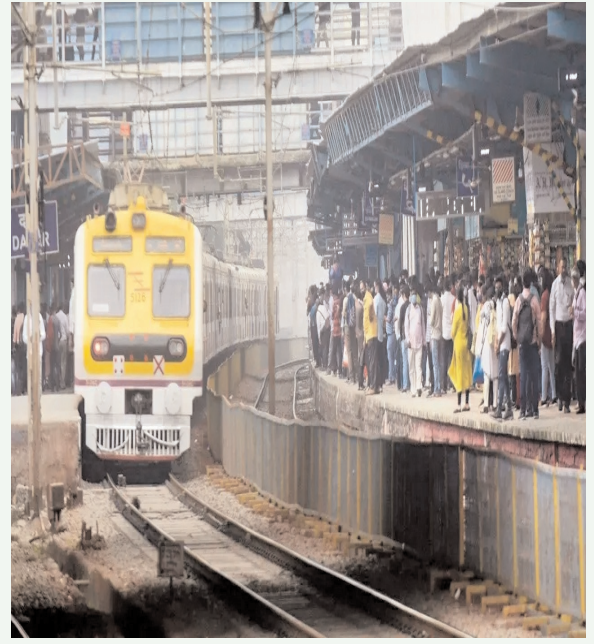
The Shivba Sanghatana leader Manoj Jarange-Patil on Friday welcomed the report of the Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (MSBCC) submitted to the state government, but declared that his agitation would continue till his demands were met. The MSBCC Chairman, Justice (Retired) Sunil Shukre, presented the report to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, to ascertain the backwardness of the Maratha community, just four days ahead of the Special Legislature Session convened on February 20 to finalise the community's quotas. Jarange-Patil said that though the Marathas would get separate quotas, his hunger strike would continue till the January 26 draft notification on 'Sage-Soyare' (bloodline) aspect is approved by the government by February 20. "The hunger strike and agitation will continue till February 20. We shall decide our next move after seeing the outcome of the Special Legislature Session that day," asserted Jarange-Patil. Among other things, Shinde said that those Marathas who do not have Kunbi Caste proof would be given separate quotas, while those having Kunbi Caste documents shall be issued certificates entitling them to reservation.



Western Railway to carry out night block between Vasai and Bhayandar on Sunday

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Western Railway, while sharing Mumbai local train updates, on Friday said that it will carry out night block between Vasai and Bhayandar stations on Sunday. According to an official statement, the Western Railway said that to carry out maintenance work of tracks, signaling and overhead equipment, a jumbo block of three hours will be taken on up and down fast lines from 00.00 hrs to 03.30 hrs between Vasai Road and Bhayandar stations in the intervening night of Saturday/Sunday, i.e. on 17th/18th February, 2024. According to a press release issued by Sumit Thakur - Chief Public Relations Officer of Western Railway, during the block period, all Fast line trains will be operated on slow line between Virar and Borivali. "There will be no block during the day over Western Railway's suburban section on Sunday 18th February. Detailed information to this effect is available with concerned station masters. Passengers are requested to take note of the above arrangements," the statement said. Meanwhile, in another statement, last week, the Western Railway on



Wednesday said that it collected Rs 141 crore as fines during different ticket checking drives conducted between April 2023 and January 2024 and a 38 per cent fine collection rise has been witnessed in Mumbai AC local trains. According to the Western Railway, in order to ensure hassle-free, comfortable travel and better services to all bonafide passengers over Western Railway, intensive ticket checking drives are being carried out continuously over Mumbai suburban local services, mail/express

as well as passenger trains and holiday special trains so as to curb the menace of ticketless/irregular passengers. The Western Railway said, the highly motivated ticket checking team under the supervision of senior commercial officers of Western Railway organised several ticket checking drives during the period from April 2023 to January, 2024, thereby recovering an amount to the tune of Rs. 141.50 crore, which also includes Rs. 37.55 Crore from Mumbai suburban section.

Woman strangles 11-year daughter to death in Borivali

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a tragic incident that unfolded on Thursday night in Mumbai's Borivali area, where a woman undergoing treatment for mental illness killed her daughter. The woman strangled her 11-year-old daughter to death using a dupatta. She then attempted to take her own life by slitting her wrist with a knife, in their rented accommodation, police sources said. However, the mother is alive and under treatment at the hospital. The event occurred around 9:30 pm on Thursday in Daulat Nagar locality, shortly after the family had dinner. The mother locked herself in a room with her daughter while the father, who owns a shop in the



area, remained in the living room of their three-bedroom flat. The woman's husband promptly informed the Kasturba Police Station about the distressing incident, prompting officials to rush to the scene. Upon arrival, the police discovered the woman lying on the floor in a pool of blood, and her daughter nearby with a dupatta around her neck. According to authorities, the woman was under treatment for mental illness at hospitals in Andheri and Baroda for the past decade, but she had skipped her medication for the last three days. Her daughter, 11-year-old Ruhaani Solanki, was pronounced dead upon arrival at Shatabdi Hospital. However, the woman, identified as 46-year-old Rekha, was still alive and undergoing treatment.

Pune Prison's Jailer attacked by 12 inmates, suffers wrist fracture

Team Absolute | Pune

Jailer was injured after he was assaulted allegedly by some inmates of the Yerawada central prison in Pune, an official said. Jailer Sherkhan Pathan sustained injuries on his face and fractured his wrist in the attack that took place on Thursday morning, he said.

"When Pathan was on duty in the jail's Circle I area, he was assaulted by inmates Prakash Renuse, Vickey Kamble and 10 others. A case has been registered and a probe is underway," he added. In December 2023, a 27-year-old undertrial lodged in Yerawada prison died after he was allegedly attacked by four inmates over past enmity.

SC to consider listing Sharad Pawar's plea against EC decision on 'real' NCP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday said that it will consider urgent listing of the plea filed by Sharad Pawar challenging the decision of Election Commission of India (ECI) which had recognised the faction led by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar as the 'real' Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and allotted it the party's 'clock' symbol. A bench presided over by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud agreed to list the matter at the earliest after senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for Sharad Pawar, sought directions for urgent listing of the plea on February 19. Singhvi said that a strange situation would arise if Sharad Pawar faction is subjected to party whip in the Assembly session commencing this weekend. "Our case is worse than Uddhav Thackeray as we have not been allotted any alternate poll symbol," he explained to the apex court. The plea arraying Ajit Pawar as respondent was filed by Sharad Pawar on February 12 through advocate Abhishek Jebaraj. The Ajit Pawar side has already filed a caveat last week, saying that it should be heard, before the top court proceeds to pass any order. A caveat serves as a notice submitted to an appellate court by a litigant who wishes to be heard in case any orders are issued regarding an opponent's appeal that challenges the



decision made by the lower judicial or quasi-judicial body. Delivering the verdict on the disqualification petitions filed by both rival NCP factions after the party split in June 2023, Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar on Thursday ruled that the faction led by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar is the 'real' NCP. The NCP split in July last year, with a faction led by Ajit Pawar rebelling against his uncle and NCP founder Sharad Pawar to join the ruling BJP-Shiv Sena government in Maharashtra. After that, both sides laid claim to the party name and symbol.

Fadnavis helps bring body of Maha medical student from war-torn Ukraine

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

In a touching and humane gesture, Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis moved the Centre and Ministry of External Affairs to bring back the body of a medical student from Raigad District, who passed away recently in war-ravaged Ukraine. On February 2, the Pawar family of Roha town was devastated to learn of the death of the ailing Dr. Prachiti Deepak Pawar, 21, in Kyiv. The country has been at war with Russia since February 24, 2022 and citizens as well as foreigners, especially students, face major constraints there. The news of Dr Prachiti's demise reached the Pawar family through her friends and colleagues in the Ivano-Frankivsk National Medical University. On January 25, she was rushed in a critical condition to the KNP Central City Clinical Hospital, of the Ivano-Frankivsk City Council, and underwent surgery there. As per a medical report of the university Dean (FCTD) Dmytro Solomchak, the young student was diagnosed with "phlegmon of the right axillary area with spread to the right



shoulder, side wall of the chest, besides Sepsis, Septic Shock, Septic Encephalopathy, Multiple Organ Failure, Bilateral pneumonia, and respiratory failure of the second degree." However, Dr. Prachiti succumbed to her illnesses on February 2, even as her friends appealed to the Indian Embassy in Kyiv, the Ministry of External Affairs and others to help secure a visa for her mother Devayani Pawar, a government employee, and Dr. Prachiti's twin sister, Aditi, who is studying aviation in a college in Salem, Tamil Nadu. The BJP's Maharashtra social media chief, Prakash Gade learnt of the matter and he immediately brought it to the notice

of Fadnavis. "The mother was worried whether her daughter would get a decent funeral or not, as she died in a foreign country. The family here couldn't afford to go there and bring back her body," Gade said. Moved by the family's plight, Fadnavis asked Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraliedharan and other officials for assistance. Fadnavis also directed his team in Mumbai and New Delhi, comprising Dilip Rajurkar and Manoj Munde, to regularly track the developments in the case and he himself monitored the movements in Ukraine and India. All these efforts proved successful, and the MEA started moving various departments and the Indian Embassy in Kyiv, to bring Dr. Prachiti's remains back to India expeditiously. "Finally, a weekly cargo flight from Kyiv, via Poland, landed at Mumbai Airport with Dr. Prachiti's mortal remains on February 13. Fadnavis arranged for an ambulance and the body was taken by road to Roha town the following day where her last rites were performed on February 14," said Gade.

80-year-old collapses, dies as he walks to terminal due to lack of wheelchair at airport

Team Absolute | Mumbai

An 80-year-old man reportedly collapsed and died of a heart attack at the Mumbai international airport while proceeding to clear immigration on foot allegedly due to a lack of wheelchair support, police said on Friday. According to a news agency, the incident happened at the airport on February 12 after the passenger landed in an Air India flight from New York. In a statement on Friday, Air India said that due to heavy demand for wheelchair, it had requested the passenger to wait for an airline staff-assisted wheelchair but he opted to walk along with his spouse. "In an unfortunate incident, one of



our guests flying from New York to Mumbai on February 12, fell ill while proceeding to clear immigration with his wife, who was on wheelchair," the airline said, the news agency reported on Friday. As advised by the airport doctor attending to him after taking ill, the airline said the passenger was immediately rushed to the hospital, where he was declared to have passed away.

According to Air India, it is in constant touch with the family members of the bereaved, extending necessary assistance, and added that it has a clearly laid down policy to offer wheelchair assistance to all passengers who pre-book the same, report stated. An official of Mumbai airport operator MIAL said wheelchair assistance is purely a service given by the airline. At the terminal, the wheelchair inventory and manpower assistance is also managed by the respective airline ground handling. The airport operator only helps coordinating with the airline in case any passenger requires help, the official added, according to the news agency. There was no official comment from MIAL on the incident.

Mumbai docs treat man with 'extremely rare' 5 in 1 million heart disease

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A team of doctors here achieved a remarkable breakthrough in treating a 35-year-old man with an extremely rare heart disease that occurs in only 5 in 1,000,000 people in Asia. The patient, Raj Gorsa, a bank employee, was brought to Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre in Mumbai after experiencing unusual symptoms such as chest pain, severe palpitations, and blackouts while working on November 10, last year. After a series of tests, doctors identified that Raj had recurrent ventricular tachycardia -- a potentially dangerous cardiac rhythm disorder. As initial attempts with medications did not improve Raj's condition, the doctors resorted to automated implantable cardioverter defibrillator (AICD) implantation. Further investigations by cardiac MRI and PET scan and biopsy of his neck node revealed he suffered from a combination of cardiac tuberculosis (TB) -- a common respiratory problem that rarely affects the heart -- and cardiac sarcoidosis -- a rare inflammatory illness that affects the heart muscle. The patient did not have any previous history of tuberculosis. In a hospital statement, the doctors stated that the prevalence of cardiac sarcoidosis and tuberculosis simultaneously in Asians is five in one million cases. They noted that the condition can be a frequently missed diagnosis given its rarity and the high index of suspicion needed to make the diagnosis. Raj continued to suffer from ventricular tachycardia and received multiple shocks from AICD to convert his heart rhythm to normal. He was then treated using bilateral



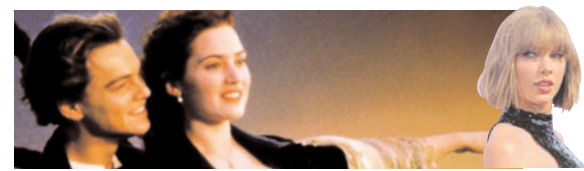
Thoracoscopic sympathectomy, a rare surgical procedure that involves cutting of the specific sympathetic nerves (the nerves that control the heart rate). The procedure was done using thoracoscopic minimally invasive techniques. The surgery was high risk as he had a persistently abnormal heart rate. The multidisciplinary team that looked after Raj's periprocedural care and ensured an uneventful recovery. Raj was discharged hale and hearty on November 27. The doctors monitored his heart condition for 6 weeks to ensure that there are no heart rhythm disturbances affecting his daily life, the statement said.

Four held for rape of 48-year-old woman, extortion in Raigad

Team Absolute | Raigad

The Raigad Police in Maharashtra have arrested four persons in connection with the alleged repeated rape of a 48-year-old woman and extortion, an official said on Friday. Based on a complaint, the Mahad police on Thursday arrested four men, while another accused is absconding in the case, the official said. One of the accused was acquainted with the victim, whose husband was working abroad, he said.

The man allegedly raped the woman on different occasions between 2018 and 2024 on the pretext of helping her with domestic issues, the official said. He also threatened and blackmailed her using objectionable photographs and videos, which he had shot and shared with the other four accused, he said. The accused men also extorted Rs 2.2 lakh from the victim, and when their demands started increasing, she approached the police, the official said.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Taylor Swift donates \$100K to family of woman killed at Chiefs victory parade shooting

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Taylor Swift has made donations on a charity page totaling \$100,000 early Friday morning after Lisa Lopez-Galvan was killed in a mass shooting at the Kansas City Chiefs' victory parade. The victim's family had setup a GoFundMe page. The "Elizabeth Lopez-Galvan Memorial" page was set up Thursday afternoon, with a goal of raising \$75,000 for the family of the 44-year-old shooting victim. Around 1,300 people had made donations when Swift pushed the total beyond the goal in the wee hours of Friday morning, first making a donation of \$50,000 and then making a second donation in the same amount eight minutes later, reports variety.com.

"Sending my deepest sympathies and condolences in the wake of your devastating loss. With love, Taylor Swift," wrote the singer.

While that counted as in the middle of the night in U.S. time zones, it was early evening for where Swift is in the world at present, in Melbourne, Australia, where she is playing the first night of a three-night engagement there, after traveling halfway around the world to resume her tour after attending the Super Bowl.

The donations were made around showtime in Australia.

Swift's representative confirmed that the donations by the singer appearing on the page were legit.

"This fund has been set up to benefit the family of Lisa Lopez-Galvan," reads the GoFundMe page's text. "Lisa was celebrating the Chiefs' Super Bowl Victory parade when senselessly killed. She is survived by two

children and her husband of 22 years. She was an amazing mother, wife, daughter, sister, aunt, cousin, and friend to so many. We ask that you continue to keep her family in your prayers as we grieve the loss of her life. This fund will help provide vital financial support to her family as they process this unthinkable tragedy. Any amount is appreciated."

Lopez-Galvan died Wednesday after being struck in her abdomen by a gunshot as chaos broke out. Initial reports said she passed away after undergoing surgery, but later reports clarified that she died at the scene.

Besides being a wedding DJ, Lopez-Galvan was the co-host of a Latin music pro-



gram, "Taste of Tejano,"

on a community radio station, KKFI, according to the Kansas City Star.

Altogether, 23 people were wounded in the outbreak of gunfire following the climax of a rally celebrating the Chiefs' Bowl triumph, with Lopez-Galvan being the sole fatality among those 23. Police said Thursday that two juveniles have been detained in the mass shootings.

Lopez-Galvan's son, Marc Lopez-Galvan, who is in his 20s, was among the other gunshot victims and has been released from the hospitals. Two other more distant relatives were also wounded. The victim's teenaged daughter, Adriana, was also at the scene but escaped being hit.



Megan Fox criticised after comparing herself to 'sex doll'

Actress Megan Fox said she looks like an "expensive sex doll" as she gave it back to body-shaming trolls.

The actress, 37, was mocked after photographs surfaced of her partying with her fiancé Machine Gun Kelly, as well as Taylor Swift, 34, and her boyfriend Travis Kelce, which they said was proof she had undergone plastic surgery as her features appeared more chiselled than usual.

Fox hit back by blaming the lighting at the party where the shots were taken, in the Resorts World Las Vegas' nightclub, following The Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl win, reports aceshowbiz.com.

She said on Instagram: "Oh my god guys look how different I... dont look at all. turns out it was just a shadowy cell phone pic of me looking like a Ukrainian blow-up doll. When in REALITY I look like one of those super expensive silicone real sex dolls you can only get in Japan."

She then came under fire for comparing herself to a Ukrainian sex doll in particular - with online critics saying it was disgusting in light of Russia's bombardment of the nation.

One said online: "Distasteful comment about Ukraine," while another hit out: "Girl you had one opportunity to write a good post about this iconic pic and you write THIS?"

A third critic said: "I guess xenophobia towards Eastern European [women] is still a thing in Hollywood."

Fox has previously opened up about her struggle with insecurities over her body, telling the 2023 Sports Illustrated Swimsuit issue: "I have body dysmorphia. I don't ever see myself the way other people see me. There is never a point in my life where I loved my body, ever ever."

The actress added she has suffered an "awareness" and "obsession" with her image from a very young age.

Shakira to release next album 'Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran', her first on vinyl, on March 22

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Shakira is busy in the studio, as she has been "rebuilding herself" with her brand new album. The 47-year-old Latin singer, who split from footballer Gerard Pique in 2022 after more than a decade together, has so far released 11 studio albums since she was a teenager, reports Female First UK.

She announced that her 'Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran' will be out on March 22. She said: "Making this body of work has been an alchemical process. While writing each song I was rebuilding myself. While singing them, my tears transformed into diamonds, and my vulnerability into strength."

As per Female First UK, the 'Whenever, Wherever' hitmaker recently gave fans a glimpse of what is to come during her Super Bowl commercial teaser and the new record will feature eight new tracks along with the previously released hit singles, including 'Music Sessions Vol. 53' with Bizarrap, 'TQG' with Karol G, 'Te Felicito' with Rauw Alejandro, 'Copa Vacía' with Manuel Turizo, and more.

In a first for the Grammy Award-winning star, the new album marks her debut release on vinyl, featuring four distinct artwork editions, each paired with an exclusive coloured vinyl variant.

The 'She Wolf' singer has not released an album since 2017 when 'El Dorado', which was mostly sung in her native Spanish, spawned the singles 'Chantaje' and 'Me Enamore'. Prior to that, Shakira released the self-titled record that served as her fourth English-language album overall and it featured the hit single 'Can't Remember To Forget You', which featured Rihanna.



AMY SCHUMER ADDRESSES COMMENTS ABOUT 'PUFFIER' FACE, SHARES HEALTH UPDATE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress and comedian Amy Schumer has addressed her critics with honesty and humour. The actress recently shared posts on her Instagram from her appearances on 'The Tonight Show' and 'Good Morning America' promoting the season 2 release of 'Life & Beth'.

These posts have received comments about her "puffier" face, reports People magazine.

Addressing the comments, she wrote in a new Instagram post: "Thank you so much for everyone's input about my face! I've enjoyed feedback and deliberation about my appearance as all women do for almost 20 years. And you're right, it is puffier than normal right now."

The comedian then explained that she has endometriosis, adding: "There are some medical and hormonal things going on in my world right now but I'm okay."

Endometriosis is described as an "often painful condition" that occurs when "tissue that is similar to the inner lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus." Symptoms include painful menstrual peri-

ods, pain during sex, infertility, fatigue, and bloating.

"I also believe a woman doesn't need any excuse for her physical appearance and owes no explanation," Schumer continued in her caption. "But I wanted to take the opportunity to advocate for self love and acceptance of the skin you're in."

"Life every other women/person some days I feel confident and good as hell and others I want to put a bag over my head," she explained. "But I feel strong and beautiful and so proud of this tv show I created. Wrote. Starred in and directed. Maybe just maybe we can focus on that for a little."

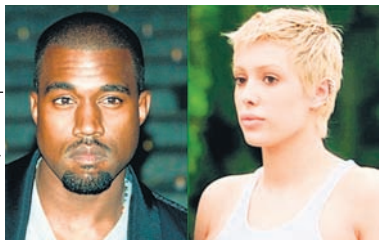
As per People, the Trainwreck star revealed in a candid Instagram Video back in September 2021 that she had her uterus and appendix removed as a result of endometriosis.

She said: "So, it's the morning after my surgery for endometriosis and my uterus is out. The doctor found 30 spots of endometriosis that he removed. He removed my appendix because the endometriosis had attacked it. There was a lot, a lot of blood in my uterus and I'm, you know, sore and I have some, like, gas pains."

Kanye West creates bizarre AI model of wife Bianca Censori

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rapper Kanye West has cranked up the notch with regard to his bizarre social media antics as he appears to have created a virtual model of wife Bianca Censori. The rapper uploaded a short video to his Instagram of a virtual model that bears a striking resemblance with his architect wife in a short video clip of the AI designed face opening and closing its mouth. He wrote in the caption: "AAAAAAAH" as he shared the new creation with his 19.5 million followers. As per Mirror.co.uk, fans have commented on the upload as they question the reasons behind the quirky post, as one wrote: "What is this Kanye". Another added: "Kanye wtf you are doing". A third shared: "What does this mean Kanye West?" Some followers pointed out that the doll-like model looks similar to a sex doll, as one fan commented: "Bianca identifying as a sex doll." Yet some worried this would be the start of another string of strange posts from him, as one wrote: "Sorry guys he's out of his cage again." In previous months Kanye has posted images of his wife in various skimpy outfits and styles, sparking concern for Bianca and seeing the rapper accused of "abuse" and "humiliating" her.



Brad Pitt moves in with girlfriend Ines de Ramon

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Brad Pitt is said to be living with his girlfriend Ines de Ramon. The 'Fight Club' actor, 60, was first linked to the jewellery executive, 34, in 2022.

Multiple sources have now said that the pair have taken the huge step in their relationship, reports Female First UK.

An insider close to Ines told People magazine: "It's pretty recent. They are going very strong, and she is happier than ever." The source added Anita Ko vice-president Ines did not give up her own home when she moved in with Brad.

As per Female First UK, Brad and Ines first sparked dating rumours in November 2022 when they were spotted looking intimate at a Bono concert in Los Angeles.

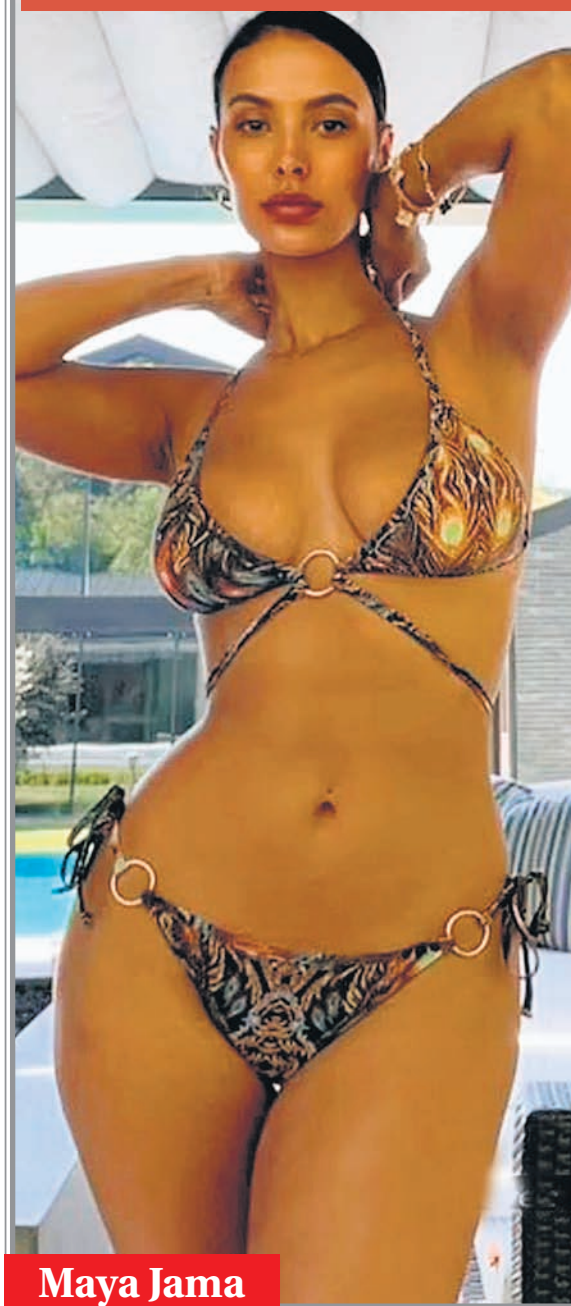
In December they were seen together at Brad's 59th birthday and they saw in the New Year together on holiday in Cabo San Lucas. Then in August 2023, Ines was spotted wearing a necklace with a 'B' pendant, and Brad is said to now introduce her to people as his "girlfriend".

Their romance came amid Brad's bitter legal battle with his ex-wife Angelina Jolie, 48, over the French vineyard they once jointly owned. It also started two months after Ines announced her split from 'The Vampire Diaries' actor Paul Wesley, 41, to whom she was married for three years.

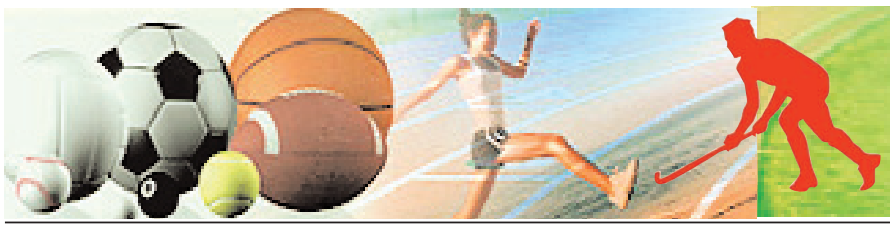
An insider close to the couple has also confirmed to People they are "serious" about each other, adding: "This is Brad's first proper relationship since the divorce. He introduces (Ines) as his girlfriend. It's great to see him in a good place".



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Maya Jama



3rd Test: Duckett's 88-ball whirlwind ton helps England reach 207/2 after India post 445 in first innings

**Team Absolute** | Rajkot

The left-handed opener Ben Duckett smashed the fastest Test century by an England batter in India to take the visitors to 207/2 in 35 overs at stumps on day two of the third Test at the Niranjan Shah Stadium on Friday. England trail India by 238 runs after bowling out the hosts for 445 in an engrossing day of Test cricket, thanks to Duckett's attacking display with the bat. Duckett reached his century in 88 balls and ended the day at 133 not out off 118 balls, laced with 21 fours and two sixes, to leave India on the back-foot. Post tea, Duckett continued his onslaught on the Indian bowlers, sweeping firmly against Kuldeep Yadav twice, followed by driv-

ing and slamming Mohammed Siraj for two fours. Duckett reverse-swept Kuldeep and steered Siraj twice through the gap on the off-side to get his fifty in just 39 balls.

Duckett and Zak Crawley took two boundaries each off Kuldeep before the latter top-edged a sweep to short fine-leg as Ravichandran Ashwin ended the 89-run opening partnership to get his 500th Test wicket, becoming the second Indian bowler after Anil Kumble to get the momentous achievement. Duckett survived a yorker from Bumrah and continued to sweep, slog-sweep, punch, pull and on-drive with ease to get his hundred in 88 balls, also the third-fastest century by a visiting Test batter in

India. Ollie Pope hit five fours and a six in his 55-ball 39, before being trapped LBW by Siraj. Duckett and Joe Root (nine not out) hit some boundaries before stumps arrived, including the former surviving an LBW call in the final over of the day.

Brief scores:

India 445 in 130.5 overs (Rohit Sharma 131, Ravindra Jadeja 112, Sarfaraz Khan 62; Mark Wood 4-114, Rehan Ahmed 2-85) lead England 207/2 in 35 overs (Ben Duckett 133 not out, Ollie Pope 39; Ravichandran Ashwin 1-37, Mohammed Siraj 1-54) by 238 runs

Ashwin becomes second Indian bowler to pick 500 Test wickets

Team Absolute | Rajkot

Veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has become just the second Indian bowler and ninth overall to pick 500 wickets in Test cricket. Ashwin achieved the milestone during the ongoing third Test match against England at the Niranjan Shah Stadium in Rajkot on Friday. The off-spinner was on 499 scalps at the end of the second Test in Visakhapatnam and completed his 500th scalp with the wicket of Zak Crawley, who top edged a sweep to short fine leg, ending an 89-run opening partnership, on day two of the third Test. Ashwin was then swarmed by his teammates to congratulate him on achieving the monumental feat.

"From Chennai to the cricketing cosmos, @ashwinravi99's journey to 500 Test wickets is a saga of grit, guile, and unrivaled skill. A monumental achievement that cements his legacy in the annals of cricketing history. Bravo, Ashwin!" wrote veteran India wicketkeeper-batter Dinesh Karthik on 'X'.

Ashwin is the ninth bowler in Test history to breach the 500-wicket barrier, and the only one from India since the legendary leg-spinner Anil Kumble, who took 619 wickets in 132 Tests. Muttiah Muralitharan (800), Shane Warne (708), James Anderson (695), Anil Kumble (619), Stuart Broad (604), Glenn McGrath (563), Courtney Walsh (519) and Nathan Lyon (517) are ahead of him in the list of highest wicket-takers in Test history. "500 Test wickets for a one-in-a-million bowler! In AshWIN the SpinNER, there was always a WINNER. 500 wickets is a huge milestone in Test cricket. Congratulations, Champion!" wrote legendary India batter Sachin Tendulkar on 'X'. Ashwin achieved the 500 wickets feat in 98 Test matches, making him the second-quickest in Test history to the milestone after Muralitharan, Sri Lanka's legendary off-spinner, who did so in 87 Tests. Each of



the other seven bowlers took more than 100 Test matches to get to the milestone. Ashwin, who made his Test debut against the West Indies at New Delhi in November 2011, has been India's strike bowler in Tests, particularly at home, where 347 of his 500 wickets have come. On the eve of the Test, teammate Ravindra Jadeja had cheekily commented that it was Ashwin's 'destiny' to complete the milestone at the all-rounder's home ground in Rajkot.

"I am very happy for him, I have been playing with him for years. I thought he would get it in the first test match, but it's okay, it is destiny that he will get it here in my hometown." Ashwin has 34 five-wicket hauls and eight 10-wicket match hauls in his Test career. James Anderson, Lyon and Ashwin are the only active bowlers to have more than 400 wickets in Test cricket. From Ashwin's 500 wickets, 277 have been caught, including 12 of them being caught and bowled dismissals, followed by 110 lbws, 100 bowled, and 13 stumped scalps.

xWorld Team TT C'ships: India women lose to China 2-3 in group I opener

**Busan** | Agencies

The Indian women's team went down 2-3 to China after putting up a valiant show in its opening tie in the preliminary round Group I of the World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals 2024 here on Friday. At the World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals, each tie consists of a maximum of five singles matches. The first team to win three matches wins the tie.

Ayhika Mukherjee, who won the bronze medal at the Asian Games last year in doubles, gave India a fiery start as she stunned World No.1 and Tokyo 2020 silver medallist Sun Yingsha 3-1 (12-10, 2-11, 13-11, 11-6) in the opening rubber.

India's top-ranked singles player at world No. 36 Manika Batra, then lost 1-3 (3-11, 8-11, 15-13, 7-11) to world No.4 Wang Manyu in the second match of the tie as China levelled the score. In the third rubber, Sreeja Akula reclaimed the lead for India as she sent blistering forehands and mind-boggling backhand tempo changes to clean up World No.2 Wang Yidi 3-0 (11-7, 11-9, 13-11).

"I was really happy beating Wang Yidi. We got the team spirit and the players, who were sitting on the bench supported so we were so motivated," said Sreeja after the match.

However, the reigning Olympic champions, China won the final two matches to clinch the tie. Sun Yingsha stepped out to steady the ship with a tough four-game 3-1 (11-3, 11-6, 11-13, 11-9) win over Manika. With the scores levelled 2-2, Wang Manyu then closed out the match by defeating Ayhika 3-0 (11-9, 13-11, 11-6) to wrap up the tie.

The Indian women will play their next match against Hungary on Sunday.

Up to eight Paris 2024 Olympics team quotas are on offer in each of the two events at the World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals. These will go to nations who reach the quarterfinals in Busan and have not won team quotas previously. The Indian men's team, led by Commonwealth Games champion Sharath Kamal, will open its campaign against Chile on Saturday.

The Indian men's and women's table tennis teams are yet to obtain quotas for the Paris Olympics.

BATC 2024: Indian women create history by reaching semis, men go down to Japan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian women's team made history in the Badminton Asia Team Championship (BATC) 2024 by securing a maiden semifinals berth while the men went down to Japan in the quarterfinals on a mixed day for the Indian teams in Selangor, Malaysia, on Friday.

The focus was on the women's team, considered by many as the weaker of the two squads because of the inclusion of some new players, belied expectations as it blanked Hong Kong 3-0 to storm into the semifinals for the first time in the history of the competition. The men went down 2-3 against Japan in a hard-fought encounter, missing out on a place in the semifinals.

The Indian women's team, which had upset China on Tuesday to top Group W, capitalised on a favourable quarterfinal draw with two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu once again leading the charge. Sindhu, who is returning after a long injury-induced layoff, started strong against Lo Sin Yan Happy but had to regroup herself after a second-game hiccup to win 21-7, 16-21, 21-12 to give India the lead. Sindhu began the match with a bang winning 11 of the first 12 points and sailed through the opening game. But if she was hoping for an easy outing, Lo had other plans. The Hong Kong shuttler used her deceptive strokes to trouble her opponent and forced a decider. In the final game, Sindhu was just too strong for her opponent as she once again started aggressively and never looked in trouble.

The women's doubles combination of Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa then proved that they were the pair in form as they got the better of the world No.18 combination of Yeung Nga Ting and Yeung Pui Lam 21-10, 21-14 to put India within striking distance of the semi-final spot.

Ashmita Chaliha then wrapped up the quarterfinal encounter with a 21-12, 21-13 win over Yeung Sum Yee. Assured of a medal, India will now face top seeds Japan, who defeated China 3-2 in the



other quarterfinals.

However, it was a heart-break for the men as they came within striking distance of a semifinal spot but two-time former world champion Kento Momota found a way to take his team through, beating Kidambi Srikanth in the third singles.

With the team locked 2-2, all eyes were on the third and final singles between two former world No.1 Kidambi Srikanth and Kento Momota.

Srikanth drew first blood by claiming the opening game before the Japanese fought back to force a decider.

It looked like India were through to the semifinal when Srikanth opened up a 19-12 lead but Momota forced his way back by winning eight straight points. The Indian managed to save one match point but could not stop the Japanese from taking the match in an hour and 17 minutes.

Australia's Sutherland smashes fastest double ton in women's Test history

Team Absolute | Perth

Australia women all-rounder Annabel Sutherland smashed the fastest double century in the history of women's Tests after she brought up 200 on the stroke of tea on day two of the one-off Test against South Africa here at the WACA Ground.

She reached the milestone in just 248 balls, breaking the previous record of 306 balls held by Karen Rolton. In the process, she also became the youngest Australian woman to score a double hundred.

Resuming her innings on a promising 54 on day 2, Sutherland showcased remarkable composure and skill as she seamlessly continued her onslaught against the Proteas' bowling attack on the second day and turned her second Test ton into a double.

Her sensational inning came to an end in 121.4 over when she fell victim to Chloe Tryon for the score of 210 off 256.

Sutherland is the ninth woman to score a double hundred in a Test and the fifth Australian. Former India captain Mithali Raj is the only younger player to score doubleton, scoring 214 at 19 years old in 2002.

The 22-year-old had earlier become the first woman to score two centuries batting at No.6 or lower. Her first Test ton came against England during last year's Ashes at Trent Bridge, where she struck a superb unbeaten 137 batting at No.8.

Sutherland ranks as the third youngest woman to achieve two or more centuries in total, trailing behind India's Sandhya Agarwal and New Zealand's Emily Drummond, both of whom accomplished this feat at the age of 21.



Sutherland's innings helped Australia push their lead close to 450 at tea on day two on Friday.

Squash: Saurav Ghosal reaches QF of Fire Open in Washington

Washington | Agencies

Saurav Ghosal moved into the quarterfinals of the Squash Fire Open with a hard-fought 4-11, 11-8, 11-4, 13-11 win over Spencer Lovejoy (US) in a match that stretched to almost an hour.

The Indian world No 26, who is the sixth seed and received a first-round bye at the \$51,500 PSA World Tour Bronze event, will meet French world No 11 and top seed Victor Crouin in the quarterfinals.

Meanwhile, reigning national champion Velavan Senthilkumar, who made it to his maiden PSA World Tour Silver quarterfinal in Pittsburgh last week, lost to Egyptian second seed Youssef Soliman 11-6, 11-8, 11-2.

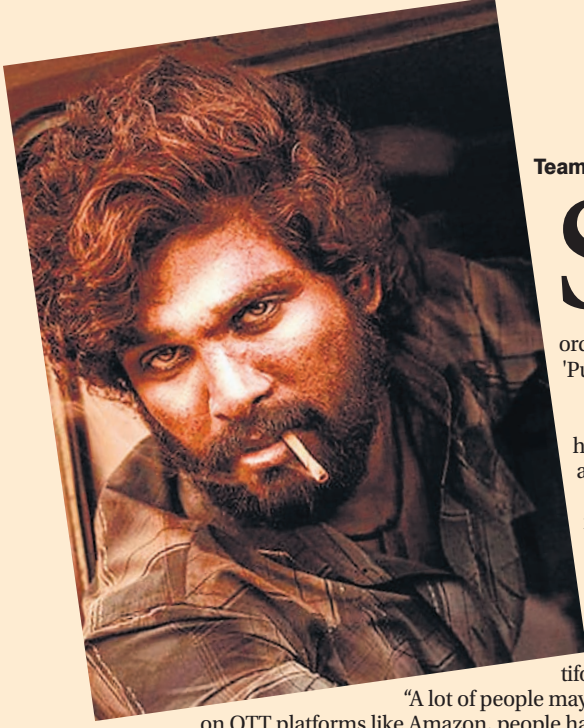
The left-hander from Tamil Nadu had put it past Briton Mark Broekman 11-4, 11-4, 11-2 in 22 minutes in his opening round.





Allu Arjun: 'Pushpa 2' has a 'huge canvas'; fans can 'definitely expect' a third part

Team Absolute | Mumbai



South Indian star Allu Arjun spoke about the plans of expansion for his 'Pushpa' franchise, which was first released in 2021. Talking about the August release 'Pushpa 2: The Rule', Arjun said: "You can definitely expect part three, we do want to make it a franchise and we have exciting ideas for the lineup." "A sizzle reel from the Pushpa franchise is being screened on the sidelines of the Berlin European Film Market in order to seed it as a brand for international audiences. There will also be a fan screening of 'Pushpa: The Rise — Part 1', added the actor, while talking to Variety.

Berlin will be Arjun's first time in Germany and his first time at a film festival.

"I just want to see how people abroad are going to see this film, and try to understand how they view Indian cinema, just understand how film festivals are and what kind of films are watched and what is the mindset of the people that come there," Arjun said.

Directed by Sukumar, the film talks about the rise of Pushpa Raj (Arjun), a laborer who rises through the ranks of a red sandalwood smuggling syndicate and faces off against an egotistical police officer.

After being a hit at home in India and in diaspora markets like the U.S., U.K. and the U.A.E., 'Pushpa: The Rise — Part 1' found a new lease on life when it began streaming on Prime Video.

"More than the theatrical reach of 'Pushpa', the OTT (streaming) reach has been multifold," Arjun said.

"A lot of people maybe during the theatrical release have only watched it once or twice. But after it's available on OTT platforms like Amazon, people have watched it multiple times. And because of the OTT platform, there's a lot of crossover audience from other languages, and other regions and neighboring countries. And also it made a noise because it was the biggest film (in India) of 2021. "I didn't find much of a difference the way urban Indians have watched the film and people overseas. And I think urban Indians are similar to global audiences. So all the things that they have liked in terms of the candidness of the film or the performances, I've got similar feedback from urban audiences in India and overseas," Arjun said.

'Pushpa 2: The Rule' is due to release August 15, during the Indian Independence Day holiday frame.

"'Pushpa 2' is going to have a very different shade of Pushpa than what you've seen in 'Pushpa 1', because it is the lower end of the spectrum that you've seen," Arjun said.

"You'll see the highest end of the spectrum in terms of characterisation. So you'll see him on a very high note, you'll see him on a very high scale, in terms of characterisation, in terms of this scale and presentation and the canvas of the problems are going to be much bigger than what it was compared to 'Pushpa 1'. It's going to be a bigger canvas, and there is a different dimension to the characterisation."

Towards the end of the first part, the character Pushpa assumes de facto control of the syndicate.

"Till then it was playing on a regional scale, now it will play on a national and international scale," Arjun said.

Amy Jackson: Evolution of women in action films is empowering

Team Absolute | New Delhi

She is all set to pack a punch at the bad guys with her portrayal of a headstrong cop in her next film 'Crakk'. Amy Jackson said that the evolution of women in action films is inspiring as they are not just "relegated to glamour."

"The evolution of women in action films is empowering. It's inspiring to see actresses now portraying strong, impactful roles

crucial to equality in cinema," she added.

In the upcoming film directed by Aditya Datt, Amy along with her co-stars Vidhut Jammwal, Arjun Rampal and Nora Fatehi will be seen doing deadly stunts.

How much is too much for an actor to invest in a role considering the risk involved?

"Navigating the delicate balance of extreme sports and stunts in a role is paramount.



Prioritising safety and clear communication of limits are non-negotiable. However, collaborating with a seasoned professional like Vidhut

Jamwal elevates the entire experience." "His unparalleled expertise in executing daring action choreography not only instills trust in the director and storyline but also empowers actors to embrace their own stunts." Working alongside such a maestro feels not only safe but got me immersed in the thrill, guided by a phenomenal choreographer," she conclude.

'Bade Miyan Chote Miya' title track infused with Akshay, Tiger's 'swag, style'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The title track of Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff-starrer 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan' will be dropping February 19 and the actors have shared a glimpse of it filled with "swag and style" in a poster. Akshay and Tiger took to Instagram, where they shared a poster, where the two are seen walking in style. The poster seems to be a still from the song, which will drop in three days. The track is touted as the "party song for the season."

The action heroes captioned it: "Bade ka swag, chote ka style 3 Days To Go!"

#BadeMiyanChoteMiyan Title Track Out on Feb 19. Stay tuned!

#BadeMiyanChoteMiyanOnEid2024." Tiger and Akshay will be seen sharing screen space in action-thriller 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan', directed by Ali Abbas Zafar. The film is produced by Zafar, Jacky Bhagnani, Vashu Bhagnani, Deepshikha Deshmukh, and Himanshu Kishan Mehra under the banners of Pooja Entertainment and AAZ Films.

The film stars Prithviraj Sukumaran, Sonakshi Sinha, Manushi Chhillar, Alaya F, and Ronit Bose Roy. The film is shot in locales of Mumbai, Scotland, London, Luton, Abu Dhabi, and Jordan. It is said to be released on Eid.



rather than just being relegated to glamour," Amy told IANS. The actress, who made her debut in 2010 with the Tamil film 'Madrasapattinam' minced no words when she said that women want to be represented as an equal to male actors on screen.

"Women of all ages want to feel represented on screen and to be seen an actress embodying a role rather than just popping up as eye candy is

PICTURE PERFECT: KAREENA POSES WITH 'BEAUTIFUL' WINNIE HARLOW

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood diva Kareena Kapoor Khan looked drop-dead-gorgeous in a picture posing Canadian fashion model Winnie Harlow in Dubai.

Kareena took to Instagram, where she shared several images on her Stories section from an event. In the first image, she took a mirror selfie dressed in a deep neck-lined ocean green shimmering dress.

She captioned it: "Woke up like this."

The diva then shared another image, taken in front of a mirror in the elevator and wrote: "And to bed like this."

The actress then shared a picture with Harlow, who is also public spokesperson on the skin condition of vitiligo.

"The one with beautiful Winnie Harlow," Kareena, who was representing India at the event, wrote. For the unversed, Winnie Harlow gained the spotlight in 2014 with television series America's Next Top Model. In 2016, she became the first model with vitiligo to walk in the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show. Harlow has also appeared in the Beyoncé-directed visual album 'Beyoncé: Lemonade'.

Kavita Chaudhary of 'Udaan', who inspired generation of women to become cops, passes on

Mumbai: Actress Kavita Chaudhary, who is known for playing the role of an IPS officer in the television show 'Udaan', passed away after suffering a cardiac arrest.

The actress, who was battling poor health for a long time, passed away in Amritsar. Her last rites were performed on Friday morning.

As per media reports, she breathed her last at Parvati Devi Hospital in Amritsar where she was being treated.

'Udaan', which was written and directed by Kavita herself, aired in 1989. The show was based on the life of her sister Kanchan Chaudhary Bhattacharya, who became the second IPS officer after Kiran Bedi.

Kavita inspired a lot of young women as at the time there was very less female representation in the police force. 'Udaan' gained immense popularity and made her a household name. The show was re-tecast on Doordarshan during COVID-19 pandemic.



Ram Madhvani: I want to reach out to the world audience with my work



Mumbai: Director Ram Madhvani, who is receiving a lot of positive response to the new season of 'Aarya', has said that he strives to entertain the world audience, and that the show's Emmy nod was a step in that direction.

The International Emmy nominated series, which stars Sushmita Sen in the titular role, follows the journey of its titular character, who is an independent woman putting all her might to protect her family. She joins a mafia gang in order to get revenge for her husband's murder.

Talking about his vision to appeal to the international audience, Ram told IANS: "I want to be the kind of filmmaker who is known as not just Indian but also international - the international Indian. I want to talk to not just our audience but the world audience."

"I have been brought up on a healthy dose of Hindi movies, European movies and movies from other languages, so it has been a part of my system. I want to reach out to the world audience. I have done that in my advertising career, and the Emmy nomination for 'Aarya' and the National Award for 'Neerja' are the steps in that direction for me."

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Nikita Sharma