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Nayab Singh Saini takes oath as Haryana CM with five Cabinet colleagues

11TH HOUR CHANGE

The BJP's attempt to fight anti-incumbency in Haryana, which it has ruled since 2014, has seen another big name being dropped. Anil Vij, arguably the best-known leader from the Haryana BJP after now former chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar, has not found a place in the new cabinet led by Nayab Singh Saini. Five other ministers, who were part of Khattar's cabinet, took oath with Saini at a swiftly organised ceremony on Tuesday evening, hours after the chief minister and his entire cabinet resigned.

Vishal Gulati | Chandigarh

First-time BJP MP Nayab Singh Saini was sworn in as the Haryana Chief Minister on Tuesday, along with five Cabinet colleagues.

Saini's name was unanimously decided during the party's meeting after incumbent Manohar Lal Khattar and the entire cabinet, comprising three members of Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala's JJP -- stepped down in the morning.

With a stronghold over the OBC community that comprises eight per cent in the state, Saini, who touched the feet of Khattar before and after taking the oath in Hindi, will be the Chief Minister for seven months till the state goes to the polls.

The Saini caste has a sizeable population in Kurukshetra, Yamunanagar, Ambala, Hisar, and Rewari districts. Kanwar Pal Gujjar, Mool Chand Sharma, Ranjit Singh Chautala, J.P. Dalal, and Banwarilal took oath as ministers.

Governor Bandaru Dattatreya administered the oath of office to them at a ceremony in Raj Bhavan in Chandigarh. However, former Home and Health Minister Anil Vij was conspicuously absent from the oath-taking ceremony that started 20 minutes before the scheduled time.

Vij left the morning meeting as soon as Saini's name was proposed. The outgoing Cabinet comprised



14 ministers, including Khattar and three members of the JJP.

In the 90-member Haryana Assembly, the BJP has 41 MLAs, while the JJP has 10. The ruling combine also enjoys the support of six of the seven independents, taking it past the halfway mark of 45 seats.

As per sources, Khattar will be contesting the Lok Sabha elections. He is expected to be fielded from Karnal.

Khattar's own man Sanjay Bhatia -- also a Punjabi face who won by a margin of 6.5 lakh votes in 2019, the second-highest victory margin in the country, may replace Saini as the party's state chief.

In 2019, the BJP had won all the

state's 10 seats.

Political observers told IANS that Saini's elevation to the top post is being seen as to consolidate the non-Jat and OBC votes. Also, it is an attempt to counter anti-incumbency against Khattar, who has been at the helm since 2014.

In the caste politics of Haryana, the Jat -- a landowning community that accounts for around 25 per cent of the state's population -- support is largely divided among the Congress, the Jannayak Janata Party, and the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD). BJP insiders say apart from being an OBC and close to Khattar, old association with the RSS also helped Saini to reach the helm.

THE CAUSE OF CHANGE

New Delhi: The BJP is towing a fine line in Haryana ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, sending multiple messages through the change in the top post. Sources said the change made it necessary for the whole cabinet -- including Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala of JJP to resign -- which was what the party was aiming for. The BJP and JJP (Jannayak Janata Party) had fallen out over seat sharing in the state. While the BJP wanted to contest all 10 Lok Sabha seats, the JJP, which failed to win any in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, wanted at least two seats. But an acrimonious break-up with JJP or sacking of Chautala from the cabinet would have sent a wrong message to Jats, a substantial chunk of the state's population.

The BJP, sources said, chose to take a roundabout way.

A second set of message was sent through the choice of state BJP chief Nayab Saini, a strong leader of the Other Backward castes, to fill the shoes of Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar -- one that showed the party supporting the non-Jats as well.

Chaudhary Birendra Singh's son and BJP MP from Hisar Brijendra Chaudhary joining the Congress last week is also linked to this, sources said. Around 20 per cent of Haryana's population are Jats, the rest belong to other communities.

'Another important step by PM Modi', Madhya Pradesh CM says on CAA rules notification

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah after the Central government notified the rules of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

Termining the notification of CAA rules as yet another important step by PM Modi, CM Yadav said: "I heartily thank and congratulate PM Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for this historic decision."

State unit Bharatiya Janata



Party (BJP) leaders also congratulated PM Modi and HM Shah over the CAA rules notification.

Madhya Pradesh unit BJP president V.D. Sharma said: "Implementation of CAA will not affect the citizenship of any Indian. It will help the Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and

Christians who were persecuted on religious grounds in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Jain and Parsi brothers and sisters will also get citizenship." Meanwhile, Congress leader and former CM Digvijaya Singh said: "Every person in the Constitution has the right to practice his religion, in my opinion this (CAA) is against the Constitution." The Congress leader also questioned the timing of CAA rules notification.

"Why so much delay?" he questioned. The CAA was passed in Parliament in 2019.

Maharashtra Cabinet clears Transgender Policy, 2024

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra Cabinet led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Monday cleared the state's Transgender Policy, 2024.

As per the policy, the eligible beneficiaries from transgender community will be entitled to get benefits under the various schemes implemented by the departments of social justice and special assistance, Divyang, industry, labour, OBC, tribal development, water supply and cleanliness, food and civil supply, school education, rural development, minorities development,



higher and technical education and employment guarantee. Besides, the Cabinet also cleared the implementation of The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 released by the Centre under The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act,

2019. The government will not bear any additional burden due to the implementation of the Transgender Policy. As per the 2011 census, the state's Transgender population is 40,891, but the current number could be more than that.

CAA will not take away citizenship, Amit Shah assures minorities

Hyderabad | Agencies

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday assured minorities that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) will not take away their citizenship.

He alleged that Congress and some other parties are spreading misapprehension among people for vote bank politics.

Amit Shah was addressing BJP's polling booth presidents from Telangana at LB Stadium here.

He clarified that CAA is a law which gives citizenship and not takes away citizenship. "I want to tell this country's minority brothers and mothers that no citizen will lose his citizenship because of CAA. CAA is a law to give citizenship not to take it. Owaisi, Kharge and Rahul Gandhi all are speaking lies that this will take away citizenship of minorities. I assure you that under CAA, there is no provision for taking away anybody's citizenship but there is provision to give citizenship to our refugees," he said.

Amit Shah, who earlier addressed a meeting of social media warriors of BJP, said the Modi government yesterday implemented the



promise of CAA.

"Our constitution drafters had promised that refugees coming from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan after suffering oppression will be granted citizenship. However, due to appeasement and vote bank politics, Congress used to oppose it. By granting citizenship to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and others, Narendra Modi ji has honoured them," he said.

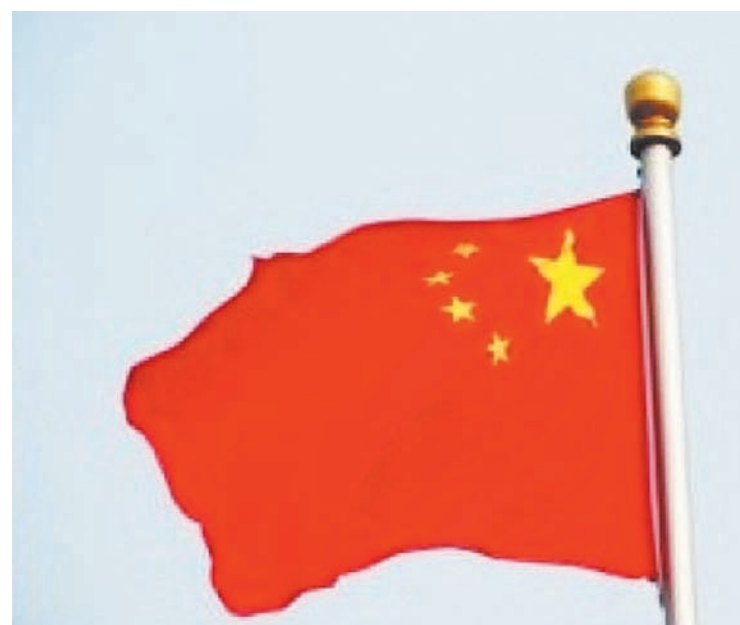
China considering military facilities in multiple locations including Pakistan: US intelligence

Team Absolute | New Delhi

China is reportedly considering pursuing military facilities in multiple locations, including Pakistan, Burma, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, and the UAE, as per the latest report by US Intelligence Community.

These facilities are beyond developing its military base in Djibouti and its military facility at Ream Naval Base in Cambodia.

"Beijing will focus on building a fully modernised national defence and military force by 2035 and for the PLA to become a world-class military by 2049. In the meantime, the CCP hopes to use the PLA to secure what it claims is its sovereign territory, to assert its preeminence in regional affairs, and to project power globally, particular-



ly by being able to deter and counter an intervention by the US in a cross-strait conflict," the assessment by the US intelligence said.

However, China lacks recent warfighting experience, which probably would weaken the PLA's effectiveness and leaders' willingness to initiate a conflict, it said.

"Xi Jinping's prioritisation of security and stability for the CCP is undermining China's ability to solve complex domestic problems," it added.

"Beijing's headline approach to alleged separatism in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Tibet, as well as broader crackdowns on religion and dissent in China, have generated widespread global criticism of China's human rights abuses and extraterritorial interference," it added.

Gaurav Gogoi, Nakul Nath, Vaibhav Gehlot in Congress 2nd Lok Sabha list

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress leaders Gaurav Gogoi, Nakul Nath, and Vaibhav Gehlot figure in the second list of Lok Sabha candidates released by the party on Tuesday.

Nakul Nath (Chhindwara), Vaibhav Gehlot (Jalore), and Gaurav Gogoi (Jorhat) are sons of former Congress Chief Ministers Kamal Nath (Madhya Pradesh), Ashok Gehlot (Rajasthan), and late Tarun Gogoi (Assam).

The list contains 43 names of candidates from Assam (12), Gujarat (7), Madhya Pradesh (10), Rajasthan (10), Uttarakhand (3), and Daman and Diu (1). Rahul Kaswan, who switched over from the BJP a couple of days ago, has also been nominated from Rajasthan's Churu.

Announcing the candidates, Congress General Secretary, Organisation, K.C. Venugopal



said 76.7 per cent of the second list candidates comprise SC/STs, OBCs, and Muslims. He said 25 of the candidates were below 50 years of age, 8 were aged between 50 to 60, and 10 were aged 61 to 72.

However, the names of perceived heavyweights of the party were missing from the list. The second list still does not feature candidates from crucial states like Uttar Pradesh and Delhi.

SBI submits data on electoral bonds to Election Commission of India

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The State Bank of India (SBI) on Tuesday evening submitted data on political contributions made through electoral bonds to the Election Commission of India (ECI), in accordance with the Supreme Court's order.

The Election Commission will now collate and release the data by 5 p.m. on Friday, as per the court order.

The Supreme Court had on Monday rejected SBI's plea to extend the March 6 deadline for submitting the data to the ECI.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud came down strongly on the bank for "willful disobedience" of its orders and warned it of contempt proceedings on Monday.



The SBI had claimed that it would take a considerable amount of time to collect, cross-check and release the data, which was stored in two silos to maintain secrecy.

In a verdict delivered on February 15, the Supreme Court struck down the Electoral Bonds Scheme, 2018 as unconstitutional and

ordered the SBI to forthwith stop their issuance.

It also asked the SBI to submit details of the electoral bonds purchased since April 2019 to the ECI by March 6 for publication on the official website of the poll body.

"SBI must disclose details of each Electoral Bond

encashed by political parties which shall include the date of encashment and the denomination of the Electoral Bond. SBI shall submit the above information to the ECI within three weeks from the date of this judgment, that is, by March 6, 2024," the SC had said in its February 15 order.

Web portal for citizenship seekers launched, 'CAA-2019' mobile App to come soon

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Tuesday launched a web portal for facilitating the registration of people, seeking citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019.

The MHA informed on X, that a mobile app called CAA-2019 will also be launched soon to expedite the applications by non-Muslim migrants seeking Indian citizenship.

The web portal and mobile app for seeking citizenship under CAA will not only simplify the procedure but also enable non-Muslim migrants to apply for the same, via their mobile phones. The migrants, who escaped Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to India before 2015, can apply under the scheme. They will have to first register

themselves on the web portal and mobile App and create individual logins, before filling applications for the same.

Notably, the Centre on Monday notified the rules for CAA implementation and also released the application formats which could be filled by migrants for getting Indian citizenship.

The law granting citizenship to refugees pertaining to six religions other than Muslims was cleared by Parliament in 2019.

As per the rules of CAA, any Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian who came to India before December 31, 2014, suffering atrocities and persecution on religious grounds in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, can seek Indian citizenship without producing a valid passport of these countries or a valid visa from India.



PRIME MINISTER MODI WITNESSED THE 'BHARAT SHAKTI' EXERCISE AT POKHRAN

Jaipur | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Rajasthan's Pokhran on Tuesday witnessed the 'Bharat Shakti' exercise, showcasing the power of homegrown defence equipment across the three services. Prime Minister Modi hailed the indigenization in the country's defence sector and also underlined the need to reduce dependence on other powers and focus on building self-reliant India. He also stressed on attaining 'Atmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in various sectors ranging from edible oils to modern aircraft. "A self-reliant India in the defence sector instils confidence in the Armed Forces," the Prime Minister asserted. Interestingly, Prime Minister Modi's dream of attaining 'atmanirbharta' and making India a self-reliant country is not new. About 26 years ago, when India conducted a series of 5 nuclear tests at the Pokhran range on May 11 and 13, 1998, it left the world bewildered and stunned about the country's capabilities. At that time



also, he had described it as the power and manifestation of India's self-reliance.

An audio clip shared by the 'Modi Archive' X handle, shows how Narendra Modi, then a BJP worker, delivered a powerful speech in 1998, post Pokhran tests and saluted the country's scientists for making it a highly secretive and highly successful operation.

"100 taka Swadeshi! - 100 per cent Made In India," he then thundered, while claiming that the whole world was left in shock over India's nuclear tests. The extract from his then speech also shows how he celebrated the success of the Pokhran nuclear tests in 1998, highlighting how the scientists involved in the programme were all Indian -- even their education, and how they achieved the feat using indigenous technology.

He showered lavish praise on noted scientist A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the man credited for the 1998 nuclear tests and also boasted about his Indian education and that too in Tamil language.

India's retail inflation eases to 4-month low of 5.09 per cent in January

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's retail inflation slowed to a four-month low of 5.09 per cent in February bringing some relief to household budgets, official figures released on Tuesday showed.

The retail inflation in January was a tad higher at 5.1 per cent.

There was a sharp decline in cooking oil prices during February which came down by as much as 11.67 per cent. The price rise in spices slowed to 13.51 per cent compared to 16.36 per cent in January.

However, the data show that vegetable prices shot up by as much as 30.25 per cent in January while pulses turned costlier by 18.9 per cent. The prices of cereals went up by 7.6 per cent.

The consumer price inflation is now above the 4 per cent midpoint of the RBI's 2-6 per cent target range and is the main reason why the central bank is not going in for a cut in interest rates to spur



economic growth. The RBI is keen to keep inflation under control to ensure stability and has held the repo rate steady at 6.5 per cent for six consecutive times in a row in its bi-monthly monetary policy reviews.

The latest inflation data comes weeks before the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meets again on April 3-5.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said barring food and beverages, the inflation across all other sub-groups

eased in February 2024, indicating that the momentum in the non-food items continued to track a welcome moderation.

The food and beverages inflation printed above the 7 per cent mark for the fourth month in a row. While the food and beverages inflation posted an unpleasant uptick in February 2024 vis-a-vis January 2024, this was not broad-based, with seven of the 12 sub-items witnessing a moderation in their YoY inflation print, she added.

Ex-CM Thackeray counters dynastic politics charge made by top BJP leadership

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief, Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday strongly countered the charge of dynastic politics levelled by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, and Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, against him and other Opposition leaders.

Daring the top BJP leadership to talk about their lineage, the former Maharashtra Chief Minister said he was proud to talk about his family's contribution to society.

"Basically, I don't need to tell you about my family. My father, my grandfather, great grandfather, great great grandfather were all in public service. Everyone made sacrifices for the welfare of the people," he said at a mass outreach programme at Ralegaon Village, Yavatmal District in Maharashtra's Vidarbha region.

"Everyone has seen what I did during the Coronavirus pandemic. My grandfather's father Sitaram Thackeray did great work during the plague epidemic. At that time our family was living in Panvel. There was a plague in our country and people were dying due to it.

"In those difficult times, there was no one to carry dead bodies. At that time, Sitaram Thackeray carried the dead bodies. In the



end, he also got plague and died. This is the history of the Thackeray family," said the Shiv Sena (UBT) chief while rebutting the charge of nepotism.

He was responding to HM Shah's swipe at him at a recent rally he addressed in Jalgaon District in North Maharashtra that Uddhav Thackeray wants to make his son (Aaditya) the Chief Minister, instead of a Shiv Sainik, while NCP(SP) chief Sharad Pawar is keen to make his daughter Supriya Sule the Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

Tears of joy: Pakistani Hindu refugees in Delhi celebrate notification of CAA rules

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Holi came early for Pakistani Hindu refugees living in a cramped settlement near Majnu Ka Tila in Delhi, as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) rules were notified on Monday. Since Tuesday morning, the people living in the refugee camp were seen distributing sweets and playing with colours.

Dharamveer Solanki, regarded as a leader by the Pakistani Hindu community in Delhi, shared his elation with reporter, and said that the refugees would now obtain Indian citizenship after waiting for over a decade. Expressing immense happiness, Solanki told reporter, "I am glad I decided to return to my homeland in 2013. We have been waiting for this for over a decade now. We are extremely happy that we will be finally called Indian citizens."

Among the jubilant refugees numbering over 500, is Kamal, who has been living in a slum without legal



recognition for decades.

"This moment is like a second birth, not only for me and my family but for my entire community and for those who were living here without any authority for decades," said Kamal.

Another refugee, Brij Lal, likened the occasion to Holi and Diwali, two of the most celebrated festivals in Hindu culture.

Lal attributed this milestone to Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, describing him as no less than an "avatar (incarnation)" for their community. The implementation of the CAA has been a subject of heated debate since its inception. However, for refugees like Solanki, Kamal, and Lal, it represents a long-awaited opportunity for a better life in their adopted homeland.

The Union Home Ministry on Monday notified the rules for the CAA, paving the way for granting of citizenship to non-Muslims -- mainly Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and Parsis -- facing persecution in neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, who had migrated to India before December 31, 2014.

"Immigrants qualifying for citizenship under CAA will have to submit applications in an online mode, for which a web portal has been created," an MHA spokesperson said.

The CAA was an integral part of the BJP's 2019 Lok Sabha poll manifesto and was enacted by the Parliament in December 2019 amid large-scale demonstrations from the Muslim community, backed by Opposition parties. Monday's announcement came on the back of Union Home Minister, Amit Shah's assertions that the CAA would be implemented before the Lok Sabha elections, slated for April/May.

You might lose everything if you apply on CAA portal: Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee

Kolkata | Agencies

West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, on Tuesday issued a note of caution against enrolling on the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) portal, saying applicants might ultimately lose everything.

"Some of you might be happy over the CAA notification. If you are happy, then I am also happy. But when you are sad, I am also sad. I am telling those who will be enrolling at the CAA portal, try to understand something. How can one be granted fresh citizenship when one is already a citizen? Without citizenship how could one cast votes for such a long time?" the Chief Minister questioned, while addressing a public meeting at Habra in North 24 Parganas District on Tuesday afternoon.

"Once you apply at the portal, you will become an illegal immigrant from a genuine citizen. Once you become an illegal immigrant what will happen to your property or profession? You will be sent to detention



camps. Those will also become illegal. So think again and again before you apply," the Chief Minister warned.

She also claimed that the CAA was a ploy to divide Bengal and ultimately drive away Bengalis from India.

"In Delhi a number of Bengali-speaking people have been harassed after they were branded as

Bangladeshis," the Chief Minister said.

According to her, the CAA notification is yet another ploy of the BJP to create division among people. "That is why besides Bangladesh and Pakistan, it has also included Afghanistan, though it does not have any international border. Why weren't Sri Lanka and Myanmar,

who have borders with India, included? This is just a ploy to polarise some religions against one particular religion," she said.

From the dais she also raised a war cry that she would not allow introduction of CAA or NRC in West Bengal. "I will oppose that, even if I have to sacrifice my life for it," the Chief Minister said.

Coast Guard seizes Pak boat with Rs 480 crore drugs off Gujarat coast; six held

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In an overnight joint operation on the intervening night of March 11 and 12, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) apprehended a Pakistani boat off the coast of Porbandar, Gujarat, with six crew members and narcotics valued at around Rs 480 crore on board.

The boat was apprehended about 350 km from Porbandar in the Arabian Sea in a sea-air coordinated operation involving ICG ships and Dornier Aircraft. The operation exhibited well-coordinated efforts between the ICG, NCB, and ATS Gujarat.

The ICG said that on specific intelligence inputs from the security agencies, the ICG strategically positioned its ships in the Arabian Sea on Monday.

The ICG also deployed its Dornier aircraft to scan and locate the boat in the likely areas. After an exhaustive search in the area, the ICG



ships, accompanied by teams from the NCB and ATS Gujarat, arrived at the location and identified the boat, which was moving suspiciously in the dark.

On being challenged by the ICG, the boat tried to escape but was deftly chased and forced to stop by the ICG ships.

The boarding team immediately embarked on the ship for preliminary checking.

It was found to be a Pakistani boat with six crew

members. After further searches, 80 kg of drugs worth about Rs 480 crore were recovered from the boat.

The boat, along with its crew, has been apprehended and brought to Porbandar for further investigation.

This was the 10th such apprehension by the ICG, in collaboration with the ATS Gujarat and NCB, in the last three years, leading to a total seizure of 517 kg of narcotics worth about Rs 3,135 crore.

CONGRESS WORKER KILLED, HANGED FROM A TREE IN K'TAKA

Gadag: An incident of a Congress worker being killed and hanged from a tree by some miscreants came to light on Tuesday near Dambala village in Mundaragi taluk of Gadag district in Karnataka.

The deceased was identified as Sharanappa Sandigoudra, a local Congress leader from Doni village.

According to the police, the killers attacked him when he was going on a bike and chased him after he fell off the vehicle. They threw chili powder into his eyes and stabbed him with sharp-edged weapons.

Later, they hung his body from a tree and escaped from the spot. The Congress party had organised a convention of the beneficiaries of guarantee schemes at Dambala village and the incident created tension in the area. The Mundaragi police reached the spot after villagers spotted the body hanging from a tree.

IAF's Tejas aircraft crashes in Rajasthan, pilot safe

Jaipur | Agencies

A Tejas aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed near Jaisalmer in Rajasthan on Tuesday during an operational training sortie, said IAF officials.

Sharing the information on X, the IAF officials said, "One Tejas aircraft of the Indian Air Force met with an accident at Jaisalmer, on Tuesday during an operational training sortie. The pilot ejected safely. A Court of Inquiry has been constituted to find out the cause of the accident."

Sources said that this helicopter was coming for the 'Bharat Shakti-2024' exercise being held at Pokhran Field Firing Range, which crashed near Jawahar Colony, Jaisalmer.

Last month too, a Hawk trainer



aircraft of the IAF met with an accident in West Bengal during a training sortie. Both the pilots ejected safely. The plane had crashed in the

civilian area near the Kalaikunda Air Force Station but there was no loss of life or damage to the civilian property.

Court in UP's Hapur sentences ten to life terms in mob lynching case

Hapur | Agencies

A court in UP's Hapur district on Tuesday convicted all ten persons accused in the 2018 mob lynching case and sentenced them to life imprisonment.

The court of Additional District Judge Shweta Dixit, after hearing both parties, convicted 10 people of killing 45-year-old Qasim and assaulting Samaideen, 62, on a false rumour of cow slaughter.

Government counsel Vijay Chauhan said that the court has also imposed a fine of Rs 58,000 each on the accused -- Rakesh, Hari Om, Yudhishtir, Rinku, Karanpal,



Manish, Lalit, Sonu, Kaptan, and Mange Ram of Bajhaida village.

In June 2018, a mob had lynched Qasim, a resident of Bajhaida village, accusing him of slaughtering a banned animal. Samaideen was also assaulted on a false rumour of cow slaughter, but he survived. The police registered

an FIR giving the incident a motorcycle accident angle but after Samaideen moved the Supreme Court, the investigation was brought on track, the government counsel said.

Samaideen had filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court in 2018 and the court had directed the provision of security and recording of statements under section 164 CrPC and directed IG, Meerut Zone to supervise the investigation.

The prosecution argued that the victim's side does not have any enmity against the accused and only seeks justice. They had also sought death sentences for the convicts.



DEVELOPMENT IS TAKING PLACE IN ALL AREAS OF THE COUNTRY: CHIEF MINISTER DR. YADAV

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, all-round development is taking place in all areas of the country. The interests of all sections are being taken care of. Today, Prime Minister Modi has given many gifts to the entire country including Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh for better rail infrastructure. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav was addressing the program organized in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh). On this occasion, Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh Shri Vishnudev Sai, local public representatives and farmers in big organizations were present.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Prime Minister Modi has today inaugurated many works related to rail infrastructure in the country. Vande-Bharat trains are operating on different routes. Other railway facilities are also being expanded. Adequate funds have been provisioned for these works. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that both Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are like brothers. Prime Minister Modi is giving adequate funds to Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh for the implementation of development projects. There is no shortage of money in both the states under his leadership. Narmada Maiya's blessings are on both the states.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that



under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, Ram Lalla was consecrated in Ayodhya on January 22, which the entire country can never forget. The struggle for the consecration of the statue of Ram Lalla was going on continuously for 500 years in Ayodhya. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that today the soldiers on the border are risking their lives to protect the nation. The soldiers are serving the country with full dedication. He said that Prime Minister Modi has

worried about the farmers along with the army personnel. Along with giving Samman Nidhi to the farmers, a scheme like Ladli Lakshmi is being run. In a short period of three months, many works of public welfare have been done in Chhattisgarh. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav also participated in other programs in the presence of Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnudev Sai and other public representatives. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav was felicitated in the program at Manas Bhawan of Durg. Dr. Yadav said that Lord Krishna had come to Ujjain, the city of Lord Mahakal, to receive education. Gopal Krishna had come to Ujjain, the city of Lord Mahakal, after the killing of Kansha in Mathura. Here he learned 64 arts, not only this, Gopal Krishna became adept in 4 Vedas, 18 Puranas and 14 Vidyas. In the program, Chief Minister Dr. Yadav offered prayers in front of the statue of Lord Krishna.

25 percent more wages to all industrial and unorganized workers in Madhya Pradesh from April 1

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In Madhya Pradesh, from April 1, all industrial and unorganized workers will get 25 percent more wages. The wages of trained and untrained workers associated with all industrial and unorganized sectors will increase from April 1, 2024. The state government has issued orders in this regard. It is noteworthy that for the first time after the year 2014, the wages of laborers have been revised in the state. Under the guidance of Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav and efforts of Labor Minister Pahlad Singh Patel, a concrete initiative has been taken for the welfare of the workers.

Labor Minister Patel said that the increase in wage rates will bring major changes in the lives of workers. This initiative has been taken for the upliftment of workers in line with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the "Development of all" being carried out under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr. Yadav. He said that the Labor Department is committed to the welfare and safety of the workers and many important decisions will be taken in this direction

in the coming times. It will prove to be a milestone in making women workers self-reliant and empowered.

According to the rule, wage revision should be done every 5 years, for the first time after 2014, the wages of workers have been revised. In future too, wage revision will be done as per rules.

Minister Patel said that after receiving information about unfairly giving benefits under Sambal Yojana in Bhopal district, he immediately took cognizance of the matter and ordered action against the concerned officials. The new minimum wage rates have been determined by increasing the prevailing minimum wage rates payable to agricultural workers by 25 percent and adding the variable dearness allowance payable to the minimum wage from October 1, 2019 on the basis of the average of All India Agricultural Workers Consumer Price Index prepared by Labor Bureau, Shimla. Once the new minimum wage rates come into effect, the minimum wage of agricultural workers will be Rs 7660 per month. Similarly, the prevailing minimum wage rates payable to beedi workers and agarbatti workers have also been increased by 25 percent. Minimum wage rates will not adversely affect any worker.

skilled workers will be Rs 10,571 per month. The minimum wage of skilled workers will be Rs 12294 while the minimum wage of highly skilled workers will be Rs 13919 per month. The wage rates of workers are based on the average of data from January 2019 to June 2019 based on the All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers prepared by Labor Bureau Shimla. New minimum wage rates have been determined by increasing the prevailing minimum wage rates payable to agricultural workers by 25 percent and adding the variable dearness allowance payable to the minimum wage from October 1, 2019 on the basis of the average of All India Agricultural Workers Consumer Price Index prepared by Labor Bureau, Shimla. Once the new minimum wage rates come into effect, the minimum wage of agricultural workers will be Rs 7660 per month. Similarly, the prevailing minimum wage rates payable to beedi workers and agarbatti workers have also been increased by 25 percent. Minimum wage rates will not adversely affect any worker.

Big relief to Digvijay Singh from Gwalior Court

Team Absolute | Gwalior

Former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and Congress Rajya Sabha MP Digvijay Singh has got a big relief from the MP MLA Court of Gwalior. He has been acquitted in the case of remarks made on BJP and RSS.

Digvijay Singh was accused of controversial remarks on BJP and RSS in August 2019 while discussing with reporters in Bhand. On this, advocate Awadhesh Singh Bhadauria had filed a defamation case in MP MLA Court. Digvijay Singh's advocate



Sanjay Shukla said that the court has rejected the defamation case filed against Digvijay Singh. Digvijay Singh was also present in the court during the hearing of this case. He told reporters that

the court's decision is welcome. Six defamation cases are pending against me. Now there are five left. Of these, two were done by RSS and two by Owaisi's party. One Baba Ramdev has done.

Meeting of two former Home Ministers of Madhya Pradesh in discussion

Team Absolute | Bhopal

These two party changes are in full swing in Madhya Pradesh. Meanwhile, two former home ministers of the state -- Dr Narottam Mishra of BJP and Dr Govind Singh of Congress met which has given rise to many discussions in the political circles.

Sources say that on Tuesday, senior Congress leader and former Home Minister Dr. Govind Singh reached the residence of BJP's new joining committee convenor Dr. Narottam Mishra. There was a closed-door discussion between the two leaders.

The picture of this meeting is also going viral on social media.



Dr. Mishra was the Home Minister in the Shivraj government, while Dr.

Govind Singh had also served as the Home Minister during the tenure of

Digvijay Singh.

Even though the parties of these two leaders are different, their mutual relations are well known.

After this meeting, discussions have gained momentum in political circles.

It may be noted that a large number of Congress leaders are changing parties before the Lok Sabha elections in the state.

Dr. Govind Singh wants to contest elections from Gwalior as a Congress candidate, but has not yet received the green signal from the party.

It is being said that Dr Singh is not happy with the party. Meanwhile, he met BJP leader Dr. Narottam Mishra and since then political implications started being explored.

Deputy Chief Minister Shukla inspected the under construction Medical College and District Hospital Rajgarh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla inspected the Medical College building under construction at a cost of Rs 256 crore and the District Hospital building with 200 bed capacity under construction at a cost of Rs 40 crore in Rajgarh. He gave instructions to complete the construction work with quality and within the time limit. The Deputy Chief Minister said that the construction work and other formalities should be completed on time so that admissions in the medical college can start from the next academic session (2025).

The Deputy Chief Minister inspected various wards under construction in the District Hospital building. He gave instructions to make arrangements as per the facilities of the patients. He said



that excellent arrangements should be made for the infant ward. The Deputy Chief Minister gave instructions to construct a night shelter for the family members of the patients in the district hospital premises. Minister of State

(Independent Charge) for Fishermen Welfare and Fisheries Development Narayan Singh Panwar, MLA Amar Singh Yadav, Hazarilal Dang, Mohan Sharma and Commissioner Medical Education Tarun Pithode were

present. Deputy Chief Minister Shukla inspected the pressurized control irrigation system operated by Mohanpura Micro Irrigation Project in Rajgarh and became aware of its details.

RAID ON THE RESORT OF FORMER HOME MINISTER NAROTTAM MISHRA'S SON, CENTRAL GST CAUGHT TAX EVASION OF RS 2.5 CRORE

Gwalior: On Monday, officers of Central Goods and Services Tax (GST) of Bhopal and Gwalior raided the Imperial Golf Resort in Gwalior. The team searched the documents till four in the morning. Tax evasion of about Rs 2.5 crore has been revealed. The officers of the department had received information that tax evasion was being done in the resort. After this, a team of 15 officers of Central Police reached here at 2.30 pm on Monday afternoon and kept scanning the documents till midnight. The team has also taken other institutions associated with the resort under surveillance. On Monday, the team that came from Bhopal along with local officers of Gwalior formed two teams.

Bailable warrant of Rs 10,000 issued against MP Pragya Thakur in Malegaon blast

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The troubles of Bhopal MP Pragya Singh Thakur are increasing. The Special Court has issued a bailable warrant of Rs 10,000 against him in the Malegaon blast case. Actually, the MP was to appear to answer the questions related to the Malgaon blast case, but she did not turn up. After which the court issued a bailable warrant against the MP.

MP Pragya Singh's lawyer had filed an application in the court to grant her relief, citing that her health was not good. A copy of the medical certificate was also attached. But the court did not accept the attached medical certificate. According to the information, it was not the original certificate but its photocopy. After this, the court has



issued a bailable warrant of Rs 10,000 against the MP and asked him to appear in the court and answer. According to the information, the MP may appear in the court on March 20.

On 29 September 2008, six

people were killed and several were injured in a blast near a mosque in Malegaon city. MP Pragya Singh Thakur is also a suspect in this case. The hearing of this case is going on in the special NIA court.

The public has given the responsibility of work, the state government is fulfilling it well: Deputy Chief Minister Deora

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Deputy Chief Minister Jagdish Deora inaugurated the newly constructed Community Health Center at Pipliya Mandi in Mandasaur district at a cost of Rs 5 crore 75 lakh. After the program, Deputy Chief Minister Deora reached village Turkiya and performed the bhoomi puja of the new population access road to be constructed at a cost of Rs 86 lakh. Minister Shri Deora also performed the bhoomi puja of the four lane access road to Shri Mahadev temple to be constructed at a cost of Rs 2 crore 20 lakh in village Khiljipura.

Deputy Chief Minister Deora said that the government has worked on the con-



cept of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is one of the most powerful leaders in the world. His dream is also based on Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas. With the construction of a sub-health center in Pipliya Mandi, the people here will get health facilities.

The shortage of staff and other resources in the hospital will be filled very soon. To ensure that everyone gets pure water, the government worked on the Tap Water Scheme. Water should reach every field. For this, work is

going on on Malhargarh Micro Irrigation Project. Roads worth more than Rs 700 crore were constructed in Malhargarh area. There is a network of roads in the entire area. The public has given the responsibility of the work which the state government is doing well. The state government has made all-round development in the field of development. Where there was no electricity. Now electricity is available there 24 hours a day. The government has given permanent houses to the people sleeping under the sky and at the stations. The poor are getting free treatment facilities through Ayushman Card. The government has done the work of linking the rivers.

Second workshop on Medical Education Technology begins at AIIMS Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A three-day workshop for the second batch on Medical Education Technology was inaugurated today by the Center for Medical Education Technology, AIIMS Bhopal. The workshop was inaugurated by Professor (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal. While interacting with the participants Prof. Singh said that it is not enough to just give knowledge to children but it is also necessary to explain it to children in an easy manner. Students must be taught as how to clear the examination. Understand the needs of children and adopt teaching methodology accordingly.

Also, make sure to remove the fear that resides in the minds of children who are back benchers. Be a role model for your students and be punctual. Earlier, Professor (Dr) Rajneesh Joshi, Dean (Academic) stressed the importance of interaction in teaching work. He said that it is very important to have eye contact while teaching in



the class, which helps the children to concentrate. Dr. Vaishali Waindeskar, Chairperson, Center for Medical Education Technology, emphasized that we should also assess our teaching methods and focus on developing our teaching skills by using more and more technology. This three days' workshop for the second batch will conclude on 14th March 2024.

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EDITOR'S SPECS

Above 40 people must test for glaucoma

If you have a family history of glaucoma, are over 40 years of age or experiencing symptoms such as pain in the eye, pressure, headaches, or seeing rainbow-coloured halos around lights, it is essential to undergo an eye test. Ignoring these signs may lead to irreversible peripheral vision loss associated with glaucoma. Siddharth Agrawal, faculty at the ophthalmology department of KGMU, said glaucoma is caused by a buildup of fluid within the eye, leading to pressure that can damage the optic nerve. He underlined the importance of regular eye checkups, especially for those above 40. He advised people to be especially vigilant if they have a family member with glaucoma, experience frequent spectacle changes, or have any discomfort in their eyes. Another faculty at KGMU's ophthalmology department, S. K. Bhaskar, said the fluid buildup inside the eye, called aqueous humor, needs to drain properly to maintain healthy pressure. Excessive steroid use can also contribute to eye problems. He said due to awareness, more patients are being diagnosed, and the number of glaucoma patients has grown by 10 per cent in the past five years, partly due to increased awareness and better detection methods. However, many people mistake glaucoma for cataracts, delaying proper treatment. Unlike cataracts, glaucoma causes permanent vision loss if left untreated. Bhaskar emphasised the importance of eye pressure and retinal tests for anyone over 40 experiencing vision problems. Early detection allows for timely treatment and helps prevent vision loss, he added.

Udaipur home to 17 roosting, 12 nesting waterbird species: First-of-a-kind study

Vishal Gulati

In one of the only studies in the world that has documented the roosting and nesting waterbird community inside Udaipur city in Rajasthan reveals the city famous for its centuries-old artificial lakes is home to 17 waterbird species roosting and 12 nesting species. And they used 23 species of trees for these two activities.

Trees used for both activities were in locations that had a relatively smaller amount of built up area (compared to random locations), suggesting the waterbirds were trying to find less noisy and disturbed areas for these activities.

The study says waterbirds were also choosing sites that had a lot of wetlands nearby, indicating the artificial wetlands of the city were attractive to these species to conduct their most critical activities.

The research was done as part of the PhD graduate thesis of Kanishka Mehta from the Mohanlal Sukhadia University in Udaipur. The thesis was advised by Swati Kittur, Vijay Koli and K. S. Gopi Sundar, the Co-chair of the IUCN Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group.

"The research focused on Udaipur and asked the broad question of whether the city is providing refugia for waterbirds. The city is famous for its artificial lakes that erstwhile kings constructed to cool the city during the summer months. We, therefore, wanted to know if these artificial wetlands were attracting waterbirds," Sundar told correspondent on Sunday.

Specifically, the study addressed the question of roosting and nesting sites of waterbirds in the entire city of Udaipur, which has been nominated for the Wetland City Accreditation (WCA) scheme under the Ramsar Convention.

"Some of the questions we wanted to answer are: Where did waterbirds in Udaipur roost and where did they nest? Did they use the same sites for both activities? What sort of trees or other structures were used to roost and nest? Which species of waterbirds were using Udaipur for roosting and which ones were nesting within the city limits?" he explains.

The study was unusual in that it documented the entire waterbird assemblage in the city that was roosting or nesting inside the city.

A waterbird is a bird that lives near and walks or swims in water, especially rivers or lakes.

"Such studies are very rare," Sundar says. In keeping the focus relatively wide, the study discovered the following species roosting and nesting inside Udaipur: the little cormorant, Indian cormorant, great cormorant, little egret, intermediate egret, great egret, cattle egret, pond heron, grey heron, purple heron, black-crowned night heron, glossy ibis, black-headed ibis, red-naped



ibis, painted stork, Asian openbill stork, and the woolly-necked stork.

The bird species with the highest number of roosts in the city were the pond heron, cattle egret and the red-naped ibis.

The bird species with the highest number of nest sites in the city were the cattle egret, red-naped ibis and the Asian openbill stork.

Researcher Kanishka Mehta, who has now completed her doctorate, says there is some information previously from other cities around the world documenting nesting waterbirds, but studying the full assemblage of roosting waterbirds has never been attempted before.

Also, this study covered the full city. Usually, a part of the city, such as waterbodies, is covered for studies. "Our study is, therefore, able to provide insights on what aspects of the entire city are being sought after by different waterbird species," says Vijay Koli, assistant professor at Mohanlal Sukhadia University.

The study was conducted between December 2020 and September 2021. The effort, therefore, covered one full nesting season, and also provided adequate time to understand where waterbirds were roosting in the city.

Sundar explains urban ecology is a relatively new subject in India, and most of the work has been carried out on tree diversity, and in cities such as Bangalore and Delhi, that are mega cities.

Cities of India, and other cities in the tropics

and subtropics, are being discovered to have a high level of diversity. This has been surprising for scientists since most of the work on cities has been from cities in temperate areas where diversity is very low inside the city.

Studies in temperate regions have given rise to assumptions that crowded cities of the tropics and subtropics must not have too much biodiversity due to the disturbance that people's activities provide for wild animals like birds.

The few cities where such studies have been conducted in India have shown fairly high levels of bird diversity. This study in Udaipur is one of the first in a small city of India that has been conducted across the whole city using careful methods.

"Since waterbird nesting and roosting has not been studied in other Indian cities, we are unable to compare our findings. However, with the results seen in Udaipur, we suspect that cities in India are very important locations for waterbirds. This has been entirely overlooked by scientists and conservation groups and is an exciting discovery," he explains.

Indian cities are showing themselves to be very important refugia for urban wildlife. Some of this is worrying to people since species like leopards can cause some conflict and injury to people.

Other wild species like birds, bees and butterflies are, however,

not dangerous and also very important for ecological functions.

"The government should, therefore, be considering our cities as being multifunctional systems where elements planned for humans can also be useful for a number of wild species. Considering cities to be multifunctional in policies will have multiple benefits. Interactions with nature are an important element of mental well-being for humans, which means that city planning should ideally consider both humans and wildlife of that particular region.

"Cities in Assam can be planned for wildlife found in that state, and Udaipur's planners can focus on wildlife such as waterbirds that are resident in the city," adds Sundar.

The study showed the enormous importance of old trees and also dead trees as waterbird roost and nest sites. As trees age, notwithstanding whether they are exotic species such as eucalyptus, or native ones such as neem, they become invaluable habitats inside the city.

Old trees used to be a common element of roads as roadside trees planted to shade travellers. Udaipur's waterbirds still use old roadside trees for roosting despite the enormous disturbance that traffic could be causing.

international

India assails 'disguised veto' at UNSC anti-terrorism panel protecting Pakistan-based terrorists

Arul Louis | United Nations

India has assailed the secretive "subterranean" working of the Security Council sanctions committee on terrorism, accusing it of allowing a system of "disguised veto" in blocking the listing of Pakistan-linked terrorists.

"For genuine, evidence-based listing proposals for globally sanctioned terrorists to be blocked, without giving any justification, is uncalled for and smacks of double-speak when it comes to the council's commitment in tackling the challenge of terrorism," India's Permanent Representative Ruchira Kamboj said on Monday.

Speaking at a meeting of the Council on its working methods, she said that "while we do get to know of the decisions of these committees on listing, the decisions on rejecting listing requests are not made public".

"This", she declared, "is a disguised veto".

China has repeatedly blocked the listing of Pakistan-linked terrorists as international terrorists subject to UN sanctions.

The most recent action was blocking last year the designation of Lashkar-e-Taiba's Sajid Mir, the mastermind of the 26/11 terrorist attack on Mumbai in 2009, as a global terrorist by the body named the 1269



Committee for the Council resolution setting it up to sanction those with al-Qaeda, the Islamic State or related terror groups.

Calling for transparency in the working of the Council committees known as subsidiary bodies which were "inhabiting a subterranean world with their own custom-made working methods and obscure practices, which do not find any legal basis in the charter or any of the Council's resolution," Kamboj said that the selection of chairs of the panels should be an open process with "exhaustive consultations".

She pressed the case for Council reforms that expands both permanent and elected membership.

In a reference to the Council's veto-wielding permanent membership frozen in the post-World War 2 era of the 1940s, she pointed out that "with both feet firmly fixed in the past" it has been unable to act on the wars raging in Ukraine and Gaza.

The "need is a Security Council that bet-

ter reflects contemporary realities, the geographical and developmental diversity of the multipolar world of today, including the voices of the developing countries, and underrepresented regions like Africa, Latin America, and the vast majority of Asia and the Pacific," Kamboj said.

"We ask those blocking progress on this vital issue to heed calls for genuine reform and contribute to making this Council truly fit for purpose for the 21st century," she added.

The main hurdle to reforms is the position of a minority group, Uniting for Consensus, led by Italy and includes Pakistan as a leading member.

"We can no longer hide behind the smokescreen of the Intergovernmental Negotiations (for reforms) by delivering entrenched national positions in a process which has no timeframe and no text," she said.

The backdrop of Ukraine and Gaza and as such, the question as to how much the Security Council has been able to deliver on peace and security, with both feet firmly fixed in the past is a larger question.

She said the negotiations should be based "on text and not through speaking as each other or past each other as we have done for the past three decades".

Explosion reported near commercial ship off Yemen coast



Aden (Yemen) | Agencies

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) has issued a warning after receiving a report of an explosion in the vicinity of a commercial ship transiting off the coast of Yemen.

According to the report from the UKMTO released on Monday, the master of the unnamed ship reported hearing the sound of an explosion nearly 71 nautical miles southwest of the port city of Saleef in Yemen.

While the ship and crew are reported to be safe, the cause of the explosion remains unknown at this time. The US-led coalition forces operating in

the region have launched an investigation into the incident, Xinhua news agency reported.

No group has claimed responsibility for the incident yet.

Since November, the Houthis have increasingly targeted commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, which they claim is in retaliation for Israeli strikes in Gaza.

In response, the US and Britain launched air and missile strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen starting in mid-January. However, rather than deterring or degrading the rebels' capabilities, these strikes appear to have prompted further escalation from the Houthi forces.

Five killed after school bus collides with semi-truck in US



Washington | Agencies

Five people, including three children, were killed after a school bus collided with a semi-truck on a highway in Rushville, about 91 km northwest of the US Illinois state capital, Springfield.

Addressing a press briefing, Illinois State Police said the crash happened on Monday around 11:30 a.m. (1730 GMT) when the school bus heading east on US Route 24 crossed the center line into the westbound lanes for an "unknown reason" and collided with the semi-

truck carrying sand, Xinhua news agency reported.

Both vehicles erupted into flames after the collision. All four people aboard the school bus, including the driver and three children -- one five years old and two three years old -- as well as the driver of the semi-truck were pronounced dead at the scene.

Following the incident, the school district canceled school on Tuesday and Wednesday. The cause of the crash is under investigation. More details are awaited.

'Food for Gaza' plan unveiled in Italy to coordinate int'l humanitarian aid

Rome | Agencies

Three multilateral food and aid agencies, together with Italy, have unveiled a "Food for Gaza" initiative aimed at coordinating international humanitarian efforts.

The initiative is made to increase food and health aid in Gaza in the short term, and then to focus -- in the long term -- on the human and social reconstruction of Gaza, according to Antonio Tajani, Italy's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, on Monday.

Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation; Cindy McCain, executive director of the World Food Program; and Deputy Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Xavier Castellanos were present at the event held at the headquarters of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Xinhua news agency reported.

"This is a program whose objective is to coordinate the activities of these important institutions," Tajani said.

"Together we want to focus on projects and the creation of a humanitarian aid cor-



ridor." Tajani added the corridor will start from the Mediterranean island nation of Cyprus,

noting that current efforts to bring aid to the citizens of Gaza via airlifts are "proving to be inadequate".

Nine killed, two injured as building collapses in Pakistan

Islamabad | Agencies

At least nine people were killed and two others injured on Tuesday when a three-storey building collapsed in Pakistan's Multan city.

The incident took place around 3.30 a.m. at Multan's Mohalla Jawadian after which teams were sent to the spot, Rescue

1122's District Emergency Officer Kaleem Ullah was quoted as saying by Geo News.

Confirming the death toll, the official said that out of the 11 trapped under the debris, nine lost their lives.

The two injured were rushed to Nishtar hospital and their condition is stated to be critical.

The deceased included seven members of a family.

Some of the deceased have been identified as Danish (15), Faheem Abbas (40), Ameer Ali (12), Waseem (14), Sanoobar (40), Bukhtawar Ameen (18) and Komal (13).

More details are awaited.



Ahead of revamp, 'Digital survey' of Dharavi to begin on March 18

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a milestone development, the Dharavi Redevelopment Project Pvt. Ltd. (DRPPL) will embark on a 'digital survey' of lakhs of informal slum residents of Dharavi on March 18, officials said.

The DPPL -- a joint venture between the Adani Group and Maharashtra government -- will create a 'Digital Dharavi', or an advanced library of one of the world's largest slum settlements.

It will be used by the state government to determine the rehabilitation eligibility criteria of this chunk of Dharavi residents in the proposed redevelopment project.

The survey by DRPPL and the state government will be one of the largest urban rejuvenation projects in the world, and will be the first step towards making Mumbai 'slum-free', said an official spokesperson for the joint venture. "It is the beginning of transforming Dharavi into a world-class township, a state-of-the-art city within Mumbai. We urge all Dharavikars to support this exercise, which will enable us to execute the rehabilitation process and ultimately provide them with their dream home," said the DRPPL spokesperson.



The digital survey will begin from the Kamla Raman Nagar, and a unique number shall be given to each informal tenement, followed by a laser mapping of the respective lane, known as 'Lidar Survey', and a trained team will visit every tenement with an indigenously developed application to scan the documents.

The DRPPL has also activated a toll-free helpline number (1800-268-8888) to respond to the queries and concerns of the Dharavikars, the spokesperson added.

For decades, Dharavikars have been waiting for redevelopment to move into their dream homes and

commercial establishments, and the digital survey marks the process of transforming Dharavi into a world-class township that will reshape the destiny of lakhs of residents.

Every informal tenement holder will be given a home, and for the very first time in such a project, homes will be provided to the qualified ineligible tenement holders too.

Recently, the DRPPL announced that as per the DRP tender, all eligible and ineligible resident tenement holders will get a flat with an independent kitchen and toilet.

Besides, eligible industrial and commercial units in the redeveloped

Dharavi will enjoy a five-year holiday in State Goods and Services Tax (SGST) payment to boost and help formalise their businesses, which is also as per the tender conditions (IANS, February 26). Dharavi encompasses several thousands of industrial and commercial units manufacturing garments and leather items, with many being vendors for large national and international brands sold across the world, with a turnover estimated to be in millions of dollars.

They are keen to formalise their businesses to expand and get a fillip, both locally and globally. The DRPPL has engaged world-renowned city and infrastructure planning experts - the US-based design firm Sasaki, and the UK-based town planners Buro Happold - to design a world-class city in place of Dharavi.

The DRPPL said it will endeavour to transform and upgrade the lives of Dharavikars by providing them with modern housing while preserving their inherent entrepreneurial spirit.

It will be a human-centric transformation, rebuilding spaces and reinventing the very essence of community living, dovetailing state-of-the-art imperatives of transportation connectivity, electricity, water, and internet while enabling a hygienic environment with civic amenities.

Mumbai coastal road to save USD 100 million annually in carbon emissions: BMC chief

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The opening of the coastal road's south-bound carriageway between Worli and Marine Drive will reduce travel time from 40 minutes to just 9 minutes and save nearly USD 100 million annually in carbon emissions through fuel savings, Mumbai civic chief Iqbal Singh Chahal has said, reported a news agency.

The first phase of the Mumbai coastal road project was inaugurated by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Monday morning. The public has been allowed to use it from 8 am on Tuesday.

"The travelling time will be reduced from 40 minutes to 9 minutes now, and it would save nearly USD 100 million annually in carbon emissions through fuel savings," Chahal said on Monday.

The Mumbai coastal road of 10.58 km length and 16.5 km of interchanges, being built at a cost of Rs 14,000



crore, consists of four lanes on each side along with two 12.19 metre diameter tunnels of 2.07 km length, he said. These are the largest tunnels by diameter built by tunnel boring machines in the country, Chahal said.

"It is for the first time in India that a four-lane coastal road has been built 100 per cent on land reclaimed from the sea and stands on monopiles only," he said.

"The project has been executed by the Brihanmumbai Municipal

Corporation (BMC) in record time as the actual construction work commenced only in June 2020 after vacation of stay order by the high court even though work order was issued in October 2018. The northbound carriageway of the coastal road will be ready by May 2024," he said.

The Mumbai coastal road will have 175 acres of coastal gardens that will be developed over time, said Chahal, who is the BMC's administrator.

Maha govt constitutes SIT to probe violence during Maratha agitation



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate the allegations of conspiracy and violence during the Maratha agitation in Maharashtra. Nashik Commissioner of Police Sandeep Karnik will be the head of the SIT, reported a news agency.

The SIT was formed on the instructions of the Maharashtra assembly speaker after the matter of threats issued to Deputy Chief Minister Fadanavis was raised in the Assembly by BJP MLAs. On February 28, speaking in the Maharashtra Legislative Council, CM Eknath Shinde said "Many leaders have become big on the issue of Martha reservation, Jarange patil raised demands for Maratha reservation he didn't had any political background and even I went to him. Keeping all the protocols aside I visited him twice. But now he is making remarks against DCM, our ministers and on the government... why? He is using low level language against the DCM, this language is not of karayakarta it's a political language. There are many other castes leaving in the

state but this is an attempt to create conflict between castes too. We won't tolerate such language against anyone. So let SIT investigate the matter and let the truth come out (doodh ka doodh paani ka pani hone do)."

"We have given reservation to Maratha and it will stand in the court too all the guidelines and norms of court has been studied properly and accordingly. We have given reservation, there is no injustice done on any other community but people are spreading rumours that this reservation won't stand in court why? Who is spreading this?" the Maharashtra CM said.

Jarange-Patil's Maratha reservation campaign is accused of receiving financial support from 'political associates,' and it is alleged that he made inflammatory remarks during the course of the campaign.

The Maharashtra State Government had indicated that if Jarange Patil's Maratha agitation for the Maratha Reservation is politically motivated, funded, and intended to cause unrest, a comprehensive SIT inquiry would be conducted to assess its implications on law and order in the state.

MVA wrangles over 10 seats, claims Prakash Ambedkar; hints at going solo

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Signalling that all is not well in the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) President Prakash Ambedkar claimed that the alliance members are still engaged in a tug-of-war over at least 10 of the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra, here on Tuesday.

Rubbishing the statements by MVA constituent Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut's that the seat-sharing has almost been finalised amicably, Ambedkar accused him of 'misleading' the media. "They have yet to reach an understanding on around 10 seats. Sanjay Raut is giving out wrong information on this issue. Everybody is concerned about the delay... The squabble is between the Congress and SS-UBT," Ambedkar contended.

Taking umbrage, Raut shot back asking Ambedkar to prove what he was 'lying' about, adding that the MVA is in touch directly with Ambedkar on the issue.

The SS-UBT is reportedly firm on contesting 18 seats, while the Congress is eyeing 20 seats, barely leaving room for manoeuvre for the other allies including the Nationalist Congress Party (SP) or VBA.

Ambedkar also expressed doubts over the national opposition I.N.D.I.A. bloc's ability to keep regional parties together and referred to All India Trinamool Congress President and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee unilateral-



ly putting up candidates in all 42 LS seats there. Ambedkar -- whose VBA has allied with the SS-UBT -- again dropped hints at going solo in case the MVA fails to reach an acceptable seat-sharing agreement with all the allies on priority.

Interestingly, the VBA chief's statements came just hours before Congress MP Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra enters Maharashtra at Nandurbar this afternoon on its

final lap which will end at Chaityabhoomi in Mumbai, followed by an I.N.D.I.A. bloc mega-rally on March 17. Ambedkar added that on March 10, he wrote to Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge highlighting his conversation with AICC General Secretary Ramesh Chennithala. Since there was no progress in the seat-sharing discussions in the MVA, Ambedkar said he spoke with Chennithala on March 9

extensively. "Chennithala shared his concern about Shiv Sena (UBT) being adamant on at least 18 seats. I proposed that VBA and Congress should sit together and have a discussion on all those seats which Congress has in mind and demanded in the MVA. I hope Congress and VBA will soon sit together so that we can move forward to topple the BJP-RSS government," said Ambedkar.

Bus driver shot at during robbery bid on highway, Kept driving for 30 km

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Maharashtra minibus driver was on Monday shot at during a robbery attempt but he kept driving for 30 kilometres to save the passengers in the vehicle.

The incident took place on National Highway 6 when the driver, along with 17 members of the family, was travelling from Amravati to Nagpur after visiting a temple.

The police have registered a case against four unknown persons and have formed teams to find the accused.

According to the driver, Khomdev Kawade, the robbers were in a car and tried to stop them by firing at the minibus. He said that he received injuries in his hand but did not stop the minibus and drove it to a police sta-



tion, after about 30 kilometers. Three other passengers were also injured and they were admitted to a hospital in Tivsa.

He said that the robbers were in a Bolero SUV that had an Uttar Pradesh registration number.

"While coming from Amravati, there was a car, a Bolero, behind us and it kept following us. I don't remem-

ber the exact registration number but it was from UP," Kawade said.

"I gave them the space to go ahead twice but they did not overtake," he said.

"After some time, they fired at me. The first time, they missed the shot, but the second time it hit my hand," Kawade said, adding that the incident took place near Nandgaon Peth.

Congress and INDIA bloc mislead people during elections: Maha CM



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday said that the Congress and INDIA bloc level false allegations and mislead the people in the country during elections. He said this as a reply to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge allegation that the BJP would change the constitution after the 2024 elections. Speaking to news agency, CM Shinde said, "The Constitution of India holds the highest place and Prime Minister Narendra Modi ensures justice for the sections of society-Dalits and other backward classes. PM Modi has provided free ration to 80 crore people for five years. The Congress and INDIA bloc level false allegations and try to mislead peo-

ple in the country during elections."

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, while addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Monday, targeted the BJP and said that the "ruling party at the centre has not fully accepted the Constitution" and termed it as 'unfortunate'. He was responding to remarks made by BJP MP Anant Kumar Hegde. "If BJP believes in BR Ambedkar it should remove such people from the party, not give them poll tickets. If PM Modi has courage, then throw out the leader who has talked about changing the Constitution", Kharge had said. "It is unfortunate that the BJP has not fully accepted the Constitution. On one hand, the PM says that the Constitution will never be

changed, on the other hand, he asks his people to say that a two-thirds majority is required to amend the Constitution," Kharge added.

Meanwhile, the Congress' Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra entered Maharashtra on Tuesday. Gandhi embarked his tour in Maharashtra by addressing a gathering in Nandurbar district in north Maharashtra.

The Congress hopes the yatra will increase their Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra. The yatra will be concluded in Mumbai on March 17.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Minister and BJP leader Mangal Prabhat Lodha questioned Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, asking, "There is no question whether his Yatra will benefit anyone. The question is whether it would benefit him.

Pune leader Vasant More prostrates before Raj Thackeray's photo, quits MNS



Team Absolute | Pune

Firebrand leader Vasant More on Tuesday bowed and then prostrated with folded hands before a photograph of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) President Raj Thackeray and quit the party, here. "This is my 'Jai Maharashtra'... Please forgive me..." said Vasant More in a social media post, shocking the party leadership and workers.

A member of the MNS since the past 18 years, Vasant More was apparently disgruntled over being sidelined for a poll ticket in the past several parliament and assembly elections and abruptly decided to dump the party.

Vasant More penned a brief note to Raj Thackeray resigning from its member-

ship and all other posts, while drawing attention to "the dirty politics" against him by certain senior office-bearers in Pune.

He claimed that after putting a question mark over his loyalty to the MNS which he found very painful and decided to leave the party which he served faithfully for 18 years.

Earlier today, hinting at what was in store, Vasant More said that after suffering beyond a limit, a person becomes very calm, there are no complaints or expectations from anybody.

Later this afternoon, he told mediapersons that he would announce his next course of action after three-four days, but declined to say whether he would join some other political party or contest the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

3 workers die as Mumbai building scaffolding collapses

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a shocking tragedy, three workers were killed and at least one more injured seriously when the scaffolding of an under-construction building in Borivali suddenly collapsed, the BMC Disaster Control said here on Tuesday. The incident occurred around 1 p.m. when the labourers were working on the 16th floor of the 24-storied building coming up at Soniwadi, near the Kalpana Chawla

Chowk, in Borivali suburb of north-west Mumbai. The BMC said that the unidentified victims were rushed to the Shatabdi Hospital in Kandivali west where three were declared dead and one is stated to be in a critical condition. The Mumbai Police and fire brigade teams rushed to the spot and the causes leading to the scaffolding crash are being investigated, whether they were equipped with safety gear or not, plus ascertaining the identity of all the victims.



Michelle Yeoh

clears air on Oscars stage confusion between her and Emma Stone

Los Angeles | Agencies

The Oscar-winning actress Michelle Yeoh has issued a clarification on what led to the confusion between her and 'Poor Things' actress Emma Stone at the 96th Oscars stage, when the latter won the Best Actress honour. Michelle along with fellow past Oscar winners and actresses Jennifer Lawrence, Charlize Theron, Sally Field, and Jessica Lange were on hand at Sunday's ceremony to present the award for Best Actress, reports 'People' magazine.

Each actress gave a short speech about this year's nominees -- Emma Stone, Annette Bening, Lily Gladstone, Sandra Hüller, and Carey Mulligan -- before the 'Poor Things' actress was pronounced the winner.

Michelle handed Emma Stone's Oscar statuette to Jennifer Lawrence on the Oscars stage causing confusion. As Emma Stone walked onto the stage, she told the women that her custom Louis Vuitton gown had ripped before walking over to Michelle, who was holding onto the statuette. As per 'People', Michelle, still holding onto the Oscar, walked over to Lawrence, who took it from her hands and presented it to Emma.

After Emma said, "Thank you", she and Lawrence laughed before hugging each other. The exchange caused moviegoers to voice their confusion online, causing Michelle to clear the air in an Instagram. The actress wrote: "Congratulations Emma!! I confused you, but I wanted to share that glorious moment of handing over Oscar to you together with your best friend Jennifer!! She reminded me of my Bae Jamie Lee Curtis, always there for each other."

The post included a picture of Michelle smiling from ear to ear as Lawrence handed the Oscar to Emma. Michelle won the award for Best Actress in 2023 for her work on 'Everything Everywhere All at Once'. Curtis also starred in the film and took home the win for Best Supporting Actress. Emma and Lawrence have also been long-time friends, who first met through Woody from Toy Story.



Los Angeles | Agencies

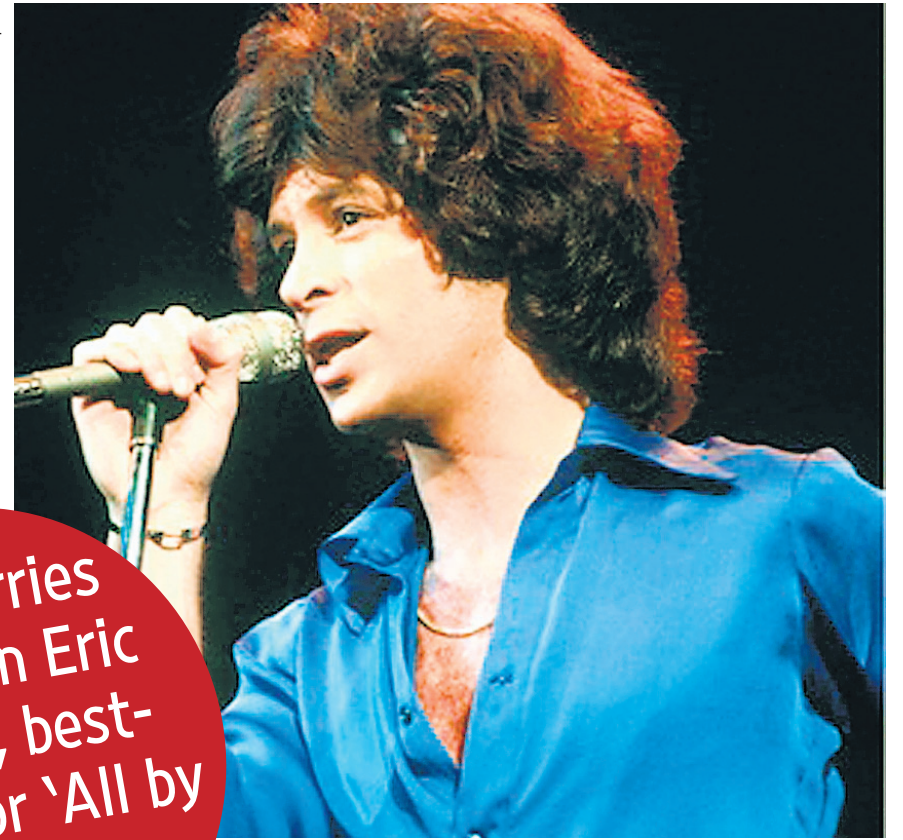
Eric Carmen, the frontman of the American pop band Raspberries, has passed away at the age of 74.

Eric became an icon of early 1970s power pop and later achieved solo success with hits like 'All By Myself' and 'Hungry Eyes'.

His wife, Amy Carmen, wrote on his website, "It is with tremendous sadness that we share the heart-breaking news of the passing of Eric Carmen," reports 'Variety'.

It further read,

Raspberries frontman Eric Carmen, best-known for 'All by Myself', dies at 74



date of death has been shared by the singer's family.

Eric, who was born in Cleveland, Ohio, was the primary singer and songwriter of the Raspberries, who rebelled against the heavy, glam and progressive-rock scenes of the early 1970s and threw back to the Beatle-esque pop they were raised on.

The group was often lambasted at

the time for being too pop or wimpy, but the Raspberries could be a powerhouse rock band when they chose to. Along with kindred spirits Badfinger, Big Star and Todd Rundgren, they created a model that has been revived multiple times over the decades, most vividly in the early 1990s with bands like Teenage Fanclub, the Posies and even Nirvana: Kurt Cobain was a fan, as well as Bruce Springsteen.

"Our sweet, loving and talented Eric passed away in his sleep, over the weekend. It brought him great joy to know that for decades, his music touched so many and will be his lasting legacy. Please respect the family's privacy as we mourn our enormous loss. 'Love Is All That Matters... Faithful and Forever'."

As per 'Variety', the latter quote from Carmen's wife is a callback to the song 'Love Is All That Matters', from his 1977 solo album 'Boats Against the Current'. However, no cause of death or exact

Bob Odenkirk-starrer 'Better Call Saul' to premiere in Hindi from April 1

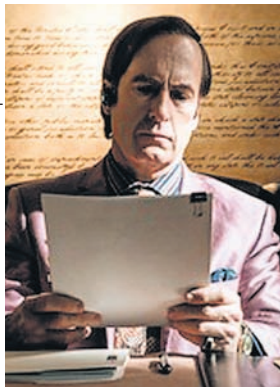
Los Angeles | Agencies

The prequel of American crime drama series 'Breaking Bad' -- 'Better Call Saul', is set to premiere in Hindi on Indian television from April 1. Created by Vince Gilligan and Peter Gould, 'Better Call Saul', which is set in the early-to-mid-2000s in Albuquerque, New Mexico, delves into the evolution of Jimmy McGill (Bob Odenkirk), a struggling lawyer, into the shrewd and morally complex attorney Saul Goodman.

Set within the same universe as 'Breaking Bad', the show offers a deep dive into Jimmy's journey, his encounters with ethical dilemmas, and his eventual embrace of his alter ego.

The show also stars Jonathan Banks, Rhea Seehorn, Patrick Fabian, Michael Mando, Giancarlo Esposito, and Tony Dalton in pivotal roles.

The show has received 53 Emmy Award nominations, with Bob receiving six nominations for 'Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series'. After six seasons, the series concluded in August 2022. Zee Cafe had released the Hindi-dubbed version of the groundbreaking series 'Breaking Bad' in August 2023.



JHARKHAND FARMER FEATURED IN 'TO KILL A TIGER' GOT US VISA AFTER BEING REJECTED FIRST

Los Angeles | Agencies

New Delhi-born Indian Canadian filmmaker, Nisha Pahuja, has shared how Ranjit, the Jharkhand rice farmer whose fight for justice for his gang-raped daughter is the story of her Oscar-nominated documentary feature, 'To Kill A Tiger', did not get an American visa when the film was theatrically released in the US in September last year.

"We tried to get visas for him and his incredible daughter back in September for the US around the time of our theatrical launch," Pahuja says in an Instagram post. "They were denied. It was a heartbreaking experience for all of us."

The post accompanies a picture of Pahuja in red gown with Ranjit, outfitted in a black tuxedo, in the backstage area of the Oscars venue, the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. "Without doubt, one of the proudest moments of my life," Pahuja writes.

Of course, with influential members of the Indian diaspora, notably entertainment celebrity Mindy Kaling, actor Dev Patel

(Slumdog Millionaire', 'Lion'), American surgeon, best-selling author and healthcare adviser to Bill Clinton and now Joe Biden, Dr Atul Gawande, and Priyanka Chopra Jonas, coming on board as executive producers, getting a visa was no problem for Ranjit the second time, enabling him to attend Sunday night's Oscars gala. "Thanks to a group of wonderful supporters and champions the second time was a charm," Pahuja writes. "To Kill A Tiger" eventually lost out to the gripping Ukraine War story, '20 Days in Mariupol'. Ranjit, expectedly, felt bad about it.

"Ranjit was sad to not win but we reassured him that we all won the moment he and Jaganti [his wife] and their amazing daughter refused to capitulate to a false shame," Pahuja writes. "Thank you Ranjit Bhai for showing the world how it's done. Your quiet resilience will now echo and inspire millions around the world. We are forever humbled and changed."



Ed Sheeran visits Mumbai school, swaps performances with students



Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran, who is known for chartbusters like 'Shape of You', 'Perfect', 'Thinking Out Loud' and others, is in Mumbai.

The singer visited a school in Mumbai and spent time with his young fans, as he played songs for them and sang along with them.

The singer-songwriter is set to perform in Mumbai on March 16. On Tuesday, Ed Sheeran took to his Instagram and shared a video of his school visit.

The singer wrote in the caption: "Visited a school in Mumbai this morning and swapped performances with the kids, so much fun. Great being back in India too."

This isn't the first time that the singer is performing in Mumbai. This is his third visit to the maximum city as he has earlier performed in the city in 2015 and 2017. In fact, his earlier pictures from his bash with his Bollywood buddies had gone viral on the Internet, in which he was seen in the company of Bollywood choreographer-director Farah Khan.



Al Pacino explains why he didn't name all Best Picture Oscar nominees before revealing winner

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood legend Al Pacino, who didn't name all the 10 nominees for Best Picture at the recently held 96th Academy Awards before announcing the winner, has issued a clarification detailing what led to the awkward moment on stage.

He issued a statement amid questions surrounding his appearance during the 2024 Oscars ceremony, where he awkwardly presented the best picture category, reports 'Variety'. The actor, who won an Academy Award for best actor in 'Scent of a Woman', simply opened the envelope and said, "And my eyes see 'Oppenheimer', at the award ceremony.

"There seems to be some controversy about my not mentioning every film by name last night before announcing the best picture award," Pacino said in a statement. "I just want to be clear it was not my intention to omit them, rather a choice by the producers not to have them said again since

they were highlighted individually throughout the ceremony. I was honoured to be a part of the evening and chose to follow the way they wished for this award to be presented."

He further mentioned, quoted by 'Variety', "I realise being nominated is a huge milestone in one's life and to not be fully recognized is offensive and hurtful. I say this as someone who profoundly relates with filmmakers, actors and producers so I deeply empathise with those who have been slighted by this oversight and it's why I felt it necessary to make this statement."

Oscars producer Molly McNearney also told Variety in an interview after the Oscars that "it was a creative decision" not to have Pacino list all 10 best picture nominees before announcing the winner.

The creative team was "very worried that the show was going to be long" and clips from all 10 best picture nominees had already played throughout the ceremony.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Kristen Stewart



IPL 2024: Rishabh Pant declared fit; Shami, Prasidh ruled out, says BCCI

Team Absolute | New Delhi
Rishabh Pant is all set to make his long-awaited return to competitive cricket as he has been granted a fitness clearance for the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL), the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) issued a medical and fitness update on Monday. "After undergoing an extensive 14-month rehab and recovery process, following a life-threatening road mishap on December 30th, 2022, near Roorkee, Uttarakhand, Rishabh Pant has now been declared fit as a wicket-keeper batter for the upcoming TATA IPL 2024," BCCI statement read. The IPL 2024 will mark Pant's return to action since the two-match Test series in Bangladesh ended in December 2022. A couple of days after the series ended, Pant miraculously survived a near-fatal car crash while on the way to his hometown Roorkee on December 30, 2022. He has undergone multiple surgeries and extensive rehab to reach a stage where he is ready to return to crickering action. The BCCI also provided a medical



update on fast bowlers Mohd Shami and Prasidh Krishna, saying the pace duo will miss the upcoming edition of the IPL after undergoing surgery for their respective injury issues. Shami underwent

successful surgery on his heel to repair his Achilles tendon last month was 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. He also missed the subsequent T20I home series against Australia and also the tour of South Africa and five-match Test series against England. "Mohd Shami: The fast bowler successfully underwent surgery on February 26th, 2024, for his right heel problem. He is currently being monitored by the BCCI medical team and is ruled out of the upcoming TATA IPL 2024," it said in a statement. "Prasidh Krishna: The fast bowler underwent surgery on February 23, 2024, on his left proximal quadriceps tendon. He is currently being monitored by the BCCI Medical Team and will resume rehab at the National Cricket Academy soon. He will not be able to take part in the upcoming TATA IPL 2024," it added.

'So many emotions, so many memories': Hardik Pandya joins MI training session

Team Absolute | New Delhi
Mumbai Indian (MI) captain for the Indian Premier League (IPL) season 2024 Hardik Pandya was excited to join the MI squad calling it 'relieving the good old days'.
Hardik Pandya, who started his career with Mumbai Indians and won a couple of IPL titles with them, joined Gujarat Titans before the start of the 2022 season, leading them to the title, and the final in the 2023 season. Ahead of the 2024 season, Hardik was traded to MI and was announced as their captain. Pandya posted pictures and videos from the first day of the training session of the MI camp showing his excitement going into the tournament with his old team. "Day 1. So many emotions, so many memories. Seeing old friends and reliving the good old days. Excited for what's ahead with this wonderful team. Let's get down to business," Pandya wrote on Twitter.



rehab route to ensure his long-term availability for future events. In December 2023, he was traded to Mumbai Indians from Gujarat Titans and became the side's skipper, replacing five-time championship-winning captain Rohit Sharma in the top job ahead of IPL 2024, starting on March 22. Mumbai Indians will play their first match of the season against Gujarat Giants on March 24 at Ahmedabad.

LCT provides opportunities for retired players to continue playing: Harbhajan Singh

Team Absolute | Palkeke
Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh has said that Legends Cricket Trophy (LCT) is providing opportunities to retired players to continue playing in the competitive environment. Sharing his experience from the league, Singh highlighted its significance for retired players and said, "Leagues have started happening with retired players for the past two to three years. It provides opportunities for retired players to continue playing in a competitive environment, whether they're colleagues from abroad or the national team. He also hailed the LCT 90-ball format for offering a balanced cricketing experience. "The LCT 90 format adds a new dimension to the game. It strikes a fine balance between length and skill, allowing players to showcase their talents across various aspects of the sport." "It's different from other formats, with four power plays and the option for the batsman to choose their powerplay between 10 to 15. Additionally, the best bowler can bowl four overs, making it favourable for retired play-



ers," he explained. Reflecting on his initial reaction to the 90-ball format, Singh noted the simplicity of the options available. "Whenever a new format is introduced, it takes time to adapt. However, as a batsman, having the choice of powerplay against strong bowlers is advantageous," he remarked. Singh also praised the format for allowing longer gameplay compared to T10 cricket. "In T10, there's limited time for play, but in the LCT 90 format, longer play is possible. This works to our advantage, especially when we have strong bowlers like Malinga," he added. Unlike the rapid pace of T10 cricket, LCT 90 encourages a strategic approach, fostering intense battles between bat and ball. Singh highlighted the format's capacity to challenge players, elevating the quality of competition and spectator engagement. As Legends League Trophy Season 2 unfolds, Harbhajan Singh's support for the LCT 90 ball format is expected to spark discussions within the cricketing community. With his esteemed reputation in the sport, Singh's advocacy validates LCT 90's potential to redefine limited-overs cricket.

Ranji Trophy: Musheer Khan surpasses Sachin to become youngest Mumbai batter to score century in final

Team Absolute | Mumbai
Musheer Khan broke legendary Sachin Tendulkar's 29-year-old record to become the youngest Mumbai batter to score a century in the Ranji Trophy final against Vidarbha, here at the Wankhede Stadium.



Aged 19 years, 14 days Musheer scored 255 balls hundred in the second innings of the Mumbai in the final. Sachin held the record for the youngest Mumbai batter to hit a Ranji final hundred when he scored twin centuries against Punjab in the 1994/95 season, a month short of his 22nd birthday, which helped Mumbai win the title. Incidentally, Sachin was also present in the stands at the time when Musheer achieved the milestone, watching the youngster break his record. Mumbai went into the second day of play, having gained a 119-run lead in the first innings. As openers Prithvi Shaw and Bhupen

Lelwani fell short, Musheer and captain Ajinkya Rahane braved a top-order wobble. Both players achieved their half-centuries, bringing the score to 141 for two overnight. After Rahane was dismissed for 73 on day 3, Musheer continued to amass runs alongside Shreyas Iyer. In the 90th over of the match, Musheer achieved his second First-Class ton in three games. However, his scintillating innings ended for the score of 136 when he was trapped lbw by Harsh Dubey at the stroke of Tea. Earlier, Sarfaraz Khan's younger brother Musheer turned his maiden First-Class century into a double ton during the quarterfinal match against Baroda. He became the second-youngest batter from Mumbai to accomplish the record after Wasim Jaffer. Mumbai have won the Ranji Trophy title a record 41 times across 47 finals and are poised to claim another championship in their 48th final. Meanwhile, Vidarbha are playing in their third Ranji final, having previously won in successive seasons between 2017-19. At the time of writing this report, Mumbai are 357/6 at Tea on Day 3 in the second inning, with a massive 476 runs lead.

Sr Women Nationals: Madhya Pradesh to take on Chhattisgarh in season opener



Team Absolute | Pune
The 14th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship is all set to kick off on Wednesday here at the Major Dhyan Chand Hockey Stadium Pimpri with Madhya Pradesh taking on Chhattisgarh in the tournament opener. The semifinal will take place on March 22 with final scheduled on the following day. A total of 27 teams that have been divided into eight pools will be vying for top honours. The upcoming tournament holds significance as it will serve as the platform for choosing the next core probables for the women's national team. The majority of the senior women's team, which includes key players such as Indian captain Savita, the most capped player Vandana Katariya, seasoned pro-Monika, experienced players like Navneet Kaur, Salima Tete, as well as emerging talents like Deepika and Sangita Kumari, are all poised to take

part in the competition from their respective states. Defending champions Madhya Pradesh have been slotted in Pool A along with Bihar and last year's runners-up Chhattisgarh. Hosts of this year's edition Maharashtra find themselves in Pool B with Delhi and Kerala. Pool C consists of Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh while Haryana, Puducherry and Assam form Pool D. Odisha, Chandigarh and Goa are a part of Pool E. Pool F consists of Punjab, Himachal, Rajasthan and Mizoram. Karnataka find themselves in Pool G alongside Manipur, Uttarakhand and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu Hockey while Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Telangana form Pool H. The top team from each Pool will advance to the quarterfinals, slated for March 20, with the semifinals set to take place on March 2. The 3rd/4th place play-off is scheduled for March 23, fol-

lowed by the final later that evening. Notably, 29 Indian international players will be a part of this tournament. Maharashtra will have Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Akshata Abaso Dhekal and Rajani Etimarpur in the team while the likes of Mariana Kujur, Ajmina Kujur and Jyoti Chhatrari will turn up for Odisha. Nikki Pradhan, Beauty Dungdung, Salima Tete and Sangita Kumari will be seen in action for Jharkhand and Baljeet Kaur and Gurjit Kaur will represent Punjab. Uttar Pradesh will see Mumtaz Khan, Vandana Katariya and Bansari Solanki donning their colours while Bichu Devi Kharibam, Ishika Chaudhary and Lalremsiami will represent Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram respectively. Haryana will field a star-studded lineup consisting of 11 international players, namely Monika, Navneet Kaur, Neha, Nisha, Deepika, Mahima Chaudhary, Jyoti, Savita, Sharmila Devi, Sonika and Uditia.

Yashasvi Jaiswal, Annabel Sutherland named ICC Player of the Month for February

Dubai | Agencies

India batter Yashasvi Jaiswal has been named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for February 2024 while Australia all-rounder Annabel Sutherland won the corresponding ICC Women's Player of the Month award. For Yashasvi Jaiswal, the month was a canvas upon which he painted his brilliance with the strokes of his bat. Jaiswal was on top of his performance with a double-century (209) in the first inning of the second Test at Visakhapatnam and then slammed his second double-hundred of the series in the second inning (214) of the third Test. Jaiswal scored 560 runs in his first three Tests, including an astonishing 20 sixes. Jaiswal's innings helped India make a comeback in the series after losing the first Test. The back-to-back double hundreds at the age of 22 years and 49 days made him the third youngest batter in the world to record two double centuries in Tests after Sir Donald Bradman and Vinod Kambli. "I'm really happy to achieve the ICC award and I hope I will be getting more in the future," Jaiswal said to ICC. "It's one of the best and this is my first five-match series. I really enjoyed it, the way I have played and the way it's been and we won the series by 4-1. It's been an incredible experience with all my mates And I really enjoyed it," he added. Jaiswal also rated his Rajkot knock of 214 as his crowning achievement. "I think when I celebrated my double century in Rajkot, I think that was something which I really enjoyed and felt. And I was, I was living," he added. The young Indian opener created several records in February and equalled the



long-standing Test record for most sixes in a Test inning (12) during his Rajkot knock. To his credit, he carried his form into March, reaching the milestone of 1,000 Test runs, becoming the second-quickest Indian to the landmark. Meanwhile, Australia all-rounder Annabel Sutherland became the fifth Australian player to claim the ICC Women's Player of the Month Award, joining the esteemed ranks of previous winners Alyssa Healy, Rachael Haynes, Tahlia McGrath and Ashleigh Gardner. Sutherland rewrote the record books with her marathon double century in the one-off Test against South Africa. Her blistering knock of 210, achieved in just 248 balls, set a new benchmark for the fastest double century in Women's cricket surpassing fellow Australian Karen Rolton (306 balls). "It's a massive honour to be named the Player of the Month and a nice way to cap off a successful home summer for the team," Sutherland said to ICC. "South Africa are always a strong opponent and to be able to perform against them in a home Test is something I'm proud of."

Golf: Hitaashee Bakshi blazes for 64, takes lead in 6th leg of WPGT

Team Absolute | Gurugram

Hitaashee Bakshi played a sensational front nine at the DLF Golf and Country Club as she carded 8-under 64 on the first day of the sixth Leg of the 2024 Women's Pro Golf Tour here on Tuesday. Hitaashee, who has had a steady season so far and leads the Order of Merit, opened sedately with two pars and then landed two eagles and four other birdies in the next seven holes for a front nine of 8-under 28. She had another birdie on the 13th and a bogey on the 17th, her only blemish of the day, to finish at 64, equalling the ladies course record. Hitaashee, who in her five previous starts has won once and been second or tied second on three other occasions, is eight shots clear of the second-placed Vani Kapoor and last week's winner, Amandeep Drall, who shot 72 each. Gaurika Bishnoi, who was runner-up last week in the fifth leg,



was fourth with a round of 73, while the Queen Sirikit bound amateur Zara Anand showed her promise with a 74 that put her at fifth. Hitaashee, who after a comeback from injuries topped the Thailand LPGA Q-School, showed great form. She picked an eagle on Par-5 fourth and another eagle on Par-4 sixth, where she holed her second shot. Her

birdies came on third, fifth, eighth and ninth. On the back nine, she birdied the 13th, and her lone bogey came on the challenging 17th. Vani had four birdies and four bogeys in her first 13 holes and parred the rest, while Amandeep parred the first 11 holes and birdied the Par-3 12th and gave that shot back on Par-4 17th. Gaurika had three birdies against four bogeys. Zara Anand had a rough start and was 3-over after the first six holes, but three birdies and a bogey between the eighth and 12th steadied her. She finished with two more bogeys against one birdie. Astha Madan (75) was sixth, while five players, Anyana Datar, Karishma Govind, Jasmine Shekar, Jahaanvie Walia and another Queen Sirikit player amateur Vidhatri Urs were all tied seventh at 76 each. Amateur Heena Kang, also part of the Indian team going for Queen Sirikit with Zara and Vidhatri, shot 77 to be T-12.



SALMAN TEAMS UP WITH A.R. MURUGADOSS, SAJID NADIADWALA FOR UNTITLED EID 2025 RELEASE



Team Absolute | Mumbai

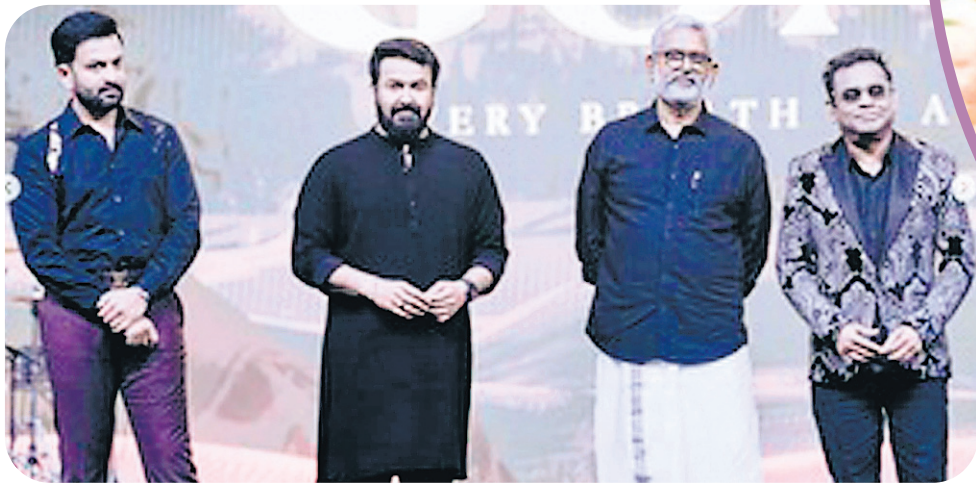
Bollywood superstar Salman Khan, who was last seen in the spy-universe film 'Tiger 3', is set to join forces with A.R. Murugadoss, known for 'Ghajini', for a yet-to-be-titled film. The film is slated for a release on Eid 2025. On Tuesday, Salman took to his X (formerly called Twitter), and notified his followers about the development.

Salman tweeted: "Glad to join forces with the exceptionally talented, @ARMurugadoss

and my friend, #SajidNadiadwala for a very exciting film!! This collaboration is special, and I look forward to this journey with your love and blessings. Releasing EID 2025. @NGEMovies @WardaNadiadwala."

The film will be bankrolled by Sajid Nadiadwala, who is known for films like 'Tamasha', 'Judwaa', 'Mujhse Shaadi Karogi', 'Kick' and several others.

A.R. Murugadoss has superhits such as 'Ghajini', 'Holiday: A Soldier Is Never Off Duty', and several others in the Tamil industry.



MUSIC MAESTRO A. R. RAHMAN DELIGHTED TO WORK WITH BLESSY ON 'THE GOAT LIFE'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Music maestro A. R. Rahman has expressed his deep joy working with director Blessy, whose latest venture 'The Goat Life' is all set to hit the theatres on March 28.

The film is being released in Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada.

Speaking about his journey in the film, Rahman said, it is an honour to work with such a passionate man as Blessy, who believes in cinema, goodwill, stories and humanity.

"Working with him taught me so much because he is a very patient

person. I want to thank you for coming and supporting us. This movie is a story of all of us, we are all struggling in some kind of way," said Rahman, who was in the city here coinciding with the music launch of the film.

"For some people the struggle is internal, in the movie, the struggle of the hero is being trapped in a desert, but still, a lot of people are relating to this. Returning to the Malayalam film industry, I personally feel like I have come back home. Coming back in this way for such a special movie with such great people to support this, it is such an honour, and it has been a

very interesting journey," said Rahman.

Talking about the music of the film, the hero of the film Prithviraj Sukumaran said he had the privilege of working in two films that Rahman sir had composed.

"Both the films had amazing music, but, I have done over 120 films and I do not remember another time when I have heard the score of a film after having done it entirely and then wished that I had the score with me when I was acting. I wish I could hear the music before each take now, but that is the process of cinema, you don't get to do that. I would like to thank you for

what you have done for the film, you are as big a character as Najeeb is in 'The Goat Life'. It's an amazing piece of work," said Prithviraj.

The film is based on the novel 'Aadujeevitham', one of the most popular best sellers ever from the Malayalam literary world, which has been translated in 12 different languages, including those that are foreign.

Penned by noted writer Benyamin and it follows the true story of the life of a young man Najeeb, who in the early 90s migrates from the lush green shores of Kerala in search of the fortunes in a land abroad.

Neha Dhupia says her 'favourite yoga buddy' is her son Guriq

Team Absolute | Mumbai



Actress Neha Dhupia on Tuesday shared an adorable sneak peek into her workout session, dropping a glimpse of her 'favourite yoga buddy' -- her son Guriq.

The actress, who was last seen in the 2022 vigilante thriller film 'A Thursday', took to Instagram, and dropped a series of pictures, wherein she can be seen doing yoga in her

house.

The former Miss India is wearing green yoga shorts and a grey coloured sports top. The pictures have a glimpse of her son Guriq performing the same yoga pose as his mother.

The post is captioned as: "Me - when someone asks me how is your prep for @kareenakapoor's episode going #yogaeveryday #mamahustle #nofiltermeha #mamasboy @guriqdhupiabedi my favourite yoga buddy." In the caption, Neha was referring to Kareena's appearance on her chat show 'No Filter Neha Season 6'.

Actress Rasika Dugal dropped red heart emojis in the comment section.

Neha is married to actor Angad Bedi. The couple also have a daughter named Mehr.

YAMI'S LOVE-FILLED B'DAY WISH FOR ADITYA DHAR: 'LUCKED OUT MARRYING BEST MAN IN THE WORLD'

Team Absolute | Mumbai



Actress Yami Gautam, who is currently riding high on the success of her recently released movie 'Article 370', on Tuesday showered love on her husband and filmmaker Aditya Dhar, who has turned 41, saying she has married the best man in the world.

Aditya is best known for directing 2019 military action drama 'Uri: The Surgical Strike', starring Vicky Kaushal and Yami in the lead.

Yami tied the knot with Aditya in June 2021.

Talking to Instagram, Yami shared an unseen picture with her 'sunshine'.

The photo is truly filled with love, featuring the actress known for 'Vicky Donor' in a blue denim jacket, and Aditya in a navy blue coat and black T-shirt.

The couple is holding onto each other closely, and smiling cutely for the lenses.

The post is captioned: "Happy birthday to my... (sun, world, star, and love emojis)... Words shall never do justice to how I feel about you and the fact that I lucked out marrying the best man in the world. Thank you for everything that you do and what you are. I love you so much... Happy birthday, Aditya."

Meanwhile, in the political action thriller 'Article 370', Yami plays the spirited intelligence officer Zooni Haksar.

The movie is set against the backdrop of the abrogation by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi government of the constitutional provision that assured a special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

Set against the backdrop of true events, the film offers audiences a gripping narrative with political intrigue, national security threats and pulse-pounding action sequences woven in.

Neeta Lulla

40 years in fashion industry hasn't been a cakewalk, been quite a struggle

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Neeta Lulla, who is one of the most renowned names from the world of fashion, has completed 40 years in the industry. However, it was not a cake walk for the designer as she says she had tasted her share of struggles to make it where she is today.

"40 years in the industry has not been a cakewalk, it has been quite a struggle. Apart from being a fashion designer, I am also a costume designer, a housewife, and a mother. Being able to juggle these roles and seamlessly transition from one role to another was quite a task, Lulla told, when asked about her 40 years in the fashion industry.

The designer, who has worked on over 300 films and has been designing wedding dresses since 1985, said that "time management and good organisational skills can be an asset." "Luckily for me, my workplace was my home in the beginning, and later on, it was closer to home, so it was a huge advantage,

and it helped me manage both my roles at work and home," added Lulla.

The designer, who has been feted with the National Film Award for Best Costume Design in 2009 for 'Jodhaa Akbar' and 2012 for the Marathi language film 'Balgandharva', talked about being a female designer in the industry.

Lulla said that "gender inclusivity has always been a norm in our industry."

"Back when I started working, we had many stalwarts, who were working in the films and the industry - and they were women. We had a good space in those times, where there were no restrictions to only men. At that point, many women were managing the creative aspect of costume and fashion design, for female actors."

For male actors, it was a male designer, said Lulla, who crafted an unforgettable pearl-encrusted lehenga for actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's mehendi ceremony.

"But today, there is a lot more room and inclusivity where male designers design for women and female designers design for men



have gotten in the scene and it has always been a common aspect of the industry from that time," she added.

Over her 40 years run in the industry as a fashion stylist and a costume designer, Lulla has created the look for leading Bollywood

personalities including Late star Sridevi, Juhi Chawla, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Shilpa Shetty, Deepika Padukone, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Rajinikanth, Shah Rukh Khan and Hrithik Roshan. How is it working with the Indian film industry?

"It has been a beautiful journey working with the Indian Film Industry. This year marks my 40th year in the fashion industry and in 2026, it will be my 40th year in films. This journey is filled with many joy rides, speed breakers, and challenges but if I had to do this all over again, I would happily do it," said the 59-year-old designer.

She describes the journey as "very fulfilling" and has helped her "evolve as a person and as a creative talent." "There's no stopping her, as Lulla is currently working on five films.

Without sharing much details, Lulla said: "As of now, my plate is filled with five films, a five-film project that is in the pipeline and a musical in the works. And also, I am working on the new couture collection, that will be out soon."

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Shriya Saran