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PROTESTING FARMERS SUSPEND 'DELHI CHALO' PROTEST TILL FRIDAY

Chandigarh | Agencies

Farmers on Wednesday announced to suspend the 'Delhi Chalo' march for two days, and will decide their next course of action on Friday evening.

The decision was announced by farmers' leader Sarwan Singh Pandher while addressing the media.

Farmers have been protesting at the Punjab-Haryana borders for the past few days to press the Centre into accepting their demands on minimum support price (MSP) for crops and other issues.

A protesting farmer, identified as Jugraj Singh, reportedly died and several were injured as Haryana Police lobbed tear gas shells at the Shambhu and Khanauri border in Punjab on Wednesday afternoon. Haryana Police have, however, denied any casualties.

Amid the huge build-up of farmers at the borders of Haryana as they got ready to march to the national capital, Union Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda earlier in the day said the Centre was ready to discuss all issues.

"After the fourth round, the government is ready to discuss all the issues like MSP demand, crop diversification, stubble issue,



FIR in the fifth round. "I again invite the farmer leaders for discussion. It is important for us to maintain peace," he wrote on X. The farm union leaders had on Monday rejected the Centre's proposal of buying pulses,

maize, and cotton at the MSP by the government agencies for five years, saying it was not in farmers' interest.

The announcement was made by farmer leaders Pandher and Jagjit Singh Dallelwal after holding a meeting.

A panel of three Union ministers -- Piyush Goyal, Arjun Munda and Nityanand Rai -- on Sunday gave the proposal to the farmers during the fourth round of talks in Chandigarh.

Appealing for holding more talks to resolve the issue amicably, an optimistic Agriculture Minister told the media: "We want to do good, and several opinions can be given for doing so, as we always welcome good opinions... But to find a way on how that opinion will be

fruitful, the only way is conversation. Through conversation, a solution will surely come out."

HARYANA POLICE FIRE TEAR GAS SHELLS TO DISPERSE PROTESTING FARMERS

Chandigarh: Haryana Police on Wednesday fired tear gas shells as protesting farmers on the Shambhu border, bordering Haryana, tried to breach the border. However, farmers' leaders have been appealing to the protesters to keep it peaceful. The farmers, who are staging their protest march towards the national capital over demands comprising the law guaranteeing the minimum support price (MSP) of crops, are armed with gas masks, bulldozers and heavy machines to force their entry into Haryana from Punjab.

Haryana Police have warned the owners of earthmover machines and bulldozers, saying "you may be held criminally liable".

In a post on X, the police said these machines can be used to harm security forces, which is a non-bailable offence.

POLICE FIRE TEAR GAS SHELLS TO DISPERSE PROTESTING FARMERS

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Ameen Sayani, the voice of radio's golden era, passes away

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ameen Sayani, the iconic radio personality, passed away at the age of 91 due to cardiac failure. He suffered a heart attack on Tuesday evening after which he rushed to HN Reliance Hospital in Mumbai.

He reportedly suffered a heart attack on Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. The doctors at the hospital tried to treat him but he was declared dead after the revival attempts didn't yield a positive result. Ameen had been suffering from high blood pressure and other age-related ailments for some time. He also had back issues owing to which he used a walker.

He achieved huge popularity through his radio program 'Geetmala' which has gone down as a milestone in India's radio landscape. His captivating voice and engaging style spelled a cast at the listeners cultivating fans across the country, and popularised the medium of radio which got a further boost in early 2000s as the dotcom bubble burst. His signature way of addressing listeners as "Behno aur Bhaiyo" (sisters and broth-



ers) became instantly recognisable and widely imitated.

He produced a record number of 54,000 radio programmes and lent his voice to over 19,000 advertisements and jingles.

His voice has also been imitated in the song 'Tamma Tamma Again' from the Alia Bhatt and Varun Dhawan-starrer 'Badrinath Ki Dulhania'.

Four Telangana men return home after spending 18 years in Dubai jail

Hyderabad | Agencies

After spending 18 years in a Dubai jail in a murder case, four of the five workers from Telangana have returned home.

Emotional scenes were witnessed at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport as two workers hailing from Rajanna Sircilla district were received by their family members on Wednesday. Shivarathri Mallesh and his brother Shivarathri Ravi turned emotional on seeing their near and dear ones and embraced them. Dundugula Laxman had returned two months ago while



Shivarathri anmanthu came back two days ago. The fifth person Venkatesh is likely to be released from jail next month. A Dubai court had sentenced five workers to 25 years in jail for killing Bahadur Singh, a watchman from Nepal. The United Arab

Emirates government had approved their mercy petition after an appeal by then state minister K. T. Rama Rao (KTR) during his visit to Dubai in September last year.

KTR arranged flight tickets for the workers to return.

MVA REACHES 'CONSENSUS' ON 39 OF 48 MAHARASHTRA LOK SABHA SEATS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) allies have reached a consensus on sharing 39 of the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra, while the sharing of the remaining nine seats is likely to be finalised by the weekend, top leaders said here on Wednesday.

Nationalist Congress Party (SP) President Sharad Pawar confirmed the developments in Kolhapur which were endorsed by the other allies Congress-Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders in Mumbai. However, the three partners remain tight-lipped on what constituencies shall be contested by which ally, though there are clear indications on some seats.

At the same time, there are rumbles on certain important or high-profile constituencies, tug-of-war over the actual number of seats each MVA partner should get, based on



the 2019 outcome, either as winners or runner-up. Compared with 2019, the state political spectrum has become very crowded in 2024, with an array of parties expected to be in the fray, confounding the already confused scenario. Two major parties have split vertically - the original Shiv Sena and the NCP, besides the parting of the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi and AIMIM, which were allies in the

last Lok Sabha polls.

The housefull scenario includes the MVA's three main partners, plus their half-dozen other constituents; the ruling MahaYuti of Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party-Nationalist Congress Party and their supporters; plus Independents and smaller parties like the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena which may or may not ally with any other group.

CONGRESS TO FIGHT ON 17 SEATS IN UP

Lucknow: The Congress will contest 17 of Uttar Pradesh's 80 Lok Sabha seats in the forthcoming general election, while the Samajwadi Party will be allotted the remaining 63, the INDIA bloc members said this evening.

This is the first major seat-share deal announced by the opposition alliance, which was formed in June to defeat Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

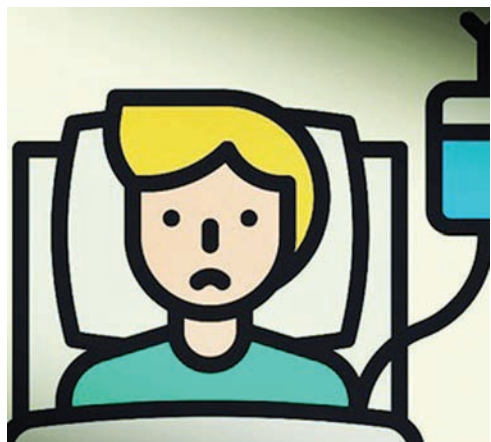
Apart from its strongholds of Raebareli and Amethi (lost to the BJP's Smriti Irani in 2019), the Congress will field candidates from Kanpur Nagar, Fatehpur Sikri, Basgaon, Saharanpur, Prayagraj, Maharajganj, Amroha, Jhansi, Bulandshahr, Ghaziabad, Mathura, Sitapur, Barabanki, and Deoria.

MAHARASHTRA: 200 FALL ILL AFTER CONSUMING 'PRASAD'; ALL STABLE

Buldhana | Agencies

Around 200 people suffered from symptoms of food-poisoning after consuming 'maha-prasad' at a religious event in Somthana village, an official said here on Wednesday.

With complaints of vomiting, nausea, stomach pains and cramps, they were rushed to local hospitals on late Tuesday night and by Wednesday afternoon, most had recovered and all patients are reported to be out of danger, even as a probe has been ordered. The incident occurred during the 'Harinam Saptah', a week-long religious congregation held at the village followed by a 'maha-prasad' (meal) for the devotees. Buldhana Collector Kiran Patil told mediapersons that around 142 people were admitted to a nearby rural hospital, 20 in



Lonar and 35 to another medical facility but most have been discharged after treatment.

Videos of the incident flooded social media with the affected people laying on mats outside the hospital owing to bed shortages due to the sudden influx of patients.

Some showed saline bottles - administered to the patients - were hanging from a string attached to trees with anxious relatives crowding around. Initial reports had suggested over 500 villagers, including some outsiders, were affected but officials did not confirm the same even as the incident sparked huge panic among the villagers. Meanwhile, the police and health authorities have collected samples from the 'maha-prasad' meals for forensic analysis as part of the probe initiated into the potential tragedy.

Army rushes to aid 500 tourists stranded after sudden snowfall in Sikkim

Gangtok | Agencies

The Army on Wednesday rescued more than 500 tourists stranded due to sudden heavy snowfall and inclement weather in high-altitude areas in east Sikkim, officials said.

Defence spokesman Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said that in view of the sudden heavy snowfall, approximately 175 vehicles with over 500 tourists got stranded at



Nathu La in east Sikkim and troops of Trishakti Corps,

braving the sub-zero temperature rushed to the mountainous areas to rescue and provide succour to the stranded tourists. Prompt medicare, hot refreshments and meals and safe transportation were rendered to the tourists timely to assist the tourists reach safety, he said. The Trishakti Corps, while guarding the borders in Sikkim, is always prepared to assist the civil administration and people, Lt Col Rawat added.

Eminent Jurist Fali Nariman passes away

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Eminent constitutional jurist and senior advocate Fali S. Nariman passed away here on Wednesday. He was 95.

Nariman argued several landmark cases, including the famous NJAC verdict. He also appeared in the important SC Aor Association case (which led to the collegium system), TMA Pai case (on scope of minority rights under Article 30), and many others. He was appointed Additional Solicitor General of India in May 1972. Nariman was awarded the



Padma Bhushan in January 1991 and the Padma Vibhushan in 2007.

The veteran lawyer was enrolled as an advocate of the Bombay High Court in November 1950. He practised law for more than 70 years beginning from the High Court of Bombay and then moved to the Supreme Court.

63 MOONS TECHNOLOGY ROPES IN TOP GLOBAL FIRMS FOR CYBERSECURITY FORAY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

NextGen tech company 63 moons Technologies Limited said on Wednesday that it has forayed into the cybersecurity segment to target the comprehensive mobile security and digital infrastructure market pan-India.

The company said its cybersecurity verticals are formed in alliance with the world's 10 best cybersecurity firms, from Israel to the USA, which would provide customised protection solutions to counter cyberattacks in the ever-growing digital infrastructure market.

The company said it has partnered with global leading cybersecurity firms, including Blackberry, Resecurity, and Morphisec, to create the best-in-class and comprehensive cybersecurity suite. "Given the unprecedented scale and viciousness of cyberattacks, cybersecurity is paramount for all individuals, institutions, corporate entities, and countries. We are continuing our legacy of innovation and disruption



by entering the cybersecurity arena," said 63 moons Mentor and Coach, Jignesh Shah, while addressing the media here.

In line with the Narendra Modi government's commitment to provide national security to the country's digital assets, Shah said 63 moons introduced groundbreaking products and services, enabled through its three verticals - CYBX

for every mobile phone, 63 SATS for every enterprise server, and CYBERDOM for every city, every state, and the country. They are powered by a Centralised Security Operations Nerve Centre and supported by a decentralised franchise network, he added. "The rollout of CYBX, 63 SATS and CYBERDOME is a testament to our unwavering commitment to safeguard every internet-connected device across India," said Neehar Pathare, Tech CEO, 63 SATS. He said CYBX helps every mobile phone user make secure calls with its intuitive Dialer App with a verified number database. It checks WiFi status and associated risks, protects from malicious and unverified inbound messages, identifies potential threats and verifies the safety of each URL link. It also tracks application network and resource utilization for performance monitoring and provides a dashboard showing the health of all apps. 63 SATS provides customised enterprise solutions for protecting digital infrastructure and state-of-the-art malware protection, anti-Pegasus mobile threat defence, and data air-gapping using galvanic separation.



EXCISE POLICY CASE: DELHI COURT DEFERS ORDER ON SISODIA'S BAIL PLEA AMIDST PENDING CURATIVE PETITION

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court on Wednesday deferred its decision on whether to entertain former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's regular bail plea in the excise policy case, considering his pending curative petition before the Supreme Court.

Special Judge M K Nagpal of Rouse Avenue Court had, on January 17, reserved the order for Wednesday, following arguments from both the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Sisodia's legal counsel.

The judge also will now hear the matter on March 2, when the judicial custody of AAP MP Sanjay Singh and Sisodia will also expire.

The ED had, in the previous hearing, said that Sisodia's regular bail application should not be entertained while his curative petition is pending



before the apex court.

Special counsel Zoheb Hossain had argued that seeking relief simultaneously from two forums is impermissible under legal discipline, urging the trial court to await the disposal of the curative petition.

In response, senior advocate Mohit Mathur, representing Sisodia, had questioned the rationale behind withholding the bail plea until the curative petition's outcome. He had cited precedents from the coal scam cases where trial proceedings continued despite pending special leave petitions in the Supreme Court.

The court had recently granted three-day interim bail to former Sisodia to attend his niece's wedding.

The alleged excise policy scam is being probed by both the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation.

'Coarse gender discrimination': SC on termination of woman from army on marriage

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court has ordered the Defence Ministry to pay compensation of Rs 60 lakh to a Permanent Commissioned Officer who was released from the Army on ground of her marriage.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said that termination of employment because the woman has got married is a coarse case of gender discrimination and inequality, adding that acceptance of such patriarchal rule undermines human dignity, right to non-discrimination and fair treatment.

"Laws and regulations based on gender-based bias are constitutionally impermissible. Rules making marriage of women employees and their domestic involvement a ground for disemployment would be unconstitutional," the bench said.

Disposing of the appeal filed by the Centre, the apex court refused to interfere with the decision of the Armed Forces Tribunal which had held the release of Lt. Selina John - a Permanent Commissioned Officer - from the Military Nursing Service was wrong and ille-



gal. It noted that the Army, in 1995, withdrew its Instruction titled "Terms and conditions of service for the grant of permanent commissions in the Military Nursing Service".

"We direct the appellant(s) to pay compensation of Rs 60,00,000 (rupees sixty lakh only) to the respondent - Ex. Lt. Selina John within a period of eight weeks...In case the payment is not made within a period of eight weeks, the appellant(s) will pay interest at the rate of 12 per cent per annum," the apex court ordered.

Surveillance tightened in Sandeshkhali to prevent recurrence of tension

Kolkata | Agencies

Amid fresh allegations of hounding by local anti-social elements in the wee hours of the day levelled by some women at Sandeshkhali in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, surveillance has been beefed up in the area, which is a conglomeration of some islands, to prevent recurrence of tension.

District police sources said that 10 new CCTV cameras have been installed at five different locations with focus on the areas from where maximum complaints were received.

The initiative, according to the local police, will be key in keeping a close watch on the movements of people in the troubled areas so that prompt action can be taken in case of any foul play.

On Wednesday, that is 14 days after tension broke out at Sandeshkhali after some local women accused certain



local Trinamool Congress leaders of sexual harassment and violence, acting DGP Rajeev Kumar visited the troubled spots, accompanied by newly-appointed ADG (South Bengal) Supratim Sarkar and Basirhat district SP Hossain Mehedi Rehman.

Kumar held a closed-door meeting with the top police officers on the law and order situation in the area. Although the acting DGP

did not speak to mediapersons, sources said that Kumar took a detailed stock of the nature of police deployment in the area and the complaints received by the police. The visit of Kumar was significant considering that a field-inspection team from the National Commission of Scheduled Tribe (NCST) is scheduled to visit Sandeshkhali on Thursday.

Over 10K-litre fake ghee packed under well-known brand names seized in Jaipur

Jaipur | Agencies

Over 10,000 litres of substandard and spurious ghee packaged under the names four well-known brands have been seized from a warehouse under the Vaishwakarma police station area in Jaipur, Additional Director General of Police (Crime), Dinesh MN, said on Wednesday.

The ghee was packed and sold in the market with the names and package designs similar to four well-known brands available in the market, the ADGP added.

A joint team from the CID Crime Branch, local police, and the food department raided the warehouse on Tuesday. During the raid that went on till late in the night, 10,465 liters of fake ghee were seized from the warehouse. The accused operator of the warehouse, Shrawan Singh Shekhawat, a resident of Sikar district, has been arrested by the police, Dinesh said. The raid was conducted following a tip-off about adulterated ghee being packed at the godown under reputed brand names like Krishna, Lotus, Mahan and Amul. The total seizure included 304 tins of Krishna brand, 230 tins of Lotus



brand, 104 tins of Mahan brand and 55 tins of Amul brand, along with 56 packets of Krishna brand. Krishna brand representative Divakar Mishra and Lotus brand representative Hemant Jain, who examined the seized ghee, described it as fake. A case under the relevant sections of IPC,

Copyright Act and Trademark Act has been registered at the Vishwakarma police station. Shekhawat, the accused, had reportedly started the fake ghee business in 2007. He was earlier arrested by the police, but was released on bail. In 2013, he started running a grocery shop, which was

closed in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. He then rented a warehouse in the Vishwakarma industrial area, purchased poor quality ghee from the traders in Jaipur, and packed them under the names of famous brands to earn handsome profits, the ADGP said.

Cryogenic engine of LVM3 rocket completes ground qualification tests: ISRO

Chennai | Agencies

The Indian space agency, ISRO, on Wednesday said it has achieved a major milestone in the human rating of its CE20 cryogenic engine that will power the LVM3 rocket to carry Indian astronauts.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) also said the first unmanned Gaganyaan (G1) mission is tentatively scheduled for Q2 of 2024. Gaganyaan is the name of India's human space mission.

According to ISRO, the final round of ground qualification tests for CE20 cryogenic engine were completed on February 13.

The final test was the seventh of a series of vacuum ignition tests carried out at the High Altitude Test Facility at ISRO Propulsion Complex, Mahendragiri, to simulate the flight conditions.

The ground qualification tests for the human rating of the CE20 engine involved life demonstration tests, endurance tests, and performance assessment under nominal operating



conditions as well as off-nominal conditions with reference to thrust, mixture ratio, and propellant tank pressure, ISRO said.

All the ground qualification tests of the CE20 engine for the Gaganyaan programme have been successfully



completed. In order to qualify the CE20 engine for human rating standards, four engines have undergone 39 hot firing tests under different operating conditions for a cumulative duration of 8,810 seconds against the minimum

human rating qualification standard requirement of 6,350 seconds, the Indian space agency said.

ISRO has also successfully completed the acceptance tests of the flight engine identified for the first unmanned Gaganyaan (G1) mission tentatively scheduled for Q2 of 2024.

This engine will power the upper stage of the human-rated LVM3 vehicle and has a thrust capability of 19 to 22 tonnes with a specific impulse of 442.5 seconds, ISRO said.

Indian space agency Chairman S. Somanath had termed the year 2024 as the Year of Gaganyaan for ISRO as it will be carrying out various tests and other activities to realise the country's manned space mission in 2025.

Somanath said ISRO will be carrying out two more abort missions in 2024. Last year, the space agency carried out the first Flight Test Vehicle Abort Mission-1 (TV-D1) to demonstrate the crew escape system.

According to him, ISRO will carry out two unmanned missions, helicopter drop test, launchpad abort tests and several others.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian Air Force (IAF) for integration of futuristic weapons and sensors in the Tejas, Light Combat Aircraft (LCA).

In a statement on Wednesday, the Defence Ministry said that there is a continuous need of upgrading the weapons and sensors suite of the aircraft in the present war scenario and towards this, ADA has initiated the know-how transfer for the integration of weapons and sensors to SDI.

"This will facilitate the IAF to independently carry out sensors, weapon integration and flight testing to enhance the operational capability of Tejas-LCA fighter," the ministry said. According to the statement, the ADA has suc-



cessfully developed and type certified Tejas-LCA with a credit of more than 10,000 sorties of incident free flying. The IAF has already formed two squadrons of the fighter aircraft and twin-seater aircraft are also being inducted.

The ADA under the Department of Defence Research and Development

is mandated to design and develop Tejas-LCA and its variants. The MoU was signed by Prabhulla Chandran V.K., Technology Director (Avionics and Weapon Systems) of ADA and Air Vice Marshal K.N. Santosh VSM, Commandant, Software Development Institute (SDI) of IAF.

TWO WOMEN JUMP OFF BALCONY AS FIRE BREAKS OUT IN DELHI APARTMENT, ONE DEAD

New Delhi: An octogenarian woman died while her daughter-in-law was injured after they jumped off the balcony of their fourth floor flat in Delhi's Dwarka to save themselves as a fire broke out there on Wednesday, police said.

A senior police official said that a police control room (PCR) call was received at Dwarka South police station regarding a fire in a flat at Pacific Apartments in Sector 10, Dwarka and a police team reached the spot.

There they found that Jasuri Devi, 83, and her daughter-in-law Pooja Pant, 30, jumped from the balcony and both got injured.

"They were shifted to Ayushman Hospital for further treatment where Jasuri Devi was declared brought dead and Pooja is under treatment," the official said.

The official said that the Crime team and FSL Rohini is on the spot and reason of fire is being ascertained.

BJP will not have alliance with any party in Telangana: Kishan Reddy

Hyderabad | Agencies

Telangana BJP president and Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy on Wednesday made it clear that the BJP will have no alliance with any party in Telangana for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

He said that there is no difference between Congress and Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS).

Kishan Reddy said this while addressing mediapersons at Narayanpet on Wednesday during the BJP's ongoing Vijay Sankalp yatra. The BJP leader stated that the party will be contesting to win all 17 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

He remarked that there is no need for BRS to contest the polls as it has no agenda.

"Even if the BRS does not win a seat, it will make no difference to people," he said.

He exuded confidence that BJP will win all Lok Sabha seats in



Congress-ruled Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka.

Kishan Reddy also stated that be it Asaduddin Owaisi, KCR or Rahul Gandhi, nobody can stop Narendra Modi from becoming Prime Minister for another term.

He alleged that the Congress came to power in Telangana with impractical promises.

He said it was making no effort to implement the promises. Alleging that Congress leaders were not focussed on implementing the promises, he said they were all busy in serving Sonia Gandhi.

Manipur lawyers protest use of 'excessive force' by security forces on women protesters

Imphal | Agencies

Lawyers on Wednesday staged a demonstration in front of the Cheirap court complex in Manipur's Imphal West district to protest against the reported security forces' "highhandedness" against women protesters on Tuesday.

The All Manipur Bar Association (AMBA) and the High Court Bar Association (HCBA) jointly held an emergency meeting on Wednesday and then held the sit-in in the Cheirap court complex.

The Rapid Action Force (RAF) personnel allegedly fired tear gas shells on Tuesday inside the Cheirap court complex on a large number of women, who were protesting against the arrest of six persons in connection with the mob violence and looting of arms from the security forces in Imphal East district on February 13. The trouble started after the police had brought the detainees to the court to seek further custody.

AMBA President Puyam Tomcha said that both the bar associations



strongly condemned the excessive use of force by RAF personnel against women protesters by using electric baton sticks, mob bombs and other lethal weapons. As a mark of protest, the lawyers abstained from discharging their duties, except for urgent matters, in the courts including the High Court on Wednesday. Both the AMBA and the HCBA demanded to strengthen the security in the court complex and institute an inquiry into the incident headed by a retired Manipur High Court judge. Both associations urged all sections of the society and the security forces to respect the sanctity of the court and not to indulge in such violence inside the court premises.

Delhi records 12.2 degrees, AQI remains 'poor' at several stations

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The national capital on Wednesday recorded a minimum temperature of 12.2 degrees Celsius, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Until last week, the temperature was hovering around 7 degrees, and the minimum temperature was recorded at around 7 or 8 degrees. The IMD's Wednesday forecast showed that the maximum temperature was likely to hover around 27 degrees, with the minimum at around 12 degrees again.

The weather department said that there will be "generally cloudy sky with light rain or drizzle". Air quality at 9 a.m. at several stations across the city was in the 'poor' and 'moderate' categories, unlike last week when the AQI was



'very poor' and 'poor'. In the Anand Vihar area, at 9 a.m., PM2.5 levels were recorded to be in the 'very poor' category, standing at 310 and PM10 reached 240, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The Air Quality Index (AQI) between zero and 50 is considered 'good'; 51 and 100 'satisfactory'; 101 and 200 'moderate'; 201 and 300 'poor'; 301 and 400 'very poor'; and 401 and 500 'severe'. The Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport (T3) recorded PM2.5 levels at 172, which is counted as 'moderate' and PM10 at 151.



NO SCHEME FOR THE WELFARE OF SISTERS AND DAUGHTERS WILL BE STOPPED: CHIEF MINISTER DR. MOHAN YADAV

INSTALLMENT OF LADLI BEHNA YOJANA WILL BE RELEASED ON THE FIRST OF MARCH. CHIEF MINISTER INAUGURATED AND PERFORMED BHOOMI PUJAN OF DEVELOPMENT WORKS WORTH RS 761 CRORE IN BALAGHAT. BHOOMI PUJAN OF INDUSTRIAL UNITS COSTING RS 650 CRORE TOOK PLACE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has said that no scheme for the welfare of sisters and daughters will be stopped. Under Ladli Behna Yojana, the installment for the month of March will be released into the accounts of the sisters on the first date. I consider myself not the Chief Minister but the chief servant of the people. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the chief servant of the country and as the chief servant, I am dedi-



icated to the development and public welfare of the state.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav was addressing the public meeting after the road-show in Balaghat. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav performed the bhoomi puja of Hindustan Green Energy Limited and Hindustan Tapes Private Limited industrial units costing Rs 650 crore and inaugurated and performed the bhoomi puja of

development works worth Rs 761 crore in Balaghat district. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav also distributed benefits to the beneficiaries of various schemes.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that our double engine government is dedicated to development at a fast pace, the proof of this is that Bhoomi Puja and inauguration of many development works is taking place in

Balaghat district which has great potential. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav called upon the people of Balaghat to become allies in this process of development. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has said that about 100 lakh metric tonnes of wheat is to be procured in the state in the coming months, which will benefit about 11 lakh farmers. For this, ensure better arrangements for procurement by coordinating with Food Corporation of India, State Civil Supplies Corporation and Markfed. CM Dr. Yadav said this during a courtesy visit by Food Corporation of India's Executive Director (West Zone) Shri Singh and General Manager Vishesh Garhpale at Samatva Bhawan.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that to confirm the quality of wheat at the procurement centres, availability of experts, moisture measuring instruments, gunny bags and other necessary equipment along with convenient arrangements for the farmers should be ensured. There was also a discussion on facilitating the process of obtaining delivery of surplus wheat from Madhya Pradesh by the Food Corporation of India and sending it to the states facing deficiency.

In MP, Congress gave the seat of BJP state president VD Sharma to SP



Team Absolute | Bhopal



The opposition has formed India Alliance for the Lok Sabha elections. In which the decision has been taken to share the seats of Uttar Pradesh between Congress and Samajwadi Party. Samajwadi Party has given 17 seats to Congress in UP. This alliance will also be seen in Madhya Pradesh. Information is coming to light about the alliance between Samajwadi Party and Congress in the state for the Lok Sabha elections. It is being told that an agreement has been reached between both the parties regarding seat sharing.

According to sources, Congress has decided to give Khajuraho Lok Sabha seat to Samajwadi Party. It is being told that Samajwadi Party was demanding one seat from Tikamgarh and

Khajuraho Lok Sabha. After the meeting between the two parties, agreement was reached on Khajuraho seat. Both the Lok Sabha seats are related to UP. For this reason, SP's focus was on these seats only. It is believed that if there is a complete agreement between the two parties regarding the alliance on Khajuraho seat, then Madhya Pradesh will be the second state after UP where both the parties have formed an alliance.

Even during the assembly elections, a long meeting of both the parties took place. But no consensus could be reached regarding seat sharing. After which Akhilesh Yadav and Congress leaders also made very harsh comments on each other. Presently BJP President VD Sharma is MP from Khajuraho Lok Sabha seat. There are 8 assembly con-



stituencies in Khajuraho Lok Sabha. In the recently held assembly elections, BJP has captured these eight assembly seats. Samajwadi Party had performed well in the assembly elections under Khajuraho Lok Sabha seat area in Bundelkhand region. There were speculations that if SP and Congress had fought together in the assembly elections, it could have benefited in the Bundelkhand region.

Time table released for free admission in non-government schools under RTE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The State Education Center has released the timetable for online free admission of children from weaker sections and deprived groups in non-grant recognized non-government schools under the Right to Education Act for the academic session 2024-25. Director State Education Center Dhanraju S said that online applications will be taken on www.educationportal.mp.gov.in/rte portal from February 23 to March 3, 2024. Option for error correction will be available on the portal. After online application, applicants will be able to download the acknowledgment and get the

original documents verified in the centers from 24th February to 5th March.

Under RTE, schools will be allotted to the applicants by organizing an online lottery through a transparent random method on March 7, 2024. Applicants will also be informed through SMS. Applicants selected in the lottery will be able to get admission in the allotted school by downloading the allotment letter from March 11 to March 19, 2024. At the time of taking admission, the admission report will also be filed by the concerned private school through the mobile app.

As soon as the process of the first phase is over, the process for admission in the

second phase will be started. Vacant seats will be displayed on the portal on March 21, 2024. In the second phase, the choice of schools can be updated from 22 to 26 March. The second phase of online lottery will be held on March 28 and schools will be allotted. In the second phase, applicants selected through lottery will be able to download the allotment letter between March 30 and April 5, 2024 and get admission in the allotted school. The State Education Center has issued instructions to all the District Collectors to complete this work within the stipulated time in a completely transparent manner as per the rules.

Preparation to run cruise in Sagar's Lakha Banjara Lake

Team Absolute | Sagar

The identity of Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh is Lakha Banjara Lake. The campaign for its rejuvenation has been going on for five years. Now preparations are being made to run a cruise with water sports in the lake.

Lakha Banjara Lake is situated in the middle of the city and there are temples around it, that is why the evening view here fascinates everyone.

Efforts are going on to give an attractive look to this lake, it is a different matter that till now the lake has not taken the form which everyone had expected. A bridge has been built in the middle of this lake, which is con-

necting the two parts of the city. It has become easy to reach Chakraghat from the bus stand. Besides, the traffic pressure on the main road of the city has also reduced.

Now along with cruise, water sports are also going to start in this lake. Collector Deepak Arya has given instructions to ensure all necessary arrangements for sports activities and said that under no circumstances should one participate in the activities without a life jacket. There will be enough water in the lake in the coming rainy season. Keeping this in mind, a cruise is going to be run for tourism in the lake. Water sports and sports activities will also start soon in the lake.

Order issued regarding school bag policy in MP

WEIGHT DECIDED ACCORDING TO CLASS. THERE WILL BE ONE DAY STUDY WITHOUT BOOKS IN MADHYA PRADESH SCHOOLS



Team Absolute | Bhopal

The government has fixed the weight of books in school bags for students of all government and private schools in Madhya Pradesh. This weight has been determined as per the National Education Policy. Also, students will study without a bag one day a week. Directorate of Public Instruction has issued orders for school bag policy. This system will be applicable in all government and private schools. According to the new advisory, the maximum weight of the school bag of a class 1 student will be 2 kg 200 grams, while the maximum weight of the school bag of a class 10 student will be 4.5 kg. The school management committee will decide the limit of bag weight for classes 11th and 12th.

of school bags of school children. Commissioner of Public Instruction Anubha Srivastava has issued instructions to strictly follow the school bag policy from the new academic session (2024-25). It has been said in the instructions that children should be called without bags once a week and they should be made to do activities related to professional work experience, so that their interest and knowledge in the professional field increases.

It has also been decided that homework will not be given to students from class 1st to 8th. Arrangements will be made to keep their exercise books, work books and other necessary materials in the school itself. Let us inform you that the department had issued this policy in the year 2020, which will now be strictly followed. This system will be applicable to all (government, private and aided schools). It will not be mandatory to

bring books in computer, moral education, general knowledge, health, physical education, sports and art classes. The department has clearly said that these classes should be conducted without books. Under the policy, the weight of the bag of class 1 students cannot be more than 1.6 to 2.2 kg and the weight of the bag of class 10 students cannot be more than 2.5 to 4.5 kg. Homework will not be given to class two students.

Students of classes 3 to 5 will be given 2 hours of homework per week, students of classes 6 to 8 will be given 1 hour per day and students of classes 9 to 12 will be given 2 hours of homework per day. The school will have to display the bag weight chart on the notice board. The school management committee of the school will keep an eye on this. The committee will prepare the time table in such a way that students do not have to bring all the

There will be appointment in 3 thousand 323 posts in the health department.

CANDIDATES SHOULD NOT FACE ANY INCONVENIENCE: DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER SHUKLA. SPECIAL CAMPS WILL BE ORGANIZED FOR MEDICAL AND DOCUMENT TESTING.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla has directed that the candidates selected for various posts in the Health Department should not face any inconvenience in the verification of documents and medical examination. All concerned officers should discharge their duties sensitively.

It is noteworthy that as per the result declared by the Staff Selection Board on February 12, recruitment is being done on 3 thousand 323 posts in the Health Department. These



include A.N.M. This includes 2 thousand 576 posts, 104 posts of Radiographer Grade-3, 228 posts of Laboratory Technician and 415 posts of Pharmacist Grade-2.

Appointment orders of Laboratory Technician and Radiographer are issued by the Divisional Regional Director and ANM. And the appoint-

ment order of Pharmacist Grade-2 is to be issued by the Chief Medical and Health Officer. Appointment letters will be sent to the eligible candidates through single click in the function organized on 29th February in Bhopal. For this, it will be necessary to get the documents and medical examination of the selected candi-

dates done. Commissioner Health Dr. Sudam Khade said that special camps will be organized in the district hospitals from 9 am to 5 pm for testing the medical and documents of the selected candidates. A.N.M. Candidates' examination in district hospitals from 22 to 26 February, Pharmacist Grade-2 in district hospitals from 23 to 25 February. Medical examination and document examination of Radiographer candidates will be conducted at the District Hospital of Divisional Headquarters on 24th February and that of Laboratory Technician candidates will be conducted at the District Hospital of Divisional Headquarters on 25th February.

The responsibility of medical examination in district hospitals will be of all civil surgeons cum chief hospital superintendents. Regional Director, Health and Chief Medical and Health Officer will arrange for appropriate staff to verify the documents.

Digvijay Singh gets angry after seeing the female doctor came to ask for candidature

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The temperature of former Congress CM Digvijay Singh, who is usually calm with the workers, rose on Wednesday. Digvijay Singh got enraged after seeing a female doctor who had come to him asking for Lok Sabha ticket and even asked his security personnel to throw her out. Here is the story.

Digvijay Singh was on a visit to Gwalior on Wednesday. During this time a woman had come to meet him. The woman had told her name as Dr Leena Sharma and she wanted a Lok Sabha ticket. According to media reports, despite repeated refusal, the woman was adamant on meeting him. When she did not agree even after refusing, Digvijay Singh signaled his security personnel and asked them to throw the woman out.



After the incident, the media talked to Dr. Leena Sharma. Doctor Leena Sharma described herself as a resident of Guna. She said that she had come to meet Digvijay Singh. She wants to contest elections against Modi by taking Lok Sabha ticket from Banaras. Leena Sharma also described herself as the national president of the National Kisan Congress Forum. He says that Digvijay Singh is my idol and I have always received his blessings, but some people are jealous. There has been no reaction from Digvijay Singh on this development.

Threat to kill Pandit Pradeep Mishra

Sehore : Renowned storyteller Pt. Pradeep Mishra has faced a case of death threat and defamation by an unknown person through a letter. This has created anger among the narrator's followers. After this information came to light, Navneet Rana, Lok Sabha member from Amravati, Maharashtra, has written a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah demanding the safety of storyteller Pradeep Mishra. The Union Home Minister's reply has also come in this context. Let us tell you here that Pandit Pradeep Mishra has already got security from Bhopal Police Headquarters.



Advertisement for B.Ed. program in Shivpuri. Title: एस पी एस एकेडमी, शिवपुरी. (तिथि शिक्षा प्रसार समिति, शिवपुरी द्वारा संचालित) फतेहपुर रोड, शिवपुरी (म. प्र.) मोबा.न. - 9425136166, 9425191548. द्विवर्षीय B.ED. पाठ्यक्रम में कोलेज कोड 28 (17) के अंतर्गत प्राचार्य एवं शैक्षणिक स्टाफ नियुक्ति हेतु आवश्यकता है.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Green Hydrogen as fuel

The government issued guidelines for undertaking pilot projects for using Green Hydrogen as fuel in buses, trucks and 4-wheelers. Under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) will implement pilot projects for replacing fossil fuels in the transport sector with Green Hydrogen and its derivatives. Officials said that these pilot projects will be implemented through the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and the Scheme Implementing Agencies (SIAs) nominated under this scheme. The scheme will support development of technologies for use of Green Hydrogen as a fuel in buses, trucks and 4-wheelers, based on fuel cell-based propulsion technology/internal combustion engine-based propulsion technology. The other thrust area for the scheme is to support development of infrastructure such as hydrogen refuelling stations, the statement explained. The use of Green Hydrogen in the transport sector, via the proposed pilot projects, will lead to development of necessary infrastructure including refuelling facilities and distribution infrastructure, resulting in establishment of a Green Hydrogen ecosystem in the transport sector. With the expected reduction in the Green Hydrogen production cost over the years, the utilisation in the transport sector is expected to increase. The scheme will also seek to support any other innovative use of hydrogen for reducing carbon emissions in the transport sector, such as blending of methanol / ethanol based on green hydrogen and other synthetic fuels derived from green hydrogen in automobile fuels. The Scheme will be implemented with a total budgetary outlay of Rs 496 Crores till the financial year 2025-26. The Mission will lead to significant decarbonization of the economy, reduced dependence on fossil fuel imports, and enable India to assume technology and market leadership in Green Hydrogen.

I.N.D.I.A'S BATTLE AGAINST NDA SEEMS OVER BEFORE IT BEGINS?

Vinod Kumar Shukla

The BJP appears to have outsmarted all opposition political parties in the country for the electoral gains with its twin strategies of expanding base organically and forcing opponents to commit mistakes so their supporters lose faith in them. It is not that the BJP succeeds in its every attempt but even when it fails, it doesn't bemoan even for a moment but move on with its Plan B of the same project. It doesn't give up on anything which is its one of the biggest strengths.

Half of the leaders from opposition parties are either in the BJP or their parties are part of the NDA. Let's first take up the last development that is Jayant Chaudhary joining the NDA who's party contested the last Assembly election as a Samajwadi Party ally. The SP granted RLD seven seats to contest in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and had earlier sent Jayant to Rajya Sabha. Now, Jayant preferred 3-4 seats of NDA that he has better chances of winning than getting seven seats and losing all. His joining NDA will help the alliance for a possible clean sweep in Uttar Pradesh as they already have Apna Dal (Sone Lal), NISHAD Party and Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party.

In yet another dramatics, Nitish Kumar joined the NDA bandwagon yet again living up to his image of switching sides with utmost ease. Vokkaliga party Janata Dal (Secular) is already part of the NDA with an arrangement of two seats in Lok Sabha and one berth in Rajya Sabha to make things difficult for the Congress in Karnataka. In Maharashtra, Nationalist Congress Party led by Ajit Pawar, Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde and Republican Party of India led by Ramdas Athawale are with the NDA to take on I.N.D.I.A with Shiv Sena of Uddhav faction, NCP of Sharad Pawar faction, Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana (SP), and the Vanchit Bahujan Aaghadi (VBA). This is the only place where the alliance is expected to give a tough fight to the NDA.

The BJP stunned I.N.D.I.A in the mayoral election in Chandigarh with the help of Shitromani Akali Dal (SAD) which is an indication that SAD may join the NDA before 2024 L.S. polls. BJP is in talks with Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N Chandrababu Naidu and Jan Sena Party chief Pawan Kalyan



bargaining for 6-8 seats out of total 25 in the state and the BJD in Odisha always add strength to the NDA. The way PM is cajoling Naveen Patnaik, it seems he too may soon join the NDA.

Now, the second strategy comes into play. Hemant Soren is in jail on corruption charges marring Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's (JMM) chances in the state. ED is after Arvind Kejriwal who dishonoured its sixth summons by calling it unconstitutional. Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh and Satendra Jain are already in jail on the same issue. Some political analysts call it part of the strategy to weaken the opposition. Mamata Banerjee has already announced to go it alone in West Bengal, what does it mean for her to be part of I.N.D.I.A if she is not ready to give seats to alliance partners. AAP is not ready to give anything to the Congress in Punjab and Chandigarh. The CPI (M) has already indicated to the Congress that Wayanad will not be a walkover for Rahul Gandhi, so better he should look for some other seat. The BJP is in the lookout for such an opportunity as Smriti Irani is constantly visiting not only Amethi but Wayanad as well. If Rahul shifts from Wayanad to Medak seat in Telangana, the BJP will use this opportunity to declare him a bhagora (absconder) from Amethi to Wayanad to Medak. Sonia Gandhi has already orphaned the Rai Bareilly constituency and wants Priyanka Gandhi to contest from her

place. This could be a tough decision for Priyanka as all is not well in Rai Bareilly for Gandhies with their popularity at its lowest ebb. So, for all practical purposes the Gandhies are out of UP, once their pocket borough. Will Priyanka be ready for another debacle for her in UP?

Besides political parties, there are many big leaders who are joining the NDA for example former Maharashtra chief minister and former Congress leader Ashok Chauhan joined the BJP and the very next day he was nominated for Rajya Sabha. Former state Congress president and AAP leader Ashok Tanwar, a Dalit, too joined the BJP. On the contrary, over half a dozen ministers including Narayan Rane from Maharashtra were denied Rajya Sabha despite BJP having enough seats to nominate them. But like Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections, they will be fielded in the Lok Sabha.

The decision of the united opposition to join hands under the alliance called I.N.D.I.A made BJP out of breath at least for a moment when it was conceived in July 2023 but it regained its strategy to counter allies of I.N.D.I.A one after another. The consecration ceremony of Ram Temple to be held in January 2024 was announced by Amit Shah on January 5, 2023. So, the BJP made its plan well in advance but the wrong move of the Congress to start Bharat Jodo

Nyay Yatra a week before Ram Temple consecration at Ayodhya has not gone down well with the people and also Congressmen alike. The response is so poor that Yatra was cut short to almost half in Uttar Pradesh to cover embarrassment by citing reasons like Rahul Gandhi traveling to his constituency to meet people victim of wild elephant attack and joining farmer's protest. The timing and response of the yatra are so wrong that people in the party have started saying that the battle for 2024 is over for the Congress. Priyanka Gandhi too seems to have realized the same and did not join her brother in the Yatra so far. She tweeted being unwell and in the hospital.

Finally, the Rajya Sabha ticket distribution has also made things miserable for I.N.D.I.A. In Uttar Pradesh, there are 11 candidates for 10 seats making voting inevitable as the BJP fielded Sanjay Seth, who was sent to Rajya Sabha by SP in 2016, as its eighth candidate. RLD is already in NDA and Pallavi Patel is angry with Akhilesh for neglecting PDA. Karnataka too is facing a similar situation where five candidates are in the race for four seats with Congress nominating three candidates, BJP one and JD (S) one. MLAs are not happy with the decision of fielding Abhishek Manu Singhvi from Himachal Pradesh ignoring local leaders. In Rajasthan too Sonia Gandhi virtually replaced Manmohan Singh denying the chance to a local leader. The BJP fielded Harsh Mahajan in Himachal Pradesh, a former Congressman, who joined BJP in 2022. There is some murmuring on the name of Ashok Chauhan in the BJP but otherwise the party has balanced caste equations very well and future planning even by fielding R P N Singh to win over Kurmi votes and use his services elsewhere too. It doesn't want to replace its sitting MP from Kushinagar who defeated RPN Singh from there only.

So, the BJP's strategy appears like it has not only laid out a path for itself but did not allow others a smooth sail. There is no denying the fact that besides their own internal contradictions, the BJP's strategy caused I.N.D.I.A collapsing like a house of cards.

(The writer is a freelance journalist based at Delhi. Views expressed are personal)

international

Indian restaurant manager 'killed' in UK; suspect due for court appearance

London | Agencies

A 24-year-old man is due to appear in a UK court on Wednesday in connection with the murder of an Indian restaurant manager who was hit by a vehicle as he was cycling home from work last week.

Shazeb Khalid of no fixed address was arrested and charged with one count of murder on Tuesday, following an investigation by the police, and is due to appear at Reading Magistrates Court on Wednesday.

Vignesh Raman, aged 38, was declared dead at the Royal Berkshire Hospital after he was hit by a vehicle on Addington Road in Reading on February 14.

Police said seven other



men from Reading, aged between 20 and 48, who were arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender, have all been released on bail.

"Our thoughts remain with the family of Mr. Raman, who are being supported by specially trained officers. We are continuing our investigation into the circumstances of his death, and arrests have now been made," Senior

Investigating Officer, Detective Chief Inspector Stuart Brangwin of Thames Valley Police's Major Crime Unit, said.

He also appealed to people with information on the case to get in touch with the police and added that there will be a visible police presence in the area as investigations continue.

Meanwhile, a fundraising

page has been set up to help Raman's grieving family with repatriation costs, and funeral expenses.

Describing him as a "loving husband, dedicated son, and accomplished professional", the JustGiving page said that Raman was "a committed restaurant manager at Vel, where he poured his heart and soul into his work, earning recognition for his exceptionally warm nature, customer service, and work ethics".

"His dream of reaching a senior management position in the hotel industry was within reach, with an exciting opportunity awaiting him at Hyatt Regency Mayfair London," the page, which hopes to raise 50,000 pounds to support Raman, read.

14 killed as truck falls off cliff in Philippines

Manila: At least 14 people were killed and three others were critically injured on Wednesday after a truck fell off a cliff in Negros Oriental province of Philippines.

The accident occurred around 1.30 p.m. local time when driver of the truck lost control over the vehicle, Xinhua news agency reported.

Videos posted on social media showed bodies strewn around the crash site.

Police and rescuers are on site to help the victims and determine the cause of the incident.

The exact number of people onboard the truck is not known.



PML-N, PPP clinch deal; Shehbaz Sharif set to be Pak PM; Asi Ali Zardari slated to be Prez

Islamabad | Agencies

PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif is set to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan while PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari is slated to be the President of the country, according to PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

After days of hectic parleys, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) late on Tuesday reached an agreement to form the coalition government and who will be on the top slots, Geo News reported.

In a joint press conference, Bilawal said that Sharif is slated to be the Prime Minister while his father (Asif Ali Zardari) is set to become the President of the country. The PPP chairman said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), which had allied with the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), did not have the required numbers to form the government at the Centre.

On the occasion, former prime minister



Sharif thanked all top leaders of the two parties and said that they will form the government at the Centre.

In the February 8 general elections, the PML-N had secured 75 seats while the PPP bagged 54 seats. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) has also agreed to support them with their 17 seats.

A party needs 133 out of 265 contested seats in the 266-member National Assembly or the lower house of Parliament to form the government.

12 Palestinians killed in Israeli attack on residential area in Gaza



Gaza | Agencies

At least 12 Palestinians were killed during an Israeli attack on a residential square in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, according to Palestinian medical sources.

The medical sources told Xinhua news agency that "the Palestinian civil defence crews transported 12 bodies of Palestinians and dozens of wounded after targeting several homes in the Nuseirat camp, which was crowded with displaced people". "The bodies of the victims arrived in pieces at a local hospital, while the wounded were trans-

ferred to the hospital to receive treatment amid great suffering due to the running out of medicines and the limited number of medical staff present in the hospital," the sources said.

The sources added that they are facing "extreme difficulty" in dealing with the large number of victims arriving at hospitals, Xinhua news agency reported.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Gaza-based Health Ministry announced that the number of Palestinian deaths as a result of Israeli attacks on the Strip had risen to 29,195 since the outbreak of the Hamas-Israel conflict.

7-year ban on Indian restaurant owner for hiring illegal workers in UK

London | Agencies

The owner of an Indian restaurant and takeaway in the UK has been banned as a company director until 2031 for hiring three illegal workers from Bangladesh without conducting right-to-work checks.

Iqbal Hussain, 51, hired the workers, all in their forties, at the Taste of Raj on High Street, Hertfordshire, before the restaurant was raided by immigration enforcement officials in March 2020. A resident of Enfield, Hussain was the sole director of the restaurant, trading under the company name of Tender Love Ltd, since June 2014. The workers told investigators they had worked at the restaurant for between four days and up to two months. Hussain not only employed them without conducting right-to-work checks but also failed to keep the required documentation proving they were eligible to work in the UK, a Home Office statement said on

Tuesday. "Iqbal Hussain's failure to ensure the required checks were carried out resulted in the employment of three illegal workers, in contravention of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006," Kevin Read, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service, said.

Calling this a serious breach of legislation, Read added that Hussain cannot be involved in the promotion, formation or management of a company in the UK as a result of the ban, which came into effect on February 16. Suran Padiachie from Home Office Immigration Enforcement said illegal working cheats honest workers out of employment, puts vulnerable people at risk, and defrauds the public



purpose.

"We're clamping down on illegal working by ramping up enforcement activity and tripling fines for rogue employers. We will continue to work with partners, including the Insolvency Service to tackle illegal migration in all its forms," Padiachie added.

The Secretary of State for Business and Trade accepted a disqualification undertaking from Hussain.

US COURT AWARDS 20 YRS JAIL TERM TO 2 GUILTY IN \$3 MN IPHONE REPAIR SCHEME

San Francisco: A U.S. court has found two Chinese nationals guilty of a "sophisticated scheme to defraud Apple out of millions of dollars' worth of iPhones."

The scam involved submitting counterfeit iPhones to Apple for repair, which were then replaced with genuine iPhones.

Haotian Sun, 33, and Pengfei Xue, 33, were found guilty by a federal jury in the US District Court of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, which carry a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. The judge scheduled sentencing for June 21, 2024. Both Chinese nationals received shipments of counterfeit iPhones from Hong Kong between May 2017 and September 2019, returning them to Apple retail shops and Apple Authorised Service Providers with falsified serial numbers and/or IMEI numbers.

Over the course of two years, more than 5,000 iPhones were submitted to Apple. "Trial evidence showed that conspirators submitted more than 5,000 inauthentic phones to Apple during the conspiracy, intending to cause a loss of more than \$3 million to Apple," the US Attorney's Office noted. Sun and Xue used various aliases during the scheme. They were arrested on December 5, 2019.





Maratha quotas given, but unrelenting Jarange-Patil to start fresh stir from Feb 24

Team Absolute | Jalna (Maharashtra)

A day after the Maharashtra Government proposed to give 10 per cent reservation in education and government jobs, a miffed and unrelenting Shivba Sanghatana leader Manoj Jarange-Patil on Wednesday announced a fresh statewide agitation from February 24.

Speaking to the media at his village Antaravali-Sarati on Wednesday afternoon, Jarange-Patil claimed that the government had given quotas to the Marathas but "not as required by the community" and that was "not acceptable."

On the 12th day of his indefinite hunger strike, Jarange-Patil reiterated his original demand to declare the Marathas as 'Kumbhis' (falling in the OBC category) and grant them separate quotas from the OBCs, plus the formal notification of the 'Sage-Soyare' (family bloodline).

"The government has not given what we demanded. The Special Session of Legislature was held for political reasons ahead of the elections. We have to safeguard the interests of the Marathas. They have given us the motorcycle but no petrol, so



it's not acceptable to us," he declared.

In order to compel the government to concede to the demands, Jarange-Patil announced a Maharashtra-wide peaceful agitation starting from February 24.

This will include daily roadblocks from 10.30 am-1 pm, and again from 4-7 pm, to avoid inconveniencing the students writing their HSC exams.

The stir will also include processions and demonstrations in all villages, towns and cities. He also appealed to senior Marathas to join in hunger strikes in their villages but warned that "if any aged Maratha is sacrificed to the cause, the government would be held responsible."

Calling for a boycott, Jarange-Patil urged Marathas in all villages not to

allow political leaders to enter their territories and to stop or confiscate election campaign vehicles outside the villages.

He demanded that the government "should not hold elections till the Maratha quotas are given as per our demands."

While appealing to the Marathas to ensure peaceful agitation, the Shivba Sanghatana chief also cautioned, "If the government or police harass our youth, then they would face the repercussions."

Meanwhile, in a surprise development, a person named Ajay Maharaj Baraskar launched a scathing attack on Jarange-Patil, accusing him of "destroying the Marathas' cause and ruining many families by his ill-conceived agitation that has been dragging on for the early seven months."

"He has no brains, is just a publicity-seeker, uses abusive language towards one and all, is arrogant and adamant, he insults many people... He wants Marathas to be declared as OBCs, how can this be possible? Who asked him to launch this agitation or sit on an indefinite hunger strike," fumed Baraskar.

SURVEYS PREDICT 50% SEATS FOR MVA IN MAHA, BJP UNNERVED, CLAIMS SHARAD PAWAR

Team Absolute | Kolhapur

NCP-SP President Sharad Pawar said on Wednesday that recent pre-poll surveys have predicted that at least 50 per cent of the Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra would go to the Opposition MVA, and that has rattled the BJP.

Speaking to the media, Sharad Pawar said that despite claims to the contrary, the MVA is set to bag at least 24 of the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra.

Pawar said that the BJP is uncertain of its victory in the forthcoming elections and is resorting to sabotaging Opposition parties and their leaders.

"That is the reason they are deploying the CBI, ED and IT dept to break up political parties and take away their leaders," pointed out Pawar, in a reference to the recent entry of former Congress strongman Ashok S. Chavan into the BJP fold.

While Chavan's sudden exit may have shocked many, the NCP-SP supremo averred that he was "not at all surprised" by it and he had an



inkling of what was to come.

"The BJP had released a White Paper on its 10 years' performance and that of the Opposition parties too, in which Chavan's name had figured in context of the Adarsh Society scam. At that time, we understood that this was a sort of 'threat' to him and it could have some ramifications. It finally happened," explained Pawar.

On the MVA's seat-sharing talks, Pawar revealed that there was a consensus on a majority of the 48 seats, and the rest would be finalised in the next two-three days.

He asserted that wherever

there are disputes, the top MVA leaders sit together and hammer out solutions and suggested a similar strategy for the parties that form the INDIA bloc.

The senior Pawar suggested that INDIA partners in each state should hold discussions among themselves, particularly in states like Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, where there is no consensus on seat-sharing.

In West Bengal, the Trinamool Congress, CPM and Congress are the traditional rivals, and such issues have to be tackled, he advised.

Saline hung from ropes: hundreds of patients treated on road in Maharashtra

Team Absolute | Mumbai

About 300 people - including children and women - fell sick after having food at a religious event in Maharashtra yesterday, the police said.

The people complained of food poisoning after having food on the last day of the week-long religious event in Maharashtra's Buldhana.

They were taken to a hospital, but due to shortage of beds, many of them had to be treated outside the hospital. Visuals showed saline bottles tied to the ropes - hooked to the trees - as hundreds of patients lied on the ground. Villagers told media



that when they reached the hospitals, no doctor was present there. "We had to call some private doctors to treat the patients," they said.

Officials said the condition of 30 people is stated to be critical. Kiran Patil, Buldhana district collector, said a team

of doctors has been deployed in the village with an ambulance and other necessary equipment in case a medical emergency arises.

"Samples of prasad have been sent to a laboratory for analysis and an inquiry will be initiated," he said.

TRIBUTES POUR IN FOR LEGENDARY RADIO PRESENTER AMEEN SAYANI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The death of legendary radio presenter Ameen Sayani at the age of 91 has elicited tributes from various quarters, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and several film personalities recalling his iconic contributions, particularly as the voice behind "Binaca Geetmala," an iconic radio programme.

Sayani suffered a heart attack on Tuesday evening and was rushed to a hospital in South Mumbai, where he passed away. His son, Rajil Sayani, confirmed the news, stating that Sayani's voice resonated with millions of Indians through his weekly show on Radio Ceylon from 1952 to 1988 and later on All India Radio's Vividh Bharati until 1994.

Expressing his condolences, Prime Minister Narendra Modi commended Sayani's "golden voice" and his role in revolutionising Indian broadcasting. While, Union Home Minister Amit Shah noted Sayani's enormous contribution to radio and referred to his legacy as eternal.



"Shri Ameen Sayani Ji's golden voice on the airwaves had a charm and warmth that endeared him to people across generations. Through his work, he played an important role in revolutionising Indian broadcasting and nurtured a very special bond with his listeners.

Saddened by his passing away. Condolences to his family, admirers and all radio lovers. May his soul rest in peace," PM Modi wrote.

"Pained to know that Shri Ameen Sayani Ji the voice of the radio is no more. Sayani Ji leaves a void behind that will be difficult to fill. His golden legacy makes him immortal. My sincerest condolences to his near and dear ones and millions of admirers. Om Shanti," Amit Shah wrote.

Other leaders expressed their sorrow over Sayani's passing, pointing out his impact on Indian radio and his enduring influence on listeners over the years included Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, TMC leader Derek O'Brien, and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis.

"He had an equally sweet voice as the songs. Pained to hear about the demise of one of the greatest radio presenters Ameen Sayani ji. He produced more than 50,000 radio programs & around 19,000 radio jingles. We all have such fond memories associated with him & his voice since our childhood. We have grown up with it. He was a great human being too. My humble tributes to Him and deepest condolences to his family & crores of music lovers," Fadnis wrote in his social media post.

Sayani, who was born in 1932 into a bilingual family in Bombay, started his broadcasting career at an early age

and hosted more than 50,000 episodes in 42 years. His well-known salutation, "Namaste behno aur bhaiyo, main apka dost Ameen Sayani bol raha hoon," became a radio catchphrase in India and stirred up fond memories in listeners.

Sayani started his radio career in 1952 as the host of "Binaca Geetmala," which was supported by the toothpaste brand. The show ran for four decades, becoming one of the most well-liked and longest-running radio programmes in Indian history.

Millions of Indians held a special place in their hearts for him because of his unique voice and captivating manner, which won over listeners from all over the nation. Future broadcasting and entertainment generations will continue to draw inspiration from Sayani's legacy as a pioneer in Indian radio.

Sena (UBT) leader Anand Dubey seeks SC intervention, says 'We are real Shiv Sena'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) national spokesperson Anand Dubey has petitioned the Supreme Court and the Chief Justice of India to intervene in Maharashtra's present political crisis, citing the recent ruling in the Chandigarh Mayoral polls as an example of justice that should be duplicated throughout the state.

Dubey expressed unhappiness with the Maharashtra Assembly speaker Rahul Narvekar's recent ruling in Sena split case and he alleged that he is prejudiced against Uddhav faction.

The news agency report quoted Dubey as saying, "You are well aware of how our party, the Shiv Sena, was

broken, the whole country is a witness to it. The Maharashtra Assembly speaker too did not give a fair decision."

As per the report, drawing parallels to the Supreme Court's ruling in the Chandigarh mayor elections, which rendered previously rejected votes legal, Dubey sought the court to direct Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narvekar to recognise the Uddhav group as the true Shiv Sena. He emphasised the faction's commitment to the party's symbol, the bow and arrow.

"A decision was given by you in the Chandigarh mayor polls, in which the 8 votes that were made invalidated, were made valid. In the same way please direct the Maharashtra

Assembly Speaker Rahul Narvekar and tell him that our party, the (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) faction, is the real Shiv Sena, our party's symbol is bow and arrow," Dubey told the top court.

Furthermore, Dubey requested punitive action against Speaker Narvekar for what he saw as an unjust verdict in favour of the faction led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

The political issue in Maharashtra arose from a rift in the Shiv Sena in June 2022. Last month, Speaker Narvekar deemed Shinde's group to be the genuine Shiv Sena, citing inconsistencies in the party's leadership structure provided to the Election Commission.

Narvekar, in his verdict, said, "In my view, the 2018 leadership structure (submitted with ECI) was not as per the Shiv Sena Constitution. Shiv Sena party chief, as per the party constitution, cannot remove anyone from the party...Uddhav Thackeray removed Eknath Shinde or any party leader from the party as per the party constitution. So the removal of Eknath Shinde by Uddhav Thackeray in June 2022 is not accepted based on the Shiv Sena Constitution."

In a separate judgement, the Speaker affirmed Ajit Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) as the genuine entity, taking into account the parliamentary majority and dismissing disqualification petitions filed by MLAs.

9 Charged after Mumbai woman duped of Rs 1.92 crore in online trading scam

Thane | Agencies

Police have registered a case against nine persons for allegedly cheating a 40-year-old woman from Navi Mumbai township in Maharashtra of Rs 1.92 crore in online share trading, an official said on Wednesday.

The accused lured the victim, resident of New Panvel area, into online trading of shares with a promise of high returns on her investments. She transferred a collective sum of Rs 1,92,82,837 into various bank accounts since December 2023 as instructed by the accused, but was not able to withdraw any amount later, Cyber police station's senior inspector Gajanan Kadam said. When she did not get any satisfactory response from the accused



over it, she filed a police complaint. The police on Tuesday registered a case against nine persons under Indian Penal Code sections 420 (cheating), 406 (criminal breach of trust) and 34 (common intention) and provisions of the Information Technology Act, the official said.

Former Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan's security upgraded to 'Y-Plus' category

Mumbai | Agencies

Former Maharashtra Chief Minister and BJP leader Ashok Chavan's security has been upgraded to the 'Y-plus' category due to suspected threats, officials in Mumbai said on Wednesday.

Chavan's security, which was previously classified as 'Y', has now been strengthened, with increased security measures taken at his Mumbai residence and hometown of Nanded, according to an official statement. According to the report, the 'Y-plus' security cover calls for the deployment of two security professionals to protect Chavan, reflecting the enhanced threat perception reported by the state police's



VIP security department. Chavan, 65, recently resigned from the Congress to join the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Following his conversion, the BJP nominated him as a candidate for the Rajya Sabha election in Maharashtra. His election to the upper house was proclaimed uncontested on Tuesday, the report added.

NCP disqualification matter: Bombay HC issues notice to Maharashtra speaker on Ajit Pawar faction plea

Mumbai | Agencies

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday issued a notice to Maharashtra assembly speaker Rahul Narvekar and 10 MLAs belonging to Sharad Pawar's NCP faction on petitions challenging the speaker's decision to not disqualify them, reported news agency.

Anil Patil, chief whip of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, had filed two petitions challenging the speaker's decision to not disqualify 10 MLAs from the Sharad Pawar camp.

A division bench of Justices G S Kulkarni and Firdosh Pooniwalla on Wednesday also issued notice to the Maharashtra legislature secretariat and directed all the respondents to file their affidavits to the petitions.

The Bombay High Court posted the matter for further hearing on March 14. Patil in his petitions requested the high court to quash the speaker's recent order



by declaring it bad in law, and also disqualify all the 10 legislators. The petitions challenged the "legality, propriety and correctness" of the order passed by Narvekar dismissing the disqualification petitions filed against the MLAs belonging to the Sharad Pawar faction.

Patil's counsel Mukul Rohatgi on Wednesday told the court that the major findings made by the speaker were in Ajit Pawar's favour except the part where the 10 MLAs were not disqualified.

"The speaker has ruled that the Ajit Pawar-led NCP is the real political party. Even the Election Commission had ruled

in Ajit Pawar's favour. But still the 10 MLAs (from Sharad Pawar's faction) were not disqualified," Rohatgi said.

The actions of the 10 MLAs were against the interests of the party and hence they ought to have been disqualified, the senior counsel argued.

"The speaker has wrongly held that this was a case of internal strife within the party. But that is not our case. This is not just a case of internal dispute," Rohatgi said.

The bench, after hearing the arguments briefly, said it would issue notices to the respondents and direct them to file affidavits and hear the matter further.

Narvekar last week held that the faction led by Ajit Pawar is the real NCP, but didn't disqualify MLAs of either faction. Patil in his petitions claimed the speaker has wrongly arrived at the conclusion that the split in the NCP was intra-party dissent. As the speaker has ruled that the NCP led by Ajit Pawar is the real political party, then the disqualification petitions should have been allowed too, he said.

Keke Palmer croons song from her parents' wedding

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-actress Keke Palmer took a trip down memory lane. The actress recently took to her social media to share a clip of herself singing a song that is close to her heart. She wrote in the caption: "My mom sang this to my dad at their wedding! I wasn't there, but all growing up as a party trick, he would put my mom on the spot to sing 'their' song," reports People magazine. In the video, she can be seen doing her own rendition of the late Natalie Cole's 1975 single 'Inseparable'. She confessed: "It wasn't until I was an adult that I realised she (her mom) didn't write the song! That's how well she would sing it."

As per People, the actress said that her singing prowess may fall a little short compared to that of her mother Sharon Palmer's, but she felt compelled to sing the tune while at home with her baby boy.

She wrote: "Randomly while playing with Leodis in the living room, I just started singing it to him. I guess that's what real love makes you feel." In the video, the actress's sartorial choice included an oversized T-shirt with various dinosaurs and a black cosy sweater.

The Emmy Award winner welcomed her first child, son Leodis "Leo" Andrellton, on February 25, 2023, with her ex-boyfriend, Darius Jackson.

Bradley Cooper says he was freaking out when he met Jay-Z, Beyonce

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Bradley Cooper has said that he was "freaking out" when he met rapper Jay-Z and his wife Beyonce. The actor spoke with the couple when he wanted the 'Formation' hitmaker to play aspiring singer Ally in his movie 'A Star is Born'. The role however, ultimately went to Lady Gaga, reports 'Female First UK'.

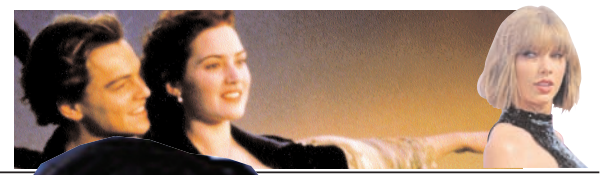
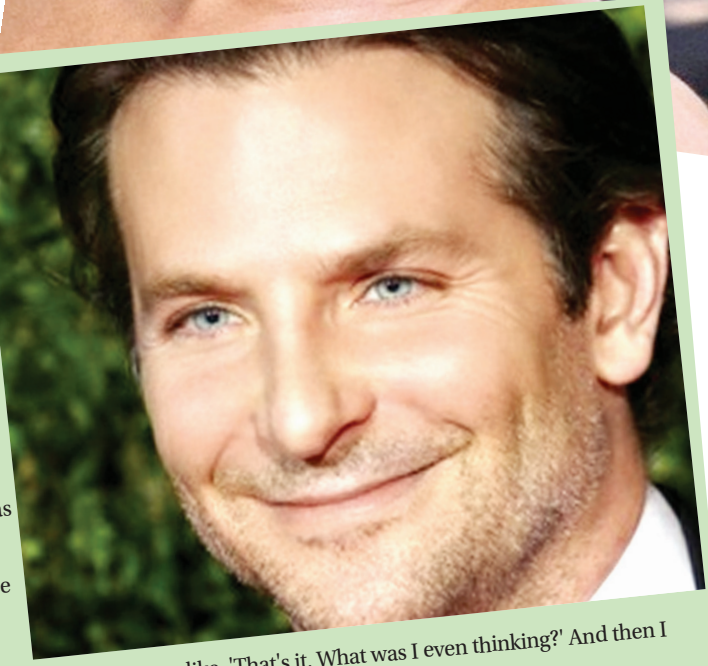
The actor was amazed to find the '99 Problems' rapper sitting on the sofa watching daytime TV show 'Judge Judy'. Bradley said during a recent interview with the SAG-AFTRA Foundation, "I went to Beyonce's house, and Jay-Z was watching Judge Judy, I still remember. I'm not kidding. And I was freaking (out). I remember I had this weird cough when I was pitching it to her."

He further mentioned, quoted by 'Female First UK', "It was crazy. She was incredible and so was he, and we developed it for like a year together. I mean, she's one of the greatest people of all time. Then that fell through".

He also wanted Adele to play the role, but she only texted him back once and said she was "busy".

And after hearing Gaga sing at a benefit concert, Bradley knew he had found the right person to play Ally opposite him as singer Jackson Maine. He said: "It just blew the doors off of the whole place, and it was at that moment where it was like, 'That's it. What was I even thinking?' And then I asked to meet her."

Gaga and Bradley ended up winning the Oscar for Best Original Song for their duet of 'Shallow' from the film.



Rihanna's Sexiest Outfits of All Time

Rihanna's fashion sense certainly sets her apart

from the rest. Celebrate her birthday with some of her hottest looks of all time. We all know Rihanna is a fashion icon, famous for pushing boundaries with her sartorial choices. Whether she's attending a red carpet event or just out and about, the pop star consistently adds a touch of seduction to her outfits with daring cut-outs and plunging necklines. Her confidence and unapologetic approach to style has made her a role model for women everywhere, and that was even before she reinvented maternity fashion during her two pregnancies.

Whether she's showing off her figure in something provocative, or embracing something a little more glam, Rihanna knows how to rock it all.

Sam Mendes to helm films on each of the Beatles: Paul, John, George, Ringo

Los Angeles | Agencies

The Beatles legends John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr will be the subject of a different upcoming feature film. The four separate films will tell the stories of each of them in standalone narratives.

The films will be directed by the Oscar nominated filmmaker Sam Mendes. Sam plans to make four separate movies, one from each Beatles member's point of view, reports Variety.

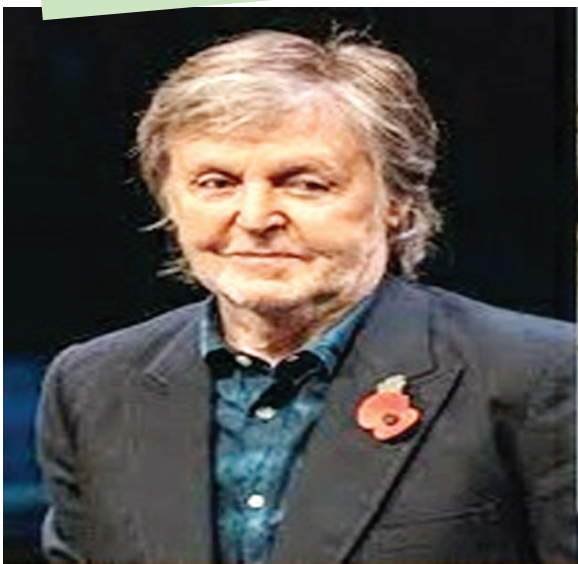
They will intersect to "tell the astonishing story of the greatest band in history," leading up to their 1970 breakup, according to a press release. Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, and the families of the late John Lennon and George Harrison have granted full life story and music rights for the scripted films.

Sam said in a statement: "I'm honoured to be telling the story of the greatest rock band of all time, and excited to challenge the notion of what constitutes a trip to the movies."

The four films will be financed and distributed by Sony Pictures Entertainment with preferred release of all of them in 2027.

As per Variety, music movies have been surging in popularity at the box office. Baz Luhrmann's 'Elvis' and Paramount's 'Bob Marley: One Love' were bigger hits than expected, while Taylor Swift's 'The Eras Tour', a cinematic rendering of her record-breaking concert, outperformed several Hollywood franchises in terms of global ticket sales.

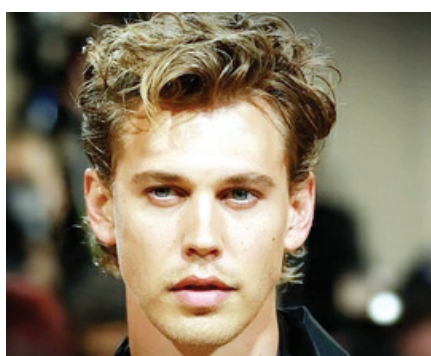
Several other looks at musical legends are in the works, Antoine Fuqua is turning Michael Jackson's life story into a feature film, Amy Winehouse is getting the biopic treatment with 'Back to Black' and Ridley Scott is in talks to direct a movie about the rise of the Bee Gees.



Austin Butler reveals 'Dune 2' set 'became a microwave': People were passing out

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Austin Butler went through hell during the shoot of 'Dune: Part Two'. Earlier, he was hospitalised after the wrap up on Baz Luhrmann's 'Elvis'. It seems nothing short of a miracle that he avoided a similar fate on the set of Denis Villeneuve's 'Dune: Part Two', reports Variety. The Oscar nominated actor joins the epic franchise as Feyd-Rautha, the cruel and sadistic younger nephew of and heir to Baron Vladimir Harkonnen (Stellan Skarsgard). Butler told Entertainment Weekly that heat stroke impacted several people on set during his first week of shooting. He said, quoted by Variety: "It was 110 degrees (43.3°C) and so hot. I had the bald cap on, and it was between two sound stages that were just these grey boxes of 200-foot walls and sand. It became like a microwave. There were people passing out from heat stroke. And that was just my first week." "It really bonds the entire crew," Butler added. "There's something so humbling about being in such an uncomfortable environment." As per Variety, Feyd-Rautha's gladiator match on the Harkonnen's home planet was the first scene he shot for 'Dune 2'. In the



scene, he battles fighters to prove he should be his uncle's heir. During the preparations, the actor was hard focused on Skarsgard's vocal performance in the original 'Dune' movie as it held the key to bringing his version of Feyd-Rautha to life.

Austin said: "I felt that because he grew up with the Baron, the Baron would be a big influence on him in many ways. So then I started thinking about the way that he speaks, and that being linked to the person that you see with the most power from the time that you're a child, who you do end up emulating in some way."

Larsa Pippen and Marcus Jordan's Relationship Timeline: Their Ups & Downs

Larsa Pippen, 49, and Marcus Jordan, 33, were the unlikely couple that just kept giving. But after a year and a half of a steamy romance, something seemed to go wrong, with the Real Housewives of Miami star wiping her Instagram account of photos of the son of Michael Jordan and unfollowing him on Super Bowl Sunday in February of 2024. He did the same. But just a few days later, the two were spotted together on Valentine's Day, leaving fans very confused. She was also spotted with a massive ring, sparking engagement speculation.

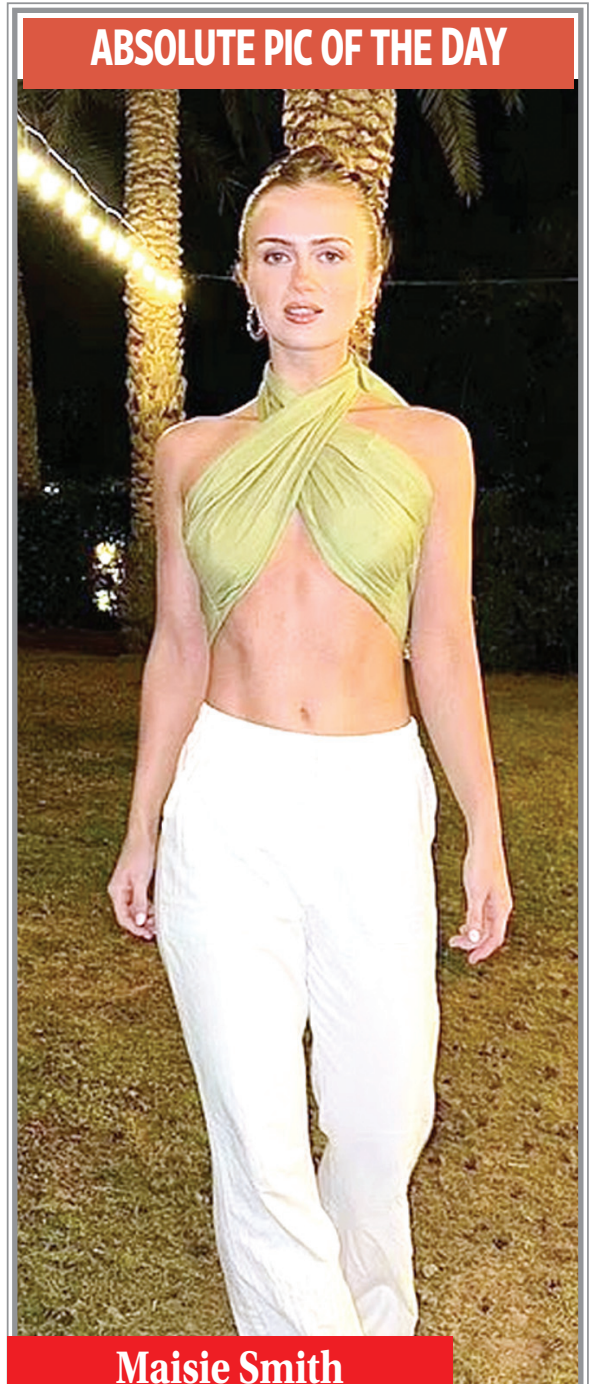
The relationship was always bound to be at least a bit awkward. Larsa was previously married to NBA great Scottie Pippen, who was Michael Jordan's teammate on the Chicago Bulls during their meteoric rise in the 1990s, and a wide age difference further fueled negativity aimed at them. But Larsa and Marcus appeared to have triumphed over

naysayers with a publicly affectionate relationship that only got better over time.

In fact, she all but gushed over him in a February 2023 interview with PEOPLE. "For me, I just could never be open and open to different guys," she told the outlet of dating before finding love with Marcus. "I would find faults in every guy... I had all these quirky things and then low and behold, Marcus drops down from heaven. And I'm like, I like everything about him."

She also explained that because of their affection, she wanted to please him. "I feel like I always joke around and I say, 'Oh my God, if Marcus told me to color my hair green, I'm going to do it,'" she said at the time. "Just because I feel like I have to make him happy because he makes me so happy."

Amid the speculation they've either parted ways or got engaged, here's Larsa and Marcus' full relationship timeline.



Maisie Smith



Yashasvi gains big in ICC Test rankings after double ton in Rajkot

Team Absolute | New Delhi
India's young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal continues his rise in the Test rankings after scoring an unbeaten 214 in the third Test against England in Rajkot as he jumped 14 places to be placed 15th position on the updated rankings for Test batters, released by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday. The 22-year-old left-hander, who joined a select band of seven cricketers to score double centuries in two consecutive Tests including two Indians -- Vinod Kambli and Virat Kohli, also attained a new career-high rating of 699. Captain Rohit Sharma has moved up one spot to 12th position after also notching a century in the first innings while Shubman Gill has progressed three places to 35th after coming close to a century in the second innings. Debutants Sarfaraz Khan and Dhruv Jurel have entered the rankings in 75th and 100th positions, respectively. Player of the Match in Rajkot Ravindra Jadeja's knock of 112 in the first innings has taken him from 41st to 34th position among batters. He has also consolidated his position at the top of the all-rounders' rankings, going from 416 to a career-best 469 rating points. Jadeja scored a century and claimed seven wickets for the match in that emphatic Test victory and



moved to a new career-high rating while maintaining his place as the No.1 ranked all-rounder in Test cricket. Meanwhile, Kane Williamson has strengthened his position at the top of the batting rankings after notching a century against South

Africa, his seventh in seven Tests. Veteran spinner Ravichandran Ashwin slides closer to Indian teammate Jasprit Bumrah at the top of the Test bowling rankings courtesy of a one-place jump to second after he went past 500 Test wickets, while

Jadeja jumped three places to sixth on the same list following his five-wicket haul in England's second innings in Rajkot. England opener Ben Duckett's quickfire 153 in the first innings has lifted him 12 places to 13th position.

Messi, Suarez fit for Inter Miami MLS opener

Miami | Agencies

Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez are fit and ready to play for Inter Miami in the club's opening match of the Major League Soccer season against Real Salt Lake City, manager Gerardo Martino said.

The former Barcelona teammates will be the headline acts in Wednesday night's clash at Inter Miami's renamed Chase stadium in Fort Lauderdale, though they are not guaranteed starters.

"Messi and Suarez are ready to play, if 90 minutes are required, we will see this depending on the team's needs," Martino told a news conference.

Messi missed much of Inter Miami's pre-season because of an adductor strain while Suarez has overcome a knee problem.

The other half of Inter Miami's contingent of former Barcelona stars - defender Jordi Alba and midfielder Sergio Busquets - will also be available after recovering from recent injury concerns, reports Xinhua.

The only doubt for the Florida outfit is Argentine defender Nicolas Freire, who has a leg muscle injury.

"Freire is in doubt, but we have not yet confirmed his absence," Martino said. "We are evaluating with the medical staff to what extent there is a risk and to what extent there is no risk."

Inter Miami finished 14th in the MLS's 15-team Eastern Conference last year with nine wins from 37 games.

The club, which is partly owned by former England captain David Beckham, is expected to vie for the league title this year following its glut of recent signings, led by Messi and Suarez.

But Martino is not thinking beyond the duel with Real Salt Lake City.



"We are preparing for all possibilities against a team that could choose to press high or sit back," Martino said. "We have to be ready for all scenarios. But we are confident of having the answers and we believe that we are in good shape for the start of the new season."

Austin Butler reveals 'Dune 2' set 'became a microwave': People were passing out

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Austin Butler went through hell during the shoot of 'Dune: Part Two'. Earlier, he was hospitalised after the wrap up on Baz Luhrmann's 'Elvis'. It seems nothing short of a miracle that he avoided a similar fate on the set of Denis Villeneuve's 'Dune: Part Two', reports Variety. The Oscar nominated actor joins the epic franchise as Feyd-Rautha, the cruel and sadistic younger nephew of and heir to Baron Vladimir Harkonnen (Stellan Skarsgard). Butler told Entertainment Weekly that heat stroke impacted several people on set during his first week of shooting. He said, quoted by Variety: "It was 110 degrees (43.3°C) and so hot. I had the bald cap on, and it was between two sound stages that were just these grey boxes of 200-foot walls and sand. It became like a microwave. There were people passing out from heat stroke. And that was just my first week." "It really bonds the entire crew," Butler added. "There's something so hum-



bling about being in such an uncomfortable environment." As per Variety, Feyd-Rautha's gladiator match on the Harkonnen's home planet was the first scene he shot for 'Dune 2'. In the scene, he battles fighters to prove he should be his uncle's heir. During the preparations, the actor was hard focused on Skarsgard's vocal performance in the original 'Dune' movie as it

held the key to bringing his version of Feyd-Rautha to life. Austin said: "I felt that because he grew up with the Baron, the Baron would be a big influence on him in many ways. So then I started thinking about the way that he speaks, and that being linked to the person that you see with the most power from the time that you're a child, who you do end up emulating in some way."

'Giving their best': Shubman Gill rallies behind the team despite key India players unavailable for Ranchi Test

Team Absolute | Ranchi
Tamil Nadu opener Shubman Gill commended the youngsters for stepping up in the absence of senior teammates leading up to the fourth Test against England.

India has showcased remarkable resilience in the series, bouncing back from a 1-0 deficit in Hyderabad to lead 2-1 after securing significant victories in Vizag and Rajkot. As they aim to clinch the series, India faces a challenging task due to the absence of key players.

Jasprit Bumrah, the leading wicket-taker with 17 wickets, will be rested to manage his workload. Additionally, KL Rahul is still recovering from injury, and Virat Kohli continues to be on leave after welcoming his second child.

While the bowlers have earned their plaudits in the series, the Indian batters, including Shubman Gill, came under the scanner after a rare defeat in the first Test.

Like the other batters, Gill too bounced back and played an important role in India's two wins with a century in the second match and 90 in the previous match.

"We have scored close to 400 in the first innings of every match so far in the



series. Every batter can't score big runs in every game, everyone goes through ups and downs," said Gill in the pre-match press conference. "In the first match, multiple players scored over 80. In the second match, Yashasvi Jaiswal scored a double hundred. In the previous match, Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja scored centuries. "It's not that only one batter is performing. Everybody is chipping in with runs and that's why we are able to put close to 400 runs on board every time. In the absence of big players, the youngsters have put their hands up. In the third

Test, Sarfaraz Khan scored twin fifties on his debut while Dhruv Jurel was brilliant with the bat and the gloves, his run-out of Ben Duckett in the second innings proving to be a game-changing moment. Shubman Gill has expressed confidence in the young players, endorsing their ability to sustain the momentum in the series. "Virat Kohli hasn't been with us for three matches. Obviously, when a player of Kohli calibre isn't available, it does make a little difference but in his place, the way Sarfaraz Khan recently batted, he did very well," said Gill.

I have played with him and I am really proud of him: AB de Villiers on Sarfaraz Khan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former South Africa cricketer AB de Villiers lauded the performances of Sarfaraz Khan and Shubman Gill, as well as the remarkable display of talent by Yashasvi Jaiswal, in the ongoing Test series between India and England.

Sarfaraz Khan, who made his debut in the third Test against England in Rajkot, showcased his mettle with scores of 62 and an unbeaten 68*.

De Villiers, who shared the dressing room with Sarfaraz during their time at Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB), expressed delight at the young cricketer's achievements. De Villiers praised Sarfaraz's level-headedness and down-to-earth demeanor, highlighting the emotional moment when Sarfaraz's father blew kisses in celebration of his fifty.

"I have played with this boy before and he is a very level-headed and down-to-earth guy. I am really proud of him. It was great to see his dad blow kisses after Sarfaraz reached fifty and it was heartwarming for me to watch," said De Villiers on his YouTube channel.

Furthermore, De Villiers commended Shubman Gill for his vital knock of 91 runs, which played a crucial role in India setting a mammoth target of 557 for England in the same Test match. Despite facing pressure and being out of form, Gill's innings provided him with much-needed breathing space in the Indian team, according to De Villiers.

"He (Gill) has been under pressure and isn't in the best of forms. But he played such a crucial knock under pressure and that too at a crucial point in his career. This innings was crucial for him to get some breathing space in that Indian team."

In addition to Sarfaraz and Gill's



contributions, De Villiers showered accolades on Yashasvi Jaiswal for his sensational back-to-back double centuries in the series. Jaiswal's aggressive batting style and ability to domi-

nate the England bowling attack left De Villiers in awe, with the former South African captain expressing his admiration for the young talent's skill and temperament.

De Villiers expressed full confidence in Jaiswal's ability to continue his remarkable form across different conditions and against varied oppositions, both at home and away.

KIUG 2023: Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar dominates 10m Air Rifle final

Team Absolute | Guwahati

Olympian Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar of Guru Nanak Dev University clinched the men's 10m Air Rifle gold with a dominant performance that saw him lead from the first shot in the 4th Khelo India University Games (KIUG) 2023, Ashtalakshmi, at the Kahilipara Shooting Range here. The 23-year-old qualified for the final in second spot but never looked under any trouble as he scored a total of 252 points, beating second placed Umamahesh Maddieni of KLEF University by 2.1 points. Sumeedh Sasane of Shivaji University bagged the bronze medal with a score of 228.8 points.

"I am quite happy with the way I shot today. I didn't have a good outing in the ISSF World Cup in Granada and I came here to work on certain flaws and find my rhythm ahead of a long season," said Tomar.

He also teamed up with Vidit Jain and Manpreet Singh Basra to help Guru Nanak Dev University clinch



the team gold with a total of 1871.7 points and jump to the 10th spot in overall standings.

Jain University continued to top the standings as their women's team clinched the basketball gold with a 68-58 win over University of Madras and their swimmers added two more gold medals to take the gold medal

count to seven gold, four silver and four bronze.

Chandigarh University are second with four gold, six silver and eight bronze while Savitribai Phule University jumped to third place thanks to two gold medals from the weightlifting arena in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.

Trupti Mane of Savitribai Phule University clinched the women's 76 kg gold with a total of 177 kg. Mane started with two unsuccessful lifts in snatch before finally managing to cleanly lift 77kg. She then went on to lift 100kg in her third attempt of clean and jerk to take home the gold. Shreya Ganamukhi of Shivaji University bagged silver with a total of 169kg and Sana of CSMU won the bronze with a total lift of 168kg.

Later, Savitribai Phule University's Abhijit Disale won the 89 kg gold with a total lift of 302kg. GNDU's Surinderpal Singh (284kg) and SRTMU's Krishna Dalvi (282kg) bagged the silver and bronze medals respectively.

In the kabaddi competition at the Sarusajai Sports Complex in Guwahati, Chandigarh University defeated Bharati Vidyapeeth 34-32 in the women's final while Mangalore University bagged the men's gold with a 36-22 win over University of Kota.



The soul of 'Binaca Geetmala', legendary Ameen Sayani bids final adieu

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The legendary radio host Ameen Sayani - who ruled the airwaves and lorded over the hearts of millions of "Behno aur Bhaiyon" in the Indian subcontinent and neighbouring countries - fell silent forever following a cardiac arrest at the age of 91. Ameen Sayani is survived by his son Rajil and several grandchildren.

Sayani suffered a heart attack late on Tuesday and was rushed to the Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital in Nana Chowk where he breathed his last. "His mortal remains shall be kept for people to pay their last respects at Famous Studios, Mahalaxmi followed by the funeral," said Rajil Sayani in a statement. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union I&B Minister Anurag Thakur, Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and other bigwigs from the political and entertainment fraternity paid tributes and offered condolences to Sayani's family. The country's first celebrity Radio Jockey's iconic lines "Namaskar Behno aur Bhaiyon! Main aapka dost Ameen Sayani bol raha hoon..." became embedded in the hearts of millions, spanning several generations, and remain an unparalleled radio greeting even today. Sayani became a household name with the country's first popular countdown show of top Bollywood songs on Radio Ceylon (now Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation) and then on All India Radio (AIR). "One of the greatest radio presenters, Ameen



Sayani has passed away. He was the iconic presenter of the popular radio show 'Binaca Geetmala', the Akashvani AIR said in a tribute to renowned radio presenter on Wednesday. An acclaimed communicator, a voiceover artiste par excellence and an unmatched storyteller, Sayani also had a great sense of humour, and over the decades, his voice became synonymous with the golden era of Indian radio. This was long before the airwaves were unshackled and a young breed of RJs grabbed the studio microphones. Born on December 21, 1932 in Mumbai, he was educated at St. Xavier's College, and started working for Radio Ceylon from 1951. Sayani went on to create a mammoth record of presenting-hosting over 54,000 radio programmes, and more than 19,000 spots or jingles, and appearing as himself in several Hindi films. Initially, he would help his mother Kulsam Sayani edit a fortnightly multilingual journal 'Rahber' initiated by Mahatma Gandhi, while his elder brother Hamid Sayani was an equally famed English broadcaster. Starting

with the 'Binaca Geetmala' (later 'Cibaca Geetmala', 'Hit Parade' and revived as 'Colgate Cibaca Geetmala'), the programme ruled the roost for 42 years from 1952-1994.

There, in his mesmerising voice, Sayani presented the week's top Bollywood songs, in a countdown, with the grand finale to the top song ('Aur pehle paidaan par hai...!') for which his enthralled audiences laid bets, screamed and celebrated when they were proved right.

Sayani also contributed to many English programmes at AIR for a decade before concentrating fully on Hindi programming and carved a permanent niche in the hearts of his audiences, despite the measly payments of that era.

Through the 'Geetmala' series, Sayani also helped popularise Hindi film music among the masses through the humble 'family radio', especially for those who couldn't afford the expensive gramophone players and the record discs.

With his popularity transcending national boundaries, Sayani went on to host more than 2000 live stage shows and events like beauty pageants, international film festivals, fashion shows or others, in India and around the world, where the audiences hung on to each word he uttered.

Sayani was conferred the Padma Shri (2009), the Hindi Ratna Puraskar (2007), IAAFA's Hall of Fame Award, besides many other awards and honours.

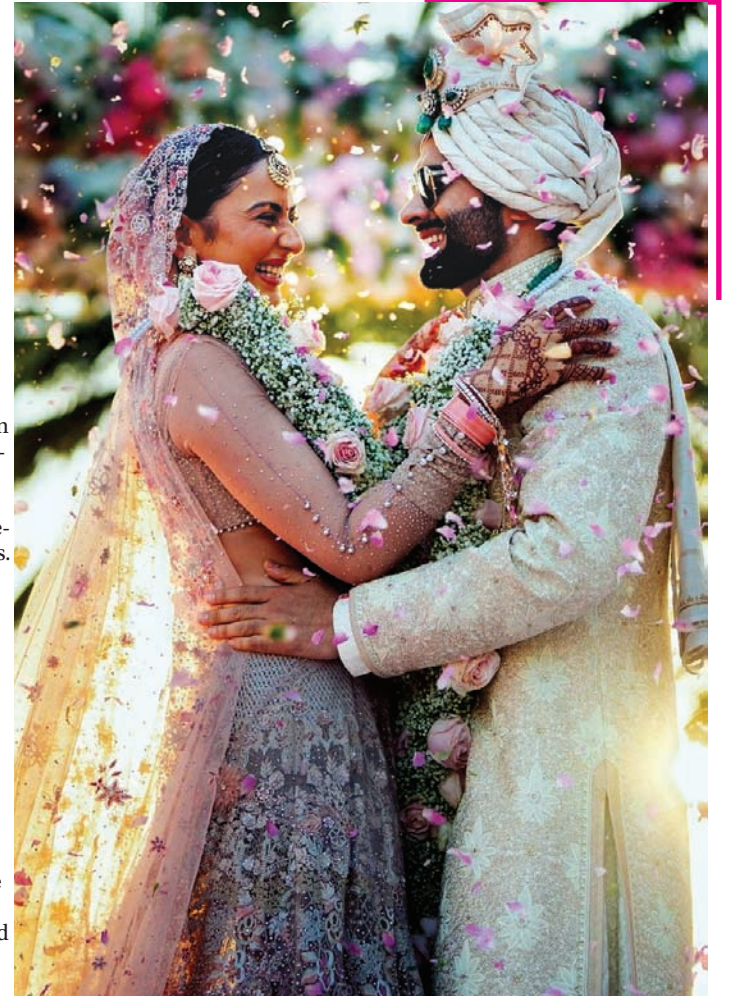
Jackky Bhagnani, Rakul Preet Singh are married now

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor-producer Jackky Bhagnani and actress Rakul Preet Singh are now man and the wife after the two tied the nuptial knot at the ITC Grand in Goa on Wednesday. As of now, all festivities have been concluded with the couple being blessed by the guests at the venue. The festivities on Wednesday began with Rakul's 'Chuddha' ceremony in the morning. There were two wedding ceremonies -- first, the 'Anand Karaj' or the Sikh wedding ceremony, and the second a Sindhi-style ceremony -- reflecting both Rakul and Jackky's cultures.

The couple will now host a grand after-party for all the guests present at the venue. Earlier, they had their 'haldi' and 'sangeet' ceremonies on Tuesday. The sangeet was hosted by actor Riteish Deshmukh, who is close to Jackky's family, and actress Bhumi Pednekar, who has been getting a lot of positive response of late for her latest release 'Bhaskar'.

The guests at the ceremony also paid a tribute to the actor-producer duo of David Dhawan and Jackky's father, producer Vasu Bhagnani. David's son Varun also danced to 'Husn Hai Suhana' from 'Coolie No 1' at the sangeet. 'Coolie No 1' was directed by David Dhawan and produced by Vasu Bhagnani. The film was rebooted in 2020 with the same title, and was released on OTT during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Film and TV celebrities pay their last respects to Rituraj ahead of funeral

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Hours ahead of the last rites of the late 'Anupamaa' actor Rituraj Singh, film and TV celebrities visited his residence to pay their last respects to the actor, who passed away at the age of 59 on Tuesday following a cardiac arrest.

The grieving visitors included Arshad Warsi, Ravie Dubey, Anup Soni, Raza Murad, Nakuul Mehta, Hiten Tejwani, Gauri Pradhan, Gulam Khan Hussain, Jaswir Kaur, Deepshikha Nagpal and Priyanshu Chatterjee. The actor's funeral will take place at the Oshiwara Hindu Cemetery. Leading up to his death, Rituraj had been discharged from hospital after he was admitted following an attack of pancreatitis. His health, however, took a turn for the worse on February 19 and he suffered a heart attack.

With a career spanning over three decades, Rituraj was known for his work



in popular television shows such as 'Banegi Apni Baat', 'Tehkikaat', 'Kutumb', 'Jyoti', 'Beintehaa', and, most

recently, 'Anupamaa'. He also featured in the 2022 web series 'Made in Heaven' and the 2023 movie 'Yaariyan 2'.



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It was celebration time for Saif Ali Khan and Kareena on Wednesday as they got together with family for the third birthday of their younger son Jeh. The birthday celebrations video shows Kareena aka Bebo wearing a yellow T-shirt paired with a green summer coat and blue denims. For makeup, she opted for nude lips, blushed cheeks, and Kohl eyes, while keeping her hair straight. The look was rounded off with a black handbag, gold hoop earrings, and white sneakers. Saif arrived looking casual -- a grey half-sleeved kurta and white pajama. He completed the look with brown shoes. Tamiur, Jeh's elder brother, showed up with his school friends. The little ones were all dressed in their school uniform. Jeh arrived separately with his nannies. He was cutely dressed in a white shirt, a black sweater and blue denims. The look of the birthday boy was completed with white sneakers. He was seen happily coming out of the car and, like a celebrity in the making, playfully posing for the paps, who were shouting 'Happy Birthday Jeh'. He then dashed off to his birthday party venue. Kareena's brother, Ranbir Kapoor, arrived with his daughter Raha and niece Samara for the party. The 'Animal' star donned a formal look -- blue shirt, beige trousers and brown shoes. He completed the look with round-frame sun-

Kareena-Saif celebrate Jeh's b'day with Soha-Kunal, Ranbir-Raha & Sonam

Alia Bhatt and his little bundle of joy, Raha, in his arms. She wore a blue frock and her hair was tied in two little ponytails. The actor was seen adorably kissing his daughter on the cheeks. Sonam Kapoor was also spotted at the party. She wore a golden knee-length dress with short sleeves and opted for a no-makeup look, with brown lips, her hair tied in a ponytail. She completed the look with brown formal shoes and a big handbag. Kareena's father, Bollywood veteran Randhir Kapoor, sister-in-law Soha Ali Khan and husband Kunal Kemmu, and friend Neha Dhupia, along with her two children, also arrived at the party. Earlier in the day, Saif and Amrita Amrita Singh's daughter, actress Sara Ali Khan, took to Instagram Stories and shared a collage with the birthday boy Jeh. She captioned the family pictures with: "Happiest Birthday to little Jeh baba."

Salman bats for Celebrity Cricket League, says it unites the film fraternity



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan, who will be attending the opening match of Celebrity Cricket League (CCL) Season 10 in Sharjah, feels the cricket jamboree is one of the occasions that unites the film fraternity. The tournament will kick-start with the opening match between Mumbai Heroes and Kerala Strikers on February 23. Salman, who also co-owns Mumbai Heroes with his brother Sohail Khan, will be accompanied by Bollywood A-lis-

ters Bobby Deol, Sunil Shetty, Ritesh Deshmukh, Aftab Shivdasani, Sharad Kelkar and Saqib Saleem, among others. Talking about the tournament, Salman said in a statement, "It is always exciting for me to join everyone at CCL. The love, the camaraderie and the excitement makes me coming back to the league. It's one of those occasions that unites the Indian film fraternity, and every time I meet my brothers at such events, it truly warms my heart with joy."

"It's Season 10 already, and it's great to see the league go

places, literally. I wish the best to all the teams always. Inshaallah, the trophy will find its way back home. Let the games begin."

Vishnu Vardhan Induri, Founder, Celebrity Cricket League, said, "We couldn't be more excited to have megastar Salman Khan kick-off our milestone Season 10. Bhajjaan's presence is more than just star power for us, as he brings with him a touch of good fortune and bucket loads of love. With Salman on board, I am sure together we will make this season a great success as well."

'We're evolving,' says Priyanka as she drops videos of daughter MM filming herself

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Global star Priyanka Chopra Jonas has shared some videos of her little bundle of joy Malti Marie (MM), wherein she can be seen playing with the front camera of the phone and recording herself.

Priyanka married American singer and actor Nick Jonas in December 2018. In January 2022, the couple had their first child, MM, via surrogacy.

The 'Aitraaz' fame actress is often seen sharing glimpses of her baby girl on social media. And now she has dropped videos on her Instagram account, where Priyanka enjoys 90.6 million followers. In the Stories section, the 'Mary Kom' actress shared little videos, wherein we can see Malti recording herself. The video features her forehead and a slight glimpse of her face.

It was captioned: "Now it's videos too... we're evolving," followed by a heart eyes emoji. On February 4, Nick had shared a selfie, which was clicked by Malti. In the photo, we can see Nick wearing a black hoodie. Malti's eyes were visible in the photograph. Nick had captioned it: "Morning selfies by MM."



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Kate Sharma