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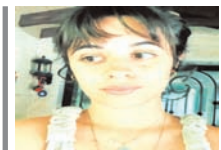
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## EDGE IS GETTING SHARPER

Chandigarh | Agencies

After discussing the situation at the interstate borders between Punjab and Haryana where thousands of farmers have been camping for over a week, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella organisation of the farmers' organisations, on Thursday announced a series of protests, including a 'mahapanchayat' in Delhi on March 14. It demanded registration of a murder case against Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Home Minister Anil Vij over the death of a man during the farmers' agitation a day earlier and a compensation of Rs 1 crore for the deceased. Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait told the media after the coordination committee meeting of the SKM said on Friday a 'black day' for non-implementation of

their demands, comprising the law guaranteeing the minimum support price (MSP) of crops, would be observed across the country.

"We demand registration of a murder case under Section 320 (of the IPC) against the Haryana CM and the Home Minister and the death of a protestor would be judicially probed," he said. Accompanying farmer leaders from across the country, Tikait said on February 26 a tractor march would be carried out across the country on one side of national highways.



"One side of all the highways will be allowed for the commuters to use. We will ply tractors only on the one side."

On March 14, a 'mahapanchayat' would be held in Delhi for the next course of action.

Farmers leaders on Wednesday put the 'Delhi Chalo' march on hold for two days after a protestor was killed and about 12 police personnel injured in clashes at Khanauri border, one of the two protest sites on the Punjab-Haryana border.

### CBI SEARCHES PREMISES OF EX-J&K GOV SATYA PAL MALIK

Srinagar: The CBI on Thursday carried out searches at 30 locations, including that of former J&K Governor Satya Pal Malik, in connection with the alleged corruption in allotment Kiru hydroelectric power project. Sources said the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) started searches in the morning when 100 sleuths of the agency swooped down on 30 locations at different places, including the premises of the former J&K governor in New Delhi.

The case relates to alleged corruption in awarding civil works of the Kiru Hydro Electric Power Project (HEP) worth Rs 2,200 crore. Malik is furiously vocal against Modi govt on farmer's issues.

## Manipur HC cancels order for examining inclusion of Meitei community in Scheduled Tribes list

Imphal | Agencies

The Manipur High Court has modified its March 2023 order in part, whereby a contentious direction was issued to the state government for considering the inclusion of Meiteis in the Scheduled Tribes (ST) list, observing that a paragraph of that order was in conflict with the Supreme Court's constitution bench observation, court sources said on Thursday.

The single judge bench of Justice Golmei Gaiphulshillu was hearing a review petition filed against para 17 (iii) of the decision dated March 27, 2023 rendered by the then acting Chief Justice M.V. Muralidharan in a petition by a Meitei organisation. "...the direction given at Para No. 17 (iii) needs to be deleted and is ordered accordingly for deletion of the Para No. 17 (iii) of the judgment and order dated 27.03.2023 passed in W.P.(C) No. 229 of 2023," the order of Wednesday said.

The contentious paragraph no 17 (iii) of last year's High Court verdict instructed the state to expedite consideration of Meitei community inclusion in the ST list.

Then acting Chief Justice M.V. Muralidharan, who was subsequently transferred to the Calcutta High Court, in his March 27, 2023 order



directed the state government to send a recommendation to the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry to consider the ST status for the Meitei community. The directive is believed to be a catalyst for ethnic conflict between the non-tribal Meitei community and tribal Kuki-Zo community claiming over 200 lives and injuring 1,500 and displacing over 70,000 people of both communities.

Erstwhile princely state Manipur merged with the Indian Union in 1949.

Justice Gaiphulshillu's order said: "The Meitei (Meitei) of Manipur has lost the identity of the tribe while merging with the Union of India on September 21, 1949 and earlier Manipur was a simple classless tribal society. However, at the time of merging, 29 communities of Manipur have been included in the Scheduled Tribe list of Indian Union and thereafter, as per the order of May 26, 2003 of the Gauhati High Court's Imphal bench, Chongthu, Khoibu, and Mate have been included in the list of Scheduled Tribes. Accordingly, now there are 34 numbers of tribal communities of Manipur included in the list of Scheduled Tribes of the Indian Constitution, but the Meitei (Meitei) tribe was left out."

After the outbreak of ethnic violence on May 3 last year (post the March 27 High Court order), several petitions, including challenges to the high court directive, were filed to the Supreme Court.

## X CLAIMS CENTRE ORDERS TO WITHHOLD ACCOUNTS

New Delhi: The Centre has issued orders requiring microblogging site X to act against some accounts and posts, the Elon Musk-led organisation has said, stressing that it disagrees with these actions and that the posts should not be withheld on grounds of freedom of expression. Allegedly, these accounts are related to current farmers protest. The global government affairs team of X, formerly Twitter, said they are unable to publish the Centre's executive orders due to legal restrictions, but "believe that making them public is

essential for transparency". The Centre is yet to respond to the allegations that were made in a post on X past midnight. "The Indian government has issued executive orders requiring X to act on specific accounts and posts, subject to potential penalties including significant fines and imprisonment," the post read. "In compliance with the orders, we will withhold these accounts and posts in India alone; however, we disagree with these actions and maintain that freedom of expression should extend to these posts," it added.

"Consistent with our position, a writ appeal challenging the Indian government's blocking orders remains pending.

We have also provided the impacted users with notice of these actions in accordance with our policies. Due to legal restrictions, we are unable to publish the executive orders, but we believe that making them public is essential for transparency. This lack of disclosure can lead to a lack of accountability and arbitrary decision-making," the post stated.

## Russian skier killed, 4 others rescued in Gulmarg avalanche accident

Srinagar | Agencies

A Russian skier was killed while 4 others, including a local guide, were rescued after an avalanche hit a group of skiers in Jammu and Kashmir's Gulmarg ski resort on Thursday, officials said.

Officials said that a group, comprising 4 Russians and a local guide, had gone for skiing to Afarwat heights in Gulmarg ski resort when an avalanche hit them.

"One male Russian skier was killed while 4 others including 3 Russians, including a woman, and a local ski guide were rescued," an official said. Gulmarg and other higher reaches of Kashmir



have received bountiful snowfall during the last 4 days. This has brightened up the prospect of skiing and other winter sports at Gulmarg ski

resort. The 4th Khelo India national snow sports event was inaugurated at Gulmarg by J&K Lt Governor, Manoj Sinha on Wednesday.

## PM MODI IS MOST POPULAR LEADER IN THE WORLD: SURVEY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has once again emerged as the most popular leader in the world, leaving behind many of his contemporaries in the Western countries. State heads of world's most powerful economies like United States, United Kingdom, Germany and others are ranked much below in the charts, in terms of domestic and global appeal.

PM Modi's approval ratings, as per Morning Consult survey, stands at a whopping 78%, which roughly means that he commands approval and support of the same percentage of population. Notably, PM Modi has consistently topped the Morning Consult charts in both NDA 1.0 and NDA 2.0. As per survey findings, PM



Modi is the only leader to have approval ratings above 70% mark while all others, barring four leaders, have got the approval of below 50%.

Mexico President Andres Obrador is the closest second leader in the charts with 65% approval ratings while Argentina President Javier Milei has got 63% ratings.

Poland's Donald Tusk is ranked fourth in the charts with rating of 50% while Switzerland President Viola Amherd bagged a rating of 51%. US President Joe Biden, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, seen as the most powerful leaders are placed either in mid or bottom of table. While Biden has managed to command 37% ratings, Sunak and Olaf have got barely little above 20% approval ratings.

## FRESH TENSION IN SANDESHKHALI: PROPERTY OF SHAHJAHAN'S BROTHER BURNT BY MOB

Kolkata | Agencies

Fresh tension erupted in Sandeshkhali in West Bengal on Thursday afternoon as angry villagers burnt down a property owned by Sheikh Sirajuddin, the younger brother of the absconding Trinamool Congress leader Sheikh Shahjahan.

The angry villagers also reportedly recaptured a local playground at Sandeshkhali which was allegedly occupied forcefully by the absconding leader and his associates.

The property of Sheikh Sirajuddin that was reportedly set ablaze by the agitated villagers was a warehouse in the midst of a pisciculture farm owned by him. The villagers alleged that the farm where the warehouse was situated was set up on land belonging to them and that it had been illegally occupied by the Trinamool leader and his kin. They alleged that



Sirajuddin occupied the farmland after ruining its fertility by flooding it with saline water. Sandeshkhali is known for an abundance of pisciculture farms, mostly owned by Shahjahan and his associates and the local people alleged that majority of such farms were set up illegally.

Some of the villagers even alleged that close associates of Sirajuddin before leaving the place had threatened the local people with dire consequences. The fresh tension at Sandeshkhali erupted just hours after the Acting Director General of Police, Rajeev Kumar, returned to Kolkata after reviewing the security arrangements in the district.

Before leaving for Kolkata on Thursday morning he said that he has issued an appeal to the people not to take the law into their own hands. However, he remained noncommittal about ensuring Shahjahan's arrest.

## Centre issues stern warning against surrogate ads seen as harming consumers

Mumbai | Agencies

The Department of Consumer Affairs in collaboration with the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) conducted a stakeholder consultation to collectively address the malaise of surrogate advertisements that promote products in restricted categories, such as alcohol.

Such ads undermine consumer rights and pose a potential danger to public



health. Secretary in the Department of Consumer Affairs, Rohit Kumar Singh, said that surrogate advertisements that promote products in restricted categories undermine consumer rights and can have serious implications. There is a pressing need to restrict the proliferation of

surrogate ads across industries. If respective prohibited industries fail to adhere to this guideline and comply with existing laws, more stringent actions will be implemented. "We are committed to working collaboratively with all stakeholders as we navigate through this evolving issue. The Department of Consumer Affairs reaffirmed its stance with utmost clarity that any continued involvement in surrogate advertising will not be condoned."

## Nifty touches fresh record high on strong global cues

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a volatile session, Nifty ended in the green on Thursday, touching a fresh record high helped by positive global cues, said Deepak Jasani, Head Retail Research at HDFC Securities.

At close on Thursday, Nifty was up 162.40 points, or 0.74 per cent, at 22,217.45, while Sensex climbed 535.15 points or 0.74 per cent to reach 73,158.24. Cash market volumes on the NSE were a bit lower than the previous session, but still closed at Rs 1.02 lakh crore. The Midcap index rose more than

the Nifty even as advance decline ratio improved to 1.22:1. Banks, Reliance, ABB, and new age stocks were part of the active stocks traded, Jasani said.

The global stocks rallied on Thursday, with Japan's benchmark hitting a record high while Europe's on track to do the same, after Nvidia's blowout sales forecast reinforced investor conviction in the boom in generative AI use.

India's imports of crude and petroleum products rose 5.6 per cent year-on-year to 25.4 million tonnes in January, compared to 24 MT in the year-ago period.

## IIT JODHPUR'S 1ST 'MAKE IN INDIA' BREATH SENSOR TO DETECT ALCOHOL, ASTHMA

The device, based on metal oxides and nano silicon operating at room temperature, is primarily aimed to detect alcohol content in the breath in drunk and driving cases.

However, with some changes in sensing layers and the use of an array of sensors (for Electronic Nose or Artificial Nose), and data analytics, it can also be very useful for characterisation of diseases, such as asthma, COPD, diabetic ketoacidosis, sleep apnoea, and cardiac arrest, where the person's breath volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are monitored.

Jodhpur | Agencies

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jodhpur on Thursday announced the development of the first 'Make in India' human breath sensor to measure alcohol and other respiratory diseases like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

VOCs are a diverse group of organic chemicals that can evaporate into the air and are commonly found in various products and environments. The current breath analysers



are either bulky or require a long preparation time and a heater. This adds up to the power consumption of the device and a long waiting time. The new sensor operates at room temperature and is like a plug-and-play.

"Continued research and development in these directions could lead to the practical implementation of the breath diagnostics in various fields, ranging from healthcare and wellness to wearable technology and IoT applications," said

Dr Saakshi Dhanekar, Associate Professor, Department of Electrical Engineering, IIT Jodhpur, in a statement. "The output of the sensors can be connected to Raspberry Pi and the data can be sent to a doctor or phone," she added. The technology behind this device is an electronic nose with room-temperature operable heterostructure (metal oxide with nano silicon). The sensors react with the alcohol in the sample and depict a change in resistance. This change is proportional to the concentration of alcohol in the sample.





# PM MODI TO LAUNCH WORLD'S LARGEST CO-OPERATIVE SECTOR GRAIN STORAGE PLAN TO EMPOWER SMALL FARMERS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate and lay the foundation of multiple initiatives to strengthen the country's Cooperative Sector on February 24 at Bharat Mandapam in the national capital which will be a major step in empowering small farmers, the PMO said on Thursday.

The Prime Minister will inaugurate the pilot project of 'World's Largest Grain Storage Plan in Cooperative Sector', which is being done in 11 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) of 11 states, the PMO statement noted.

PM Modi will also lay the foundation for an additional 500 PACS across the country for the construction of godowns and other agricultural infrastructure as part of the scheme. The initiative aims to seamlessly integrate PACS godowns with the foodgrain supply chain, fortifying food security and fostering economic development in the country with a collaborative effort supported by NABARD and spearheaded by the National Cooperative Development



Corporation (NCDC).

The initiative is being implemented through the convergence of various existing schemes like the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), Agriculture Marketing Infrastructure (AMI), etc. to enable PACS participat-

ing in the project to avail subsidies and interest subvention benefits for undertaking infrastructure development.

The Prime Minister will also inaugurate the project for computerization in 18,000 PACS across the coun-

try, aligning with the government's vision of "Sahakar se Samridhi" aimed at rejuvenating the cooperative sector and empowering small and marginal farmers, the PMO statement said.

The monumental project has been approved with a financial outlay of more than Rs 2,500 crore. This initiative involves transitioning all functional PACS onto a unified Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) based national software, ensuring seamless integration and connectivity. By linking these PACS with NABARD through State Cooperative Banks and District Central Cooperative Banks, the project aims to enhance the operation efficiency and governance of PACS, thus benefiting crores of small and marginal farmers.

NABARD has developed the National Level Common Software for this project, tailored to meet the diverse needs of PACS across the country.

Onboarding of 18,000 PACS on ERP software has been completed, marking a significant milestone in the project's implementation.

# Rajasthan: SUV rams into procession after driver suffers heart attack; dies

Jaipur | Agencies

An SUV rammed into a procession being taken out to celebrate Vishwakarma Jayanti in Rajasthan's Nagaur on Thursday after its driver suffered a heart attack and died.

The SUV collided with carts parked on the street and crushed four pedestrians, of which the condition of two is state to be critical.

The incident took place at Degana in Nagaur at 11 a.m. on Thursday. The video of the accident has also surfaced on social media, in which the SUV could be seen crushing people.

The procession was taken out by the Jangid community members to mark Vishwakarma Jayanti. The driver of the SUV, Ishaq Khan (60), suffered a heart attack and lost control of the vehicle which rammed into the procession.

The two critically injured persons -- Hariram (78) and Devkarani (65) -- were



referred to a hospital in Ajmer, while two others -- Megharam (62) and Shivraj (29) -- were discharged after treatment.

Condoling the tragic incident, Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma said in a tweet, "I am deeply saddened to hear the news of civilian injuries in a road accident during the

procession taken out on the occasion of Vishwakarma Jayanti in Degana.

"I pray to the Lord for the peace of the departed soul and pray for the speedy recovery of the injured. May the family members have the strength to bear this shock. Om Shanti!"

# It's now 'condom politics' in poll-bound Andhra Pradesh

Amaravati | Agencies

It's now "condom politics" in Andhra Pradesh ahead of simultaneous polls to state Assembly and Lok Sabha. Videos of condom packets with the names and symbols of ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the main opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) have surfaced on social media, triggering a war of words between the two parties.

The two parties blamed each other for a new low into politics.

Videos show condom packets with names and symbols of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSRCP and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP being distributed allegedly by party cadres to voters.

"Distributing condoms to people for their party campaign. What kind of publicity madness is this? Will they start giving out Viagra next? Will they stop there or going forward stoop to another low", reads a post from YSRCP handle on X while reacting to the



video posted from a handle 'Deccan 24x7'.

Hitting back at the ruling party, the TDP shared a picture of a condom pack with the YSRCP symbol. "Is this the 'siddam' (preparedness) the party was talking about?" the opposition party commented referring to title of Jagan Mohan Reddy's political campaigns.

Simultaneous elections to the Assembly and Lok Sabha are likely to be held in April-May. The TDP has entered into an alliance with the Jana Sena of actor Pawan Kalyan to take on the YSRCP.

# PEEVED MUMBAI CONGRESS MLA SLAMS RAHUL'S TEAM, KEEPS OPTIONS OPEN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A day after he was abruptly ousted as Mumbai Indian Youth Congress President, Congress MLA Zeeshan B. Siddique on Thursday criticised Rahul Gandhi's team and also dropped veiled hints of examining fresh political alternatives.

"If the Congress does not want me, I will have to look for new options. They should have at least consulted me. I learnt of the development through the media," said Zeeshan, an MLA from Bandra East who was the youngest to get elected to the Assembly in 2019, rattling Congress circles.

The developments came barely two weeks after Zeeshan's father, Baba Ziauddin Siddique, three-time ex-MLA from Bandra West and ex-Minister suddenly quit the Congress and joined the Nationalist Congress Party led by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar. Targeting the Congress leadership, Zeeshan told mediapersons that though Rahul Gandhi is a 'good leader', his team is the biggest factor



leading to the Congress' downfall, and claimed that the party is riddled with hypocrisy.

"It seems they have taken a contract from some other party to wipe

off the Congress. I had gone to Nanded for the previous Bharat Jodo Yatra and sought to meet Rahul Gandhi. I was told to return after shedding 10 kg," he said.

Zeeshan also slammed the erstwhile Maha Vikas Aghadi government, saying that he was not able to resolve the issues of his constituency.

On his removal as the MYC chief, Zeeshan said that while his father had joined (NCP), there are many instances of families staying in different political parties.

He cited the instance of the late Rajiv Gandhi and his brother Sanjay Gandhi whose families are now in different political parties -- Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka are with the Congress but Maneka Gandhi and Varun Gandhi are with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Similarly, Madhavrao Scindia and Vijaya Raje Scindia were with Congress, but their other relatives are with the BJP, A.K. Antony is a Congressman but his son Anil A. Antony has joined BJP.

On his future plans, Zeeshan said that he was elected by 88,517 members -- the highest in MYC's history -- as the city President, and would consult his supporters before taking a call on his political options.

# PUNJAB POLICE BUST ONLINE JOB FRAUD RACKET, NAB FOUR FROM ASSAM

Chandigarh | Agencies

The Punjab Police's Cyber Crime Division has busted an international online job fraud racket with the arrest of four criminals from Assam, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said here on Thursday.

The modus operandi used by the gang was to lure people into trap by offering lucrative "work from home" jobs through a Telegram mobile app group.

"To gain trust, fraudsters would initially give petty tasks to the victim, in return paying a small amount in lieu of accomplishing the task. Later, the victim was asked to deposit money on different pretexts in lure of a bigger return," the DGP said, adding with these arrests the police has dug up another trail, leading to deep-rooted cyber fraud nexus spread across the country.

Those arrested have been identified as Jahurul Islam, Rafiul Islam, Mehabub Alam, and Azizur Rehman.

Police teams have also recovered two swipe machines, two biometric scanners, an eye scanner, a fingerprint scanner, 38 PAN cards, 32 debit and credit cards, 16 SIM cards, 10 voter cards, nine Aadhaar cards, 10 bank account passbooks and cheque books, etc., from their possession.

ADGP, Cyber Crime, V. Neeraja said following a complaint from a woman who was duped of Rs 25



lakh, a Cyber Crime team conducted investigation into the case and found that the gang was running their operation from Assam.

During the operation, the accused Jahurul Islam and Rafiul Islam were arrested from Assam's Nagaon district and revealed that they were running a customer services point (CSP) for providing online services, and to make quick bucks they mis-

used the documents of the public using Adobe Photoshop software.

Thereafter, Alam was arrested from Guwahati district, and revealed that he came into contact with Rehman, who asked him to provide bank accounts details on a commission basis.

Police have also arrested Rehman from Morigaon district of Assam.

# Woman moves Kerala HC against husband, in-laws over 'instructions' on how to conceive male child

Kochi | Agencies

A woman has moved the Kerala High Court seeking directions to the Director, Pre-Natal Diagnostic Division and Additional Director, Family Welfare, to conduct an investigation and take appropriate action against her husband and in-laws for allegedly giving her instructions on how to conceive a male child.

She has sought action against them under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994.

In her petition, she points out on the first day after her wedding, a note was handed to her by her husband and his family on what needs to be done to conceive a good boy child and not a girl child. Taking up the petition, the



court orally remarked: "It is shocking to hear that such instances take place in Kerala also". Giving time to the respondents to take instructions in the matter, it added that the high court may not be the appropriate

forum for considering the grievance involved in the plea.

The wedding took place in 2012 and in 2014, the woman delivered a girl child and since then has been having a tough time.

# EIGHT-YEAR-OLD GIRL GANG-RAPED IN UP, MOTHER ARRESTED

**Lucknow:** The Lucknow police have arrested the mother of an eight-year-old girl, who was allegedly gang-raped by a cleric and his brother in the Malihabad area, on the outskirts of Lucknow. The police spokesman said that the victim's mother was in a relationship with the accused and was aware of the crime committed against her daughter.



The cleric, Abedin, has already been arrested while his brother is absconding.

The victim's father has lodged a complaint at the Malihabad police station, alleging that his daughter was gang-raped by two men who teach in a madrasa.

The accused individuals have been identified as Mohammed Abedin and his brother, Mohammad Arshad.

The police registered an First Information Report (FIR) under section 376D (gang rape) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Abedin and the victim's mother have been arrested under section 34 (common intention) of the IPC, while Arshad is currently on the run. The victim's father, who works in a Gulf country and has been away for eight months, learned about the incident upon his return and immediately approached the police.

# Police detain Sharmila in Cong office to foil 'Chalo Secretariat' call against YSRCP Govt on job issue

Vijayawada | Agencies

Tension prevailed at the Congress party's office here on Thursday as the police virtually detained the sister of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and Andhra Pradesh Congress chief YS Sharmila Reddy in the office to prevent her from leading the 'Chalo Secretariat' march.

The Congress party has given a 'Chalo Secretariat' call demanding that the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) Government address the problems of unemployed youth and students and to demand a Mega DSC (District Selection Committee) to fill teachers' post in the state. Sharmila Reddy, who spent the night in the party office Andhra Ratna to avoid house arrest, remained inside with some party leaders.

She said the government had promised to fill 23,000 posts of teachers but issued DSC notification only for 6,000 posts. She demanded that the YSRCP Government apologise to the unemployed.

A large number of policemen remained deployed around Andhra Ratna to stop Sharmila Reddy from coming out.

The police arrested Congress Working Committee (CWC) member G Rudra Raju, Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) Working President Mastan Vali and several other leaders and workers trying to gather at the party office for the march to the Secretariat.



The Congress leaders raised strong objections to the police action and Mastan Vali wanted to know if there was no democracy in the state. He tried to pull down the police barricade, lead-

ing to heated arguments and fisticuffs between the two sides. Some police personnel held Mastan Vali by his collar and physically lifted him into a police vehicle.

Rudra Raju and other leaders and Congress workers were also detained.

Police also placed under house arrest Congress leaders in Vijayawada, Guntur and other places to foil the march.

Reacting sharply to the arrests, Sharmila Reddy said they were arrested for pulling up the YSRCP Government for turning mega DSC into 'dagha' DSC. She demanded immediate release of the arrested leaders. She said the government was arresting all those questioning it.

"Thousands of policemen have been deployed around us. Iron fencing has been put up to detain us. They are arresting us for standing by the unemployed. You are dictators who are trying to stop us," she posted on X.

The APCC President wanted to know if they did not have the right to protest in a democracy.

"Is it not shameful that I as a woman had to spend the night at the party office to avoid house arrest. Are we terrorists or anti-social elements," Sharmila Reddy asked.

Meanwhile, Rudra Raju said Sharmila Reddy would continue her protest inside the Congress office. He said the party would conduct 'Chalo Secretariat' despite all the hurdles created by the government.

# SIX-YEAR-OLD BOY MAULED TO DEATH BY STRAY DOGS IN UP DISTRICT

**Muzaffarnagar:** A six-year-old boy was mauled to death by a pack of stray dogs in a village in Muzaffarnagar district on Wednesday evening.

Circle Officer (CO) Rupali Devi said on Thursday that the boy Dev aka. Golu, a class 3 student, was playing in the fields when a pack of dogs attacked him.

Locals nearby rushed to Golu's rescue and brought him to a hospital where he was declared dead, the CO said. Anjeet Kumar, uncle of the deceased, said, "After Dev's death, there is panic in the village." Village head Sahendra Kumar has demanded that the administration should solve the problem of stray dogs that have attacked people here in the past also.





## CONTINUE DEFECTION IN MADHYA PRADESH CONGRESS INCREASES PARTY'S WORRIES

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In Madhya Pradesh, the ongoing discussions regarding the joining of former Chief Minister Kamal Nath and his son Nakul Nath in BJP may have come to an end, but even then the continuing party changes have increased the worries of the Congress.

Talks of a major party change on 25th February are again in full swing.

In fact, before the Lok Sabha elections in the state, many Congress leaders are joining BJP. Apart from Jabalpur Mayor Jagat Singh Annu and former Advocate General Shashank Shekhar, a large number of Congress leaders and workers, including former Media Department Chairman Ajay Singh Yadav, have joined the BJP. Almost every day there are reports of



some Congress officials and workers joining BJP. Discussions about former Chief Minister Kamal Nath and his son Chhindwara MP Nakul Nath join-

ing BJP were also in full swing, but that has come to an end. Senior BJP leaders are likely to visit the state in the coming days. Union Home

Minister Amit Shah is coming on 25 February. It is being said that during this time, big leaders of Congress may join BJP.

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav is even saying that some people want to join the BJP family, but have not joined yet. We believe that in the course of time they will join our family. It is a different matter that the state unit of Congress is trying to portray itself as unconcerned with this defection and state in-charge Bhanwar Jitendra Singh has even said that those who want to go, should go.

Political analysts say that many leaders in the Congress are feeling neglected and there is a lack of mutual coordination, along with this, those leaders do not see much possibility for the Congress in the upcoming elections, hence, He is moving towards BJP.

## Doors shut for Kamal Nath, BJP doesn't need him: Vijayvargiya

Team Absolute | Jabalpur

Madhya Pradesh minister Kailash Vijayvargiya has asserted that BJP does not need Kamal Nath and its doors are closed for him, amid suspense over the next political move of the senior Congress leader.

The former BJP general secretary was reacting to queries over speculation that Kamal Nath might join his party. "I had said there is no need of Kamal Nath in our party and that's why its doors were closed for him," he told reporters on Wednesday.

Speculations are rife ever since former MP chief minister Nath and his MP son Nakul Nath reached New Delhi last week. However,



Nath confidant Sajjan Singh Verma had denied reports that the 77-year-old veteran Congress leader would join BJP. Amid the suspense over Kamal Nath's next political move, several local leaders of the party from his stronghold of MP's Chhindwara district

joined the BJP on Wednesday. To a question about Digvijay Singh's comments concerning extradition of fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, Vijayvargiya said the senior Congress leader and others like him were frustrated.

## Chief Minister Dr. Yadav presented with special tricolour made in Assam

### Wives of deceased soldiers prepare tricolour flags in 'Sadbhavna Programme'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav was presented a special handmade tricolour made in Tinsukia, Assam today at Samatva Bhawan in the Chief Minister's residence. Brave women of military families prepare this tricolour at the Laipuloi Stitching Center operated under the Goodwill Programme of the Indian Army in Assam. In this, machines are not used and the tricolour is completely handcrafted. Nikhil Dave and Prakar Dave of Lit Chowk Foundation, Indore met Chief Minister Dr. Yadav and presented this special tricolour. The tricolour flags manufactured at the Center are presented to distinguished persons by the Lit Chowk



Foundation with the aim of inculcating among the citizens a sense of respect for the brave soldiers and military officers who sacrificed their lives for the nation, who sacrificed their lives for the nation. The income earned from making tricolour flags is also

spent for the welfare of military families. Programmes are organized by Lit Chowk Foundation of Indore to commemorate the contribution of soldiers to the nation and to make the young generation aware of the bravery of the martyrs.

## Digvijay Singh detained by police in Delhi for protesting against EVM

Team Absolute | Delhi/Bhopal

Digvijay Singh reached Delhi on Thursday to protest against EVM. The police took him into custody because he did not have permission. The protest was scheduled at Jantar Mantar, but the police did not give permission.

Digvijay Singh wrote on his X, "Two weeks ago, I had received an invitation from EVM Hatao Morcha to hold a peaceful protest on 22nd February on the issue of not holding Lok Sabha elections in the country using EVMs, which I accepted."

He further wrote, "2 days ago, the approval for a peaceful protest was also cancelled. What is the reason why the central government under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi is so nervous? Since this time thousands of people from all over the country were coming to join the



protest, they got scared and canceled the approval. Now the 'Remove EVM, Save Democracy' movement is reaching every village of the country. The Supreme Court should take cognizance of this.

Digvijay Singh said, "The issue of EVM has been going on since 2018. In the political resolution passed unanimously by AICC, it was mentioned that people have doubts about EVM, hence the elections should be conducted through ballot paper. The Election Commission does not give any answer when asked any question regarding this. We do not trust the Election Commission.

He said, "In democracy no one is greater than the public. We will fight together with the people. BEL, which makes EVMs, has four directors who are BJP leaders. We are not shown the report of the technical committee member when asked for.

## Patwari's pain spilled over - Those who want to do illegal business are joining BJP...

Team Absolute | Bhopal

State Congress President Jitu Patwari said in Ratlam on Thursday that during the struggle, people who got position, prestige and respect in the party are retreating, but for us, the respected people are those who, along with small business, fearlessly standing for the ideology of Congress.

The PCC Chief had come to Ratlam on March 6 to see the preparations, route and other arrangements for Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra. He held a meeting of officials and workers regarding the yatra and discussed with the media after the meeting.

On the question of Congressmen joining BJP, Patwari said that those who want to do illegal business are joining BJP. Those who do not have to pay royalty and run buses without permits are defecting.

Patwari said - Bharatiya Janata Party has started a new tradition. Talk



to the one who runs a crusher, doesn't want to pay royalty, wants to do corruption. Bring him to the party. The bus accident that took place in Guna was also caused by a BJP leader

and was without a permit. Patwari said that BJP had given five guarantees. Income of farmers, price of wheat Rs 2700 and paddy Rs 3100. Uncle Shivraj had promised to give

gas cylinder for Rs 450, 2 lakh jobs and Rs 3 thousand to women. I have been saying that Shivraj uncle was the uncle of unemployment and lies.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

To promote Digital India in urban areas in the state, e-Municipality Scheme is being run by the Urban Development Department in the local bodies of urban areas. Its objective is to provide services to the citizens of urban areas in a transparent and prompt manner. In the project, online facilities are being provided by integrating all citizen services, public complaint facility, internal functioning of bodies, all payment and budget processes. Madhya Pradesh is the first state where the facilities of all the urban bodies of the state have been brought on a single portal.

An integrated single SAP

ERP platform based project has been started to provide citizen services in all the urban bodies of the state. www.mpenagarpalika.gov.in and MP e-Nagarpalika Citizen App mobileapp are being used to provide the benefits of online citizen services by e-Municipality.

Bharat Bill Payment System service has been started to promote digital payments in e-Municipality. Now citizens can pay their property tax and water consumer charges through UPI applications (PhonePay, Google Pay, Paytm). The Urban Development Department has also started the service of Whatsapp ChatBot in e-Municipality to provide better citizen service. The internal system of urban bodies has also been

completely computerized under e-Municipality. The provision for all types of payments to be approved by digital signature has been made mandatory.

To promote transparency in the urban bodies of the state, all the budget and financial management functions have been integrated into e-Municipality and now the grants given to the bodies from the directorate level are being paid through e-Municipality. E-Municipality in Madhya Pradesh is a great example of better budgeting and e-governance. The data of all officers and employees of local bodies of urban areas has also been computerized. The honorarium of the working staff is also being paid by the e-Municipality.

## Satna's prosperity will increase with the water of Bargi Canal : Dy CM Shukla



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla said that by the month of August, Narmada water is going to reach the fields of Satna district through Bargi Canal. Irrigation facilities in the fields will increase agricultural production and increase the prosperity of the area. Deputy Chief Minister Shukla addressed the closing program of the state level third agricultural science fair at AKS University campus in Satna.

Shukla said that agriculture is the backbone of the country's development. The country will become prosperous only when the farmer becomes prosperous. The central and state governments are continuously implementing schemes for the welfare and development of farmers. The prosperity of farmers strengthens business. Employment opportunities increase. Deputy Chief Minister Shukla distributed awards to the excellent farmers selected under the Atma Project.

## AIIMS Bhopal Receives Glowing Praise for Exceptional Orthodontic Treatment

Team Absolute | Bhopal

AIIMS Bhopal, under the visionary leadership of Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh, has earned high acclaim for delivering outstanding orthodontic treatment, as highlighted in a recent testimonial. In a heartfelt letter addressed to the Director, a parent expressed their deep appreciation for the exemplary care provided to their son, Krishna (changed name), at the Dental Department of AIIMS Bhopal. Dr. Pankaj, Head of the Dental Department, and Dr. Niraj, the recently recruited orthodontist, were lauded for their remarkable skill and dedication in ensuring the highest standards of care.

The letter specifically praised the expertise displayed during the thorough examination, emphasizing



the detailed developments of the OPG cephalogram and the advanced utilization of 3D CBCT technology. These cutting-edge approaches contributed significantly to a comprehensive understanding of orthodontic treatment. Additionally, the testimonial highlighted the aesthetically pleasing enhancements in

the medical foyer, noting the inclusion of beautiful and soothing flower pots. This thoughtful touch not only contributed to the perception of a medically advanced facility but also created a warm and welcoming environment for patients. The overall experience was described as comparable to that of a private

hospital, underscoring the significant development and progress achieved under the esteemed leadership of Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh. The letter concluded with a heartfelt thank you to the AIIMS Bhopal team for fostering an environment of excellence, expressing deep gratitude for the exceptional care provided.

## Now Mohan Yadav challenges Scindia's Gwalior fair through Ujjain fair!



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has challenged Jyotiraditya Scindia in another matter. First he challenged the king's night stay in Ujjain and even called it a conspiracy by the Scindia family. Now Mohan Yadav has challenged Scindia's Gwalior fair with Vikramotsav. Vikramotsav includes all the programs that take place in the Gwalior Fair, especially the discounts

given to the auto sector which is the biggest identity of the Gwalior Fair. Not only will this discount be available in Vikramotsav, along with this, the first Regional Industrial Conclave is also being held on March 1 and 2, which is being said to be an important initiative to make Ujjain a hub of investment and employment.

Gwalior Fair takes place from 25th December to 25th February and Vikramotsav will be held in less than a





## EDITOR'S SPECS

## INDIA alliance in UP

After weeks of hard bargaining and long parleys, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress reached a deal in Uttar Pradesh to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha elections together. This has enthused the grassroots workers and gave an impetus to INDIA bloc's prospects in the northern state, which sends largest numbers of lawmakers to the Lok Sabha. Out of total 80 seats, Akhilesh Yadav-led SP allotted 17 seats to the grand old party and one to Chandrashekhar Azad's party. The SP will field candidates on rest of the 62 seats. A brief analysis of election figures show that the 17 seats of Congress are those, where it fared poorly in 2019 general elections. In 12 seats, the party even lost deposits and on one seat i.e. Bansgaon, it did not even field its candidate in 2019 elections. In 2019 elections, the Congress contested on a total of 67 seats but lost deposits in about 63 seats, besides the humiliating defeat that it had to face in its pocket borough Amethi. In 2024 polls, the seats where Congress will contest include Rae Bareilly, Amethi, Kanpur, Fatehpur Sikri, Bansgaon, Saharanpur, Prayagraj, Maharajganj, Varansi, Amroha, Jhansi, Bulandshahr, Ghaziabad, Mathura, Sitapur, Barabanki and Deoria. Of the 17 seats, Varanasi is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency while Congress does not have much to expect from its stronghold Amethi, owing to its "ignorance" and "lack of attention". The seat-sharing agreement between the two parties will indeed give impetus and strength to the INDIA alliance. The INDIA bloc had already suffered many blows in the run-up to Parliamentary elections with many regional satraps declaring to go solo. AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi reportedly played the ice-breaker and helped seal the deal, else the turbulence in seat-sharing talks had reached a "point of no return".

# RIISING USAGE OF USED HEAVY-DUTY VEHICLES MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO POLLUTION: UN REPORT

While heavy-duty vehicle (HDV) exports represent a modest 3.6 per cent of the global automotive trade's total value, their associated CO2 emissions have surged by over 30 per cent since 2000, with trucks contributing 80 per cent to this increase.

Moreover, HDVs participate substantially to environmental pollution, accounting for over 40 per cent of on-road nitrogen oxides (NOx) emissions, over 60 per cent of on-road particulate matter (PM 2.5), and more than 20 per cent of black carbon emissions, as revealed in the report by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) on Thursday.

The report, "Used Heavy Duty Vehicles and the Environment -- A Global Overview of Used Heavy-Duty Vehicles: Flow, Scale and Regulation," jointly launched by the UNEP and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), provides a first global overview by the UN of the scale and regulation of used HDVs and their contribution to global air pollution, road accidents, fuel consumption and climate emissions.

The report recommends ways to reduce the harmful aspects of used HDVs on people's



health and the climate.

According to the study, HDVs are projected to considerably continue to grow with increasing economic activities and the need to move people and goods. This is based on past trends where global sales of trucks and buses doubled in 15 years (2000-2015).

Many developing countries rely on used heavy duty vehicles imports to grow their fleet. While this promotes more affordable means to increasing mobility needs in these countries, the report finds that regulation and enforcement on the quality of used HDVs imported are either low or non-existent.

To date no country has minimum require-

ments for exporting used HDVs. The report finds regulations in over half of used HDV importing countries to be "weak" or "very weak" and enforcement to be inadequate.

For example, while 25 African countries have adopted standards on used HDVs towards air pollution control, climate mitigation and improved road safety, only four have fully implemented these.

Worldwide, only two countries have included used vehicles in their national climate action plans (NDCs).

Rob de Jong, head of UNEP's Sustainable Mobility Unit, said: "Trucks and buses contribute to economic growth just about anywhere in the world, but ambitious regulations are needed to curb their emissions causing major environment and health impacts. Introduction of cleaner bus technologies can be a major driver for the global revolution to low and, ultimately, zero emissions transport."

The report emphasises that it is a shared responsibility of importing and exporting countries to ensure cleaner and safer used vehicles are on the roads of developing countries.

It shows the need for regional cooperation

for introducing and enforcing minimum standards, such as emission standards and age limits, raising public awareness, and more research, for both environment and road safety benefits.

For example, by adopting Euro VI equivalent vehicle emission standards and cleaner fuels, as much as 700 thousand premature deaths can be avoided by 2030.

Currently 97 per cent of all newly registered trucks and 73 per cent of buses in the EU run on diesel. Better regulations on used HDVs can also lead to a leapfrog and greater uptake of advanced technologies in developing countries, including electric buses and trucks.

The report represents a first effort of quantifying and qualifying used heavy-duty vehicle flows, based on export data from Japan, the European Union, and Korea -- altogether representing about 60 per cent of the total new and used HDV export market -- to 146 predominantly low- and middle-income countries.

The report has limitations, most notably discrepancies in statistics, as well as lacking publicly available data from the US, which does not separate exports of new and used vehicles, and China, an emerging exporter.

# STUDIES SHOW NO SAFE AIR QUALITY THRESHOLD EXISTS FOR HEART & LUNG HEALTH

Short and long term exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) air pollution is linked to an increased risk of hospital admission for major heart and lung diseases, find two large US studies, published by The BMJ on Thursday.

Together, the results suggest that no safe threshold exists for heart and lung health, said the team of researchers from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Medicine, US.

According to the Global Burden of Disease study, exposure to PM2.5 accounts for an estimated 7.6 per cent of total global mortality and 4.2 per cent of global disability adjusted life years (a measure of years lived in good health).

In light of this extensive evidence, the World Health Organization (WHO) updated the air quality guidelines in 2021, recommending that an annual average PM2.5 levels should not exceed 5 microgram per cubic metre and 24 hour average

PM2.5 levels should not exceed 15 microgram per cubic metre on more than 3-4 days each year.

In the first study, researchers linked average daily PM2.5 levels to residential zip codes for nearly 60 million US adults (84 per cent white, 55 per cent women) aged 65 and over from 2000 to 2016.

They then used Medicare insurance data to track hospital admissions over an average of eight years.

After accounting for a range of economic, health and social factors, average PM2.5 exposure over three years was associated with increased risks of first hospital admissions for seven major types of cardiovascular disease -- ischemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, heart failure, cardiomyopathy, arrhythmia, valvular heart disease, and thoracic and abdominal aortic aneurysms.

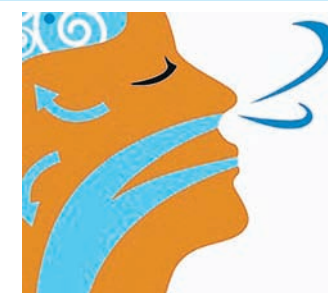
Compared with exposures of 5 microgram per cubic metre or less (the WHO air quality guideline for

annual PM2.5), exposures between 9 and 10 microgram per cubic metre, which encompassed the US national average of 9.7 microgram per cubic metre during the study period, were associated with a 29 per cent increased risk of hospital admission for cardiovascular disease.

On an absolute scale, the risk of hospital admission for cardiovascular disease increased from 2.59 per cent with exposures of 5 microgram per cubic metre or less to 3.35 per cent at exposures between 9 and 10 microgram per cubic metre.

"This means that if we were able to manage to reduce annual PM2.5 below 5 microgram per cubic metre, we could avoid 23 per cent in hospital admissions for cardiovascular disease," said the researchers from the Harvard University in the US.

These cardiovascular effects persisted for at least three years after exposure to PM2.5, and susceptibil-



ity varied by age, education, access to healthcare services, and area deprivation level.

The researchers said their findings suggest that no safe threshold exists for the chronic effect of PM2.5 on overall cardiovascular health, and that substantial benefits could be attained through adherence to the WHO air quality guideline.

In the second study, researchers

used county-level daily PM2.5 concentrations and medical claims data to track hospital admissions and emergency department visits for natural causes, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory disease for 50 million US adults aged 18 and over from 2010 to 2016.

During the study period, more than 10 million hospital admissions and 24 million emergency department visits were recorded.

They found that short term exposure to PM2.5, even at concentrations below the new WHO air quality guideline limit, was statistically significantly associated with higher rates of hospital admissions for natural causes, cardiovascular disease and respiratory disease, as well as emergency department visits for respiratory disease.

## international

# Imran wants IMF aid to Pakistan stalled over 'rigged' elections

Rawalpindi | Agencies

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan will write to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), demanding to stop its support for Pakistan due to the "rigged elections", party leader Ali Zafar said on Thursday, media reports said.

"Imran Khan will issue a letter to the IMF today. The charter of IMF, EU, and other organisations stipulates that they can function or provide loan to a country only if there's good governance," Zafar told journalists after meeting Khan at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail, Geo News reported.

Zafar claimed that the "most important section" of their charter is that a country should be democratic.

"If there's no democracy, neither can these institutions function in such countries, nor should they," he said, Geo News reported.



"The basic pillar of democracy is free and fair elections. However, the entire world saw how the nation's mandate was stolen. Let's leave pre-poll rigging aside, in post-poll rigging, victory was snatched from PTI's winning candidates," Zafar said.

This isn't the first time that the opposition PTI will try to affect the IMF deal, as in 2022, its ex-leader Shaukat Tarin had told PTI's then Finance Ministers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab that they should "tell the IMF that the commitment made to them cannot be fulfilled" and to cite the recent devastation caused by floods in the country as the reason behind it.

Pakistan secured a short-term \$3 billion programme from the IMF last year, which helped the country avert a sovereign debt default. It will run out next month and securing a new and much bigger one is widely seen as the priority for the new administration.

With the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and their allies striking a deal to form a coalition government, the PTI and some other political parties have altogether rejected the elections and announced country-wide protests, Geo News reported.

# BOTSWANA REPORTS INCREASE IN CASES OF INFLUENZA-LIKE ILLNESS, COVID-19



Christopher Nyanga, chief public relations officer for the Ministry of Health, on Wednesday.

The Ministry has asked the public to be vigilant and protect themselves by following hand hygiene protocols, seeking medical attention if they

have a fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, fatigue, or difficulty breathing, and observing physical distancing measures and wearing masks, Xinhua news agency reported.

Nyanga added that the situation is under control, and the Ministry will continue to monitor the situation closely and take appropriate action as needed.

He also advised the public to stay informed through credible sources of information.

Gaborone | Agencies

Botswana has recorded an increase in the number of people with influenza-like illness and Covid-19 in its facilities, a government official said in a statement.

Over the past four weeks, cases of influenza-like illness have ranged from 5,300 to 8,627 per week, while cases of Covid-19 have ranged from two to 41 per week, said

# FIVE KILLED AS CARGO SHIP RAMS INTO BRIDGE IN CHINA

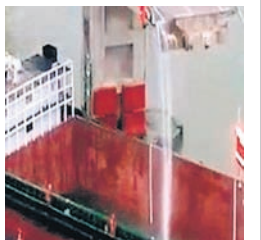
Beijing: Five people were killed after a cargo ship rammed into a bridge, leading to collapse of a portion of the structure on Thursday morning in China's Guangdong province.

The victims included driver of a bus without passengers, a motorbike rider and three people who were in vehicles that fell into the river under the bridge, Xinhua news agency reported.

The accident happened around 5.30 a.m. when the container ship hit the pier of the Lixinsha Bridge in Nansha District.

Five vehicles, including a motorbike, were involved in the accident. Two of the vehicles plunged into the river while the others fell onto the vessel, a preliminary investigation has found.

Three other people suffered injuries and were sent to hospital for treatment. Two of them fell from the bridge and sustained bone fractures and soft tissue contusions, and they are in stable condition, according to the First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University.



# Russia-US relations won't improve for decades: Dmitry Medvedev

Moscow: Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev Thursday said that Russia-US ties will not improve in the coming years and even decades.

In an interview to the local media, Dmitry Medvedev said that his current position allows him to speak more categorically and openly than during other periods, Xinhua news agency reported.

Both countries will not be able to develop normal ties in the upcoming years after what has happened, no matter who is in power in Washington, Dmitry Medvedev said.

He reiterated that Moscow had never refused to negotiate with Kiev as it is Ukraine that forbids talks, but attempts made by Western countries to steer Ukraine in this direction have remained unsuccessful.

Russia's preconditions for such negotiations would be "the recognition of the results of the special military operation," he said, adding that Ukraine is trying to delay the negotiation process fearing immediate defeat.



# 17 KILLED IN ISRAELI AIR STRIKE ON NUSEIRAT REFUGEE CAMP IN GAZA

Gaza | Agencies

At least 17 Palestinians were killed and more than 34 others injured in an Israeli airstrike on a house in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, local medical sources told the media.

The sources added on Wednesday that rescue efforts are still ongoing, and the casualties include women and children, Xinhua news agency reported.

The recovered victims were all transferred to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the city of Deir el-Balah, the sources said.

Eyewitnesses told Xinhua news agency that an Israeli warplane fired several missiles at the



house sheltering several displaced families.

The massive blast brought down the building and caused severe damage to neighbouring houses in the western part of the camp.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian death toll from Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip has risen to 29,313, with 69,333 others wounded, as the Israel-Hamas conflict continues, the Hamas-run Health Ministry said in a press statement on Wednesday.

# China one of the costliest places in the world to raise a child

Hong Kong | Agencies

China is one of the most expensive places in the world to raise a child in relative terms, a new report said, with the disproportionate impact on women driving the country's precipitously low fertility rate as it grapples with a demographic crisis.

The study by the China-based YuWa Population Research Institute found that the average nationwide cost of raising a child from birth to age 17 was about \$74,800 - rising to more than \$94,500 to support a child through a bachelor's degree, CNN reported.

The cost of raising a child to age 18 in China is 6.3 times higher than the country's GDP per capita, the report said - a ratio second only to South Korea, which has the world's lowest fertility rate, and where the cost of child-rearing is 7.79 times the GDP per capita, CNN reported.

For comparison, the report said that the cost is just 2.08 times the GDP per



capita in Australia, 2.24 times in France, 4.11 times in the United States, and 4.26 times in Japan - another East Asian country that has long struggled with a rapidly aging population and declining birth rate.

"Due to reasons such as the high cost of childbearing and the difficulty for

women to balance family and work, the Chinese people's willingness to have children is almost the lowest in the world," the report said, adding, "It is no exaggeration to describe the current population situation as a collapse in the birth population," CNN reported.





# ONLY BJP IS WORKING IN 'CLEAN WAY' FOR ADVANCEMENT OF POOR: JP NADDA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president J P Nadra on Thursday said that only BJP was working in a "clean" manner to ensure progress of the poor.

The Congress only gave slogans of poverty alleviation but the Narendra Modi government brought 25 crore people out of poverty, JP Nadra said.

"Only the BJP is ensuring advancement of the poor and the country in a clean way. All other parties do corruption," he said.

"Be it Sonia (Gandhi), Rahul (Gandhi) or Lalu Prasad, they all are out on bail. Soren (apparently referring to former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren) is in jail," JP Nadra further said.

While 50 per cent of the country's population was living in poverty during former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's years in office, the proportion increased to 60 per cent after Indira Gandhi came to power, the BJP chief



claimed. "The Congress only gave slogans in the name of the poor, devised schemes and plans in the drawing room but they were never implemented," he said.

Meanwhile, the BJP president JP Nadra on Wednesday asked leaders

from party's Mumbai unit to ensure that the BJP's ideology reaches the last person in society.

According to a news agency, JP Nadra urged Mumbai BJP leaders to give a befitting reply to opposition attacks.

JP Nadra, who is on a two-day visit

to the city, met BJP office-bearers from all 36 assembly constituencies, MPs and MLAs from Mumbai.

He urged BJP leaders to use social media and seek the support of prominent personalities, stressing the need to formulate a strategy to ensure that the party's ideology reaches the grassroots levels. He also urged BJP leaders to give a befitting reply to attacks by the opposition.

Nadra also chaired the election management committee meetings for all six Lok Sabha constituencies in Mumbai.

In the 2019 general elections, the BJP and undivided Shiv Sena, which was its alliance partner then, had won three seats each in Mumbai.

In the Maharashtra Assembly polls held that year, the BJP won 16 of the 36 seats in the city, while 14 were bagged by the Sena.

The state's political landscape has undergone dramatic changes since then, with splits in the Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

# PARENTS PROTEST OVER ALLEGED HARASSMENT OF CHILDREN DURING SCHOOL PICNIC NEAR MUMBAI

Team Absolute | Thane

A large crowd of parents gathered outside a private school in Thane for the second day in a row, demanding the resignation of the administration over the alleged molestation of class 2 girl students inside a school bus during a picnic trip.

The parents complained that girls in class 2 were molested by an outsider who accompanied the school management during the picnic.

Speaking to a news agency, a parent said "On February 20, when kids from grade 2 were on a picnic, two outsiders also accompanied them which wasn't informed to any parents. We don't know the due diligence or the process through which they're selected for the picnic. One man molested 8-10 children, teachers are denying, they are saying that they were keeping an eye and nothing had happened, but eight children can't lie," one



of the parents said.

"Teachers are denying it, and management has accepted but only about the negligence in appointing the third party and they're blaming it entirely on the third party. We are demanding the resignation of the teachers and management involved who planned the picnic trip. We have filed an FIR against the teacher, management, principal and the criminal," she added.

Following the outrage, the Kapurbawadi Police on Wednesday arrested the main accused involved. Despite the arrest, the unrest persisted, with parents assembling outside the school, demanding justice.

The situation escalated to the extent that the Kapurbawadi Police force was deployed outside the school to manage the crowds and ensure the safety of everyone.

# ED raids multiple locations of Hiranandani Group in Mumbai

Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) carried out raids at multiple offices of the realty major Hiranandani Group, for alleged violations of FEMA rules, official sources said here on Thursday.

The raids and searches were going on at the Hiranandani Group headquarters in Powai and at least three other offices in Mumbai and adjoining Raigad for alleged violation of foreign exchange regulations.

The operation was to verify possible violations of FEMA laws, and the ED is scanning its financial transactions to check whether they fall within the rules.

Earlier, in March 2022, the Hiranandani Group was targeted by the Income Tax Department which had raided several of its premises in Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru for suspected tax evasion by the company. More details were awaited.

# SHIV SENA MLA CLAIMS HE KILLED A TIGER, WEARS ITS TOOTH AROUND HIS NECK

Team Absolute | Mumbai

An MLA from the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena has claimed that he hunted a tiger 37 years ago and wears its tooth around his neck.

A video of Sanjay Gaikwad, who represents the Buldhana constituency in Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, making the claim was seen on social media.

In the video, Gaikwad is asked about the thing around his neck.

"This is a tiger tooth. In 1987, I had hunted it and removed it (the tooth)," said Gaikwad, who is known for his off-the-cuff remarks.

The interaction seems to have been



recorded on Monday on the occasion of Shiv Jayanti, the birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. It was also posted online by Saamana, the mouthpiece of Sena's rival Uddhav Thackeray faction, on social media.

Hunting of tigers was made a criminal offence in the country much before 1987.

Calls made by Press Trust of India to Gaikwad were not answered.

# "Heavens Won't Fall": Court pauses Netflix docu-series on Indrani Mukerjea

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The release of a Netflix documentary on Indrani Mukerjea, a former media boss accused of murdering her 25-year-old daughter, has been stalled for now. The Bombay High Court has told Netflix to organise a screening of "The Indrani Mukerjea Story: Buried Truth" for officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is investigating the Sheena Bora murder case. The documentary was to release today.

The court has now asked Netflix to organise a special screening that will be attended by CBI officials and lawyers. The matter will be heard next Thursday, meaning the docuseries is not releasing this month.

Earlier, the CBI had requested the court to stall the documentary's



screening till the trial in the murder case is complete. A division bench of Justice Revati Mohite Dere and Justice Manjusha Deshpande today asked makers of the documentary if

they can organise a screening for the CBI.

"Why should the CBI not be allowed to see the series. What is the difficulty in sharing the docuseries?" the court asked. It noted that like an accused, the prosecution and victim in a case have rights too.

Senior Advocate Ravi Kadam, who appeared for Netflix, initially opposed the screening and said it would amount to pre-censorship. He also said the CBI should have approached the court earlier.

But the court said the trial was still on. "It (release) can be deferred for a week... Heavens are not going to fall," the court said.

Kadam said the court can also view the series if it wishes to. The bench quipped that it does not have the time. The Netflix counsel then made a statement that the documentary will not be released before the

next hearing. He also told the court that five witnesses in the case have been interviewed for the series. These include Indrani's son Mikhail and Vidhie Mukerjea, her daughter from her second husband Peter Mukerjea.

Earlier, a special court had rejected the CBI's request to stop the release of the docuseries.

Sheena Bora was allegedly strangled to death in a car by Indrani, her then driver Shyamvar Rai and former husband Sanjeev Khanna in April 2012. Sheena was Indrani's daughter from a previous relationship.

The murder came to light in 2015 after the driver, Shyamvar Rai, spoke about it following his arrest in another case. Indrani was arrested in 2015 and granted bail in 2022. The other accused, including Shyamvar Rai, Sanjeev Khanna and Peter Mukerjea, are also out on bail.

# Locals hold 'rasta roko' against proposed Vadhavan port in Palghar, highway traffic affected

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Hundreds of people held a 'rasta roko' protest on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway in Maharashtra's Palghar on Thursday to oppose the proposed Vadhavan Port project in the district, bringing traffic to a halt for hours, reported a news wire. The road blockade was held at the Charoti toll plaza on the highway between 12 noon to 2.30 pm, during which villagers and fishermen from the region waved black flags and raised slogans against the multi-crore greenfield port.

Vadhavan is a village in Dahanu, Palghar district. The local people are concerned that the project would affect their livelihoods and said that they want to hold a dialogue with the state government and the Centre so that their issues are addressed.

As per the report, Narayan Patil, president of the Vadhavan Port Virodhi Kruti Samiti (Anti-Vadhavan



Port Action Committee) said that the local people are completely against this port. He said the government was indifferent to the concerns expressed by the locals and accused the authorities of pushing the project despite opposition. More than 15 organisations are part of the action committee. The Vadhavan Port, is a Rs 76,000

crore container port and is developed by the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT). The JNPT and the Maharashtra Maritime Board and has received in-principle approval from the Centre in February 2020.

The Vadhavan Port recently got all environmental clearances by the Central government, Deputy chief

minister Devendra Fadnis had announced. The Port, which has one of the deepest drafts, will be a game-changer for Maharashtra, Fadnis said. The local's protest comes amid reports that Prime Minister Narendra Modi may lay the foundation stone for the port by this month-end.

Heavy police deployment was put in place at the protest site. The traffic was affected for several hours as the protesters began gathering at the protest site from 10 am. The protest began at noon and ended by 2.30 pm, following which the movement of traffic was restored, news wire reported quoting police official.

Speaking at an media event recently, Fadnis also said that Palghar district has always been dismissed as a backward district. With bullet train passing through and the port, the district will march forward.

In the past too, the locals have protested raising environmental concerns.

# 10 per cent water cut in Bandra, Khar from Feb 27

Mumbai | Agencies

Water supply in some areas of Bandra and Khar West (H-West ward) will be affected from Tuesday, February 27 to Monday March 11, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has informed.

The BMC's water department is carrying out repair and rehabilitation works of the old water channel of the Pali Hill reservoir, which will cause low water supply and there will be 10 percent water cut.

The areas which will face 10 percent water cut includes Gazdar Bandh, Dilip Kumar zone, Pali Mala zone, Union Park zone (Khar west), Dandpada, Kantwadi, Sherli Rajan and some areas of Bandra West, BMC has informed. After Monday, March 11, full water supply will be resumed in the said areas of H-West ward. This month, from February 16 to 21 too water supply in H-West ward was affected as the BMC was fixing the 600 mm diameter valve at its Pali Hill reservoir.

Meanwhile, the BMC is still waiting for the report from IIT on structural stability for its Malabar Hill reservoir. Three members of the committee who are the residents of Malabar



Hill have already submitted their part of the report in the first week of January, stating no need for demolition. The report was expected within a month of the inspection, completed on December 18, 2023. The BMC had planned to demolish and reconstruct the 143-year-old reservoir that supplies water to south Mumbai. On the other hand, the BMC could announce water cuts in Mumbai is coming days as the water stock in the seven lakes supplying water to the city is dipping. Reportedly, earlier this month, the water stock in the seven lakes supplying water to Mumbai was around 49 percent, the lowest is last three years. In the view of the city could face harsh summer this year too, water cut in Mumbai is being considered.

# CLASS 12 STUDENT GOES MISSING ON EXAM DAY NEAR MUMBAI

Thane: A 17-year-old boy from Navi Mumbai township in Maharashtra has allegedly gone missing after leaving home to appear in the Class 12 board examination, police said.

The boy left his home in Ghansoli area at around 8:45 am on Wednesday to go to a college in Vashi for the exam, an official from Rabale police station said.

He did not return home till late night following which his parents carried out a search and later approached the police, he said.

Based on a complaint by the boy's father, a case was registered under sections 363 (kidnapping) of the Indian Penal Code, the official said, adding that efforts were on to trace him.

# MVA seat-sharing talks in final stages, says Congress

Mumbai | Agencies

Congress's Maharashtra in-charge Ramesh Chennithala on Thursday said that the seat-sharing talks between the constituents of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the state were in the last stage, and a final decision will be announced by month-end.

There were no differences in the alliance over seat adjustments for the Lok Sabha elections 2024, he said in Mumbai.

a meeting of the alliance -- which also includes -Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Shiv Sena (UBT) and Prakash Ambedkar's Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi -- will be held on February 27 and 28, he said.

Ramesh Chennithala was talking to reporters after chairing a meeting of the state Congress election committee at the party headquarters Tilak Bhavan.

"Talks are in the last stage. Decision on seat-sharing will be announced after the meeting on 27th and 28th," he said.

The MVA alliance was strong and everyone will work unitedly to win maximum seats, he said, adding that talks were under-



way with Prakash Ambedkar, Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray. The recent two-day training camp at

Lonavala focused on how to strengthen the party at the grassroots level, and poll preparation of the Mumbai Congress was

also being reviewed, Chennithala further said.

State Congress chief Nana Patole said at the press conference that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) slogan about making the country corruption-free was a joke as "all leaders accused of corruption are with the BJP."

"Was (deputy chief minister and NCP chief) Ajit Pawar raided by central agencies after being accused of Rs 70,000 crore irrigation scam? PM Modi accused Ashok Chavan of involvement in the Adarsh scam and (then) made him a Rajya Sabha member from the BJP. The BJP has become a shield for leaders whom it had accused of corruption earlier," he said.

Of the saffron party's 303 Lok Sabha members, as many as 165 were earlier with opposition parties, including 67 who were once with the Congress, he claimed.

Meanwhile, Sharad Pawar on Tuesday said members of Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) have arrived at a consensus on contesting 39 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra.

He said more rounds of discussions will be held for the remaining five to six constituencies.

# Shiv Sena (UBT) Vidarbha leader quits party, accuses colleagues of hatching conspiracies

Mumbai: The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) Vidarbha leader on Thursday quit the party claiming her colleagues were hatching conspiracies against her.

In a letter to Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, Shilpa Bodke, who is an office bearer of the party's east Vidarbha unit, also accused the leadership of using her as "tissue paper".

Some leaders are busy hatching conspiracies rather than working towards the party's expansion and more importance was being given to them, she claimed in the letter.



## Ajay Devgn admits having supernatural experiences during outdoor shoots

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Ajay Devgn, who is a firm believer of Lord Shiva and has directed films like 'Shivaay' and 'Bhola', incorporating themes around Lord Shiva, has confessed that he has had supernatural experiences.

The actor spoke to the media on Thursday and shared that during the initial 10-12 years of his career, he did experience supernatural occurrences.

However, he didn't get into the nitty-gritty of those experiences.

The actor said: "During the first 10-12 years of my career when we used to shoot outdoors, I did experience supernatural occurrences. What those experiences entailed, I won't get into that, but they were quite unsettling, I must say."

The actor further shared that he absolutely loves the genre of horror as it is a universal genre, adding that every religion mentions black magic.

He added: "I love the genre of horror, the audience across the world connects with it, every religion in the world finds mention of black magic."

Ajay is currently awaiting the release of his upcoming film 'Shaiteen' which also stars R. Madhavan and Jyothika.



## Priyanka Chopra gives sneak peek into MM's 'first hike'; fans gush over her voice

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Global star Priyanka Chopra Jonas on Thursday shared the glimpses of her little bundle of joy Malti Marie's (MM) first hike, sharing how she touched everything, jumped in puddles, calling the little angel as her 'magic dust'.

Taking to Instagram, where Priyanka enjoys 90.6 million followers, she shared a series of photos, and videos, wherein we can see MM wearing a leopard print jacket, full sleeves black T-shirt, and matching tights. Her look was completed with black shoes.

The photos show her enjoying the hike as she plays in the mud. In the video, we can hear MM cutely saying, "Hikeee...okayy".

The post is captioned as: "The magic of nature. Her first hike. She touched everything, jumped in puddles till she was muddy till her knees. To witness her in real time experiencing everything for the first time.. is just her magic dust that she sprinkles in my life every day." Nick Jonas dropped a red heart eyes emoji in the comment section. Fans couldn't stop gushing over the pictures and wrote: "Her little voice STAWP IT".

One user said: "The magic of Malti", while the other commented: "she looks like jiju".

Another fan wrote: "OMGooooooh her voice".

Priyanka got married to American singer and actor, Nick Jonas in December 2018. In January 2022, the couple had their first child, a girl, Malti Marie, via surrogacy.



## Samantha reveals she weighs 50 kilos, shares glimpses of intense workout

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu did not shy away from revealing her weight on social media as she gave a glimpse of her "best kind of morning." Samantha shared a motley of pictures on Instagram, which include her working out with the sea in the backdrop, a piece of paper stating her weight and metabolic rate. The image showed that the actress weighs 50.1 Kgs, fat percentage is 24.0, fat mass is 12.0 Kg, muscle mass 35.9 kg and metabolic age 23. For the caption she wrote: "Forever seeking the morning sun... The best kind of mornings."

Her picture had Taylor Swift's '...Ready For It?' playing in the backdrop.

Samantha, who was last seen in the film 'Kushi', will next be seen in the Indian remake of 'Citadel', alongside Varun Dhawan. It is directed by Raj & DK and Sita R. Menon. It also stars



Sikandar Kher, Kay Kay Menon, Saqib

Saleem and Emma Canning.

## To stop being seen smoking by his daughter, Shahid Kapoor decided to kick the butt

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Shahid Kapoor has opened up about his decision to quit smoking, and it is his eight-year-old daughter Misha. Shahid appeared on 'No Filter Neha' season 6, a podcast hosted by actress Neha Dhupia, who chats with her industry friends and makes interesting conversations. During the show, Shahid revealed about his decision to quit smoking: "When I used to smoke, I would hide from my daughter and smoke. That is actually the reason I gave it up; one day, while I was hiding and having my smoke, I told myself that I am not going to do this forever. And that is actually the day I decided to quit smoking." Shahid married Mira Rajput in July 2015. The couple have two kids--daughter Misha, and son Zain. On the work front, Shahid was last seen in 'Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya', a science fiction romantic comedy co-starring Kriti Sanon.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Urmila Matondkar reminisced about shooting with Shah Rukh Khan for the song 'Is Pyaar Se Meri Taraf Na Dekho' from the 1992 romantic comedy 'Chamatkar', calling him not only a great actor but also a lovely human being.

Urmila appeared on the special episode of singing reality show 'Indian Idol 14'. Paying tribute to Urmila's journey in the film industry, the contestants delivered melodious acts.

Rajasthan's Piyush Panwar, who owned the stage and once again impressed one and all with his amazing renditions of 'Bahut Khoobsurat Ho' from the film 'Khoobsurat', and 'Is Pyaar Se Meri Taraf Na Dekho' from the film 'Chamatkar'.

Taking a walk down memory lane, Urmila spoke about her co-star SRK, and said: "This song 'Is Pyaar Se Meri Taraf Na Dekho' was sung by Kumar Sanu and Alka Yagnik, and it

Urmila recalls how SRK made co-actors feel comfortable at 'Chamatkar' shoot

Piyush, you have beautifully attempted the song. I remember filming with the iconic Shahrukh, who is not only a great actor but also a lovely human being."

"He is one of the finest actors who has also done theatre, he's been humble since the beginning and he has an aura that makes his co-actors feel comfortable. I feel that the people who have worked with him and shared screen space with him are truly blessed," shared Urmila.

Impressed by Piyush's performance, Urmila added: "You sang beautifully. Rafi Sahab, which is rare to hear these days."

## Dalip Tahil, Ila Arun, Zakir Hussain pay their last respects to Ameen Sayani

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Iconic radio personality Ameen Sayani's mortal remains were kept at the Famous Studios in Mumbai's Mahalaxmi area to allow members of the film and music fraternity pay their last respects to the man who is celebrated as the golden voice of Indian radio.

Actor Dalip Tahil was one of the early arrivals at the prayer meet. He paid his respects to the departed soul and reminisced about Sayani while talking to his friends at the venue.

Ila Arun, who's appearing in the streaming show 'Aarya' released recently, too, was seen at Famous Studios. The actress and Rajasthani folk-pop singer briefly interacted with those present at the venue.

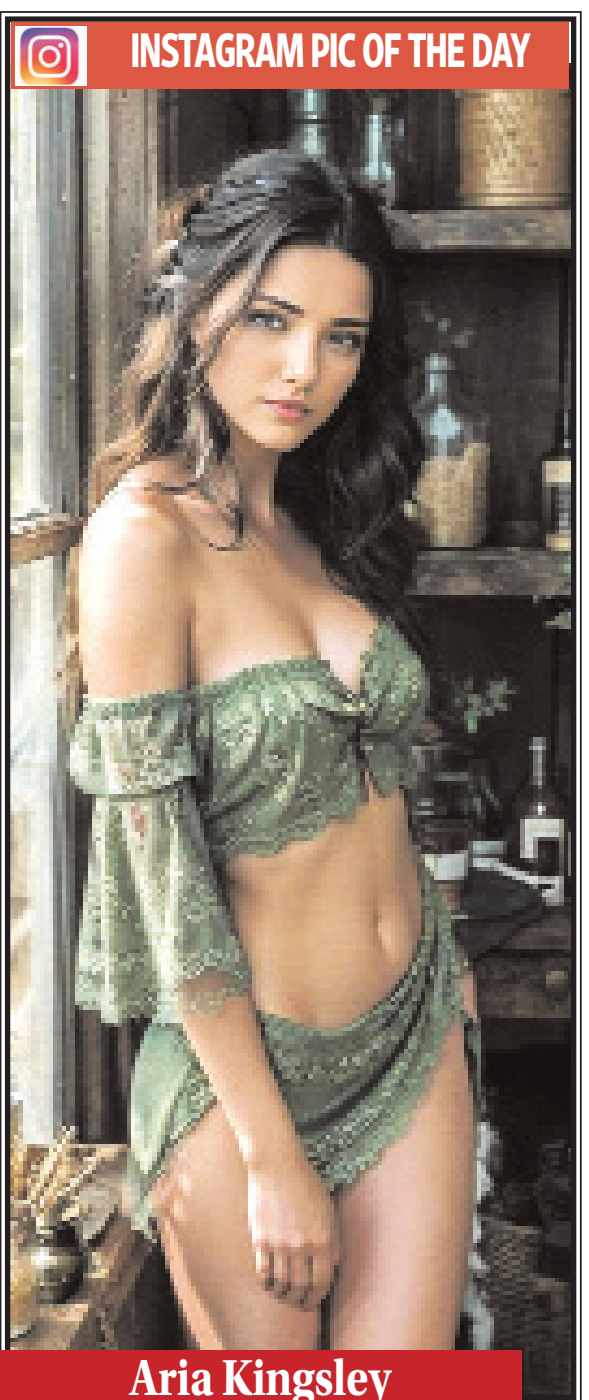
Veteran playback singer Nitin Mukesh, father of actor Neil Nitin Mukesh also came for a last sight of the late radio star, who brought film music to people's homes from 1952 to 1994 with the superhit programme 'Binaca Geetmala', which he presented non-stop throughout its long run.

Another music personality who also paid his final respects was tabla maestro Zakir Hussain, fresh from his triple-Grammy win earlier this month.



'Pagalpan Next Level' actress Sashaa Padamsee, the daughter of late theatre personality Alyque Padamsee, was also present and interacted with her acquaintances.

The celebrities let the spotlight be on the departed soul who had enthralled and educated generations of radio listeners.



Aria Kingsley





## IPL 2024: CSK to host RCB in season opener on March 22 as schedule for two weeks announced

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Defending champion Chennai Super Kings (CSK) will host Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in the opening match of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 at the M.A Chidambaram Stadium. With the General Elections up ahead, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the schedule for the first two weeks of the IPL 2024, commencing from March 22 to April 7.

The partial schedule released on Thursday by IPL comprises 21 matches, to be played across 10 cities, with each team playing a minimum of three matches and a maximum of five. However, as per this schedule, there will only be five days between the anticipated May 26 IPL final and June 1, when the men's T20 World Cup will begin in the USA and the Caribbean.

Once the Election Commission of India releases the dates of the General Elections, which are anticipated to take place in April and May, the second half of the tournament schedule will be released.

Over these 17 days, the 14 games are scheduled for the Delhi Capitals, Gujarat Titans, and RCB. While all other teams are scheduled to play four games each, KKR will play only three. Punjab Kings' home games will probably no longer be



held at their customary location in Mohali, but rather at a brand-new location in Mullanpur, on the outskirts of Chandigarh.

The partial schedule includes four double-headers including two on opening weekend -- on March 23 Punjab Kings will play the day match against Delhi Capitals at home followed by Kolkata Knight Riders hosting Sunrisers Hyderabad at Eden Gardens.

On March 24, Rajasthan Royals will play their first game, an afternoon match, against Lucknow Super Giants, and the same evening, Gujarat Titans, the 2022 champions and finalists of the last season, will play their first match, hosting five-time champions Mumbai Indians in Ahmedabad.

Capitals are the only franchise that won't play any games at their home ground, Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium, in the March 22-April 7 period; both those games will be held at the ACA-VDCA Stadium in Visakhapatnam.

Meanwhile, the return of stalwarts like MS Dhoni, Hardik Pandya, and Rishabh Pant adds an extra layer of intrigue to the proceedings, promising moments of brilliance and sheer cricketing magic.

With 74 games on the cards, including four playoff encounters, the IPL 2024 season will kick off on March 22.

## Ex-Brazil footballer Dani Alves sentenced to 4.5 years in prison over sexual assault

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Brazil and Barcelona FC footballer Dani Alves has been found guilty of raping a woman in a Barcelona nightclub and sentenced to 4.5 years in jail. The 40-year-old footballer had denied sexually assaulting the woman in the early hours of 31 December 2022 and he can appeal against the sentence.

In a statement, the court said there was evidence other than the victim's testimony that proved that she had been raped. It also ordered him to pay €150,000 (£128,500) to the victim, BBC reported. Alves, who has been held in pre-trial detention since January 2023, Alves has altered his testimony multiple times during this month's trial. Initially, he denied any acquaintance with his accuser but later said that they had encountered each other in the restroom, stating that no incident had occurred between them.

Subsequently, he revised his account once more, asserting that they engaged in consensual sexual activity.

The victim told state prosecutors that Alves and his friend had bought champagne for three young women before asking one of them to accompany him to another area with a toilet which she did not know of.



At that point they argued he turned violent, forcing the woman to have sex despite her repeated requests to leave.

## Mohammed Shami set to miss IPL 2024, to undergo surgery for ankle injury: Sources



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Senior pacer Mohammed Shami has been ruled out of next month's Indian Premier League (IPL) owing to a left ankle injury, for which he will undergo

surgery in the UK, sources said. The 33-year-old, who is not part of the ongoing Test series against England, last played for India in the ODI World Cup final against Australia in November.

According to sources, Shami was in London in January for ankle treatment. The treatment didn't help and now he has to go through the surgery. Don't think he will play in the IPL," said a source.

## PKL 10: Jaipur Pink Panthers could lift the trophy: Pawan Sehrawat gives his verdict on Playoffs

Team Absolute | Panchkula (Haryana)

Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) superstar Pawan Sehrawat has picked former champions Jaipur Pink Panthers as the favourites to win the crown in Season 10 of the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL), coming through the Playoffs to be held in Hyderabad next week.

The Puneri Paltan finished at the top of the points table at the end of the PKL Season 10 on Wednesday. They recorded the most-ever points (96) in the history of the league following their victory against U.P. Yoddhas in Panchkula. Meanwhile, the Jaipur Pink Panthers finished second on the table with 92 points.

The Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 will move to Hyderabad for the Playoffs where the Dabang Delhi K.C. will take on Patna Pirates in Eliminator 1, while the Gujarat Giants will face off against Haryana Steelers in Eliminator 2 at the GMC Balyogi



Sports Complex, Gachibowli, Hyderabad on Monday.

The winner of Eliminator 1 will be up against the table toppers Puneri Paltan in Semifinal 1 and the winner of Eliminator 2 will take on Jaipur

Pink Panthers in Semifinal 2 on February 28. The grand finale will be held on Friday.

When asked which team is likely to lift the Season 10 trophy, PKL superstar Pawan Sehrawat said, "The semi-

finals will decide who stands the best chance of winning the trophy. If Jaipur and Haryana do not face off in the semifinals then I think Jaipur will go on to win the trophy."

Telugu Titans' captain Sehrawat recorded the third-most raid points (202) in the league stage. Speaking about his own performance, the skipper said, "Overall, it was a normal season for me. However, we made too many mistakes as a team which allowed our opponents to take big leads against us. This hurt us a lot this season."

The Telugu Titans finished at the bottom of the table.

Speaking about the aspects that went wrong for the team, Sehrawat said, "Some young players couldn't replicate their training performances in the matches and let the situation get the better of them. The new players will take some time to find their feet and form a strong bond."

## Robinson, Bashir replace Wood, Ahmed in England's XI for Ranchi Test

Team Absolute | Ranchi

England have brought in fast-bowler Ollie Robinson and off-spinner Shoaib Bashir into their playing eleven for the fourth Test against India, starting here at the JSCA International Stadium on Friday. The duo replace tearaway pacer Mark Wood and leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed respectively in the starting eleven at Ranchi, which shapes to be a crucial Test for England. The visitors' are 2-1 behind in the ongoing five-match series following the heavy 434-run defeat at Rajkot. The Ben Stokes-led side must win at Ranchi to force the last Test match at Dharamshala into a series decider. Robinson's last Test match for England was the third Ashes game



at Headingley last year, where he bowled just 11.2 overs in the first innings before a back spasm forced

him on the sidelines for the rest of the series. The Test at Ranchi will also be

Robinson's first game in India in the longer format. On the other hand, this will be Bashir's second game in the format after being handed his Test debut at Visakhapatnam, where he picked four wickets. While Robinson and James Anderson will handle the fast-bowling duties, Bashir joins Tom Hartley and part-timer Joe Root in the spin-bowling department. Jonny Bairstow has retained his place in the playing eleven despite averaging 17 in the ongoing series, with his highest score being 37.

England's playing eleven for the fourth Test: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Jonny Bairstow, Ben Stokes, Ben Foakes, Tom Hartley, Ollie Robinson, Shoaib Bashir, and James Anderson.

## AICF election process to begin on Friday as court case posted to Feb 29

Team Absolute | Chennai

The election process at the All India Chess Federation (AICF) is expected to begin on Friday with the Delhi High Court adjourning the case between the Devbhoomi Chess Association and the sport body, said a senior official.

"On Thursday, the court posted the case for February 29. The Indian government has not filed its affidavit to the court. The court has said its order of August 16, 2022 should be followed,"

Devbhoomi Chess Association President Sanjay K Chadha told IANS.

On February 14, the Delhi High Court had directed the Centre to state in its reply/affidavit whether the AICF is in compliance with the directions contained in the judgment dated August 16, 2022 passed in W.P. (C)195/2010 read with the National Sports Development Code of India, 2011.

The AICF contends that it is compliant with the National Sports Development Code, 2011. Talking to IANS, AICF Treasurer Naresh Sharma said the process for the March 10 elections begins on Friday as per the election notice issued earlier by the Federation President.

According to Sharma, the Centre has to state whether



the affiliated units - chess associations in various states/Union Territories and districts - also comply with the National Sports Development Code 2011 and the Delhi High Court order of August 16, 2022.

As per the schedule announced on February 11 by AICF President Dr Sanjay Kapoor, the affiliated chess associations in the various states and Union Territories have to submit the names of two delegates by 3 p.m. on February 23. The list of delegate names will be available on the AICF official website on February 24 and communicated via email to the two Returning Officers.

The Delhi High Court, by an order dated December 6, 2023, had appointed Justice G.S. Sistani (retd) as the sec-

ond Returning Officer and fixed a fee of Rs 5,00,000. It had also ordered that the AICF elections should be held in Delhi, and not in Kanpur where Kapoor lives.

In November 2023, Kapoor appointed Allahabad High Court's retired Justice Rang Nath Pandey as the Returning Officer at a fee of Rs 16,00,000.

But suspense on the holding of elections in AICF will continue till it is over as the Delhi High Court had recently stayed the elections for the Volleyball Federation of India just a day before the polls were to be held.

The elections to the Volleyball Federation were stayed as it was not in compliance with the August 16, 2022 order of the Delhi High Court, Chadha said.

## KIUG 2023: Sakshi inspires Chandigarh University to clinch women's kabaddi gold

Team Absolute | Guwahati (Assam)

Chandigarh University defeated Bharati Vidyapeeth in the final to win the gold medal in the 4th Khelo India University Games 2023 Ashtalakshmi, turning things around in the hard-fought encounter. As the women's kabaddi final between Chandigarh University and Bharati Vidyapeeth headed towards a nail-biting finish, the instruction from Chandigarh skipper Sakshi Sharma started becoming precise and the players diligently followed them to perfection.

Chandigarh University made its KIUG debut in kabaddi in four years thanks to the leadership of Sakshi and went on to win the gold medal in their first appearance.

Sakshi, 21, who is originally from Himachal Pradesh and joined Chandigarh University last year to pursue an MA in English, has been instrumental in building a young team this year by leading from the



front. "We played two back-to-back close matches and in the final, we were quite confident that we could pull off the win despite the late surge from Bharati Vidyapeeth. It's a testimony to the hard work of the entire team that we won the gold medal in our very first appearance in the competition,"

said Sakshi, who had won the gold medal in the first edition of KIUG in Odisha with Himachal Pradesh University and a silver in the third edition in Uttar Pradesh.

Sakshi, whose father works as a lineman in the Himachal Pradesh Electricity department and has five siblings, hails from Sirmour district,

which has given many national and international kabaddi stars to the country and was inspired to take up the sport watching them.

She joined the Himachal Pradesh Sports Hostel in 2015 and hasn't looked back.

At the KIUG this year, Sakshi picked up the bulk of raiding against all the opponents and then rallied her troops with clear-cut instructions during the opposition teams' raid, to keep them at bay.

In the semifinal against Lalit Narayan Mithila University and again in the final, she brilliantly marshalled her troops with smart tactics to clinch a nail-biting 35-32 victory before breaking into a wild celebration.

Sakshi now aims to break into the Indian team and win a gold medal from the country in the Asian Games. And if the performance and leadership of Sakshi in this competition is any indication, her dream could become a reality soon.





नरेन्द्र मोदी, प्रधानमंत्री

डॉ. मोहन यादव, मुख्यमंत्री

## उन्नति और विकास की लहर हर क्षेत्र - हर शहर

प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी के विकसित भारत-2047 के राष्ट्रीय संकल्प को साकार करने के लिए मुख्यमंत्री डॉ. मोहन यादव के कुशल नेतृत्व में मध्यप्रदेश निरंतर राष्ट्र निर्माण में अपना योगदान दे रहा है। सरकार के प्रयासों का सुपरिणाम है कि लोगों के जीवन में सकारात्मक बदलाव आ रहा है और प्रदेश के शहरों और उपनगरीय क्षेत्रों में औद्योगिक और अधोसंरचना विकास से जीवन स्तर अब और भी बेहतर होने लगा है।

मुख्यमंत्री

डॉ. मोहन यादव

द्वारा

₹752 करोड़ लागत

के विकास कार्यों का

भूमिपूजन एवं लोकार्पण

23 फरवरी, 2024 - अपराह्न 1:30 बजे - दशहरा मैदान, नीमच

### भूमिपूजन

औद्योगिक क्षेत्र झांझरवाड़ा में ₹585 करोड़ लागत से कपड़ा-परिधान इकाइयों का निर्माण  
लालपुरा तालाब एवं कायाकल्प योजना 2.0 अंतर्गत सड़कों का निर्माण

### लोकार्पण

औद्योगिक क्षेत्र झांझरवाड़ा में कपड़ा-परिधान इकाई के निर्माण से रोजगारों का सृजन  
बेहतर स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं के लिए जावद एवं मनासा में 7 उप-स्वास्थ्य केन्द्रों का निर्माण  
जावद एवं मनासा की 3 जनपद पंचायतों में कृषक सुविधा केन्द्रों के निर्माण से कृषकों को लाभ  
नगर परिषद् मनासा में मुख्यमंत्री संजीवनी क्लीनिक का निर्माण 5000 से अधिक लोगों को स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं का लाभ  
रतलाम-नसीराबाद मार्ग पर उच्च स्तरीय पुल निर्माण से 2 लाख से अधिक लोगों का आवागमन आसान