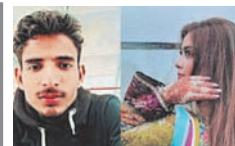


absolute india

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Madras HC dismisses PIL for grant of Indian citizenship to all children born in Sri Lankan refugee camps

CITIZENSHIP ROW

Chennai | Agencies

The Madras High Court on Thursday dismissed a PIL seeking directions to the Central government to grant Indian citizenship to all children born in camps for Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu. A bench of Chief Justice Sanjay V. Gangapurwala and Justice D. Bharatha Chakravarthy held that the PIL petition didn't have details and that the authorities concerned would be able to consider the plea only when basic details such as the date and place of birth, parents' citizenship, and so on could be submitted. Chennai advocate V. Ravikumar, who had filed the PIL petition, said that he had made a representation to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on September 17, 2022, for considering the issue of granting Indian citizenship to every baby born in the camps for Sri Lankan Tamil refugees.



Subsequently, the Union Home Ministry sent a detailed communication to him on December 14, 2022, explaining why citizenship by birth could not be claimed now, as a matter of right, by all those who were

born at the refugee camps. It stated that Indian citizenship was granted to Indian-origin Tamils as per the terms of the Sirimavo-Shastri Agreement, 1964 and the Sirimavo-Gandhi Agreement, 1974.

HINDU MIGRANTS PROTEST OUTSIDE KEJRIWAL'S RESIDENCE

New Delhi: Scores of Hindu migrants from Afghanistan and Pakistan, on Thursday, protested in front of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence over his statements on the recently notified CAA. Thousands of Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan and Afghanistan reside in the national capital. Carrying placards and raising slogans against Kejriwal, the protesters demanded an apology. They said that his statement is wrong and against the Hindu community.

Meanwhile, police have barricaded the area near the CM's house as protesters did not have permission to protest.

On Wednesday, Kejriwal held a press conference and opposed the law. He said that BJP has implemented CAA to draw benefits from it in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Kejriwal expressed concern that millions of people will come from neighbouring countries, leading to chaos in the system here.

MP govt didn't stop any beneficiary scheme in last three months: CM Mohan Yadav

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Thursday made it clear that his government has not stopped any schemes introduced by the previous governments. Mohan Yadav also claimed that the state government has not faced a shortage of funds since he took over as the chief minister.

CM Yadav made this statement while chairing the cabinet, ending speculations that his government was planning to stop some public beneficiary schemes introduced during former CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan's regime. "No scheme has been stopped, and there is no shortage of revenue to run the public beneficiary schemes and development



projects. The government has adequate revenue resources," CM Yadav said. Ever since CM Yadav took over charge of the office, there have been speculations that some flagship schemes introduced by Shivraj Singh Chouhan may be stopped. On Wednesday, former CM Chouhan, addressing a public rally in Sehore, had appealed to his successor to continue the public beneficiary schemes. CM Yadav was also present on stage when Shivraj Singh Chouhan made

this statement. Meanwhile, The BJP, in its second list on Wednesday, announced the names of candidates for the remaining five parliamentary constituencies of Madhya Pradesh. With this, the party has declared its candidates on all 29 Lok Sabha seats in the state for the upcoming polls. After the announcement by the party's central leadership, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said that the state BJP is prepared to make a clean sweep. Chief Minister Yadav said that the party workers under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi are full of energy. Addressing party workers in Indore, the Chief Minister said that Congress leaders are "running away from contesting the election, fearing defeat".

CAA WILL NEVER BE TAKEN BACK": AMIT SHAH

New Delhi: Days after the Centre notified the Citizenship Amendment Act, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the law will never be taken back and the BJP-led government will never compromise with it. "This is our sovereign right to ensure Indian citizenship in our country. We will never compromise on it and CAA will never be taken back," he said. Asked about the Opposition bloc INDIA, specifically a Congress leader saying that they would repeal the law when they come to power, the Home Minister said that even the Opposition is aware it has bleak chances of coming to power. "Even the INDI alliance knows that it will not come into power. CAA has been brought by the BJP and the Narendra Modi-led government. It is impossible to repeal it. We will spread awareness about it in the whole nation so that those who want to repeal it do not get a place," Shah said. The Union Minister dismissed criticism that the "CAA is unconstitutional", stating that it does not violate the constitutional provisions.

Election Commission uploads SBI data on Electoral Bonds on its website

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Thursday announced that it has uploaded, on its website, the data on Electoral Bonds provided by the State Bank of India. The ECI said in a statement that the data has been uploaded on its website as received from the SBI on an "as is where is basis". The data as received from the SBI can be accessed at:

<https://www.eci.gov.in/candidate-political-party> The data has been provided by the SBI in two parts. Part 1, which covers 337 pages, mentions the names of the companies and the amount of each Electoral Bond that these companies have purchased from the SBI. Part 2, which runs into 426 pages, contains the names of the political parties that have received the bonds and the date of encashment of each bond.

PETROL, DIESEL PRICES CUT BY RS 2 ACROSS INDIA

New Delhi: Petrol and diesel across India will be cheaper by around Rs 2 per litre from early on Friday as the oil marketing companies have revised prices, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry announced on Thursday. "Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have informed that they have revised Petrol and Diesel Prices across the country. New prices would be effective from 15th March 2024, 06:00 AM", the Ministry said in a post on X. According to graphs shared by the Ministry, petrol will now cost Rs 94.72 per litre in Delhi, against the present price of Rs 96.72 per litre, and diesel will cost Rs 87.62 against Rs 89.72. In Mumbai, petrol will now sell for Rs 104.21 per litre, against Rs 106.31, and diesel for Rs 92.15 against Rs 94.27. Similarly, in Kolkata, petrol will cost Rs 103.94 per litre against Rs 106.03 and diesel, Rs 90.76 against Rs 92.76, and in Chennai, petrol will cost Rs 100.75, against the present price of Rs 102.63, and diesel, Rs 92.34 against Rs 94.24.

Most axed BJP MPs bow to party's will; Dy CM Fadnavis douses fire in Mumbai North

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

After the BJP dropped four sitting MPs and replaced one for the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls, most leaders seem to have accepted the party's decision, however, Deputy Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis, had to rush to the home of one MP in a firefighting operation late on Wednesday night. Amid reports that the veteran two-time Mumbai North MP, Gopal C. Shetty, was fuming after he was dropped in favour of Union Minister Piyush Goyal - attempting his Lok Sabha debut - Dy CM Fadnavis dropped in at his home in Borivali on Wednesday night to soothe the ruffled feathers. Dy CM Fadnavis has reportedly assured the dejected MP that he will be treated in a dignified manner in future party endeavours and Gopal C. Shetty is understood to have reluctantly acquiesced, local party leaders said, ruling out the possibility of any revolt. Similarly, two-time Beed MP, Dr Pritam G. Munde, has been ignored in favour of her



sister and BJP National Secretary, Pankaja G. Munde, though the former has not yet made any defiant remarks. The two leaders are the daughters of former Union Minister and ex-Dy CM Gopinath Munde, who died in a road crash 10 years ago in New Delhi. There is speculation that Dr. Pritam Munde may be given some other plum responsibility later. One-time MP from Mumbai North East, Manoj K. Kotak, has been removed in favour of Mihir Kotecha, disappointing his supporters.

However, after the initial dejection, the Mumbai North East MP quickly concurred with the party's decision and thanked Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, BJP President, JP Nadda and the people of his constituency for giving him the opportunity to serve the masses. He promised to work as per the party's directives. After the initial shock subsided, sitting Jalgaon MP, Unmesh B. Patil, also accepted the BJP's move to nominate its leader Smita Wagh. He highlighted his contributions to building the party in the region and promised to continue in the same vein. In view of the poor health of four-time Akola MP, Sanjay Dhotre, the BJP has decided to nominate his son, Anup S. Dhotre for the seat, cashing in on the goodwill the family enjoys there. A newcomer has been named for the Pune Lok Sabha seat that fell vacant after the death of sitting MP, Girish B. Bapat in March 2023, and it will now be contested by state BJP Secretary and ex-Pune Mayor Murlidhar K. Mohol.

Panel on 'One-nation, One-poll' submits report to President, pitches for simultaneous elections

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A committee led by former President Ram Nath Kovind, submitted its detailed report on 'One-nation, One election' to President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Thursday. The comprehensive report has strongly advocated for holding the national and state polls simultaneously. The report, running into thousands of pages has been prepared after extensive consultations from various stakeholders, former election commissioners and constitutional experts. The committee to study the possibility of holding simultaneous polls was formed on September 3, 2023. Its members comprised of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, former Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Ghulam Nabi Azad, senior advocate Harish Salve and more. Notably, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has time and again underlined the need for clubbing the national and state elections together to save huge expenses and also utilise the time for better governance. 'One-nation, One-election' was also one of the major poll planks of the BJP in the 2019 Parliamentary elections.



MAMATA BANERJEE SUFFERS 'MAJOR' INJURY, RUSHED TO HOSPITAL: TMC

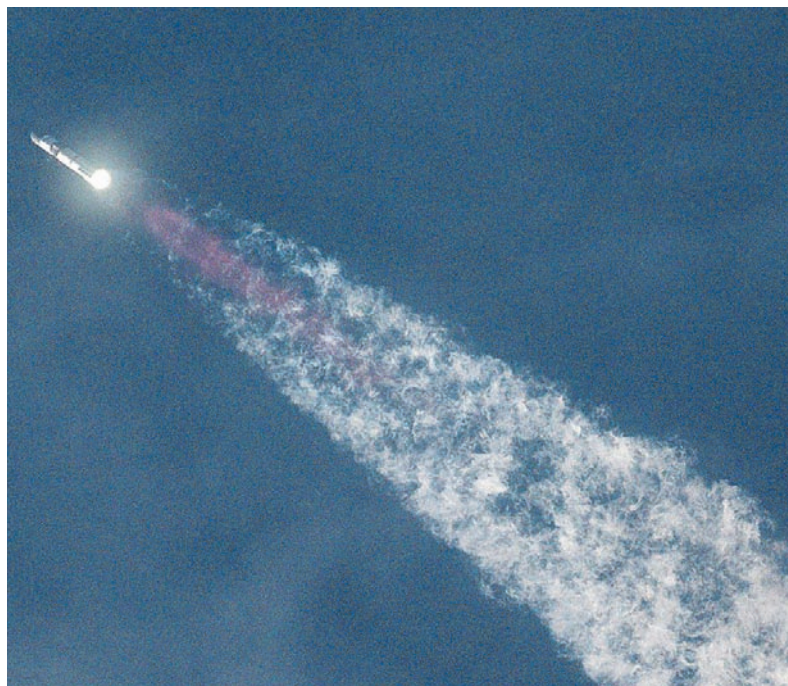


Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was hospitalised on Thursday evening after she reportedly slipped at her home in South Kolkata and injured her forehead, the Trinamool Congress said. As per the information shared by the party, the Chief Minister tripped while taking a walk at her residence in Kalighat on Thursday evening. The Trinamool confirmed the news on its official X handle, saying: "Our chairperson @MamataOfficial sustained a major injury. Please keep her in your prayers." The social media cell of the Trinamool also released a photograph in which the Chief Minister could be seen bleeding from her forehead. As per sources, CM Banerjee has been admitted to the state-run S.S.K.M. Medical College & Hospital where a team of doctors is examining her. The wound, some party insiders claimed, is quite deep.

SpaceX's Starship, World's Most Powerful Rocket, Lifts Off For Test Flight

Boca Chica | Agencies

The world's most powerful rocket Starship successfully blasted on its third test flight Thursday, in a live-streamed event watched by two million people. Lift-off from SpaceX's Starbase in southeast Texas came around 8:25 am local time (1325 GMT). The mega-rocket is vital to NASA's plans for landing astronauts on the Moon later this decade -- and Elon Musk's hopes of eventually colonizing Mars. Two previous attempts have ended in spectacular explosions, though that's not necessarily a bad thing: The company has adopted a rapid trial-and-error approach to accelerate development, and the strategy has brought success in the past. When the two stages of Starship are combined, the rocket stands 397 feet (121 meters) tall -- beating the Statue of Liberty by a comfortable 90 feet. Its Super Heavy Booster produces 16.7 million pounds (74.3 Meganewtons) of thrust, almost double that of the world's second most powerful rocket, NASA's Space Launch System (SLS) -- though the latter is now certified, while Starship is still a prototype. Starship's third launch test in its fully stacked configuration is set to be its most ambitious yet. Objectives include opening and clos-



ing Starship's payload door to test its ability to deliver satellites and other cargo into space. SpaceX also aims to re-light the ship's engines in space, and perform an onboard test that will help pave the way for future Starships to refuel one another in orbit. Starship's planned trajectory sees it fly halfway around the globe, brake in the atmosphere, then freefall to the Indian Ocean, just over an hour after launch, and probably break up and explode on impact. Soft splashdowns are planned for future tests. SpaceX has been developing prototypes of Starship since 2018, and early tests involved short hops of just the upper stage, which is also referred to as Starship.

Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, Gyanesh Kumar appointed election commissioners

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led three-member committee on Thursday picked bureaucrats Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu as election commissioners. Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury shared this information with the media after the meeting. The decision comes days after the resignation of Election Commissioner Arun Goel ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. The selection panel, which zeroed in on Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Gyanesh Kumar, includes the Prime Minister, the leader of the Opposition, and a designated Union Cabinet minister. Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is on the three-member panel in capacity as the opposition member. Besides the Prime Minister and the Congress leader, Union Home Minister Amit Shah attended the meeting. The Congress leader, however, hit out at the Centre over the law that replaced the Chief Justice of India by a Union Minister on the selection committee. "The Chief Justice of India should have been on this committee," he said. The Congress leader also said that the law brought last year had reduced the meeting to a mere "formality". "The government is in the majority on the panel. What they want happens," said Chowdhury. The Congress leader said he was given 212 names for scrutiny last night. "I reached Delhi last night and the meeting was today at noon. I was given 212 names, how can someone examine so many candidates in a day? Then, I was given six shortlisted names before the meeting. The majority is with them, so they chose the candidates they wanted," he said.



MAN HELD IN RAJASTHAN FOR SHARING DEFENCE INFO WITH FEMALE HANDLERS IN PAK

Jaipur | Agencies

An intelligence team of the Rajasthan Police on Thursday arrested a person named Anand Raj Singh for allegedly collecting defence information of strategic importance and sharing it with three female handlers in the Pakistani intelligence setup via social media.

The accused civilian ran a uniform store outside the Suratgarh Army Cantt, officials said.

Additional Director General of Police Intelligence Sanjay Agarwal said that the espionage activities carried out by Pakistani intelligence agencies are being continuously monitored by Rajasthan Intelligence. From the reliable intelligence collected, it was found that a young man named Anand Raj, who runs a uniform store outside Suratgarh Army Cantt, was in constant touch with three female handlers of the Pakistani intelligence setup through social media.

Agarwal said that Anand Raj was in contact with military personnel through his uniform store near the Army complex. When the activities of Anand Raj were closely monitored by the Intelligence Jaipur team, it was found that he was collecting information of strategic importance and sending it to the three female handlers.

In fact, Anand Raj had left the uniform store for some time and was working in a factory in Behror. Even during this time, he was in constant touch with the female handlers of the Pakistani intelligence agency and was getting important and con-



fidential information of the Army from his sources which he shared with the female Pakistani agents. He also demanded money in return for sending confidential information.

Pakistani intelligence keeps trying to obtain confidential information about the Indian army by targeting military personnel as well as civilians working around the complex. For this, social media accounts operated on Indian mobile numbers are used by female handlers who honey-trap military

personnel and persons having information about the army. Additional Director General Agarwal said that when the activities of Anand Raj aroused suspicion, technical intelligence was obtained through joint interrogation by all the security agencies. Based on the evidence found after the interrogation and technical analysis of the mobile phone used by him, a case was registered against Raj under the Secrets Act at the Special Police Station, Jaipur and he was arrested.

'Rahul aur Akhilesh ki khaatir' goes the INDIA bloc song for joint LS poll campaign in UP

Lucknow | Agencies

Dilli mein pravesh ki khaatir, Rahul aur Akhilesh ki khaatir' goes the new election song that will now be jointly used in the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress Lok Sabha poll campaign in Uttar Pradesh.

With the two constituents of the INDIA bloc in Uttar Pradesh having finalised their seat share, the SP and Congress are now preparing for a coordinated poll campaign.

The election song goes thus, "Gathbandhan hai, gathbandhan hai. Yeh INDIA ka gathbandhan hai! Dilli mein pravesh ki khaatir, Rahul aur Akhilesh ki khaatir, Samvidhaan bachana hai toh, vote karo is desh ki khaatir."

The video version of the song includes clips from the joint show that SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi put up in Agra on February 25 when the former CM joined the former Congress President's yatra in Taj city.

The four-minute-long song's opening lines call for voting the INDIA alliance to power at the Centre for the sake of the Constitution, the country and for the sake of the two leaders Akhilesh Yadav and Rahul Gandhi.

According to sources, the Congress is working on another song that goes something like this, "Samvidhaan aur loktantra ko bachana hai, phir se janata ka raaj laana hai; Dalit-Pichhdon ki ladai; INDIA gathbandhan aur hum ladengey bhai (We have to save the Constitution and Democracy. We have to



bring back the rule of the people. The INDIA bloc and we, will fight the battle of the Dalits and Backward Classes)."

If this song is also approved, then the two election jingles will be played at the joint rallies, roadshows and other campaigns of the alliance leaders in days to come.

Both, the SP and the Congress are working overtime to ease tensions between their cadres and put up a united show in the elections. In 2017, the SP and Congress had a lot of high-profile campaigns with catchy tag lines like "UP ke ladke" referring to Rahul and Akhilesh, but the two parties did not coordinate well at the booth level. This time, the SP and Congress have resolved to work concertedly at the booth level.

Seat-sharing formula, cabinet expansion to be decided soon: Nitish Kumar

Patna | Agencies

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said on Thursday that seat-sharing talks of the NDA and the cabinet expansion of his government will take place soon.

When asked about the seat-sharing formula of the NDA and the cabinet expansion of his government, Kumar said: "Seat sharing formula and cabinet expansion will soon take place here. Don't worry about it. You may get the news in the evening (Thursday evening). We are working on it."

Nitish Kumar came to the Bihar assembly to collect the certificate of MLC on Thursday. All 11 candidates who had filed the nomination for the MLC election were elected unopposed. The



voting did not take place as only 11 candidates had filed the nominations for 11 MLC posts. Six candidates of the NDA and five candidates of the Mahagathbandhan were elected.

Besides Nitish Kumar, Abdul Bari Siddiqui (RJD), Mangal Pandey (BJP), Khalid Anwar (JD-U), Shashi Yadav

(CPI ML), Urmila Thakur (RJD), Syed Faisal Ali (RJD), Lal Mohan Gupta (BJP), Anamika Singh Patel (BJP) and Santosh Kumar Suman (HAM-S) collected their certificates. In the absence of Rabri Devi (RJD), Bhola Yadav, RJD national general secretary, collected her certificate.

'PEHLA VOTE MODI KO' IS BJP'S DIGITAL CAMPAIGN TO WOO YOUNG & FIRST-TIME VOTERS

New Delhi: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday launched a digital campaign titled 'Pehla Vote Modi Ko' with an aim to reach out to the youth and first-time voters and win their support for the upcoming 2024 Parliamentary elections.

A dedicated web portal was launched, where first-time voters could register themselves and take a pledge for extending support to Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government for its third term. Along with this, many youth-centric campaign videos have also been released to strike a chord with them on issues like education, health and jobs. Through the youth-focused digital campaign, the party has sought to lure and persuade first-time voters. It is hoping to build connections with first-time voters in every corner of the country and win over their support in re-electing PM Modi-led government for the third term. Through this digital campaign, the party is highlighting the work done by PM Modi-led government in the last 10 years.

Delhi HC upholds order directing Bloomberg to remove defamatory article against ZEE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Thursday upheld a trial court's order directing Bloomberg Television Production Services India Pvt Ltd (Bloomberg) to take down a defamatory article dated February 21 against ZEE Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEE) relating to the corporate governance and business operations of the latter.

Earlier in a relief to ZEE, Additional District Judge (ADJ) Harjot Singh Bhalla directed Bloomberg to take down the defamatory article from its platform within one week of receipt of the order.

Last week, Bloomberg had moved the high court against the ADJ's order. Justice Shalinder Kaur, who presided over the case, dismissed Bloomberg's appeal and granted three days to comply with the directions of the ADJ. The trial court had restrained



Bloomberg from posting, circulating, or publishing the article on any online or offline platform till the next date of hearing.

ZEE, in its suit, argued that the Bloomberg article, which mentioned details relating to the corporate governance and business operations of ZEE, was inaccurate and led to a 15 per cent drop in the company's share price, eroding investor wealth.

It said the "false and factually incorrect" article was published with a pre-meditated and mala fide intention to defame the company.

The article, it claimed, incorrectly published that the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has found a \$241 million accounting issue in the company, whereas there is no such order from the mentioned regulator.

PM MODI LAYS FOUNDATION OF DELHI METRO'S TWO NEW CORRIDORS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday laid the foundation stone of two additional corridors of Delhi Metro's Phase 4.

The new corridors, connecting Inderlok to Indraprastha and Lajpat Nagar to Saket G-Block, will together be more than 20 km long and help improve connectivity and reduce traffic congestion.

"These two additional corridors, connecting Inderlok to Indraprastha and Lajpat Nagar to Saket G Block, are gifts for Delhi people. I congratulate all," the PM said.

During the event at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, PM Modi also engaged with recipients of the PM SVANidhi scheme.

He expressed gratitude to street vendors, acknowledging their vital role in society, as was especially evident during the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Union Urban Development Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, who was also present, said that around 945 km of metro rail network is opera-



tional across the country.

"Around 65 to 70 lakh people travel in the Delhi Metro daily. These two corridors will be constructed at the cost of Rs 8,400 crore," he said, adding that around 2.5 lakh people will benefit from this daily.

"I thank PM Modi that you are dedicating the project to the people of Delhi and this is one more step towards PM Modi's vision for 'Viksit Bharat,'" Puri said.

The development of these corridors was cleared on Wednesday by the Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister. The Inderlok-Indraprastha corridor will be an

extension of the Green Line and will provide interchange with the Red, Yellow, Airport Line, Magenta, Violet, and Blue Lines, while the Lajpat Nagar-Saket G Block corridor will connect the Silver, Magenta, Pink, and Violet Lines.

The Lajpat Nagar-Saket G Block corridor will be entirely elevated and will have eight stations -- Lajpat Nagar, Andrews Ganj, Greater Kailash-1, Chirag Delhi, Pushpa Bhawan, Saket District Centre, Pushp Vihar, and Saket G Block.

The Inderlok-Indraprastha corridor will have 11.35 km of underground lines and 1.03 km of elevated lines

and comprise 10 stations -- Inderlok, Daya Basti, Sarai Rohilla, Ajmal Khan Park, Nabi Karim, New Delhi, LNJP Hospital, Delhi Gate, Delhi Sachivalaya, and Indraprastha.

It will provide enhanced connectivity to the Bahadurgarh region of Haryana as commuters from these areas can travel on the Green Line to directly reach Indraprastha and various other areas of central and east Delhi. Eight new interchange stations will come up on these corridors at Inderlok, Nabi Karim, New Delhi, Delhi Gate, Indraprastha, Lajpat Nagar, Chirag Dilli, and Saket G Block, and significantly improve the interconnectivity among all the operational lines of the Delhi Metro network.

The Delhi Metro is already constructing a network of 65 km as part of its fourth phase. These new corridors are expected to be completed, in stages, by March 2026.

Presently, the DMRC operates a network of 391 km consisting of 286 stations. The Delhi Metro is now one of the fastest-growing Metro networks in the world.

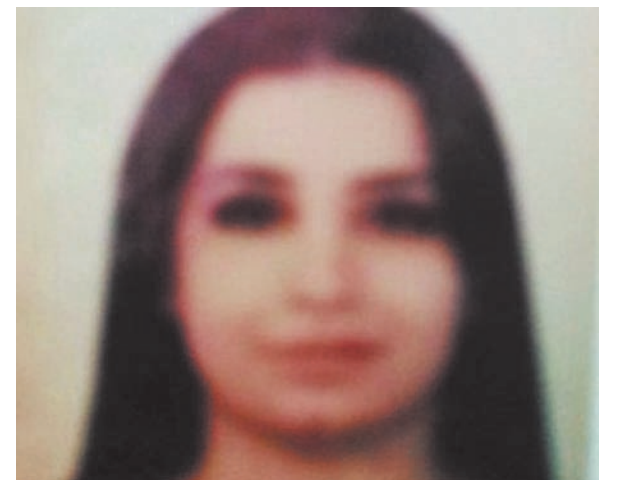
Uzbek woman found murdered in Bengaluru hotel

Bengaluru | Agencies

A woman from Uzbekistan was found murdered in a hotel room in Bengaluru, police said on Thursday.

The deceased was identified as Zareena. According to police, the woman had come to Bengaluru on a tourist visa four days ago and stayed at the hotel near BDA Bridge in Seshadripuram area.

The hotel staff were alerted by one of Zareena's friends over the phone to check on her at 10.30 p.m. on Wednesday. The staff knocked the door of the room for a long time, but there was no response. When the room was opened using a master key, the staff found Zareena's dead body lying on the floor with her face covered with blood. Immediately, the police



were informed. Preliminary investigations suggested that the Uzbek woman had been murdered. Police stated that Zareena was punched on her face as injury marks were found on her body.

The police said, one Rahul Kumar had booked the room

for Zareena till March 16.

The police are suspecting that she was strangled to death. Hotel Manager Gaurav Kumar Singh lodged a police complaint in connection with the case. The police have taken up further investigation.

Jammu-Srinagar highway blocked due to landslides

Srinagar | Agencies

The strategic Srinagar-Jammu national highway was closed for traffic on Thursday due to landslides at different places in the Ramban district.

"Fresh landslides have hit the highway at Dalwas, Cafeteria Morh and some other places. Clearance operation is going on. The highway is closed for traffic and travellers are advised to contact our control rooms in Jammu and Srinagar before undertaking the journey", officials said. The road remained open for two-way traffic on Wednesday. All essential supplies of life are routed into the Valley through the Jammu-Srinagar highway and the temporary blockades of this highway often result in short-



ages of essentials in Kashmir. Meanwhile, Srinagar-Leh, Mughal Road, Sathan-Kishtwar road and Doda-Chamba road are still closed for traffic. The Meteorological (MeT) Department on Thursday forecast generally dry weather in J&K till March 20. "Generally dry weather is expected in J&K till March 20 after which another wet spell is likely to occur between

March 22 and March 24", an official of the department said. Srinagar had 4, Gulmarg minus 4.8 and Pahalgam minus 1.3 as the minimum temperature.

Leh town in Ladakh region had minus 3, Kargil minus 4.4 and Drass minus 6.7 as the minimum temperature.

Jammu city had 13.5, Katra 8.6, Batote 2.2, Bhaderwah 3.6 and Banihal 3 as the minimum temperature.

Farmers' mahapanchayat in Delhi: Heavy security deployed, traffic advisory issued

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In view of farmers' mahapanchayat at the Ramlika ground in the national capital on Thursday, several companies of security agencies, including police, RAF, SSB have been deployed across the city to maintain law and order situation.

Deputy Commissioner Police (Central) M. Harsha Vardhan said that they had given the NOC to farmers after they gave a written assurance for peaceful mahapanchayat. "We have taken in written from farmers that the gathering will not exceed more 5,500 and the mahapanchayat will be conducted in a peaceful manner," said the DCP.

However, the DCP said that they are monitoring social media and heavy security deployment has been arranged in central Delhi.

The officer said that they are in contact with senior traffic officials to ensure smooth flow of traffic in the central



Delhi area. The Delhi Traffic Police issued an advisory alerting the commuters about traffic regulations and routes diverted. According to the traffic advisory, on Thursday, movement of general traffic will be regulated from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Jawahar Lal Nehru

Marg, Barakhamba Road, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, Tolstoy Marg, Asaf Ali Road, Jai Singh Road, Swami Vivekanand Marg, Sansad Marg, Netaji Subhash Marg, Baba Kharag Singh Marg, Minto Road, Ashoka Road, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh flyover,

Connaught Circus, Bhavbhuti Marg, DDU Marg and Chaman Lal Marg.

"Traffic diversion may be imposed from 6 a.m. on Delhi Gate, Mir Dard Chowk, Ajmeri Gate Chowk, Guru Nanak Chowk, Kamla Market road, Paharganj Chowk, roundabout Jhandewalan, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh flyover from Barakhamba Road to Guru Nanak Chowk, Janpath Road, Tolstoy Marg crossing, KG Marg crossing and roundabout GPO," read the advisory. The traffic cops further requested commuters to cooperate by avoiding or bypassing the above-mentioned roads, if possible, and by making maximum use of public transport, especially Metro services.

"General public is advised to keep sufficient time at hand while planning road journeys through the diverted routes. People who are going towards ISBT, Railway Station, or Airport are advised to carefully plan their travel with sufficient time at hand," said a senior traffic police official.



SC bars Ajit Pawar from using Sharad Pawar's name, iconic 'Clock' symbol

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

The Supreme Court on Thursday raised eyebrows on the Ajit Pawar faction - which has been recognised by the Election Commission as the "real" NCP - using the name and photograph of veteran leader and party founder Sharad Pawar.

"Why are you (Ajit Pawar) using his photograph? Go ahead with your own photographs. Why are you riding on his back?" asked a Bench presided over by Justice Surya Kant.

Responding, Senior Advocate Maninder Singh, who appeared on behalf of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister, Ajit Pawar, submitted that the party was not doing it and the respondent would file a proper reply to the claims made by the other side.

At this, the Bench, also comprising Justice KV Viswanathan said, "Who will stop? Who will take the responsibility? Give an undertaking to us that you will not allow any of your workers to use his photograph. Otherwise, we will be constrained to pass an order."

"We want a very categoric and unconditional undertaking from you that you (Ajit Pawar) will not use his name directly or indirectly," it added.

Agreeing with the suggestion put forth by the



apex court, Senior Advocate Singh highlighted that a mechanism was required to be evolved where falsely-engineered materials were not attributed to the Ajit Pawar faction.

Giving a two-day timeline to furnish an under-

taking, the apex court said, "You give a public notice with wide publicity and clarify everything. You disclose how you want to be known in the political world. Let there be a public notice. Then, you discipline your members. They are your members."

Appearing for veteran leader Sharad Pawar, Senior Advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, submitted that the 'clock' symbol is immeasurably intertwined with his name and the Ajit Pawar faction should not be allowed to use it as well.

The matter is directed to be listed next on March 19.

In an interim relief, the Supreme Court had directed that the Sharad Pawar side may continue to use the name 'Nationalist Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar' till further orders.

It had granted liberty to the senior Pawar to approach the Election Commission of India for allocation of the party symbol and directed the poll panel to allocate it within one week of receiving the application.

The NCP split in July last year, with a faction led by nephew Ajit Pawar rebelling against his uncle Sharad Pawar to join the ruling BJP-Shiv Sena government in Maharashtra.

Tata Technologies appoints Sukanya Sadasivan as Chief Operating Officer

Team Absolute | Pune

Global engineering and digital services company Tata Technologies on Thursday announced the appointment of Sukanya Sadasivan as its new Chief Operating Officer (COO), who will focus on strengthening delivery, practice and internal digital and IT systems.

With over three decades at Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) in various roles, COO Sadasivan brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to Tata Technologies, the company said in a statement.

She will report to Warren Harris, CEO and Managing Director, and the global delivery, practice organisation and digital information office teams will report to her.

"I am confident that her insight and guidance will help our team prepare for the next phase of our growth as we scale up our relationships with top R&D spenders across the world," said Harris.

As COO, Sadasivan will work with the delivery heads to charter the next phase of growth, enhance engagement margins and strengthen the company's people supply chain in collaboration with HR and the



resource management group.

"I am eager to leverage my experience to drive operational excellence, enhance customer engagement, and support the company's strategic growth initiatives," said Sadasivan.

She brings to Tata Technologies more than three decades of formidable knowledge and experience in the services sector.

INDIA alliance govt will work for protection, uplift of farmers: MVA partners at Maha rally



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) partners including the Congress, NCP(SP), Shiv Sena(UBT) and Left parties on Thursday stepped up their attack on the BJP-led government at the Centre, accusing it of being anti-farmer and assured that the INDIA bloc government would work for the protection and betterment of growers.

In a show of solidarity, former union agriculture minister and NCP(SP) chief, Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena(UBT) MP, Sanjay Raut, shared the dais with Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi, at the farmers' rally in the onion growing Chandwad area in Nashik District, during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra.

The three leaders, Sharad Pawar, Rahul Gandhi and Sanjay Raut in their speeches targeted the Centre for the present plight of farmers, rising inflation, unemployment and efforts to protect the

interests of a few billionaires and industrialists.

They urged the farmers present there, who are largely onion producers affected by the flip-flop export and import policy, to defeat the BJP-led Union government.

They promised that the INDIA alliance government would not only take care of the farmers' needs but would also act in their favour, particularly during a crisis.

NCP(SP) chief Pawar reminded the growers of the UPA's decision to waive off Rs 70,000 crore loans and claimed that the BJP-led government at the Centre had no sympathy or willingness to address the issues faced by the farmers.

He exhorted the farmers to unite to work for the defeat of the present rulers at the Centre for their neglect of the farmers, the working class and also for their failure to address burning issues such as burgeoning unemployment and price rise.

MP Sanjay Raut claimed that due to the Centre's

switch-on and switch-off export and import policies nearly 25 lakh onion growers had been hit and incurred losses to the tune of a whopping Rs 20,000 crore.

He claimed that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre was working in a dictatorial way. He added that while the onion growers from Maharashtra were suffering losses due to Centre's policies, the traders from Gujarat were making a fortune by procuring onion at throw-away prices from the farmers from the state. He warned that such a Gujarat pattern would not be tolerated.

In his speech, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi assured farmers of legalisation of the Minimum Support Price with the implementation of the MS Swaminathan formula; restructuring of the crop insurance scheme; withdrawal of GST currently recovered from farmers; loan waiver and protection of price of agricultural produce during export and import.

Maha Congress MLA Praniti Shinde rules out joining BJP, says party 'is in my blood'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amid talk of a few Congress legislators and office-bearers planning a move to the BJP ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Praniti Shinde, Congress MLA from Solapur district and the daughter of former Union Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde, on Thursday put at rest all speculation of her joining the BJP.

"The Congress is in my blood and I will continue to be in the party," she said.

The Congress may likely field Praniti from the Solapur reserved Lok Sabha seat against the BJP.

Praniti, who is currently accompanying party MP Rahul Gandhi in the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Maharashtra, accused the BJP of running a rumour-mongering campaign against her that she will desert the Congress to join it. "BJP is carrying out a rumour-mongering campaign that I will be their candidate from the Solapur constituency in the Lok Sabha elections. However, the Congress party is in my blood. My father is also in the Congress party," she said.



A three-time member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from the Solapur City Central Constituency, Praniti took a swipe at

the BJP saying "I do not fear the Enforcement Directorate (referring to action initiated against a couple of opposition leaders). I do not own any

industry or organisation. Good that my father has not ventured into it. Therefore, I will continue to speak against the BJP."

An invitee to the Congress party's Central Working Committee, Praniti said that she was the lone Congress legislator in Solapur as the rest of the legislators are from the BJP.

Unfortunately, BJP legislators do not utter a word against the government so I will continue to raise the issues faced by the citizens. 'At present, there is a government which is functioning in a dictatorial manner and therefore the legislators are scared to speak against it,' she commented.

Praniti's clarification came days after her father and Congress party veteran Sushilkumar Shinde had said that both he and his daughter had received offers to join the BJP even as the Maharashtra BJP refuted Shinde's claims. The BJP offered me and Praniti to shift to their side despite losing the Lok Sabha elections twice in 2014 and 2019.

"How can this happen? We have grown in the lap of our mother (Congress). At this age, how can I join another party?" he added.

59 booked for obscenity after bar raid in Navi Mumbai



Team Absolute | Thane

Around 59 persons were booked for alleged obscenity following a raid on a bar in Panvel area of Maharashtra, a Navi Mumbai Police official said on Thursday.

According to a news agency, the raid was carried out by a team of the Anti Human Trafficking Cell (AHTC) in Kogaon on Wednesday, the Panvel taluka police station official said.

"We booked 59 persons for obscenity. These include 26 female and 17 male waiters, the owner of the establishment and some customers. No arrest has been made in the case," he added.

Meanwhile, last month, as many as thirty-three persons were booked after a raid on a bar in Bhiwandi in Thane district, an official had said, reported news agency.

The raid was held bar in Bhiwandi's Rajnoli Naka on Friday night, the Narnoli police station official said.

"Thirty-three persons were booked. These include 12 women waiters, 17 customers and bar staff. They were charged with obscenity and other offences. No one has been arrested in the case," he said.

In another incident, the police have registered a case against 38 persons for obscenity and other violations following a raid at a bar in Bhiwandi town of Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Saturday.

Acting on a tip-off, the police raided a bar in the Anjur Phata area on Thursday night, the official said.

Waitresses were present in the bar, though the establishment did not have a licence to employ women, he said.

A case under section 294 (obscene acts and songs) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and Maharashtra Police Act has been registered against 38 persons, including customers and employees of the bar.

BMC to revamp 800-year old Mahim Fort - given as Portuguese dowry to British

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has planned out a major revamp of the over eight centuries old Mahim Fort and the adjoining Mahim beach promenade to boost tourism in the city, officials said here on Thursday.

The proposal was unveiled a month after the BMC's weekend 'Sea Food Plaza' run by Koli women self-help groups, proved to be a runaway hit with more than 40,000 foodies, families and fun-lovers flocking there on authentic fish delicacies.

In the new and first of its kind initiative, the BMC plans to restore and beautify the Mahim Fort and its precincts on the beach to lure more tourists, plus, the existing sea-front and the wall - resisting the Arabian Sea waves lapping there round the year, but lashing in the monsoon.

The dilapidated Fort, estimated to be constructed in 1140-1240, is owned by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and Mahikawati (now, Mahim) was once the capital of the then King Bhimdev in the 12th-13th centuries. 363 years ago when the present-day Mumbai was just a group of tiny isles, the Mahim Fort, along with the Mahim island, other territories making up the erstwhile Bombay, was given away as part of the dowry of the King of Portugal's daughter, Princess Catherine of Braganza to her husband, King Charles II of England, in May 1661.

After witnessing those days of glory, the Mahim Fort witnessed many wars and bloodshed, but post-Independence it was reduced to a sorry state with over 500 slums slowly encroaching inside the historical royal domain.

Almost all the shanties were shunted out of Mahim



Fort in the past couple of years, the dwellers were given alternative accommodation, and now the BMC plans to start the fort's renovation.

"We shall repair the broken parts of the fort, restore and strengthen the weakened walls and ceilings, the internal pathways, the bastions and other structures inside. The sediment on the foot-steps of the fort, old broken tiles and the cracking plaster shall be removed before the beautification works are taken up," said a BMC official.

The 130-metre long and 3-feet high protective wall built here to protect the beach and surroundings from the lashing sea-waves shall be repaired and strengthened wherever required, and beautified on three sides with lighting, seating areas, greenery, walkways plus public amenities like drinking water and toilets for the visitors.

The Sea Food Plaza created adjacent to the 130-metre-long and 10-metre-wide esplanade area will also be revamped, and since the Koli fisherfolk living nearby cannot venture into the Arabian Sea during the monsoon, arrangements shall be made to moor their fishing boats at

the promenade. The BMC has appointed an expert Vastu consultant to design the project and implement it, though the officials did not indicate a specific time-frame or the estimated costing for the same.

The official claimed that the Mahim Fort would be the first systematic restoration-cum-beautification project for any such ancient fortified structure taken up in the city, which offers a magnificent view of the Bandra Worli Sea Link and the upcoming Mumbai Coastal Road.

After this project, other forts dotting the country's commercial capital - each of which offers commanding views of the sea and hills - could follow suit.

Besides Mahim Fort, Mumbai has other imposing old citadels like the Fort George, Mazagaon Fort, Riwa Fort, Worli Fort, Sewri Fort, and Bandra Fort, dating to different glorious eras, but now most are in various stages of neglect and decay.

There are another dozen-odd big and small forts in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) areas, within a couple of hours' road journey, which are frequented by fort-lovers, trekkers and a few tourists.

BJP bets big on mobilising OBCs by nominating Pankaja Munde from Beed

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) decision to field Pankaja Munde, a former state minister and the daughter of senior party leader Gopinath Munde, from Beed in Maharashtra is a calculated move to lure OBC voters, who constitute 52 per cent of the state's population. Pankaja, who has a following among the Vanjari community, is being looked at as an emerging OBC leader. The BJP clearly sees Pankaja's potential to mobilise support from the OBC community, which will be crucial not just in Beed, but also in seven other Lok Sabha seats in the Marathwada region, where pro-Maratha activist Manoj Jarange-Patil held his protests demanding Maratha reservation, especially from the OBC quota. Pankaja had lost the 2019 Assembly elections from Parli in her home district Beed against cousin and united NCP member Dhananjay Munde. However, the political rivalry has now turned into a cordial relationship after the Ajit Pawar-led NCP joined the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena-BJP government. Dhananjay Munde is now the Agriculture Minister in the MahaYuti government. On the Maratha and OBC quota controversy, Pankaja was consistent with her stand that the government should provide reservations to the Maratha community, which will stand legal scrutiny. She had



strongly asserted that the bitterness between the Marathas and OBC communities should end. After her name went missing from the party's list of Rajya Sabha candidates from Maharashtra, Pankaja had said that she was waiting for a position, but no constituency was left for her after the formation of the 'triple-engine' government in Maharashtra. On whether she would like to go to the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha, she had replied that it was too late to choose.

"If my supporters in Beed and in the rest of Maharashtra see me in that position, it will be a big thing," she had said.



EDITOR'S SPECS

LS polls: BJP's new faces for Delhi

The BJP in its second list has named two fresh faces, Harsh Malhotra and Yogendra Chandolia, as candidates from East and Northwest Delhi seats in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Malhotra, nominated as the BJP candidate for the East Delhi parliamentary constituency on Wednesday, is a former Mayor of the erstwhile East Delhi Municipal Corporation. Similarly, Chandolia, who has secured the ticket for Northwest Delhi, is a former Mayor of the erstwhile North Delhi Municipal Corporation. With the announcement, the BJP aims to rejuvenate its campaign strategy and introduce new leadership to represent the national capital in the Parliament. In the last two Lok Sabha elections, the BJP had swept all seven Lok Sabha seats in the national capital, underscoring the party's dominance in the region. Earlier on March 3, the BJP revealed the names of five candidates from Delhi. The first list included the names of Bansuri Swaraj, Praveen Khandelwal, Manoj Tiwari, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, and Kamaljeet Sehrawat. Out of the seven candidates named, only Manoj Tiwari has secured a renomination, signalling a significant overhaul in the party's candidate selection process. Sitting East Delhi MP Gautam Gambhir has already announced his decision to not contest the upcoming elections. The sitting Delhi MPs who failed to clinch party tickets this time are Parvesh Verma, Ramesh Bidhuri, Meenakshi Lekhi, Hans Raj Hans, and Harsh Vardhan.

Congress experiments with 'generation change' in R'sthan, workers claim party will collapse

Archana Sharma

Has the Congress conceded a walkover in Jodhpur, the home constituency of former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot which he has been holding for over four decades?

This question is being discussed in political circles after the Congress fielded Karan Singh Uchiyada as its candidate for the Lok Sabha elections from Jodhpur to make it a Rajput Vs Rajput contest as the BJP has fielded its veteran leader Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

Vaibhav Gehlot, son of Ashok Gehlot, who contested the last Lok Sabha polls from Jodhpur, has been shifted to Jalore-Sirohi as the Congress candidate. He was fielded from Jodhpur on a Congress ticket in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, but was defeated by Shekhawat.

Varun Purohit, a senior Congress leader, who has worked in the NSUI, Youth Congress and the Kisan Congress in national/state level organisational positions, questioned the decision to give the ticket to a defeated candidate.

Speaking to IANS, he said, "The party has again fielded the sons of Ashok Gehlot and Madhya Pradesh's former CM Kamal Nath and this is what the party is calling generation change. Imagine after a few years, their grandsons will be getting the tickets too. Is this real generation change as the party claims? Where will the party workers go," he questioned.

If this is a generational change, then the party will collapse soon as there will be no party workers to go on any yatras in the future, be it a Nyay Yatra or any other yatra which the party plans to take out. This is because workers are not getting a chance to contest elections. Five out of six seats of the Rajya Sabha in Rajasthan have already been given to outsiders, he alleged adding, "Now, veterans' sons are being given tickets. What should the common worker do," he asked.

The party has also fielded its MLA Brijesh Ola, son of Sisram Ola who had served as MP and MLA in different terms from Jhunjhunu under the Congress government in Rajasthan. Brijesh Ola has also served as state minister during the Congress rule and is contesting from Jhunjhunu again. Another party worker told IANS that the party is experimenting a lot in these Lok Sabha polls as it failed to bag even one seat in Rajasthan in the last two Lok Sabha elections. It has not given a second chance even to the 2014 candidates and has fielded fresh faces all across to escape the threat of a three-time defeat looming large, he said adding, "Hence comes a change in seat for Vaibhav too."

In the list of 10 Congress candidates released so far, two Jats, two ST-SC, one Rajput, one Saini, one Yadav, and one Anjana (Patel) have been given tickets. However, Brahmins and Vaishyas



have not yet been included. Names are still yet to be revealed by the Congress for 15 seats.

Meanwhile, Laxmikant Bhardwaj, BJP spokesperson from Rajasthan said that this change of seat for the former CM's son will make no difference to the election result.

"In 2019, when Vaibhav was fielded from Jodhpur, he lost his booth even at a time when his father was the CM of the state. So no matter if Vaibhav contests from Jodhpur or Jalore-Sirohi, he will not win."

"During the Assembly polls of 2023, Ashok Gehlot's winning margin was reduced drastically, so he might be fearing that Vaibhav might lose with a bigger margin if he is fielded from Jodhpur, and hence the change of seat," he said adding "But Jalore-Sirohi is already a BJP stronghold so Vaibhav will face a major defeat. However, the Congress has a strong team comprising Sanyam Lodge and other loyalists of Ashok Gehlot due to which the former CM might have been convinced to shift his son there," he added.

Senior journalist Manish Godha said that it is clear that the Congress has given a walkover in Jodhpur. Also it shows how strong is the fear of defeat that the party preferred giving a walkover in Jodhpur. Ashok Gehlot should have contested from there, it being his traditional seat for over four decades. However, the party changed the seat of his son as well. All senior names like that of Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot are missing from the list; this shows a sense of fear, a feeling of giving up, it seems that the party has assumed defeat well in advance.

"It was earlier being said that seniors will be fielded but all the big names are missing from the list due to which the party workers are not motivated or enthused. It seems the party is fighting a lost battle," he added.

Meanwhile, Vaibhav Gehlot has thanked the Congress' top leadership on his social media post. He said, "Heartfelt gratitude to the top Congress leadership for nomi-

nating me as a candidate from Jalore-Sirohi parliamentary constituency in the Lok Sabha elections 2024. I assure you that I will maintain the trust expressed by you. With the blessings of the people of the area, I will ensure the victory of Congress in the area by serving the public day and night by the ideology of the party."

Vaibhav has carried pictures of Congress leaders including Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and Ashok Gehlot on his post. However, no other pictures of veteran state leaders like the PCC chief and the leader of the opposition have been carried which is further being questioned by party workers.

"This yet again reveals factionalism which is killing the party from within, hope it learns lessons for the future," said another Congress worker on condition of anonymity.

international

China urges US to stop 'suppression' of TikTok

Beijing | Agencies

China on Thursday called on the US to stop the "unreasonable suppression" of companies from other countries, following a US bill targeting the short-video app TikTok.

The US side should earnestly respect the market economy and the principle of fair competition, and provide an open, fair, just and non-discriminatory environment for enterprises from all countries, said He Yadong, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce, Xinhua news agency reported.

In a press briefing, He Yadong said relevant parties should strictly abide by Chinese laws and regulations, and China will take all necessary measures to resolutely safeguard its legitimate rights and interests.

Earlier this week, the US



House of Representatives approved a bill that would require TikTok to divest from its parent company, Chinese tech giant ByteDance, or face a nationwide ban in the US. The US House of Representatives on Wednesday passed legislation with an overwhelming bipartisan vote that could lead to the banning of the popular social media platform TikTok.

the bipartisan duo of Mike Gallagher, a Republican, and Raja Krishnamoorthi, a Democrat, who head the select committee on China as the chair and ranking member, respectively.

"Today we send a clear message that we will not tolerate our adversaries weaponizing our freedoms against us," said Cathy McMorris Rodgers, the Republican chair of the House Commerce Committee who advanced the TikTok bill.

The legislation requires TikTok's parent company ByteDance, which is based in China and is alleged to have links to the Chinese government, to divest its stake in the company within 180 days of the enactment of the law.

On June 29, 2020, TikTok, controlled by Chinese giant ByteDance, was banned in India.

South Korea says it does not recognise North Korea as nuclear state



Seoul | Agencies

South Korea on Thursday renewed its stance that it does not recognise North Korea as a nuclear state.

The foreign ministry made the comments in response to Russian President Vladimir Putin's remarks that the North Korea has its "own nuclear umbrella" and has not asked for Russia's help during a recent interview with Russia's RIA state news agency and Rossiya-1 state television, Yonhap news agency reported.

"There is no change in the government's position that it

does not recognise North Korea as a nuclear state," a foreign ministry official told reporters, when asked whether Vladimir Putin's remarks could be seen as recognition of the North as a de facto nuclear state.

The official said the government will seek diplomatic efforts for North Korea's denuclearisation in close cooperation with the US and other countries, as well as with the international community, amid escalating military threats from Pyongyang.

Details are awaited.

Vladimir Putin urges Russians to vote in upcoming presidential election



Moscow | Agencies

Russian President Vladimir Putin has encouraged country's citizens to participate in the upcoming presidential election, scheduled for March 15-17, local media reported.

"It is necessary to confirm our unity and determination to move forward together. Each of your votes is valuable and significant. Therefore, I urge you to exercise your right to vote in the next three days," Vladimir Putin said in a recorded video message, TASS news agency reported. He said polling stations will be open in every city, town and village, reminding Russians that they are one fam-

ily. "Dear friends! All of us, the multinational people of Russia, are one big family," he said.

"We will do everything exactly the way we want. Therefore, I ask you to come to the elections and express your civic and patriotic position, vote for your chosen candidate, for the successful future of our beloved Russia," Putin said, Xinhua news agency reported.

Four candidates will vie for the top position: Leonid Slutsky of the Liberal Democratic Party, Nikolai Kharitonov of the Communist Party, Vladislav Davankov of the New People Party, and Vladimir Putin, the incumbent and an independent candidate.

Everyone involved in Oct 7 massacre will be brought to justice: Israeli Defence Minister



Tel Aviv | Agencies

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant has said that everyone who was involved in the October 7, 2023, attack will be brought to justice. In a statement late Wednesday, the Israel Defense Minister said: "Everyone who was involved in the October 7 massacre will be brought to justice. Either we will eliminate them or we will put them on trial in Israel." He also said that there "won't be any safe place, not in Gaza, not outside of it or in any other Middle Eastern country. We will put them in their place".

Gallant issued the statement after his visit to the Gaza Strip on Wednesday. His statement is being seen as a clear indication that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has accelerated the search for senior Hamas leaders including Mohammed Deif and Yahya Sinwar, who are considered the masterminds of the October 7 attacks.

The remarks by Gallant came amid reports that several senior Hamas leaders including Ismael Haniyeh and Khalid Mashal are staying in Qatar.

Hamas will survive Israel's planned raids in Rafah: Hezbollah chief

Beirut | Agencies

Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has said that Israel will not be able to eliminate Hamas even if it enters Rafah, a local media outlet reported.

"You have failed to achieve any of the war's targets; even the Rafah operation will not offer you an image of victory. You will not be able to get rid of Hamas or the resistance," Nasrallah said on Wednesday on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, showing solidarity with Hamas, the Gaza-ruling Palestinian faction.

Nasrallah said that Israel had failed to achieve its "biggest goal" -- to eliminate Hamas at the beginning of the war. After nearly six months of war, Israelis are negotiating with Hamas through mediation, local TV channel al-Manar reported.

He claimed that Hamas is negotiating on behalf of all



Palestinian factions, and it aims to reach a halt to the Israeli aggression against Gaza and not only a ceasefire.

The Lebanon-Israel border has been witnessing increased tension since October 8, 2023, after Lebanese armed group Hezbollah fired dozens of rockets toward Israel in support of the Hamas attack on Israel the previous day, prompting Israel to respond by firing heavy artillery toward southeastern Lebanon.

Singapore creates 88,400 new jobs in 2023

Singapore | Agencies

Singapore's total employment grew 88,400 in 2023, including 83,500 for non-residents and 4,900 for residents, according to a labor market report released by the Ministry of Manpower ON Thursday.

The majority of the new employment for non-Singapore residents was in the construction and manufacturing sectors, and the resident employment growth was seen in higher-paying sectors such as financial services, Xinhua news agency reported.

The number of employed persons in Singapore exceeded 3.7 million as of December 2023, except for migrant domestic workers, according to the report.

The total retrenchment numbers in 2023 increased to 14,590 from 6,440 in 2022. The long-term unemployment rate held steady at 0.7 per cent.





AIR SERVICE TO TOURIST PLACES AND MAJOR CITIES IS OUR PRIORITY: CHIEF MINISTER DR. YADAV

Under PM Shri Religious Tourism Heli Service, access of devotees to the spiritual centers of Madhya Pradesh will be easy. Through this service, devotees, especially the elderly and disabled, will easily reach the two Jyotirlingas of the state, Ujjain and Omkareshwar and other religious places. Under the scheme there will be one twin engine helicopter and two single engine helicopters.

▶ LAUNCH OF PM SHRI TOURISM AIR SERVICE AND PM SHRI RELIGIOUS TOURISM HELI SERVICE. AFTER UJJAIN, OMKARESHWAR, AIR SERVICE WILL ALSO START FOR DATIA, MAIHAR, ORCHHA.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has said that Madhya Pradesh is a big province geographically. Transport facilities are available in the state by road and rail, along with this, the state government is now providing the facility to reach from one place to another in less time than by air. Expanding air service to religious tourism, other tourist places and big cities of the state is being done on priority. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav was addressing the program organized at the Government Airport, Bhopal on the occasion of the launch of PM Shri Tourism Air Service and PM Shri Religious Tourism Heli Service.



Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that God has special blessings on Madhya Pradesh. Mother Narmada originating from Amarkantak is the lifeline of Madhya Pradesh as well as Gujarat. On the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mother Narmada has made a remarkable contribution in providing energy and irrigation facilities to the country. With the air

service being started in the state, it will be possible to quickly transport people from one place to another for religious as well as business and administrative activities and in all kinds of circumstances. Our effort will be to build airstrips in all the districts and expand interstate air service. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that

after the air service from Indore to Mahakaleshwar and Mamleshwar (Omkareshwar), like Kedarnath and Yamunotri, helicopter service will be started for Datia, Maihar, Orchha etc. for darshan in a short time. Efforts will be made to expand air facilities to all the major religious places of the state. There is also a plan to expand air service to other places important from tourism point of view like Kanha, Bandhavgarh. Arrangements will be made to visit the existing pilgrimage sites in the state by linking the schemes run by the state government for religious pilgrimage with these schemes completely funded by the state government.

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav announced the launch of both the schemes. He launched both the schemes by pressing the button of the remote and flagged off two planes and a helicopter.

An MOU was signed between the Tourism Board and Jet Air Service (Flyola) organization for the operation of PM Shri Tourism Air Service. In the presence of Chief Minister Dr. Yadav, Additional Managing Director of Tourism Board Vivek Shrotriya and Managing Director of the organization M. Ram Ola exchanged views.

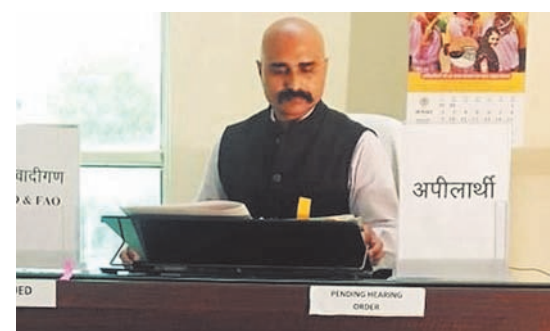
All clinic and hospitals under RTI

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Now under RTI one can get information related to registration and approval of operation of any clinic and hospital in the state within 30 days. In this important decision issued to the Health Department, Information Commissioner Rahul Singh said that health is a subject directly related to the public and giving this information will help in curbing illegally running hospitals and clinics.

Sunita Tiwari of Jabalpur had asked in RTI for complete documents related to the registration of Dr. Rajiv Jain, Star Hospital located at Malviya Chowk in Jabalpur for the year 2020 to 2021 and 2022. Sunita told in the online hearing that she did not receive the information required in the application. Sunita alleges that her daughter died due to medical negligence and the said hospital is being run illegally by Dr. Rajeev Jain.

But the Chief Medical and Health Officer of Jabalpur did not provide this information to Sunita Tiwari. On the first appeal of Sunita Tiwari, the Director of Health ordered the Chief Medical Officer to provide the information but despite this, no



information was provided to Sunita Tiwari. During the hearing, the Chief Medical Officer and Health Officer neither appeared before the Commission nor presented any reply.

Along with the order to bring the information of all the hospitals and clinics in the state under the RTI Act, Information Commissioner Rahul Singh said that the loss of life due to the massive fire in the private hospital of Jabalpur is in the cognizance of the Commission. In that case also, the hospital was being run by the private hospital disregarding the rules and regulations.

The Information Commissioner agreed that by providing information related to the registration of hospitals and hospitals, the system of operation of hospitals and hospitals will be transparent and will also

ensure accountability in the system as per the rules of the Health Department.

In the instructions issued to the Principal Secretary, Madhya Pradesh Government, Public Health and Family Welfare Department, Information Commissioner Singh has said that while making a copy of this order available to all the District Chief Medical and Health Officers of the state, he should direct all the officers that as soon as the RTI application is filed, the information about the hospital and hospital should be made available to the applicant within 30 days. The instructions issued by Singh made it clear that withholding such information under Sections 8 and 9 of the Act is illegal as it is not in accordance with the Act provisions.

Increase in monthly stipend of JUDA in Madhya Pradesh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Orders for approving increase in the monthly stipend of junior doctors of Government Medical Colleges in Madhya Pradesh have been issued by the Public Health and Medical Education Department.

Junior doctors of the state were registering a protest demanding increase in stipend and were preparing to go on strike. Meanwhile, the department issued orders to increase the stipend on Wednesday.

According to the order issued by the Public Health and Medical Education Department, the monthly stipend of Diploma and PG first year increased from Rs 69 thousand 115 to Rs 72 thousand 633, the monthly



stipend of Diploma and PG second year increased from Rs 71 thousand 241 to Rs 74 thousand. Monthly stipend of Rs 867, Super Specialty 1st, 2nd and 3rd year and PG 3rd year Rs 73 thousand 368 to Rs 77 thousand 102, Approval has been given to increase the monthly stipend of intern from Rs 12

thousand 760 to Rs 13 thousand 409, the monthly stipend of senior resident from Rs 80 thousand 811 to Rs 84 thousand 924 and the monthly stipend of junior resident from Rs 56 thousand 355 to Rs 59 thousand 223. This increase has been scheduled from April 1, 2023.

Formation of authority for development of Chitrakoot, amount of Rs 20 crore approved

Team Absolute | Bhopal

For the development of Chitrakoot, the Tapo Bhoomi of Lord Ram, the Madhya Pradesh government has decided to sanction an amount of Rs 20 crore along with the formation of Chitrakoot Development Authority. Along with this, ropeways will be built at four places in the state.

While giving information about the government's decision, State Urban Development Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya said that after the consecration of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya, there has been a huge increase in the number of tourists. Tourists also want to come to Chitrakoot in large numbers. Half of this place falls in Uttar Pradesh and the other half in Madhya Pradesh.

He said, Madhya Pradesh government has decided to set up a development authority keeping in



mind the development of Chitrakoot city and rural areas. Besides, the government has also approved an amount of Rs 20 crore. Giving information about the ropeway scheme of the Central Government, Vijayvargiya said that the Madhya Pradesh government has given approval to build ropeways at four places in Madhya Pradesh. Of these, one ropeway will be from Ujjain railway station to Mahakal Temple, apart from this, ropeways will also be built at three other places. This has been done keeping in mind the rush on special occasions to reach the religious places located on the hill.

Apart from this, the state government has also taken a big decision regarding the retired employees of the university. Now pension will be given on the basis of seventh pay scale, till now pension is given on the basis of sixth pay scale.

WORLD KIDNEY DAY CELEBRATED AT AIIMS BHOPAL



Team Absolute | Bhopal

On the occasion of World Kidney Day, the Pediatrics Department of AIIMS Bhopal hosted a significant program today, emphasizing the importance of kidney health awareness. The event was graced by Professor (Dr.) Ajai Singh, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal, who highlighted the critical need for widespread awareness regarding kidney health and timely treatment.

In his address, Professor Singh underscored the necessity of dispelling misconceptions surrounding kidney transplants and urged parents to seek timely treatment for their children. Emphasizing the role of awareness in preventing the need for transplants, he stressed the importance of early intervention in curing diseases.

Furthermore, Professor Singh urged the exploration of the role of AYUSH in chronic renal diseases, indicating a holistic approach towards kidney care. Earlier, Professor (Dr.) Shikha Malik, Head of the Department of Pediatrics, extended a warm welcome. Throughout the week leading

up to the event, various activities were organized, including national and undergraduate level quiz competitions, outreach programs in schools and colleges, and engaging competitions like fancy dress and drawing for children. Over 150 participants actively took part in these events. In a notable achievement,

the Pediatric Nephrology branch of AIIMS Bhopal, in collaboration with McGill University of Canada, has elevated its status from Level C to Level A under the Sister Renal Program of the International Society of Nephrology. Additionally, the branch has been recognized as a Fellowship Training Centre by the International Pediatric Nephrology Association.

The event concluded with Professor (Dr.) Ajai Singh felicitating the winning participants, marking a successful celebration of World Kidney Day and a significant step forward in promoting kidney health awareness at AIIMS Bhopal. On this occasion, a booklet named "Vrikankit" was also released which will have complete detail about the treatment given to the kidney patient.

WAR MEMORIAL LOCATED IN DRONACHAL WILL BE OPENED FOR GENERAL PUBLIC



Army General Officer Commanding Preetpal Singh pays courtesy call on Chief Minister Dr. Yadav Bhopal : Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav was paid a courtesy visit by Bhopal-based Army Strike Corps General Officer Commanding Preetpal Singh and Brigadier S.S. Chhillar at Samatva Bhawan. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav was presented a memento on behalf of Head Quarter 21 Kor. GOC Preetpal Singh informed Chief Minister Dr. Yadav that the War Memorial located at Dronachal will soon be opened for the general public. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav appreciated the prompt cooperation given by the Army during other disasters including the one at Harda. Colonel Vishal Ahuja was also present on the occasion.

Deputy Chief Minister Shukla gave instructions to make proposal for tunnel or four lane road in Chuhiya Valley

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla today conducted a comprehensive review of various road construction works in Rewa. He said that the construction of Shahdol Road should be completed soon. This is an important road connecting Rewa and Shahdol divisional headquarters. Immediate repairs should be made to the 300 meter damaged stretch of road in Chuhiya Valley. The Deputy Chief Minister gave instructions to prepare a proposal for construction of a three-lane tunnel in Chuhiya Valley or construction of a four-lane road in the valley.

The Deputy Chief Minister gave instructions to prepare the proposal for four-laning



of Rewa bypass on priority. The Deputy Chief Minister said that in the construction of Rewa to Shahdol road, permission from the Forest Department is required at many places. The proposals

have been submitted online. He instructed the Forest Department officials to take necessary action and issue permission quickly so that the construction of the road can be completed.

All Children to Receive Quality Education Aligned with Objectives of NEP: School Education Minister

Bhopal : School Education Minister Uday Pratap Singh has affirmed the successful implementation of the new education policy in Madhya Pradesh. Under this policy, every child in the state will receive quality education. School Education Minister Singh was addressing the parents present at the district headquarters today after inaugurating the online lottery for free admission in private schools under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act-2009 at the Mantralaya. The programme was also telecast live on the YouTube channel of the State Education Centre. The School Education Minister transferred approximately Rs. 137 crore for uniforms directly into the bank accounts of 33 lakh students across 30 districts. The occasion also marked the launch of the mobile app developed for the Ullas programme by the School Education Department.

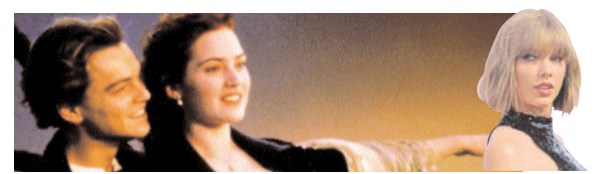
Addressing the programme, School Education Minister Singh said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is promoting new technology across the country through the Digital India programme. In this programme also, admission cards have been provided to about 1 lakh 25 thousand children in private schools using advanced technology. Director S. Dhanaraju said



that the online process has been started in the state from the year 2016-17. In this process, parents are being provided the facility of admission of their children in good private schools in their neighbourhood. Complete transparency has been maintained in the process.

Children got enrolled in private schools. It was told in the programme that this year one lakh 48 thousand children had done Aadhaar verification and submitted online applications. Of these, applications from 77 thousand 473 boys and 71 thousand 22 girls were received. 92 thousand 398 applications have been received for nursery classes, 42 thousand 509 for KG-1, 1712 for KG-2 and 11 thousand 876 applications have been received for Class-1. No fee was charged from these children for filling the form. After document verification, one lakh 24 thousand 386 children were found eligible. These children will be compulsorily given admission by 23rd March this year.

Ullas programme. It was told in the programme that the Ullas programme under Navbharat literacy is being conducted by the School Education Department. In this programme, selected persons are being made literate by organising special classes. For this, evaluation examination is being organised twice in the state. The app prepared will further expedite the programme.



Cardi B's tooth comes off after she chews on a hard bagel

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rapper Cardi B showed off her missing tooth after one of her veneers recently fell out. The Grammy-winning rapper showed off her missing tooth in a hilarious video shared on TikTok.

In the clip, Cardi struts around a picturesque outdoor pool in a high-fashion look as a teaser of her upcoming single 'Enough (Miami)' plays in the background and text on the screen reads, 'Wait till the end for a surprise,' reports 'People' magazine.

The video then cuts to Cardi filming herself while sitting in a chair, before she smiles to reveal the missing tooth.

As per 'People,' the rapper says in a stereotypically country accent, "How y'all doing m*****?"

She explained the ordeal in a separate post shared to her 'BG Secret Society' broadcast channel on Instagram, writing, "Why one of (my) veneers came out chewing on a hard a** bagel?"

Earlier this week, Cardi announced her new single 'Enough (Miami)' will be released on Friday. She also unveiled its sultry single artwork, which sees the 'Bodak Yellow' performer baring all as she lays nude atop a powder blue satin bench.

'Enough (Miami)' is set to come weeks after Cardi released 'Like What (Freestyle),' a one-off track that samples Missy Elliott's 1999 classic 'She's a B****'.

On Monday, the 'I Like It' star joined Madonna as the co-judge of her Celebration Tour's 'Vogue' ballroom segment during the last of five shows at the Kia Forum in Los Angeles.

Dua Lipa, Coldplay, SZA to headline Glastonbury 2024 music festival

Los Angeles | Agencies

The headliners for the 2024 edition of the Glastonbury music festival have been announced, and the names include Dua Lipa, Coldplay and SZA. The iconic British music festival is set to return to Somerset's Worthy Farm on June 26 and will go on to June 30. Dua Lipa will make her Pyramid Stage debut as the festival's Friday night headliner, on a bill also featuring Glastonbury veterans LCD Soundsystem and PJ Harvey, reports 'Variety'. The British rock band Coldplay will make their first Pyramid Stage appearance since 2016 on Saturday night, with the only European festival appearance slated for their ongoing world tour. With the appearance, the group, which previously held the joint headliner record with The Cure, will go one past and become the first act to headline Glastonbury five times.

As per 'Variety', Little Simz makes a return to Glastonbury to play the slot immediately before Coldplay. The Sunday night headliner is SZA making her Glastonbury debut. She will follow sets from Afrobeats star Burna Boy and Janelle Monáe. Also featured on Sunday is Shania Twain, who will make her first trip to Worthy Farm.

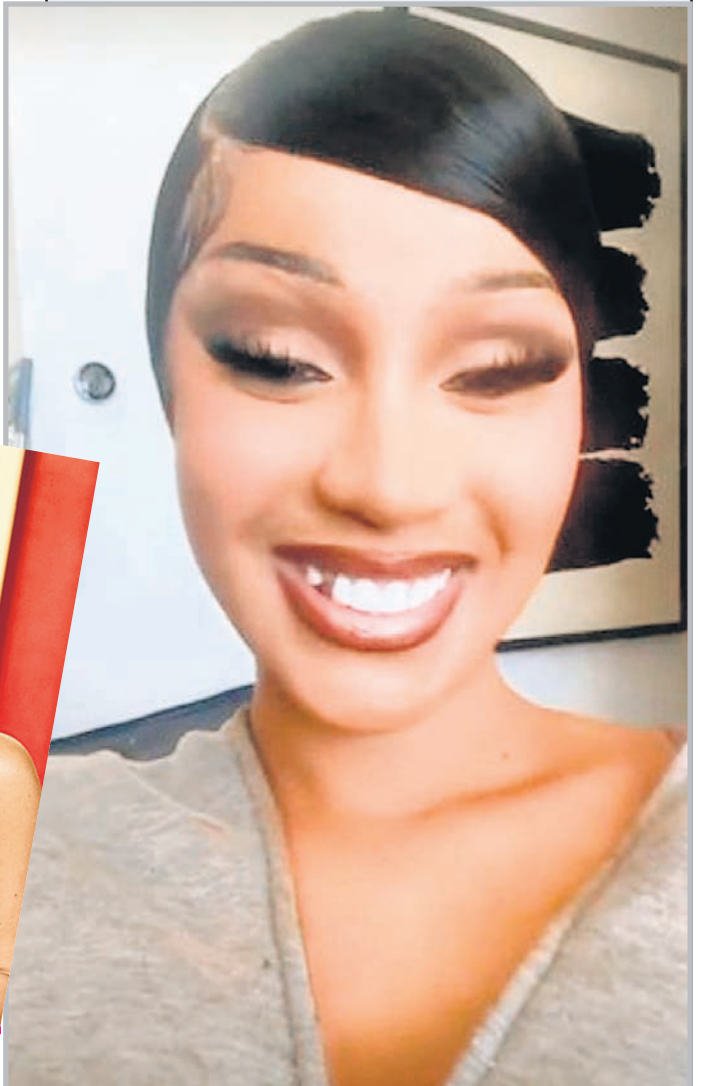
KIM KARDASHIAN & KANYE WEST'S WIFE BIANCA CENSORI SPOTTED TOGETHER

Los Angeles | Agencies

It looks like all is cordial between Kanye West, his wife, Bianca Censori, and his ex-wife, Kim Kardashian. Kim, 43, and Bianca, 29, were spotted standing next to each other at Ye's recent album listening party, according to a now-viral social media video. In the clip, the Kardashians star is seen enjoying the music while Ye's wife is spotted leaning on the barricade alongside her.

While it's unclear whether or not the women talked at the event, many social media users are pointing out that their hangout appeared amicable.

"Kim & ye getting they issues resolved [sic]," an X user tweeted on Wednesday, March 13. "The love of your life being cool w/ your soulmate >>" another chimed in. A separate person tweeted a photo of a person pointing to a sign that read "therapy" while writing in their post, "Y'all expecting them to be some sort of rivals need this." Kim and Bianca's apparently friendly hangout contradicts past rumors and reports, which claimed that the SKKN founder couldn't stand Bianca. Considering that the model has been spotted spending time with her husband's children on a few occasions suggests that the "Stronger" rapper, 46, and Kim have maintained some civility despite their past woes.



Sydney Sweeney distances herself from 'Madame Web' flop; 'was just hired as an actress'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Sydney Sweeney has talked about 'Madame Web' failing at the box-office.

"I was just hired as an actress in it, so I was just along for the ride for whatever was going to happen," Sweeney said in an interview with the Los Angeles Times, reports deadline.com.

The actress took a dig at the film, when she hosted 'Saturday Night Live' and said that the people may know her from the drama series 'Euphoria' or the film 'Anyone But You,' deadline.com.

"You definitely did not see me in 'Madame Web,'" she joked.

The Dakota Johnson-starrer 'Madame Web' reportedly opened to \$51.5M worldwide, way below the reported \$80M budget.

Dua Lipa unveils title of third album; it's 'Radical Optimism'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Dua Lipa has unveiled the title and cover art of her upcoming album 'Radical Optimism'.

The album, which is her third studio album, consists of 11 tracks, and is set to be released on May 3, reports

'People' magazine.

"A couple years ago, a friend introduced me to the term Radical Optimism. It's a concept that resonated with me, and I became more curious as I started to play with it and weave it into my life", Dua Lipa, 28, said in



a statement.

"It struck me - the idea of going through chaos gracefully and feeling like you can weather any storm."

The 'One Kiss' singer then teased various

genres she'll explore on the album.

Dua Lipa said, quoted by 'People', "At the same time, I found myself looking through the music history of psychedelia, trip hop, and Britpop. It has always felt so confidently optimistic to me, and that honesty and attitude is a feeling I took into my recording sessions."

Radical Optimism' has so far been preceded by two singles.

'Houdini', released in November 2023, featured electro-psychedelic elements and reached Number 11 on the Billboard Hot 100. Its follow-up, the disco-pop 'Training Season', dropped last month and hit Number 27 on the chart.

Dua Lipa recently performed both songs at the 2024 Grammy Awards last month, where her 'Barbie' soundtrack hit 'Dance the Night' was nominated for both song of the year and best song written for visual media.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Ella Rae Wise



Ranji Final: Mumbai ends eight-year drought to clinch 42nd title

Team Absolute | Mumbai
The eight-year Ranji Title drought ended for Mumbai as they beat Vidarbha by 169 runs on day 5 of the final to clinch their record-42nd championship title, here at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday.



leaving 290 runs needed off the last day in their 538-run chase.

Wadkar was the first wicket to fall on day five as he plumbed in front of the wicket by Kotian. The 102-run knock of Wadkar kept Vidarbha in the contest but after he got out it was all Mumbai's game.

However, their collapse in the next few overs put an end to Vidarbha's hopes of winning a third First-Class

title. With the ball, Tanush Kotian shone, taking four wickets, including Wadkar. Deshpande and Musheer Khan took two wickets each as shams Mulani and Kulkarni shared a wicket each. Fittingly, it was Kulkarni, the stalwart of Mumbai cricket, who delivered the final blow, bowling Umesh Yadav to seal victory and bid farewell to his beloved team in style. With his captain Ajinkya Rahane and

the adoring Wankhede crowd cheering him on, Kulkarni's emotional send-off marked the end of an era, as he departed as a true domestic legend, having played a pivotal role in Mumbai's cricketing legacy.

As Kulkarni passed the torch to the next generation of Mumbai's bowling attack, Deshpande emerged as a formidable force on the field, unleashing a barrage of around-the-wicket bouncers to bully Vidarbha's batsmen and pave the way for Mumbai's triumph. Alongside him, Mohit Avasthi, Mumbai's joint-highest wicket-taker of the season, stood as a testament to Mumbai's depth and talent, despite his absence due to injury in the final.

While the absence of Shreyas Iyer, sidelined with a back complaint for the second consecutive day, posed a challenge for Mumbai, it did not deter their quest for domestic dominance. With a blend of experience and youth, Mumbai reaffirmed their status as cricketing powerhouse, reclaiming the Ranji Trophy crown.

Shami returns to India post successful Achilles surgery

Team Absolute | New Delhi
Pace bowler Mohammad Shami has returned to India after undergoing successful surgery on his heel to repair his Achilles tendon at the United Kingdom (UK). Shami had to go for surgery to repair his Achilles tendon after getting injured during India's 2023 ODI World Cup campaign and has not played any form of cricket since the defeat in the final to Australia at the Narendra Modi Stadium back on November 19.



Shami shared pictures on his social media, informing his return to India from the UK and thanking fans for their support. "Grateful to be back in India after surgery. Feeling stronger and ready to

embrace this next chapter. Thank you to everyone for your support and love!" Shami shared on Instagram. Shami also missed the

subsequent T20I home series against Australia and also the tour of South Africa and the five-match Test series against England.

Indian Wells: Navarro stuns Sabalenka, Gauff enters quarters

Los Angeles | Agencies

American tennis sensation Emma Navarro defeated world number two Aryna Sabalenka 6-3 3-6 6-2 to secure her spot in ATP Masters 1000 quarter-final at the Paribas Open for the first time in her career.



Meanwhile, Coco Gauff celebrated her 20th birthday in style, dominating her opponent to advance with ease.

Navarro, known for her composed demeanor on the court, faced the formidable challenge of Sabalenka's powerful serve. However, she remained unfazed, capitalizing on four of her five break-point opportunities to clinch victory in windy conditions. The opening six games of the match were tight with neither player getting a break point chance until Navarro made the breakthrough to go 5-3 up after a string of errors from Sabalenka.

Despite Sabalenka's resurgence in the second set, Navarro maintained her composure, sealing the win with a crucial service hold and a fourth

break point conversion on match point. The victory is Navarro's best by ranking and boosted into a fourth quarterfinal on the season and first of her career at the WTA 1000 level. As if those milestones weren't enough to

underline just how good the Charleston native's 2024 season has been, she now leads the Hologic WTA Tour with 18 wins.

"It's a little bit unnatural for me to be in the spotlight and be playing on

a court like that with a ton of fans and TVs and eyes on me. It's not my natural way," she told reporters.

"But I feel I'm definitely getting more comfortable with it and just feeling like I can be myself even if there's however many people watching.

The 23rd-seeded Navarro's triumph sets up a tantalizing quarterfinal clash with either Maria Sakkari or Diane Parry.

Gauff defeated Belgium's Elise Mertens in the first set of a 24-minute WTA 1000 competition, sealing a rare bagel at this stage. It was all one-way traffic from there on. At Indian Wells, on her 20th birthday, Coco Gauff easily defeated Elise Mertens in straight sets, while Aryna Sabalenka was unexpectedly eliminated.

Gauff advanced to the final eight for the second straight year, dropping just two games en route to a 6-0, 6-2 victory over Mertens.

"I played really well. I feel really good. My best match of the tournament so far and I'm so happy to win on my birthday," Gauff told.

Singapore Smash TT: India's Sharath Kamal storms into quarterfinals



Team Absolute | New Delhi
Top Indian paddler Aachanta Sharath Kamal advanced to the quarterfinals of the Singapore Smash table tennis tournament with a 3-0 win over Omar Assar of Egypt in the men's singles Round-of-16 in Singapore on Thursday.

Sharath won the pre-quarterfinal clash 11-4, 11-8, 12-10 to advance to the next round.

Sharath ranked 88th in the world dominated the game right from the start with his attacking approach, giving no chance to World No.22 Omar.

His trademark forehand topspin and backhand whiplash from the back of the table were in full flow in all three games. Sharath was having trouble after falling behind 4-8 in the third game, but he managed to rally. The Indian hit a spectacular backhand whiplash down the line winner at 8-8.

Sharath then hit a strong forehand down-the-line winner at 10-10. Subsequently, Omar's return got into the net, paving the way for Sharath to advance to the quarterfinals. Earlier, Commonwealth Games gold

medallist Sharath advanced to the Round of 16 of Singapore Smash for the first time after a thumping victory over World No.13 Darko Jorgic with a scoreline of 3-1 (8-11, 11-6, 11-8, 11-9, on Wednesday.

Sharath is the lowest-ranked men's singles paddler left in the draw. He will next meet the winner of the match between France's Felix Lebrun and Kristian Karlsson of Sweden.

In the previous two editions of Singapore Smash, Sharath had bowed out in the first round.

Dutch footballer Promes arrested in Dubai



The Hague | Agencies

Dutch professional footballer Quincy Promes, convicted for drug trafficking and stabbing his cousin, was arrested in Dubai at the request of Dutch authorities, the Dutch Public Prosecutor announced in a press release on Wednesday.

According to the press statement, the arrest was the result of constructive cooperation between the authorities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Netherlands. The arrest was made based on a Red Notice issued by the Netherlands. Netherlands will now request the extradition of Promes, reported Xinhua.

A Red Notice is a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending

extradition, surrender, or similar legal action. It is based on an arrest warrant or court order issued by the judicial authorities in the requesting country. Member countries apply their own laws in deciding whether to arrest a person.

Promes was sentenced in absentia last month to six years in prison for involvement in the smuggling of a large load of cocaine by the court in Amsterdam. The Dutch public prosecutor had demanded nine years imprisonment. Last year he also received 1.5 years in prison for stabbing his cousin at a family party.

The 32-year-old Promes, who played 50 matches for the Dutch national team, moved from Ajax to Spartak Moscow in February 2021 and as resident of Moscow he stayed out of the hands of

Dutch police so far. However, a training camp with his Russian club to the United Arab Emirates became fatal for him. "The arrested man was reportedly staying in luxury in Dubai according to various media reports," the Dutch public prosecutor stated. "However, he has been taken into custody thanks to the efforts of the authorities in both countries. At this time, it is not possible to provide additional information to avoid disruption of the ongoing investigation."

The Netherlands has had an extradition treaty with the United Arab Emirates since 2021, in which it has been agreed that both countries will extradite persons "who are wanted for the purpose of criminal prosecution or enforcement of an irrevocable judgment."

Golf: Hitaashee keeps 10-shot lead after third day at sixth Leg of WPGT

Team Absolute | Gurugram

Hitaashee Bakshi managed to hang onto a 10-shot lead despite being unable to produce the kind of birdie feasts she had conjured up on the first two days of the sixth leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, here on Thursday. Playing at the Gary Player layout, Hitaashee after 64-66 in the first two rounds had a modest 3-over 75, but at 11-under 205, she was still 10 shots clear of the field in the Rs. 25 lakh event.

Gaurika Bishnoi (70) had the best and the only under-par round of the breezy third day and at 1-under 215 was tied for second alongside former Order of Merit winner, Vani Kapoor (75). Last week's winner, Amandeep Drall (76) was fourth, while Queen Sirikit - bound amateur Vidhatri Urs (73), also the winner of the opening leg this season, was tied fifth with amateur teammate Zara Anand (74). Jasmine Shekar (73), Riya Yadav (79), Khushi Khanijau (78) and amateur Janneya Dasannjee (77) were occupying the seventh to tenth spots. Hitaashee, who was in unstoppable form the last two days, began with three pars and then a double bogey on Par-5 fourth. She made up one shot on the next hole, the Par-3 fifth, but after two more pars, she dropped back-to-back bogeys on the eighth and ninth. On the back nine, a bogey on the 13th was compensated by a birdie on the 18th for a round of 75, yet she holds a massive lead going into the final day.



Gaurika Bishnoi had an up-and-down round with five birdies but also gave away three bogeys for a 70, the best card of the day. She shared the second place with Vani, whose 75 did not have any birdies. She double-bogeyed the Par-4 sixth and bogeyed the seventh. Amandeep Drall had three bogeys on the front nine and her solitary gain of the day came on the Par-4 13th, but she also closed with double bogey on the Par-5 18th for a 76. Vidhatri Urs and Zara Anand, who will be part of the Indian Golf Union's team at the Queen Sirikit Cup next week in New Zealand, shot 73 and 74 respectively. Vidhatri had two birdies against three bogeys, while Zara had two birdies and a bogey on the front nine and a birdie on the 10th at which point she was 2-under for the day, she then dropped shots on the next four holes from the 11th to the 14th for a 74.

Vinesh Phogat dismisses questions over participation in two weight categories in wrestling trials, over dope test

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Olympian wrestler Vinesh Phogat has on Thursday dismissed as untrue media reports claiming that she had not taken a dope test after the trials and also raised questions on her qualification for the Asian Olympic Qualifiers in women's 50kg category because she participated in two weight-categories.

Vinesh put out a statement on social media, dispelling reports that she had not taken a dope test in recent times.

"There have been claims circulating that I did not undergo a dope test after the trials. I want to clarify that I, along with all other finalists, have undergone doping tests after both the senior nationals in the previous month and following the recent trials," Vinesh said in her statement.

She also alleged that some media channels have "disseminated defamatory information" about her qualification status.

She claimed that Article 7 of the United World Wrestling regulations, which stipulated that each contestant may compete in only one weight category, which certain media channels are



quoting to question her participation in both the 50kg and the 53kg categories in the trials, applies only to competitions and not trials.

"This was confirmed by the ad-hoc committee and officials, allowing me to participate in both the 50kg and 53kg categories during the trials," said Vinesh in her statement.

She contends that for participating in the trials, complying with the weight restrictions is enough.

Vinesh also claimed that she had to decide to participate in two weight categories in the trials because of the "fluctuating circumstances that can arise surrounding the qualification pathway for the 53kg category, because of disputes

between the ad-hoc committee and WFI.

She claimed that these disputes have created uncertainty and instability in the rules and regulations governing future competitions in India. "In light of the ongoing issues and the potential for leadership changes between the ad-hoc committee and WFI, I felt compelled to secure my path to the Olympic Games by participating in both weight categories, as my Olympic weight category has historically been 53kg," said Vinesh.

"Regrettably, my participation has raised more questions than answers, especially concerning the involvement of WFI officials in the trials despite court orders to the contrary," said the wrestler who represented the country in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games and the 2020 Games in Tokyo.

Despite the question marks raised by a certain section of the media, Vinesh said, "I remain committed to fair competition and upholding the integrity of the sport, despite challenges and pressures I have faced after the protest".

She thanked all those who have stood by her and urged for a fair and transparent resolution to these issues.



Mrunal Thakur to speak at UN panel on human cost of conflict-related sexual violence

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Mrunal Thakur, who is known for 'Sita Ramam', 'Hi Nanna', 'Dhamaka', and others, is set to participate in a panel discussion titled 'Human Cost of Conflict Related Sexual Violence'. The panel is set to be hosted at the UN Headquarters in New York on Thursday, and the actress will attend the event virtually owing to her work commitments.

Mrunal's work in 'Love Sonia' brought her a lot of acclaim, as the film sheds light on the grim reality of human trafficking.

The panel aims to explore the global context and impact of sexual violence in conflict zones, including its links with human trafficking.

Mrunal's presence adds significant weight to the discussion, given her portrayal of the harrowing experiences faced by victims of trafficking in 'Love Sonia'.

Expressing her anticipation for the event, Mrunal said in a statement: "Being a part of this panel discussion is a profound honour for me. 'Love Sonia' was not just a film; it was a journey into the darkest corners of humanity, shedding light on the unimaginable suffering endured by victims of human trafficking. Through my role, I had the opportunity to delve deep into the complexities of this issue, and it has since become a cause that is incredibly close to my heart."

The actress added: "Participating in this panel allows me to lend my voice to the collective effort of raising awareness and advocating for change. It's an opportunity to amplify the voices of those who have been silenced and to stand in solidarity with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. I am deeply grateful for this platform and eager to contribute to the important conversations that lie ahead."



SRK, Ed Sheeran strike Bollywood star's iconic pose

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran, is set to perform in Mumbai on March 16.

However, the 'Shape of You' hitmaker, who is currently in the maximum city, is soaking in all the colours of the city.

After grooving with Armaan Malik to the song 'Butta Bomma' from the Allu Arjun-starrer 'Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo' and striking the iconic pose of Bollywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan, Ed Sheeran met SRK.

The two also struck SRK's signature pose and set the social media on fire.

Both SRK and Ed Sheeran took to their respective Instagram accounts and shared a joint post.

They wrote in the caption: "This is the Shape Of Us spreading love."

In the video, SRK can be seen wearing a loose shirt with papercutting print, which he paired with ripped jeans and sneakers.

Ed Sheeran wore black pants, marble print sweatshirt, which he paired with his Jordans.

They played the song 'Deewangi Deewangi' from the SRK-starrer 'Om Shanti Om'.

As soon as the two shared the post on Instagram, their fans flooded the comments section, awestruck by their camaraderie.

SRK's friend and Director-choreographer Farah Khan, who directed 'Om Shanti Om', wrote in the comments, "If this was the last thing I directed I'll die happy (sic)."

Incidentally, Farah Khan's picture from Ed Sheeran's last outing in India, back in 2017 went viral leaving netizens in splits as the 'Main Hoon Na' director was seen in high spirits along with her 'Happy New Year' actor, Abhishek Bachchan. Earlier, the 'Perfect' singer visited a school in Mumbai and swapped performances with his young fans at the school and also strummed his guitar for them as they performed.

AAMIR KHAN CELEBRATES 59TH B'DAY SRK narrates special video for Badshah's upcoming album



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan has lent his voice to the narration of the announcement video of rapper Badshah's upcoming third studio album, 'Ek Tha Raja'.

The video reveals a formidable line-up of collaborations across 16 songs.

The video not only celebrates Aditya Pratap Singh Sisodia a.k.a. Badshah's more than 12 years in the music industry, but also highlights his commitment to pushing artistic boundaries.

Talking about the album, Badshah said, "People who know me understand the significance of Shah Rukh Sir in my life. He's not just my idol; he's my source of inspiration. I admire everything about him -- his personality, his art, his dedication, his passion, and his brand."

Mentioning how he got SRK to do the narration, Badshah noted, "It was truly a dream coming true for me when I reached out to Pooja ma'am, who manages Shah Rukh Sir. I expressed my urgent need for his narration, even though the release was scheduled for the very next day."

He then went on to say that despite the last-minute request, "Shah Rukh Sir graciously accepted my request, for which I am immensely grateful. His profound love for the hip-hop community, for anything new, exciting, and meaningful, is truly remarkable."

Heaping praise on the megastar, Badshah said, "He stands out as a beacon of support for anything that embodies a voice or a cause. His debut in the desi hip-hop scene has garnered immense love from the community, emphasising his unwavering commitment to emerging talent and meaningful expressions."



LFWX FDCI: MADHURI TURNS MUSE FOR RANNA GILL; DIANA PENTY TO WALK FOR CHARU & VASUNDHARA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Twinkle toes Madhuri Dixit Nene will be seen walking the runway for ace couturier Ranna Gill, while actress Diana Penty will turn showstopper for designer duo Charu & Vasundhara at the Lakme Fashion Week x FDCI.

Madhuri will be walking the runway on March 17 and will be donning the latest collection of Gill, which is centred around the theme 'Urban Prairie', which will have silhouette featuring pantsuits, skirts, jumpsuits and evening dresses.

The collection's colour scheme will include dollop of ivory, glacier blue, taupe, sea breeze, liquorice and gold on double crepe, satin, sequins, and lurex.

Diana will be showcasing the 'AZURA: Where Dreams Bloom' by Charu & Vasundhara, a mother-daughter duo Charu Kotia and Vasundhara Kotia duo on March 17.

The colour palette includes a lot of neutral shades of beige, black and ivory. The 21 designs are crafted in organza, net, and tussar silk. The luxurious fabrics radiate with the magic of hand-embroidered floral motifs, embellished with cutdana, crystals, pearls, and stones.

Centre bans 18 OTT platforms for obscene, pornographic content after repeated warnings

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government on Thursday confirmed that it has blocked 18 over-the-top (OTT) platforms for obscene and vulgar content and, in some instances, pornographic content, after multiple warnings by Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Anurag Thakur.

One of the OTT apps amassed more than 1 crore downloads, while two others had over 50 lakh downloads on Google Play Store.

The Ministry took action in coordination with various intermediaries, to block 18 OTT platforms. Nineteen websites, 10 apps (7 on Google Play Store, 3 on Apple App Store), and 57 social media accounts associated with these platforms have also been disabled for public access in the country.

The decision was made under the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000, in consultation with other Ministries/Departments of the government, and domain experts specialising in media and entertainment, women's rights and child rights.

The I&B Minister has repeatedly emphasised the responsibility of the platforms to not propagate obscenity, vulgarity and abuse under the guise of "creative expression."

The OTT Platforms blocked are Dreams Films, Voovi, Yessma, Uncut Adda, Tri Flicks, X Prime, Neon X VIP, Besharams, Hunters, Rabbitt, Xtramood, Nueflicks, MoodX, Mojflix, Hot Shots VIP, Fugi, Chikooflix and Prime Play.

"A significant portion of the content



hosted on these platforms was found to be obscene, vulgar, and portrayed women in a demeaning manner. It depicted nudity and sexual acts in various inappropriate contexts such as relationships between teachers and students, incestuous relationships, etc," the Minister said.

The content included sexual innuendos and, in some instances, prolonged segments of pornographic and sexually explicit scenes devoid of any thematic or societal relevance.

The content was determined to be prima facie in violation of Section 67 and 67A of the IT Act, Section 292 of

the IPC, and Section 4 of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.

"Additionally, these OTT platforms extensively utilised social media to disseminate trailers, specific scenes, and external links aimed at attracting audiences to their websites and apps. The social media accounts of the concerned OTT platforms had a cumulative followership of over 32 lakh users," the Minister informed.

The government said that it remains committed to fostering the growth and development of the OTT industry.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Charlie Chauhan