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INFORMATION ON ELECTORAL BONDS WILL BE DISCLOSED ON TIME: CEC

Jammu | Agencies

India's Chief Election Commissioner, Rajiv Kumar, on Wednesday said that following the Supreme Court's order, the SBI has provided details to the Election Commission about the Electoral Bonds issued by the bank.

Addressing a press conference, he said that the Supreme Court had given the SBI time up to March 12 to provide data regarding the electoral bonds issued by it.

"We have received the data on time. I will go back and study the data and give details about it in time," he said.

The Election Commission also reaffirmed its commitment to upholding democratic principles and ensuring a fair and transparent electoral process in Jammu and Kashmir.

The CEC underscored the paramount demand voiced by political parties: the assurance of free and fair elections. He said the political representatives emphasised the importance of fairness, calling for an electoral process devoid of discrimination in security provisions and a level playing field for all candidates.

Addressing the demographic landscape, he noted a positive indicator with 2,886 voters aged over 100 years. The focus, however, remains on youth participation, with 86.9 lakh eligible voters in the region and a concerted effort to encourage their involvement, he said.

He said that the J&K voters above 85 years of age will, for the first time, be able to vote at home if they so desire.

Technological advancements are set to play a pivotal role in facilitating the electoral process, he said, adding that stringent measures will be in



place to curb illegal activities, including intensified vigilance along international and internal borders.

Asked why Harsh Dev Singh of the Panthers Party was not allowed to meet the poll panel team in Srinagar and Jammu, the CEC said: "There is a dispute regarding the JK Panthers Party. We met people of national and regional parties in J&K, but the party you referred to is under dispute."

On whether government officials, who have obtained domicile certificates in J&K but are not permanent residents here, can cast their vote, he said: "We have a uniform system for registration of voters in the country. If these people have a temporary residence here, they can get registered as voters, but they will have to cancel

their registration at the place of their permanent residence."

To a question about service voters, he said that all those serving the army or the CAPFs who belong to J&K but are serving outside, are service voters and have been given the right to vote through postal ballots.

"There were 77,503 service voters in 2019. In 2022, there were 72,738 and in 2024, there are 75,876 service voters in J&K," he said.

The CEC said all the DMs and SPs have been told that it is their duty to ensure fair and unbiased polls in their areas of responsibility.

"Any dereliction in this regard will attract severe action from the Commission," he said.

'READY FOR J&K ASSEMBLY POLLS IN'

Jammu: India's Chief Election Commissioner, Rajiv Kumar on Wednesday said that there had been no delay from their side in holding Assembly elections in J&K and the reason was the dissonance between the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 and the Delimitation Act, 2022 till December 2023.

Addressing a media conference here, the CEC, to a question on the perceived delay in holding Assembly elections in J&K, cited the "dissonance".

"We know that according to the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, the number of Assembly seats was kept at 107 after reserving 24 seats from the Pakistan-occupied part of J&K. This left 83 Assembly seats, including 7 reserved for the SCs.

"Through the Delimitation Act, 2022, the number of Assembly seats went up to 114 with 90 Assembly seats, after allotting reservations for the STs. Then, there was a provision of 2 seats for migrants with one women's seat and one nomination for the displaced persons of PoJK. This picture crystallised in December 2023, and thus, there has been no delay from our side. Just three months have passed and the season has just begun," he said.

The CEC said a decision on whether the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls should be held together or separately would be taken shortly, keeping in view the discussions held with political parties, the District Magistrates, the Superintendents of Police, and other agencies.

New education policy is necessary for the country: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, while performing the bhoomi puja of Veerangana Rani Avanti Bai Lodhi University in Sagar district, said that Sagar is a district of the state where there are not one but two universities. There is a central university here and another state university is being started.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav remembered Dr. Hari Singh Gaur and also discussed his contribution in the field of education.

Dr. Hari Singh Gaur University has got the status of Central University and now Chief Minister Dr. Yadav performed the bhoomi puja of Veerangana Rani Avanti Bai Lodhi University here.

In his address, the Chief Minister mentioned the efforts being made in the field of education in the state and said that Rani Avanti Bai was a brave woman who fought



against the British and sacrificed her life. A university is being started in Sagar in his name. Describing the new education policy as necessary for the country, the Chief Minister said that till now work was done on Lord Macaulay's education system, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made a big change by bringing the new education policy. On this occasion, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav also gave many more gifts to Sagar district.

BJP names 20 Maha candidates in 2nd LS list

GADKARI FROM NAGPUR, PANKAJA MUNDE IN BEED, 4 MPS AXED

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday announced 20 candidates from Maharashtra in its 2nd list of Lok Sabha candidates, including Union Minister Nitin Gadkari from Nagpur and Piyush Goyal from Mumbai North, and BJP Secretary Pankaja Munde from Beed, while 4 sitting MPs have been dropped. Prominent names include Raosaheb D. Danve (Jalna), Dr Bharati P. Pawar (Dindori-

ST), Dr Heena V. Gavit (Nandurbar), Dr. Subhash R. Bhamre (Dhule), Raksha N. Khadse (Raver), state Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar (Chandrapur), Mihir Kotecha (Mumbai North East), Dr. Sujaya R. Vikhe-Patil (Ahmednagar), and Ranjitsinh H. Naik-Nimbalkar (Madha). The other candidates are Sanjaykaka Patil (Sangli), Sudhakar T. Shrangare (Latur-SC), Murlidhar K. Mohol (Pune), Kapil M. Patil (Bhiwandi), Prataprao

P. Chikhalikar (Nanded), Ramdas C. Tadas (Wardha), Anup Dhotre (Akola), and Smita Wagh (Jalgaon).

The BJP has dropped four sitting MPs: Union Minister Goyal replaces Gopal C. Shetty (Mumbai North) while Pankaja Munde has been nominated in place of her sister and two-time MP Dr Pritam Munde (Beed), Mihir Kotecha comes in place of Manoj K. Kotak (Mumbai North East), and Smita Wagh replaces Unmesh B. Patil (Jalgaon).

Switch to other banks before March 15, NHAH advises Paytm FASTag users

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAH) on Wednesday advised Paytm FASTag users to procure a new FASTag issued by another bank before March 15.

This will help in avoiding penalties or any double fee charges while commuting on National Highways, the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways said in a statement. In line with the guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) regarding restrictions on Paytm Payments Bank, the Paytm FASTags users will not be able to recharge or top-up the balance post March 15.

However, they can use their existing balance to pay the toll beyond the stipulated date.

"For any further queries or



assistance related to Paytm FASTag, users can reach out to their respective banks or refer to the FAQs provided on the Indian Highway Management Company Limited (IHMC) website," said the Ministry.

The NHAH has urged all Paytm FASTag users to take proactive measures to ensure a seamless travel experience on the National Highways across the country.

Last month, the central bank had asked the National Payments Corporation of

India (NPCI) to ensure alternative arrangements for customers using the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) so that '@paytm' handles can be migrated in a seamless manner.

"It is reiterated that the holders of FASTag and National Common Mobility Cards (NCMC) issued by Paytm Payments Bank, may make alternative arrangements before March 15, 2024 to avoid any inconvenience," said the RBI.

Young generation need to acquire skill based education: Devendra Fadnavis

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Stating that it is need of the hour for the country's youth to acquire skill development along with education to make country's economy powerful, deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis said that skill development centres have been started in 100 colleges so far and announced that these centres would be named after Acharya Chanakya Skill Development Centre. Fadnavis appealed college students to avail benefit from these centres.

He was addressing the program organized by the department of skill development, entrepreneurship and innovation to inaugurate skill development centres in 100 colleges in an online manner from his official residence Meghadoot. Minister for the department Mangalprabhat Lodha, Maharashtra state skill development society commissioner Nidhi Chaudhary, Maharashtra state skill development society additional commissioner Anil Sonawane were present. Principals and students from 100 colleges attended via audio-visual medium.

Stating that the new education policy brought



by Prime minister Narendra Modi would bring about sea changes in country Fadnavis said that India was playing important role being third important economy in the World. He said that the government has given thrust on human resource development to make economy stronger so that it can acquire top rank in the country. Informing that the announcement of skill development centres in 100 colleges was made during the recently concluded budget session of the state assembly, Fadnavis said that accordingly, first phase of starting such centres in eligible colleges is launched and it is a matter of joy. Fadnavis congratulated minister Lodha for starting these centres after announcement in the budget about skill development centres.

Pointing out that with changing technology demand for skilled manpower is increasing world-over, Fadnavis said that the youth would be imparted necessary skill sets training through these centres. He asked college youth to avail benefit from these centres and asked them to acquire skill in addition to any degree which would give them employment opportunity.

Cabinet gives nod for pact with UAE on India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday, gave its ex-post facto approval to the Inter-Governmental Framework Agreement (IGFA) that was signed on February 13 between India and the United Arab Emirates on cooperation for the empowerment and operation of the India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).

The aim of the IGFA is to enhance bilateral relations and to further strengthen the relations between the two

countries in the ports, maritime, and logistics sectors, according to an official statement issued after the meeting. The IGFA includes areas of cooperation between the two countries with the objective of exploring the further potential of future joint investment and collaboration in respect of the development of the IMEC.

The agreement contains a detailed framework for cooperation between the two countries. The cooperation will be based on a set of mutually agreed upon principles, guidelines, and agreements consistent with the relevant rules and regulations of the countries' jurisdiction.

MSI launches new AI-powered laptops, 1st gaming handheld in India

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Leading laptop brand MSI on Wednesday launched the new lineup of artificial intelligence (AI)-powered laptops and its first gaming handheld device, Claw, in India.

The full range of laptops will be available in the market at a starting price of Rs 68,990.

"With the integration of latest technologies such as the Neural Processing Unit (NPU) in our Intel Core Ultra processors and Nvidia GeForce RTX GPUs, we're redefining possibilities in terms of performance, efficiency, and user experience," Bruce Lin, Regional Marketing Manager, MSI, said in a statement.

The gaming handheld also comes equipped with the Intel Core Ultra processor.



MSI has introduced a new lineup of 18-inch gaming laptops, including the Titan 18 HX, Raider 18 HX, and Stealth 18 AI Studio.

The Titan 18 HX and Raider 18 HX feature top-tier Intel 14th-generation Core i9 processors and Nvidia GeForce RTX 40 Series graphics, while the Stealth 18

AI Studio boasts Intel Core Ultra processors.

The all-new Vector 16/17 HX, Crosshair 16/17 HX, and Pulse 16/17 AI laptops offer full GPU power for an uncompromised gaming experience, the company said. Moreover, the company mentioned that the gaming handheld features a 7-inch

Full HD touchscreen display boasting a refresh rate of up to 120 Hz.

Additionally, the Claw supports MSI APP Player, offering access to Windows games as well as Android mobile games. It offers a 2-hour battery life under full workload conditions, according to the company.

AdaniConneX's Hyderabad data centre 1st in India to get 5-star grading from British Safety Council

Ahmedabad | Agencies

In a first for the country, the Hyderabad data centre of AdaniConneX - the joint venture between the Adani Group and leading data centre operator EdgeConneX - has received five-star grading in the occupational health and safety audit conducted by the British Safety Council.

The five-star audit is a comprehensive, contemporary and quantified process which benchmarks health and safety management performance against the latest best practice techniques.

AdaniConneX is currently building a 1 GW data centre platform, powered by renewable energy, in Hyderabad, Chennai, Noida and Pune.

"The award of a five-star grading, following our occupational best practice Health and Safety Audit, is an outstanding achievement and is



reflective of a proactive organisation committed to improvement in its health and safety arrangements, and managing risks to workers' health, safety and well-being," said Mike Robinson, CEO of the British Safety Council. The audit included documentation review and interviews with senior management, employees and key stakeholders, along with a sampling of operational activities.

It also measured performance against key health and safety management best practice indicators and conducted a detailed review of almost 60 components, said the company.



MERE BREACH OF CONTRACT WOULD NOT ATTRACT CRIMINAL PROSECUTION, SAYS SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Quashing an FIR arising out of a dispute related to payment of money, the Supreme Court has reiterated that a mere breach of contract by one of the parties would not attract criminal prosecution in every case.

A Bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Prasanna B. Varale was dealing with a criminal appeal filed by two officials of a bicycle manufacturing company against whom an FIR was filed in 2017 under Sections 406 (criminal breach of trust), 420 (cheating) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC, at Bengaluru Rural's Doddaballapura Police Station.

The complainant - who handled a contract for the assembly of bicycles, their transport and delivery - alleged that he was paid only Rs.35,37,390 against an invoice of over Rs. 1 crore.

The accused-appellants contended that the FIR primarily involves a civil dispute and the entire criminal proceedings initiated against them were nothing but an abuse of the



process. In its verdict, the apex court said that the dispute as to how many bicycles the complainant had assem-

bled and the amount liable to be paid is a 'civil dispute'. The complainant has not been able to estab-

lish that the appellants' intention to cheat him was there right from the beginning, it added.

"We are of the considered view that this is a case where the inherent powers should have been exercised by the High Court under Section 482 of the Criminal Procedure Code as the powers are there to stop the abuse of the process and to secure the ends of justice," said the Supreme Court. Earlier in 2020, the Karnataka High Court had dismissed the petition under Section 482 of the Criminal Procedure Code for quashing the FIR. Refusing to accept the contention that the dispute between the parties in any case was civil in nature, the High Court had held that prima facie a case of cheating was made out against the appellants.

In its 2015 ruling in Vesa Holdings (P) Ltd. vs State of Kerala case, the apex court had held that every breach of contract would not give rise to the offence of cheating, and it is required to be shown that the accused had fraudulent or dishonest intention at the time of making the promise.

Maharashtra cabinet clears updated Marathi language policy

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a bid to lure the Marathi Manos in the run up to the Lok Sabha elections, a Maharashtra cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday approved the updated Marathi language policy. The policy gives priority to the application of modern technology, preservation and conservation of all dialects of Marathi.

New technology will be used keeping in mind the current information technology as well as systems like Chat GPT. Also, easy applications will be developed with the help of modern technology to translate various dialects into the Marathi language.

In accordance with the preservation, conservation, promotion, dissemination and development of the Marathi language, the government hopes that the use of Marathi will be further



increased in education and all public affairs.

In the next 25 years, the policy proposes to establish the Marathi language as the language of knowledge and employment, to provide higher education in various disciplines such as science and technology, medicine in the Marathi medium, to equip the Marathi language with new technology, to develop the Marathi language for administrative affairs that can be under-

stood by the common people.

Besides, the policy focuses on preserving and conserving dialect languages. Also the objective of establishing Marathi as an important language at the national and global level will also be achieved.

The Marathi language policy includes school education, higher and technical education, computer education, law and justice, finance and industry and the media.

New Haryana CM wins floor test by voice vote

Chandigarh | Agencies

Day after assuming charge, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Wednesday won the floor test in the House during a special session of the Assembly.

The confidence motion was passed with a voice vote.

Defying the whip, three out of the MLAs of the breakaway faction Jananayak Janta Party (JJP) - Devinder Babli, Ishwar Singh, and Ram Kumar Gautam -- came to the Assembly, but left the House when the trust vote motion was taken up. Meanwhile, the leader of the opposition, Bhupinder Hooda, and Congress MLA, B.B. Batra, said the House was con-



vened at a short notice. Another Congress MLA, Raghuvir Kadian, claimed that there is instability in the state, which calls for the imposition of President's Rule. He also sought a secret ballot for the trust vote,

claiming that five MLAs of the BJP would vote against the motion.

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

TRAFFIC ADVISORY ISSUED AHEAD OF FARMERS MAHAPANCHAYAT IN DELHI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In view of Farmers Mahapanchayat on Thursday at Ramlila ground, the Delhi Traffic Police issued an advisory alerting the commuters about traffic regulations and routes diverted.

According to the traffic advisory, on Thursday, movement of general traffic will be regulated from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, Barakhamba Road, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, Tolstoy Marg, Asaf Ali Road, Jai Singh Road, Swami Vivekanand Marg, Sansad Marg, Netaji Subhash Marg, Baba Kharag Singh Marg, Minto Road, Ashoka Road, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh flyover, Connaught Circus, Bhavbhuti Marg, DDU Marg and Chaman Lal Marg.

"Traffic diversion may be imposed from 6 a.m. on Delhi Gate, Mir Dard Chowk, Ajmeri Gate Chowk, Guru Nanak Chowk, Kamla Market road, Paharganj Chowk, roundabout Jhandewalan, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh flyover from Barakhamba Road to Guru Nanak Chowk, Janpath



Road, Tolstoy Marg crossing, KG Marg crossing and roundabout GPO," read the advisory. The traffic cops further requested commuters to cooperate by avoiding or bypassing the above-mentioned roads, if

possible, and by making maximum use of public transport, especially Metro services.

"General public is advised to keep sufficient time at hand while planning road journeys through the

diverted routes. People who are going towards ISBT, Railway Station, or Airport are advised to carefully plan their travel with sufficient time at hand," said a senior traffic police official.

No coercive action against Pakistan Hindu refugee in camp at Majnu Ka Tila: Delhi HC to DDA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court has directed the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) not to take any coercive action to evict a Pakistani Hindu refugee residing at the city's Majnu Ka Tila Pakistani Hindu Refugees Camp.

This interim decision was made following a plea challenging an impending demolition drive by the DDA.

Justice Mini Pushkarna, overseeing the case, referred to a previous statement from the Union Government in 2013, emphasising its commitment to support the Hindu community fleeing persecution from Pakistan.

Based on this, the court ordered that "no coercive action shall be taken against the petitioner" until the next hearing date, March 19.

"Considering the statement made on behalf of the then Additional Solicitor General of India, as recorded



in order dated 29th May, 2013 in W.P.(C) No. 3712/2013 that the Union of India shall make endeavor to extend all support to the Hindu Community which has entered India from Pakistan, it is directed that no coercive action shall be taken against the petitioner, till the next date of hearing," the court said.

The plea by Ravi Ranjan Singh was filed in response to a public notice dated March 4, which demanded that residents vacate the camp by March 6 ahead of its demolition.

Singh's counsel argued that the Pakistani Hindu refugees have been established at Majnu Ka Tilla for many years, relying on basic ameni-

ties provided by the authorities.

In defence, the DDA cited a recent directive from the National Green Tribunal (NGT) mandating the removal of encroachments on the Yamuna Flood Plain Zone near Gurudwara Majnu Ka Tilla.

The DDA also mentioned a penalty imposed upon it, and that it is its obligation to comply with judicial orders.

Counsel for DDA said: "... though the DDA may have all the sympathies with the petitioner, however, the DDA is bound by the various directions that have passed by the learned NGT." The court has issued notice and included the Union of India as a party to the case. "... this Court is of the opinion that the Union of India is a necessary party before this Court. Accordingly, Union of India is impleaded as respondent no.2 in the present petition. Let amended Memo of Parties be filed within a period of three working days," the court said.

Mukhtar Ansari gets life term in fake arms licence case

Varanasi | Agencies

A Special MP/MLA Court in Varanasi, on Wednesday, sentenced politician Mukhtar Ansari to life imprisonment in a 36-year-old fake arms licence case.

He has been convicted under sections 467 r/w 120B as well as under Sections 420, 468 IPC. He was also convicted under Section 30 of the Arms Act.

The court, on Tuesday, had convicted Mukhtar Ansari in the fake arms licence case.

During the hearing, Ansari participated in court proceedings via video conferencing from Banda jail, where he is currently incarcerated. In June 1987, Ansari submitted an application to the district magistrate of



Ghazipur for a double-barrel gun licence. Subsequently, the arms licence was acquired using forged signatures of both the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police.

In December 1990, when this fraudulent activity was

exposed by the CB-CID, a complaint was filed with the police.

Subsequently, based on this complaint, a case was registered at a police station in Ghazipur against five individuals including Mukhtar Ansari.

FOUR KILLED, NINE INJURED IN ROAD ACCIDENT IN BIHAR'S MUZAFFARPUR

Patna: Four persons were killed and nine others critically injured on Wednesday after a speeding SUV ramed into a stationary truck in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district.

The incident occurred around 3 a.m. when the victims were returning from Muzaffarpur after attending marriage function, Rampur Hari police station's SHO said.

Preliminary investigation revealed that driver of the SUV dozed off leading to the fatal accident.

The deceased have been identified as Shohan Mahto, Pradyuman Dangar, Bipin Mahto and Indra Kumar Dangar. The injured were admitted to nearby hospitals. All the victims hailed from Balligarh village of Sitamarhi district.

"We have sent the bodies to Sadar hospital for post-mortem. We also rescued the injured persons and admitted them to hospitals. The family members were informed about the accident," the SHO said.

PM Modi to distribute loans to 1 lakh street vendors on March 14

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Thursday (March 14) distribute loans to 1 lakh street vendors, including 5,000 of them from the national capital, under the PM SVANidhi scheme, an official said on Wednesday.

PM SVANidhi scheme was launched on June 1, 2020 amid the global economic crisis caused by the pandemic as part of PM Modi's vision to provide economic support to the marginalised sections. "More than 82 lakh loans, amounting to over Rs 10,978 crore, have been disbursed to more than 62 lakh street vendors across the country under the scheme. Delhi alone has witnessed the distribution of nearly 2 lakh loans, amounting to Rs 232 crore. The scheme continues to be a beacon of financial inclusion and holistic welfare for those who have been historically underserved," the PMO said in a statement.



During the programme, PM Modi will also lay the foundation of two additional corridors of Delhi Metro -- Lajpat Nagar - Saket-G Block, and Inderlok - Indraprastha.

These corridors will together be of more than 20 km length and help improve connectivity and further reduce traffic congestion.

The stations on Lajpat Nagar to Saket-G-Block corridor will include

Lajpat Nagar, Andrews Ganj, Greater Kailash -1, Chirag Delhi, Pushpa Bhawan, Saket District Centre, Pushp Vihar, Saket G - Block.

The stations on Inderlok - Indraprastha corridor will include Inderlok, Daya Basti, Sarai Rohilla, Ajmal Khan Park, Nabi Karim, New Delhi, LNJP Hospital, Delhi Gate, Delhi Sachivalaya and Indraprastha.

Yogi Adityanath terms Congress, SP as 'liabilities', urges people not to vote for them

Unnao | Agencies

Describing the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress as "liabilities", UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has appealed to people on Wednesday to desist from voting for these parties that cannot ensure essentials such as ration, housing, healthcare to the underprivileged, nor honour people's faith by getting the Ram Temple built in Ayodhya.

While inaugurating and laying the foundation stone for 103 development projects totalling Rs 241.26 crore in Unnao district, he emphasised, "Only those who work without bias should have the right to come to power. And there is only one, unanimous voice in the country today, '2024 mein ek bar fir Modi Sarkar'."

The chief minister said that the double-engine government exists due to the support of the people.

"With your blessings, the temple of Lord Ram was constructed in Ayodhya. The Congress and SP had failed to

undertake the construction of Ram Lalla's temple."

Asserting that 'Viksit Bharat' should be the collective commitment of people, he stated, "The Prime Minister has emphasised the concept of 'Panch Pran' for every citizen. Fulfilling civic duties is only possible when an individual upholds the Constitution and prioritises the nation above all. Our foremost aim should be the welfare of the country. Progress is achieved when we work towards this objective."

The chief minister further said, "Previously, India lacked respect internationally. However, in the last decade, India has surged to new heights of development. Today, India stands as a global leader. As we enter the second year of 'Amrit Kaal', in Modi's third term, our aim is to propel India to become the world's third-largest economy and herald the dawn of a 'Viksit Bharat'."

From PM Modi to 'Pradhan-Parshad' (every local leader), we are all dedicated to advancing the cause of a Viksit Bharat."



INDIA WILL BE WORLD LEADER UNDER PRIME MINISTER MODI'S LEADERSHIP: CHIEF MINISTER DR. YADAV

Vidisha Lok Sabha constituency and Bhopur assembly constituency has given public representatives with leadership capabilities to the country. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav performs bhoomi puja and lays the foundation of development works worth Rs 65 crore 55 lakh in Mandideep. Ex Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan attends as a special guest. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav takes part in Jan Aabhar Yatra

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said that the Shivalinga located in Bhopur is an expression of the rich architectural legacy of the country. It is a matter of good fortune for Vidisha Lok Sabha constituency to have got great leaders like former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna Late. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Late. Rajmata Scindia, Late. Sushma Swaraj similarly Bhopur assembly constituency to have got leaders like former Chief Minister Late Sunderlal Patwa. These constituencies have provided the country with public representatives full of leadership capabilities. Swami Vivekananda had predicted that the 21st century will belong to India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is providing adequate resources and funds to all the states for the progress of the country, and under his leadership India will definitely become the Vishwa Guru. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav was addressing a programme of the dedication and bhoomi puja of development works costing Rs 65 crore 55 lakh in Mandideep Ex Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was specially present in the programme. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav inaugurated the programme by lighting the



lamp. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav and Ex Chief Minister Shri Chouhan were welcomed by the public representatives with garlands and hockey sticks presented to them by the players of Raisen district. Rani Kamalapati has developed as the best railway station

in the country, with the initiative of Prime Minister Modi and Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav. Due to their will power and commitment towards development, the state bagged gifts of Ken-Betwa, Parvati-Kali Sindh-Chambal project. Chief

Minister Dr. Yadav said that all the demands related to development and public facilities of Bhopur assembly constituency placed by MLA Surendra Patwa will be fulfilled. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav also distributed benefits of schemes to the beneficiaries.

BJP's double-engine govt made MP a progressive state: Ex-CM Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday said he had taken over the state from the Congress with a tag of 'BIMARU', however, the BJP's double-engine government (Centre and State) has made it a progressive state. Addressing a programme in Mandideep in Sehore district, which falls under Vidisha Lok Sabha constituency, Chouhan said, he believes that Madhya Pradesh will become a developed state under the leadership of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav. "Madhya Pradesh used to be counted among the states that fall under BIMARU tag, but now it is a progressive state. I believe that the state will become a developed state under Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's leadership," Chouhan said. He also appealed to his successor to continue public beneficiary schemes (introduced during his tenure). "There is no lack of money for public beneficiary schemes, and I would appeal to Chief Minister Mohan Yadav to continue with these schemes," he said.



Chouhan will fight the upcoming Lok Sabha election from Vidisha. Vidisha Lok Sabha constituency was previously represented by BJP stalwarts like late Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1991), Sushma Swaraj (2009 and 2014) and newspaper

publisher Ramnath Goenka (1971). Chouhan last won the Vidisha Lok Sabha seat in 2004 but resigned after becoming Chief Minister. He is the sitting MLA from Budhni seat, which also falls under the Vidisha Lok Sabha

More than 60 officials of Congress Medical Cell in Madhya Pradesh joined BJP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The phase of party-change continues before the Lok Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh. Many Congress leaders are joining BJP every day. In this sequence, on Wednesday, more than 60 officials of the medical cell of Congress joined the BJP. More than 60 people from 12 districts including Congress Health and Medical Cell in-charge Dr. Basant Rai, Gwalior Chambal division in-charge Dr. Siddhant Dubey, in front of State President Vishnudutt Sharma and State Convenor of New Joining Group Dr. Narottam Mishra



at the state office of BJP on Wednesday. Doctors and more than 20 pharmacists joined BJP. Similarly, many Congress leaders from Morena region also joined BJP. The state president and senior leaders welcomed him wearing angavastr.

It is known that Congress workers from every sector in the state are joining BJP. From former Union Ministers to former MPs, former MLAs and lower level officials are leaving Congress and joining BJP. There are many leaders whose names were being floated as possible candidates for Lok Sabha, they also left the Congress.

AIIMS BHOPAL AND JNCHRC WILL JOINTLY FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

Team Absolute | Bhopal

AIIMS Bhopal and Jawaharlal Nehru Cancer Hospital and Research Center (JNCHRC) will now work together for cancer prevention. In this regard, a MoU was signed with JNCHRC at AIIMS Bhopal today. On this occasion, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal, Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh said that this is a good initiative. We need to work on preventive oncology through screening and awareness. Just as after vaccination of cervical cancer in women, cancer cases will reduce by up to 99%, similarly, cancer cases can be controlled with appropriate testing and timely information. The MoU was signed by Professor (Dr) Rehan Ul Haq Dean (Research) in the presence of Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director, AIIMS Bhopal, while Dr Gautam Kumar Sharan, Director Medical, on behalf



of JNCHRC. On this occasion, Dean (Academic) Prof. (Dr) Rajneesh Joshi, Prof. (Dr) Manish Gupta, Head of Radiation Oncology Department and other faculty members of AIIMS

Bhopal were also present along with other representatives of JNCHRC. Dr. Manish Gupta said that under this MOU, both the institutions will jointly promote academic and research work

and will also run a student exchange program which will be helpful in the prevention and treatment of cancer. AIIMS Bhopal will act as the nodal institute.

Situation of stampede in Congress, all ready to go with Prime Minister: VD Sharma

Team Absolute | Bhopal

State President and MP of Bharatiya Janata Party, Vishnudutt Sharma reached booth number 216 of Ward Number 61 of Avadhpuri Mandal of Govindpura Assembly under Booth Vijay Abhiyan on Wednesday and reached B-48, residence of Booth President Girish Kumar Singh in Crystal Campus Colony and addressed the booth committee meeting. State President Sharma, while addressing the booth committee meeting, said that at booth number 216 of Ward-61 of Govindpura Assembly, where the meeting is being held under the Booth Vijay Abhiyan, there are a total of 1167 voters, out of which 482 votes in the last assembly were for BJP. Congress has got 294 votes. These were A-plus booths from the party's point of view. Still, we have to work to increase 370 votes at this



booth on the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Sharma said in the booth committee meeting that to increase 370 votes at every booth, we have to contact the new voters of 18-19 years of age along with the beneficiaries of the welfare schemes of the BJP's double engine government at the Center and the state. Today, the new voters who are 18-19 years old have not seen the Madhya Pradesh of Mr. Bantadhar's rule before 2003. Tell such

voters about the difficult situation the state was going through before the formation of the BJP government in the state in 2003. Also, put before the public the development, poor welfare and public welfare works done in the last ten years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and call upon them to vote for the Bharatiya Janata Party. Sharma said that BJP workers have an emotional connection with increasing 370

votes at every booth. Our leader Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee ji agitated for the removal of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir and he even sacrificed his life. Therefore, increase the party's 370 votes at every booth and dedicate them at the feet of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, this will be a true tribute to Dr. Mukherjee. State President Sharma said that in the last assembly elections, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, under the guidance of the party's National President Jagat Prakash Nadda and the efficient strategy of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the party received a record 49 percent votes. Are. In the history of Madhya Pradesh, no party had ever got so many votes. Booth victory campaign is also being run to increase 10 percent votes in Lok Sabha elections. The campaign, which started today on March 13, will continue till March 22.

Shankar Lalwani from Indore, Vivek Bunty from Chhindwara will contest Lok Sabha elections

Bhopal: BJP has released the second list for the Lok Sabha elections. In which candidates have been declared for the remaining five seats of Madhya Pradesh. BJP has fielded Vivek Bunty Sahu against Shankar Lalwani from Indore and Nakul Nath from Chhindwara. BJP has given ticket to Savitri Thakur from Dhar. BJP has once again given a chance to Anil Firoziya from Ujjain. Balaghat Bharti Pardihi will contest the elections. Two women have been given tickets in the second list of BJP. In which Balaghat and Dhar are seats. In this way BJP has declared all its 29 candidates from Madhya Pradesh.

Minister of State Krishna Gaur performed Bhoomi Puja for development works worth lakhs of rupees in Misrod

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Backward Classes and Minority Welfare, Krishna Gaur on Wednesday performed Bhoomi Puja of various development works in Ward-53 Jatkhedi of Misrod Mandal and gave various gifts of development to the people of the area. Minister Gaur said that whatever demands the local people have made, all those demands will be fulfilled soon. During the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, continuous development work is being done in the state. This miracle has been done by the effective leadership of PM Modi. Our country is continuously progressing under the leadership of PM. She performed Bhoomi Puja of the construction work of culvert near Rajabhoj Arcade to be completed at a



cost of Rs 5 lakh 24958, boundary wall and repairing work of Bagmugalia Lakshya Homes Park costing Rs 4 lakh 63769. Rs 9 lakh 99,917 have been sanctioned for the construction of toilet and furniture in Ganesh Nagar School. Performed Bhoomi Puja of boundary wall and repairing work near Fortune Divine City of Misrod, which cost Rs

2 lakh 81312. Bhoomipujan of boundary wall and repairing work was done at Shri Bhimeswar Mahadev Shiv Temple, Hanuman Nagar Park, Hoshangabad Road, which cost Rs 5 lakh 78, 675. At the same time, Bhoomi Puja was performed for the construction of drain near Jatkhedi Vishram Ghat at a cost of Rs 4 lakh 46, 579.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav will inaugurate PM Shri Tourism Air Service and PM Shri Religious Tourism Heli Service

ACCESS TO TOURIST DESTINATIONS WILL BE EASY. BENEFITS OF TOURISM WILL REACH REMOTE AREAS. 2 TWIN ENGINE AIRCRAFT WITH 8 SEATERS WILL BE OPERATED.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav will launch PM Shri

Tourism Air Service and PM Shri Religious Tourism Heli Service with the aim of facilitating access to the tourist destinations of the state and extending the benefits of tourism to remote areas. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav will inaugurate the service at a state level program at the State Hangar on Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 12:30 pm. Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Tourism, Culture and Religious Trust and Endowments, Dharmendra Lodhi and distinguished citizens will be present in the program.

Principal Secretary Tourism and Culture and Managing Director Madhya Pradesh, Shiv Shekhar Shukla said that the tourism air service will be operated by Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board on PPP mode. Initially, two twin engine aircraft with 8 seaters will be operated. The route will be selected by the operator from the major airports of the state like Indore, Jabalpur, Gwalior, Bhopal, Khajuraho as well as airstrips. This will provide faster means of travel to the tourists and will also increase domestic tourism.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi enhanced India's credibility in the world: Vijayvargiya

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Urban Administration and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya has said that in the last decade, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has enhanced India's credibility in the world. The double engine government in the state has done many works for the welfare of the general public. Minister Vijayvargiya was addressing the ceremony after the bhoomi puja and dedication of development works costing about Rs 34 crore in Manasa of Neemuch district on Tuesday. These works are being undertaken by Manasa Municipal Council. On this occasion, Member of Parliament



Sudhir Gupta, MLA Anirudh Maru, MLA Neemuch Dilip Singh Parihar and public representatives were present. Urban Development Minister Vijayvargiya said that a large number

of revenue cases have been resolved by running the campaign in the last one and a half month. He said that the state government is consistently working for the empowerment of

women with the assistance of self-help groups in rural areas. Vijayvargiya said that pucca houses are being provided to the poor people of the state under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. On this occasion, Urban Development Minister Vijayvargiya dedicated the 100-bed civil hospital building in Manasa built at a cost of Rs 20 crore. Urban Development Minister Vijayvargiya performed Bhoomi Puja and dedicated various development works worth Rs 13 crore 45 lakh in Neemuch. He said that the development works in the urban areas will be finished with utmost quality within the stipulated timeframe.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Citizenship under CAA

Day after the Central government notified the rules for Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) implementation, an online portal was launched on Tuesday to add pace to the process and also facilitate quick disbursal of applications by the citizenship seekers -- the refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan in particular. Those seeking citizenship under the CAA will have to first get themselves registered on the portal by filling up personal details. Once the oppressed minorities of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan fill up the basic details on the portal, they will be accordingly guided to fill out the right form. Citizenship seekers will have to upload the required documents on the portal and also pay the required fees or procedural costs. They will be asked to appear before the designated government official with all the original documents for verification. Once they clear this due process of application submission and verification, the applicants will be expected to sign an oath document. The Empowered Committee in respective states have the final authority to grant approval for the citizenship. The Certificate of Naturalization will be handed over to qualified applicants after clearance from the Empowered Committee. They will have the flexibility of receiving their certificate in both formats -- digital as well as ink signed certificate. The former is available by default while for the hand-signed certificate, one will have to mark his/her physical presence at the government office and collect the certificate in person. 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.

India well-positioned to tackle infectious diseases, climate change, nutrition issues: Soumya Swaminathan

Sanjay Jog

Former WHO Chief Scientist and Deputy Director General for Programmes, Dr Soumya Swaminathan, who on Tuesday received the prestigious Yashwantrao Chavan National Award 2023, feels that India is well-equipped and has positioned itself to effectively tackle various challenges, including infectious diseases, new pandemic, climate change, and nutrition with the present institutional build-up, collaborative approach, new and emerging technologies, and research & development.

The daughter of noted agricultural scientist late M.S. Swaminathan, Soumya Swaminathan is the Chairman of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, who hopes that India will be able to produce a vaccine to tackle tuberculosis soon.

In an exclusive interaction with IANS, she spoke at length about the ways to tackle these issues. Here are the excerpts:

On Infectious Diseases

"There are different kinds of infectious diseases. We have TB, malaria, and those which are expanding their footprints globally such as dengue, chikungunya, and also the newly emerging infections which we cannot predict, but have to remain prepared against.

So we need to tackle infectious diseases from a scientific and public health point of view. We understand enough about transmission, so we know how to prevent it even though we may not have vaccines for some of these infections.

However, with the advancement of technologies, including genomics, and different platforms being developed, we are in a good position to be able to develop diagnostics, vaccines, and drugs. What we need is a collaborative effort, because these are very complicated and complex infections.

They need vaccinologists, immunologists, virologists, epidemiologists, molecular biologists, physicists, and engineers. The collaborative efforts are likely to lead to new and innovative solutions.

The best way to prepare for the worst pandemic is to try to tackle the infectious diseases we have today. If we can use new technologies, we will be in an even better position to deal with the next pandemic.

Climate Change

Globally, India has been a strong voice on climate change and may be pushing for equity because the effects of climate change are not felt in countries, which are not major contributors to the phenomenon.

Unfortunately, even though our per capita contribution to greenhouse gases is extremely low, even lower than Africa, the brunt of the effect is being felt by us. Be it global warming leading to prolonged heat or floods, droughts, or



cyclones, they are occurring more frequently now.

Whether it is an indirect effect of climate change through reducing the yield of major crops and potentially contributing to food and nutrition insecurity, there are many ways in which the climate is impacting our health today.

So, while India needs to have a strong voice on the global side and fight for equity, we need to look immediately at the adaptation measures as to how we protect the health and livelihood of millions of people, particularly the poor and the vulnerable, who are already just about managing.

We have rich agroecology and there is a lot of traditional wisdom in India to use our water sustainably. We knew how to build houses that were traditionally better able to withstand heat. Some of these things we need to go back to in order to protect the biodiversity that still exists.

In the case of agro biodiversity, we have very diverse, rich varieties of rice, pulses, and millet, which have properties that make them resistant

to climate change and droughts.

We have to invest again in our traditional ways of growing crops and harvesting water, so that we can start to mitigate some of the impacts of climate change, which are already being felt.

Nutrition

There is a lot of science in nutrition as well. It is critically important particularly for the young child though nutrition is important throughout the life course, but probably the critical period is pregnancy and the first two years of a child's life, what we call the first 1,000 days -- as that's when the brain develops.

For India to be a developed nation with a \$5 trillion economy, our human capital is our biggest asset, so we need to invest in human capital which is the health and education of young children.

That is where we have to begin. We have to see our data, find out where we have done well, and where we still have gaps. We need to take a scientific approach to fill up those

gaps.

We have to think of our strategies to achieve in a way that fits within our traditional food habits, and diet. We should not be resorting to drugs, medicines, and chemicals to solve the nutritional problems. They have to be addressed through a dietary option as it is the only sustainable way to improve nutrition.

Therefore, we have to look at agriculture as a solution to our nutritional needs and investing in this will pay off in the long term in terms of economic dividend. It is also important to invest in children between the ages of six months and three years by establishing creches so that women can go to work and improve the women's labour force. It provides a safe and secure environment where children get physical and mental stimulation and nutrition. This will set a platform for a healthy childhood."

international

Nepal: Prachanda wins third vote of confidence in 14 months

Team Absolute | New Delhi
Nepali Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias Prachanda on Wednesday won third vote of confidence in the last 14 months.

Speaker Devraj Ghimire said that PM Prachanda secured 157 votes while 110 lawmakers voted against him.

Parliament secretariat said that out of 275 members, only 268 were present in the house during the voting process.

PM Prachanda was supported by UML, Rashtriya Swatantra Party, CPN (Unified Socialist) and some independent lawmakers. Earlier, PM Prachanda parted ways with the Nepali Congress and formed a new alliance with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN-UML) and other parties.

He became Nepal's Prime Minister in December 2022 with the support of CPN-UML



and within two months, he ditched the political alliance with UML and joined the hands with Nepali Congress.

In March 2023, he secured the second vote of confidence with the support of the Nepali Congress and inducted the minister from the party. But his political bonhomie with the Nepali Congress did not sustain for more than one year.

In the first week of March,

Prachanda ditched his partnership with the Nepali Congress and joined hands with the UML and other parties which some describe as a pro-Beijing alliance. UML Chairman K P Oli has made clear that China had no role in the recent government change in Kathmandu.

"It is we exercised and built the new alliance, not China," he said while brushing off the

speculation that China brought the communist parties of Nepal together like in 2018.

Addressing the meeting of the House of Representatives, Prachanda said that it was necessary for the government to get the confidence vote to improve the economy and for overall political instability.

"I need the support of the parliament to feel proud of nationalism, self-worth and sovereignty. I assure the esteemed parliament that thousands of new startups and entrepreneurship ventures will be started. Systematic efforts would be made towards self-reliance," the Prime Minister said.

He said that the initiation of good governance has restored the public faith towards democracy. "Confidence of the citizens towards the state would be enhanced through public service delivery and good governance," he said.

Japanese Space One's maiden rocket explodes after lift-off



Tokyo | Agencies

The inaugural rocket launch of Japanese company Space One failed on Wednesday as the Kairos rocket exploded seconds after lifting off, marking the first attempt from the country's private sector to put a satellite into orbit.

Shortly after 11:00 a.m. local time (7:30 a.m. IST) at the launch site in Wakayama Prefecture, western Japan, smoke and fire were seen following the take-off of the 18-metre, four-stage solid-fuel rocket, multiple local media live streams showed, Xinhua news agency reported.

In a statement, Space One said the flight was intentionally terminated, Nikkei Asia reported. "A mid-flight termination procedure was carried out. We

are looking into the situation," the statement read.

The Kairos rocket carried a small government intelligence satellite that weighed 100 kilograms.

The company founded in 2018 aims to do "space courier services" with 20 annual launches by 2020.

With a series of space launches, Japan is catching up in the space race, along with India, the US, Russia, and China. In February, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) successfully launched its flagship rocket the H3. The cost-efficient rocket aims to make nearly 20 satellites and probes launches by 2030.

The agency also effortlessly ached the first-ever "pinpoint" moon landing this year.

Ukraine-based Russian armed groups claim raids into Russia



Moscow | Agencies

Three Ukraine-based Russian paramilitary groups said they have crossed into Russia and are now fighting government troops there, media reported. The Freedom of Russia Legion (FRL) and Siberian Battalion (SB) posted videos purportedly showing their fighters in Russia's Belgorod and Kursk regions, BBC reported.

The FRL and an exiled Russian politician claimed two villages were now in control of "liberation forces".

Russia's Defence Ministry said the breakthrough attempts were thwarted.

It claimed more than 234 Ukrainian troops had been killed and several tanks had been destroyed.

According to Belgorod's regional governor, Vyacheslav Gladkov, one member of Russia's territorial defence forces was killed and 10 civilians were injured, BBC reported.

These numbers have not yet been verified by the BBC.

Ukraine's military denied any involvement in Tuesday's cross-border raids.

Andriy Yusov, a spokesman for the country's military intelligence, said the paramilitary groups were "independent organisations" of Russian nationals, and therefore operating "at home".

In a separate development, Russia said Ukraine had launched 25 drones on targets across Russia, but the attack was thwarted.

Biden, Trump clinch nominations, stage set for presidential election rematch

Washington | Agencies

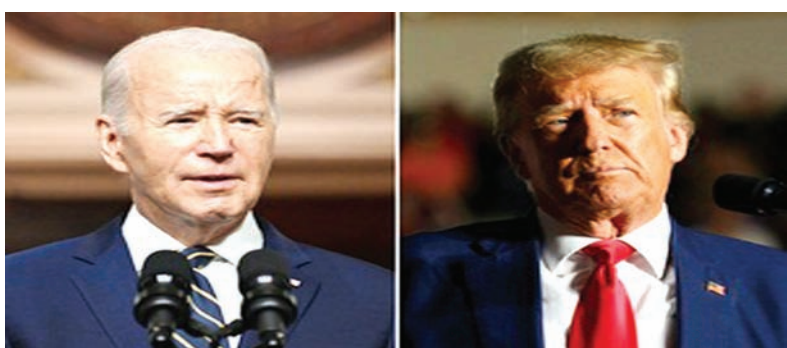
US President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump have secured enough delegates to become their respective party's 2024 nominee, setting the stage for a presidential rematch.

With his win in Georgia's primary, Joe Biden has cleared the 1,968 delegate mark out of 3,934 total to lock up this year's Democratic nomination and represent the party on the ballot in November, the US media reported.

Joe Biden will also win the Democratic primaries in the states of Mississippi and Washington, US media outlets projected Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump has secured enough delegates to become the Republican Party's presidential nominee after winning primaries in the states of Georgia, Mississippi and Washington.

Joe Biden and Donald Trump have ratcheted up rhetoric against each other after the "Super Tuesday" primaries earlier this month, when they both won by a landslide in their own party's face-offs. The lengthy, bitter battle for the White House --



poised to deepen the US political divides -- enters a new phase, Xinhua news agency reported.

"Trump and I have a very different value set," Joe Biden recently told supporters in Atlanta, Georgia, noting that if Donald Trump returns to the White House, the US will be filled with "resentment, revenge and retribution." Additionally, Joe Biden criticised Donald Trump's positions on issues such as abortion, taxes, and immigration.

During a rally in Rome, Georgia, Donald Trump attacked Joe Biden on immigration and border security, accusing him of allow-

ing illegal immigration from the southern border of the US, saying that Joe Biden's "crime" will never be forgiven. At the rally, Donald Trump also mocked Joe Biden's mannerisms.

Joe Biden unseated Trump in the 2020 election but the Republicans refused to acknowledge defeat and alleged massive voter fraud.

The Washington Post noted that the 2024 general election, which has kicked off in earnest, is promising to be "the longest, most expensive and, perhaps, most divisive presidential race in recent memory."

Hamas delegation to visit Cairo this week for truce talks, temporary ceasefire likely

Tel Aviv | Agencies

Bringing an end to the deadlock in ceasefire talks, a delegation of senior Hamas leaders led by its political bureau head, Ismail Haniyeh is set to visit Cairo this week for mediatory talks. Sources in the Israel Defence Ministry told IANS that the talks would be held at the mediation of the special envoy of US President Joe Biden, Brett McGurk, who will visit Cairo this week. According to the sources, Hamas leadership has agreed to release, women, elderly and wounded Israeli hostages in its custody in exchange for the Palestinian prisoners kept in Israeli jails. Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Al-Thani and Egyptian Intelligence Head Major General Abbas Kamel will also be part of the mediatory



talks in Cairo. However, the Israel Defence Ministry source did not give the exact date of the truce talks but instead revealed that the talks will take place this week itself.

US President Joe Biden had announced earlier that ceasefire would commence before the holy Ramadan month. While

Ramadan month has begun, there was no progress in ceasefire talks and the sudden breakthrough has given hopes for an imminent ceasefire. In the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas that began on October 7, 2023, more than 31,000 Palestinians, including a large number of women and children have lost their lives. Around 241 Israeli soldiers were killed in addition to the 1,200 people killed in southern Israel on October 7 last year when Hamas militants swarmed into Kibbutz Beeri, Kfar Aza and Reim festival areas of southern Israel.

Since the start of the war, there was a one-week ceasefire from November 24 to December 1, which saw the release of 105 Israeli hostages in exchange of 324 Palestinian prisoners kept in Israeli prisons.



Maha name-change spree: 7 Mumbai stations rechristened, Ahmednagar is now 'Ahilyanagar'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government on Wednesday rechristened Ahmednagar town as 'Ahilyanagar' in memory of the legendary Queen of Indore Rani Ahilyabai Holkar, besides renaming seven suburban railway stations of Mumbai, officials said here on Wednesday. Similarly, Pune district's Velhe taluka has been renamed as 'Rajgad' after the historic fort which was the first capital of the Maratha Empire founded by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj for 27 years.

The state cabinet presided over by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde also has accorded approval to rename seven suburban stations on the Central Railway and Western Railway with a



modern identity. They are: Curry Road station shall be renamed as Lalbaug station, Sandhurst Road station as Dongri station, Marine Lines as Mumbadevi station, Charni Road as Girgaon station, Cotton Green as Kalachowki station, Dockyard as Mazagaon station, Kings Circle as Tirhankar Parshvanath station. After the approval of the Maharashtra Legislature, the proposal for these name-changes shall be sent to the Union Home Ministry and Railways for clearance and implementation. Last year, the state government had renamed Aurangabad to Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and Osmanabad as Dharashiv, and the latest name-changing spree comes ahead of the Model Code of Conduct for the ensuing Lok Sabha elections.

Leave BJP and Join Us": Uddhav Thackeray to Nitin Gadkari

Team Absolute | Yavatmal

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray has again asked Union minister Nitin Gadkari to leave the BJP if he is being "insulted", saying the opposition in Maharashtra would ensure his victory in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Speaking at a rally at Pusa

in eastern Maharashtra's Yavatmal district on Tuesday, Thackeray said people like (former Congress leader) Kripashankar Singh, whom the BJP once targeted (over alleged corruption), figured in the saffron party's first list of candidates along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but Gadkari's name was missing. "I had told



Gadkari this two days ago, and I am repeating it again. If you are being insulted, leave the BJP and join the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). We will ensure your victory. We will make you a minister when our government comes to power, and it will be a post with powers," he said. The opposition MVA comprises the Shiv Sena (UBT),

Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) and Congress.

Last week, responding to Thackeray's offer to Gadkari to contest as a candidate of the opposition, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis mocked the Sena (UBT) chief, saying it was like a man in the street offering someone to make US president.

Centre fast-tracks setting up of multi-modal logistics park in Pune

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

The 67th meeting of Network Planning Group took up for discussion three projects of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways including the development of the Multi Modal Logistics Park (MMLP) at Pune in Maharashtra through Public Private Partnership mode on design, build, finance, operate and transfer (DBFOT) basis, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said on Wednesday.

The MMLP will act as a freight aggregation and disaggregation centre to enable freight movement in more efficient modes, such as higher-sized trucks and rail, thereby improving the efficiency of freight movement and reducing logistics costs in the country.

The second project pertains to widening the NH-334D section from Aligarh to Palwal to a 4-lane configuration. It aims to improve connectivity between Aligarh and Palwal districts, particularly benefiting traffic towards Jewar airport and providing better connectivity with the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway.

The project encompasses



major bridges, minor bridges, railway crossings, service roads, a toll plaza, truck lay bay, and various other features, to enhance the movement of freight and people.

The third project involves construction of a four-lane elevated corridor on Anishabad - Aurangabad - Hariharganj Road in Bihar. This project on NH-139 aims to alleviate traffic congestion on the existing 4-lane road connecting Patna city's key areas, including the AIIMS. The proposed elevated corridor, spanning 9 km, includes a flyover of 8.3 km, features a 4-lane at-grade road with footpath, drain,

and utility corridor, ensuring uninterrupted traffic flow.

The focus of the discussions at the meeting, headed by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Additional Secretary, Rajeev Singh Thakur, revolved around integrated planning of network infrastructure aligned with the principles of PM GatiShakti for comprehensive regional socio-economic advancement.

Attendees also included representatives from Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam where the projects are slated for implementation.

On first day, more than 16,000 vehicles used Mumbai coastal road: BMC



Team Absolute | Mumbai

More than 16,000 vehicles used the Mumbai coastal road between Worli and Marine Lines on the first day of its operation, civic officials said on Wednesday, reported a news agency.

According to numbers shared by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), 16,331 vehicles accessed the four-lane southbound carriageway of the corridor within 12 hours after it was opened to the public on Tuesday.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Monday inaugurated the first phase, a 10.5-km-long stretch of the Mumbai coastal road, named 'Dharmaveer Sambhaji Maharaj Coastal Road'.

The toll-free road witnessed its peak traffic volume between 3 pm and 4 pm, with 1,941 vehicles, equivalent to 32 vehicles per minute,

plying on it, said the civic body.

In the first operational hour, only 480 vehicles, or eight per minute, used the road, while the final hour figure stood at 496.

Throughout the day, a steady flow of traffic was seen on the road, with notable spikes between noon and 1 pm, 2 pm and 3 pm and from 3 pm to 4 pm, each seeing more than 30 vehicles per minute.

The civic body has decided to keep the road open for 12 hours daily, from 8 am to 8 pm, to expedite the remaining work. It plans to open the next phase of the road for traffic in May 2024, said officials.

The 53-km-long Mumbai coastal road, being constructed till Dahisar, will help the people in saving fuel and time, besides reducing pollution, the CM had said on Monday. The work on the ambitious project started on October 13, 2018, and its projected cost is Rs 12,721 crore.

Shiv Sena 'unilaterally' announces LS candidate from Nashik, BJP miffed

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Pravin Darekar has slammed ruling ally Shiv Sena after the latter 'unilaterally' announced sitting two-time MP Hemant Godse as its candidate for the prestigious Nashik Lok Sabha seat, here on Wednesday.

Another BJP leader from Nashik, Dinkar Patil, said that Shinde's announcement has no worth, and several other functionaries also flayed the development that suggest cracks in the MahaYuti. The BJP's response came after Shiv Sena MP Shrikant E. Shinde - son of party President and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde - rattled the ruling MahaYuti alliance by 'declaring' Godse as its nominee from Nashik Lok Sabha constituency. "Shrikant Shinde has no authority to decide on this. The three allies will jointly discuss this and then select the appropriate candidate. People keep demanding any seat they want, but only those who are suitable will be allotted the particular constituency," said Pravin Darekar.

He added that the CM had made such an announcement, he would have done it after discussing with the MahaYuti allies - the Shiv Sena-



Bharatiya Janata Party-Nationalist Congress Party.

On March 12, Shinde shook the MahaYuti by making the statement amid a thunderous applause at a Karyakarta Samvad of the party which was attended by District Guardian Minister Dada Bhuse and others. Shinde said that he has witnessed Godse's hard work in the parliament and the Nashik-kars' love for him, and "let me assure that the Nashik seat will be contested by the Shiv Sena and the candidate will be none other than Godse."

The surprise announcement came barely 48 hours after another strong



contender Swami Shantigiri Maharaj met CM Shinde on Sunday to stake his claim, which also has support from a section of the BJP.

Taken aback by the sudden twist on Tuesday, Swami Shantigiri Maharaj on Wednesday indicated that if he was not given a ticket by the MahaYuti, then he would contest as an independent. On his part, Godse took a potshot at other strong contenders for the Nashik seat within the MahaYuti, asking them "not to get upset" by his candidature as the senior leaders are taking the decisions, besides referring to his good work as MP for the past two terms.

Midnight knock on woman's door for lemon unbecoming of an officer: High Court



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Knocking on the door of a woman at odd hours asking for a lemon is preposterous and unbecoming of a CISF personnel, the Bombay High Court said refusing to quash the penalty imposed on him for misconduct.

A division bench of Justices Nitin Jamdar and M M Sathaye in its order of March 11 said the petitioner constable of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) had consumed alcohol before the said incident and was also aware that his colleague, the woman's husband, was away on election duty in West Bengal.

The court was hearing a petition by Arvind Kumar (33), posted at BPCL (Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited) in Mumbai at the time of the incident, challenging the action taken by his superiors in CISF

between July 2021 and June 2022 imposing a penalty on him for misconduct.

Kumar's salary was reduced for three years during which he would also not get any increment as punishment.

It was alleged that on the intervening night of April 19 and April 20 of 2021 in the official residential quarters, Kumar knocked on the doors of his neighbour's house in which the complainant woman and her six-year-old daughter lived.

The woman said she got afraid and informed Kumar that her husband was away on duty in West Bengal and hence he should not trouble her. Kumar left from there only after being warned and threatened by the woman. Kumar in his defence claimed that he was feeling unwell and had knocked on the neighbour's door only to ask for a lemon.

Mumbai's CSMIA adjudged best with over 40 mn passengers in Asia Pacific region for 7th time

Team Absolute | Mumbai

For the seventh consecutive year, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) in Mumbai has been ranked as the 'Best Airport with over 40 million passengers' in the Asia Pacific Region by the Airports Council International's (ACI) Airport Service Quality (ASQ) awards, an official spokesperson said here on Tuesday.

The ASQ awards are highly regarded in the aviation industry as they are based on passenger feedback and are considered a testament to the airport's commitment to providing outstanding customer experience. ACI World Director-General Luis Felipe de Oliveira said that "the ASQ awards celebrate more than outstanding customer experience; it recognises the innovation and dedication of your entire airport team. Congratulations to Mumbai International Airport for your hard work that is redefining the airport experience".

The award also celebrates CSMIA's successful efforts and dedication towards providing superior customer experiences and reflects its resolute commitment to delivering exceptional facilities and services, as demonstrated by various initiatives undertaken over the past year. Some of these include completing a major re-carpeting project of Runway 14/32; enhancing safety standards; introduction of 'Taxiway Z', a pioneering



effort to reduce ground delays, significantly lowering carbon emissions; and positioning CSMIA as a leader in environmental sustainability. The CSMIA also introduced a dedicated domestic-to-domestic passenger transfer facility within Terminal-2 (T2), slashing the transit time for the travellers with connecting domestic flights. In a further commitment to safety standards, the CSMIA commissioned a specialised Disabled Aircraft Recovery Kit (DARK), equipped with high-pressure lifting bags, making it the first airport in Asia to possess this facility.

DARK ensures efficient recovery processes for even the largest commercial aircraft. Also, the installation of 2D Barcode readers and an advanced Parking Guidance System at Terminal 2 is streamlining the entry procedures and parking experience. The DigiYatra initiative at Terminal 2 deploys artificial intelligence and facial recognition technology, which automates and accelerates the entire check-in experience, enabling paperless and seamless travel.

With infrastructure augmentation, the CSMIA now has a total of 5,735 sq mt of dedicated space for security screening, and 328 sq mt of newly-created domestic transfer security check area.

In November 2023, several achievements were notched by the CSMIA, including a record highest single-day passenger traffic on November 25, with 167,132 passengers traversing through CSMIA, including over 120,000 domestic and 46,000 international passengers.

Additionally, the CSMIA achieved a new single-day record of 1,032 Aircraft Traffic Movements (ATMs) on November 11, 2023, surpassing its previous records. The airport's Platinum Rating in the prestigious Green Airports Recognition (GAR) Programme 2023 by ACI Asia-Pacific highlights its dedication to sustainability and environmental stewardship. ASQ surveys are conducted worldwide across airports where passengers are interviewed to rate the airport services before boarding their flight.

MNS warns Rahul Gandhi against anti-Veer Savarkar remarks in Mumbai rally

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ahead of the INDIA bloc's mega rally on March 17 in Mumbai, the Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) on Wednesday warned Wayanad MP, Rahul Gandhi, against making any objectionable comments against revolutionary Vinayak D Savarkar. Talking to the media MNS Spokesperson, Sandeep Deshpande, referred to the Congress MP's known opposition to the Hindutva ideology. "We are making it absolutely clear... If Rahul Gandhi makes any defamatory statements or objectionable remarks against Swatantryaveer Savarkar, then the 14 crore people of Maharashtra will not allow him to move around the state," said Deshpande. He said the MNS will not oppose the Congress-INDIA bloc rally at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Park (CSM Park) -- which is opposite the Swatantryaveer Savarkar Memorial in Dadar west - but will not tolerate it if the former Congress President makes unsavoury remarks against the Hindutva idol.



However, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP, Sanjay Raut, made light of Deshpande's remarks and said the party was speaking without enjoying any mass credibility. "Injustice is being meted out to the Marathis daily and only the Shiv Sena (UBT) is fighting for their cause... The MNS is talking on behalf of the Gujarati lobby," said Raut dismissively. A Mumbai Congress leader also questioned the locus standi and credentials of the MNS in issuing such warnings to MP Rahul Gandhi, saying the party will

not be cowed down by such utterances. The MNS' ultimatum came as the MP Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra entered Maharashtra at Nandurbar on Tuesday, and traversed through Dhule on Wednesday. The yatra is scheduled to terminate in Mumbai at the Chaitya Bhoomi in Dadar followed by a mammoth rally of the national Opposition leaders, formally kicking off the INDIA bloc's Lok Sabha election campaign, on March 17 at the CSM Park.



Beyonce to debut in country music; announces album with 'Cowboy Carter'



Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Beyonce is making her foray into Country music. The singer-songwriter has announced the name of her latest album, 'Cowboy Carter'. The album is set to drop on March 29. Beyonce took to the Stories section of her Instagram to post the album cover which

consists of a brown and white saddle with a red white and blue sash draped over it that bears the album's name, reports Mirror.co.uk.

It also included a preorder link that takes fans to her merch store. Her store is offering limited edition vinyls available in red, white, blue, and black. There are also limited edition CDs with four different covers bearing the artist's face.

As per Mirror.co.uk, 'Cowboy Carter' will be Beyonce's first full country album,

already evident by the two singles she has released - '16 Carriages' and 'Texas Hold 'Em'. The two songs reached the top of the Apple Music US Country charts, making her the first black female artiste to do so.

Beyonce has already thrown herself into the country lifestyle, embracing her Houston heritage. Last month, she wore a black bolero and a white cowboy hat to the Grammy Awards, which she attended with her husband Jay-Z and daughter Blue Ivy.

John Cena's Iconic Nude 2024 Oscars Moment

Los Angeles | Agencies

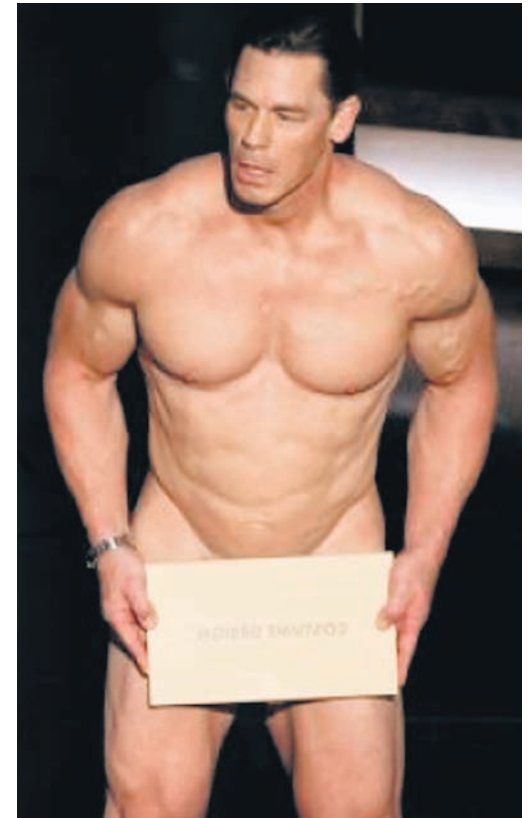
Apparently, John Cena's nude moment at the 2024 Oscars was a huge deal behind the scenes. Academy Awards host Jimmy Kimmel and several show producers are speaking out about how difficult it was to pull off the stripping stunt. During the show, John, 46, shyly came out from backstage using the envelope for Best Costume Design to cover up his midsection.

After Jimmy, 56, closed out the awards ceremony on Sunday, March 10, he explained to his audience during a subsequent episode of Jimmy Kimmel Live! what went down leading up to John's big moment.

"Getting this on the air ... of all the times I've hosted the Oscars or the Emmys or anything, no comedy bit has ever received more scrutiny than this," the comedian pointed out before detailing the chaos that ensued backstage. "There were meetings and site meetings, emails and texts and phone calls and people sweating. Somebody was crying. Then, once they realized we weren't going to take no for an answer ... there was intense discussion about the envelope."

Jimmy concluded by congratulating John for the "commotion" he "caused," adding, "Very rarely does an idea literally push the envelope and this one did."

Producers of the Oscars affirmed Jimmy's comments during an interview with Variety. Rob Mills explained that there "was a lot of reticence of not just a fine from the FCC, but potential complaints." The S&P team for the ceremony told producers that, from the audience's perspective, it had to be completely obvious that John was not



actually nude. However, the team was able to find a way around this regulation.

Joaquin Phoenix, Emma Stone, Austin Butler, Pedro Pascal on board for 'Eddington'



Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker Ari Aster, who is known for 'Hereditary' and 'Midsommar' has brought in an all-star cast for his next film, 'Eddington'.

Joaquin Phoenix, Emma Stone, Austin Butler, Pedro Pascal, Luke Grimes, Deirdre O'Connell, Micheal Ward and Clifton Collins Jr will be seen in the movie financed by A24. Based on Aster's track record, viewers can only assume the film will give nightmares, reports Variety.

Plot details are kept under wraps besides the fact that the film "follows a small-town New Mexico sheriff with higher aspirations." 'Eddington' starts production this week, with Aster writing, directing and producing alongside Lars Knudsen under their Square Peg banner.

As per Variety, two-time Academy Award nominee Darius Khondji is the director of photography. 'Eddington' marks the sixth collaboration between Square Peg and A24, which produced and distributed Aster's previous three films, 'Hereditary', 'Midsommar' and 'Beau Is Afraid', as well as 'Dream Scenario' and the upcoming 'Death of a Unicorn'.

Phoenix was recently nominated for Golden Globe for his lead performance in 'Beau Is Afraid', Aster's 2023 dark comedy horror about a troubled man who goes home to see his mother. Stone is fresh off her second Academy Award win for her lead performance in 'Yorgos Lanthimos' 'Poor Things', which she also produced, as well as the Showtime series 'The Curse', which saw her teaming up with Nathan Fielder and Benny Safdie.



Neve Campbell returns for 'Scream 7' after quitting franchise

Canadian actress Neve Campbell is making a return to the 'Scream' franchise with the upcoming film 'Scream 7'. The actress had left the franchise as she sat out of 'Scream 6' over a salary dispute, reports Variety.

"Sidney Prescott is coming back!!!!", the actress posted on Instagram. "It's always been such a blast and an honour to get to play Sidney in 'Scream' movies. My appreciation for these films and for what they have meant to me, has never waned. I'm very happy and proud to say I've been asked, in the most respectful way, to bring Sidney back to the screen and I couldn't be more thrilled."

Along with her return, 'Scream' creator and writer Kevin Williamson is taking over as director of 'Scream 7'.

As per Variety, he wrote the first, second and fourth 'Scream' movies, in addition to executive producing the 2022 reboot 'Scream' and its sequel 'Scream 6'.

"It's been nearly 30 years since my very first script, 'Scream', was directed by the legendary Wes Craven," Williamson wrote on Instagram. "I never would have predicted what it would become. Or that I would be directing the seventh installment of the franchise. I am overcome with gratitude and excitement, and I can't wait to take this journey with Neve and the entire 'Scream' family as we bring back Sidney Prescott in the next chapter of the franchise. Thank you to all the 'Scream' fans. You are the gift that keeps giving."

Guy Busick, who wrote the fifth and sixth 'Scream' films with James Vanderbilt, is taking over the screenwriting reins. Vanderbilt will continue to produce alongside his Project X Entertainment partners William Sherak and Paul Neinstein. The film collective Radio Silence, who directed and produced the previous two 'Scream' films, will serve as executive producers.

Billy Baldwin claps back at Sharon Stone over her 'Sliver' sex claim

Los Angeles | Agencies

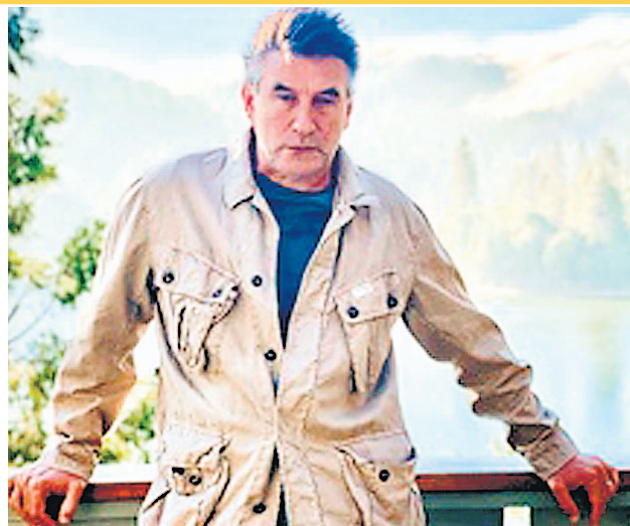
Hollywood actor Billy Baldwin, who shared the screen with actress Sharon Stone in the 1993 film 'Sliver', is fuming at the actress' claims of being forced to have sex with him.

Earlier, Sharon Stone claimed that a producer tried to force her to sleep with Billy Baldwin, reports Female First UK.

The actress had said that producer Robert Evans - who died in 2019 aged 89 - wanted her to get intimate with Billy, 61, while they filmed 'Sliver' together to improve his acting and "save the movie" from being a flop.

As per Female First UK, hours after her remarks emerged, Billy accused Sharon of being "hurt as he shunned her advances" - and said he was weighing up whether to write a book "about the many disturbing, kinky tales" he knows about the 'Casino' star.

He ranted on X: "Not sure why Sharon Stone keeps talking about me all these years later? Does she still have a crush on me or is she still hurt after all these years because I shunned her advances? Did she say to her gal pal Janice Dickinson



the day after I screen tested and ran into them on our MGM Grand flight back to New York... 'I'm gonna make him fall so hard for me, it's gonna make his head spin'???"

Billy went on: "I have so much dirt on her it would make her head spin but I've kept quiet. The story of the meeting I had with Bob Evans imploring him to allow me to choreograph the final sex scene in the photo

below so I wouldn't have to kiss Sharon is absolute legend. Wonder if I should write a book and tell the many, many disturbing, kinky and unprofessional tales about Sharon? That might be fun."

Sharon had told 'The Louis Theroux Podcast' about 'Chinatown' producer Robert apparently saying she should sleep with Billy to improve their on-screen chemistry in 'Sliver'.

She said on the podcast: "He called me to his office. He had these very low 1970s, 1980s couches, so I'm essentially sitting on the floor, when I should have been on set. And he's running around his office in sunglasses explaining to me that he slept with Ava Gardner and I should sleep with Billy Baldwin, because if I slept with Billy Baldwin, Billy Baldwin's performance would get better, and we needed Billy to get better in the movie because that was the problem."

Sharon added Robert was convinced her bedding Billy - who is now married to 56-year-old singer Chynna Phillips - would give the pair better "chemistry on screen" which he apparently told her would "save the movie."

She also made the claim in her memoir, without naming either Robert or Billy. Sharon added that she decided bosses on the film - which earned \$280 million at the box office despite being mauled by critics - could leave her "out of" the idea, saying: "It was my job to act and I said so."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Camila Cabello



Our athletes will return with best ever medal haul from Paris Olympics: Anurag Thakur

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As the countdown to the Paris 2024 Olympic Games accelerates, anticipation mounts to witness India's athletes shine on the global stage. While the players are leaving no stone unturned in their preparations for the Games, Sports Minister Anurag Thakur exuded confidence saying that the athletes will "reflect new India" in Paris 2024 due to their "fearless and competitive nature." Speaking exclusively to IANS, Anurag Thakur shared his thoughts on the Paris Games, Khelo India, anti-doping programmes and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's support to the athletes. The minister specifically mentioned PM Modi's unique approach to encouraging the athletes without burdening them with undue pressure.

Excerpts from the interview:

IANS: This is an Olympic year, how are the preparations going with the government providing all the necessary requirements to the athletes? How many medals are you expecting this time? Will we break last time's record?

AT: I am confident that our athletes will come



back with the best medal haul from the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. My confidence stems from their hard work and determination, backed by the support from the coaching staff, support staff and enabled by the Ministry through the Sports Authority of India and their National Sports Federations. I am convinced that the athletes will

reflect the new India with their fearless and competitive nature.

IANS: Khelo India has boosted the graph of sports in India, your thoughts on that and what more can be done? Education related to dope is also important for both coaches and athletes.

AT: Envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Khelo India Scheme is the country's overarching sports project. It is not only about the competitions - Khelo India Youth Games, Khelo India University Games, Khelo India Winter Games and Khelo India Para Games.

One of the major components of the Khelo India Scheme is the development of infrastructure. As many as 331 projects, costing Rs. 2943.64 crore have been sanctioned since 2014. This has taken modern sports facilities to the doorstep of the grassroots talent. Another aspect is talent identification and development through a structure of training centres ranging from the National Centres of Excellence to the SAI Training Centres and from the Khelo India State Centres to the Khelo India accredited academies around the country.

Wozniacki beats Kerber in Indian Wells to reach QF, faces Swiatek next

Indian Wells | Agencies

Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark defeated Angelique Kerber 6-4, 6-2 to advance to the quarterfinals, her first WTA 1000 quarterfinal since 2019. With her win, Wozniacki becomes the seventh woman to reach the BNP Paribas Open quarterfinals beyond the age of 33, and the last mom standing in the seven that started the main draw at Indian Wells. Kerber, 36, came to California 1-6 for 2024 after a 17-month sabbatical to give birth to a daughter, Liana. Wozniacki, sharper at the start, stormed out to a 5-1 double break lead in the opener, before Kerber punched back, taking the next three games to get back on serve. After a medical timeout for what appeared to be a foot or ankle injury, Wozniacki broke to claim the set, 6-4. Though both players required medical timeouts in the 90-minute contest, it was Kerber who ran out of gas first, as a lower back issue threw her game out of whack at the start of the second set. Still both players shared spirited rallies and landed colossal winners at times. In the end the court became tilted in Wozniacki's favour, as the 2011 champion pulled away from an ailing Kerber.

Wozniacki will meet world No. 1 Iga Swiatek of Poland, who eased into her third consecutive quarterfinal at the Paribas Open after defeating No. 79 Yulia Putintseva 6-1, 6-2 on Tuesday night.

The Pole ran off eight consecutive games



from 1-1 to take firm control of the 71-minute match and improve to 3-0 against Putintseva. Swiatek struck 17 winners while holding Putintseva to just 4.

Swiatek, a champion in Doha last month, is bidding to win her second title of the season this week. She has not lost before the semifinal stage at a WTA 1000 tournament since 2023 Rome.

Earlier in the day, World No. 32 Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk, who reached her first major quarterfinal at the Australian Open in January, defeated Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-4, 6-1 to reach her first Paribas Open quarterfinal and first at the 1000 level.

Kostyuk is the first player from Ukraine to reach the quarterfinals at Indian Wells since Elina Svitolina in 2021. No Ukrainian has ever reached a BNP Paribas Open final.

Rachin Ravindra and Amelia Kerr win top honours at New Zealand Cricket Awards

Christchurch | Agencies

Rachin Ravindra and Amelia Kerr emerged as the winners of the top honours at the New Zealand Cricket Awards ceremony on Wednesday evening. Ravindra, 24, became the youngest player to win the Sir Richard Hadlee Medal, awarded to the best New Zealand men's cricketer of the year.

It caps off a remarkable time for Ravindra, who won the Young Player of the Year award at high school in 2016. On the other hand, Amelia was honoured with the coveted Debbie Hockley Medal - awarded to New Zealand's women cricketer of the year for the second consecutive time.

Ravindra shone at the Men's ODI World Cup in India, finishing as the competition's fourth leading run-scorer with 578 runs at 64, scoring three centuries and two half-centuries, including an unbeaten 123 in the tournament opener against England in Ahmedabad.

Those performances were recognised in January, when he was named the recipient of the prestigious ICC Emerging Player of the Year award. The all-rounder continued his meteoric rise in the Test arena, registering New Zealand's highest-ever maiden Test century with 240 during the first Test against South Africa at Bay Oval.

He went on to play a key role in



New Zealand's first ever Test series victory over South Africa. Ravindra also shone on the T20I stage, featuring in 14 of New Zealand's 26 T20Is over the season and scoring a blistering 68 from 35 balls in the first T20I against Australia at Sky Stadium.

On the other hand, Amelia was also named the Women's ODI and T20I Player of the Year and took the Super Smash Women's Player of the Year. The leg-spinning allrounder was the side's leading ODI run-scorer with 541 runs at an average of 67, notching her third and fourth centuries along the way. She was also the team's joint leading T20I wicket-taker and second highest T20I run scorer with 252 runs

at an average of 42 and a strike-rate of 118. Her performances on the international front were recognised with selection in both the women's ODI and T20I ICC Teams of the Year for 2023.

Amelia also led the way on the domestic front, captaining the Wellington Blaze to their fourth Super Smash title in six years, topping the run-scoring charts with 437 runs at an average of 72, and the wicket-taking charts with 20 wickets at 8 and an economy of 4.47.

She became the first player in the competition's history to record back-to-back five-wicket bags, taking 5-10 against the Canterbury Magicians, the

competition's best bowling figures of all-time, followed by 5-13 against the Central Hinds.

Kane Williamson won the Test Player of the Year award, and the Redpath Cup for men's first-class batting. In six Test matches of the judging period, Williamson amassed 619 runs at 56, including four centuries, and became just the fifth New Zealand player to score a century in both innings of a Test with 118 and 109 in the second Test against South Africa at Bay Oval.

Williamson continued his form in the following Test against South Africa at Seddon Park, becoming the fastest player ever to reach 32 Test centuries, and extending his record to seven centuries in seven consecutive Tests. He was also selected in the ICC's Test Team of the Year.

Daryl Mitchell and Mitchell Santner took out the Men's ODI and T20I Player of the Year awards, respectively. Mitchell was a key performer with the bat at the Men's ODI World Cup in India, finishing as the tournament's fifth leading run-scorer with 552 runs at an average of 69.

Mitchell notched two half centuries and two centuries in 11 innings, including a career-best 134 in the semi-final against India, his performances earning him selection in the ICC's Team of the Tournament and the overall ICC ODI Team of the Year.

Singapore Smash: Sharath Kamal beats World No. 13 to reach round of 16

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Commonwealth Games gold medalist Achanta Sharath Kamal advanced to the round of 16 of Singapore Smash for the first time after a thumping victory over World No. 13 Darko Jorgic with a scoreline of 3-1 (8-11, 11-6, 11-8, 11-9), on Wednesday.

It took Darko a while to get off his block as he won the first game and looked sharper, but after that it was all Sharath Kamal as he blew past Darko, who could not withstand the barrage of smashes and drops that came his way. The two padlers engaged in several amazing rallies during the game, and Sharath often maintained his cool to win the point. World No. 88 Sharath began his Singapore tour by beating Romania's Andre Istrate, Yuta Tanaka of Japan, and Slovenia's Deni Kozul from the qualifying round to book his place in



the main draw.

In the round of 64, Sharath then triumphed 3-0 (11-5, 11-4, 11-6) over Nicolas Burgos, the World No. 31 from Chile. The ten-time national champion from India will compete with either Lee Sang Su of Korea or Omas Assar of Egypt for a spot in the quarterfinals.

In the women's doubles round of 16, Romanian-Spanish players Adina Diaconu and Maria Xiao defeated bronze medalists from the Asian Games,

Ayhika and Sutirtha Mukherjee, 1-3 (4-11, 14-12, 3-11, 9-11). The Indian pair had won the opening round 3-2 (11-8, 5-11, 3-11, 11-6, 11-9) against Miu Hirano and Miwa Harimoto of Japan.

The Mukherjee sisters, Sutirtha and Ayhika booked a place in the round of 16 defeating the Japanese pair Miu Hirano and Miwa Harimoto in a closely fought match that ended 3-2 (11-8, 5-11, 3-11, 11-6, 11-9) in favour of the Indians.

He just seems to be this diesel engine that never ends: de Villiers on Dhoni

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former South African cricketer AB de Villiers compared Chennai Super Kings (CSK) skipper MS Dhoni to a diesel engine that never stops working. Speculations swirled around Dhoni's retirement after the 2023 IPL season, with murmurs suggesting it might mark the swansong of his illustrious career. Yet, fueled by an unwavering commitment to his franchise, the Chennai Super Kings (CSK), Dhoni vowed to grace the cricketing stage for one more season, despite grappling with a significant knee injury. Now, at the age of 42, Dhoni strides back onto the field, after undergoing knee surgery. Dhoni put a lot of effort into his rehabilitation to get well in time to lead the five-time champions in IPL 2024, starting March 22. De Villiers, in his reflective musings, delved into the enigma of CSK's success. He attributed their prowess not only to Dhoni's stoic leadership but also to the tranquil guidance of coach Stephen Fleming and the seasoned experience of stalwarts like Ravindra Jadeja. Together, they forged a culture of excellence that breathed life into the very essence of the CSK franchise. "They played some incredible cricket last year. There were a lot of rumors about MS Dhoni finishing up last year, that was not the case, ladies and gentlemen. He would be back again. Will this be his final season? No one knows. He just seems to be this diesel engine that never ends. He keeps running. What an incredible player, what an incredible captain," de Villiers said on his YouTube channel. "I believe it's through their presence, it's through the leadership of MSD, a calm coach in Stephen Fleming, senior players in Ravindra Jadeja and others who have really set this incredible culture alive. They are a very intimidating team to play against. They are never easy to beat. That is always a great characteristic of a very successful unit, of a very successful franchise. When you are playing well, it's, 'Yes, no problem, no one's gonna stop us' but when you are not playing so well - they always find a way to compete," he added. The South African maestro also emphasized the formidable aura surrounding CSK, describing them as an intimidating force on the cricketing battlefield. Their stronghold at the Chepauk stadium, fondly referred to as a 'fortress', added an impregnable dimension to their dominance. De



Villiers sounded a cautionary note to rival IPL teams, warning them of the peril posed by a CSK side unburdened by the weight of expectations. Having clinched the title in the previous season, CSK now shoulders the mantle of defending champions with a sense of

tranquility, free from the shackles of undue pressure. "They won last year. Yes, they want to defend their title but there's almost no pressure on MSD and his troops and I think that makes them dangerous. Can they go back-to-back? They certainly have the ability," he concluded.

IPL 2024: 'Feels like I'm making my debut again', says Rishabh Pant on joining DC's pre-season camp

Team Absolute | Visakhapatnam

Wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant said he feels like it's his debut all over again ahead of his return to competitive cricketing action after 14 long months. He was declared fit by the BCCI on Tuesday to participate in the upcoming edition of the IPL. Pant underwent an extensive rehabilitation and recovery process at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru following a life-threatening road accident in December 2022. "I'm excited and nervous at the same time. It feels like I'm going to make my debut again. To be able to play cricket again after everything I've been through is nothing short of a miracle.

"I'm grateful to all my well-wishers and fans, and most importantly, the BCCI and staff at NCA. All their love and support continues to give me immense strength," said Pant in a release issued by the franchise ahead of joining DC's pre-season camp in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.



Pant has been cleared by the NCA to play as a wicketkeeper-batter, though DC picked other keeping options in Abhishek Porel, Ricky Bhui and Kumar Kushagra in case he doesn't keep wickets initially. DC will play their first two home games - against Chennai Super Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders - at Visakhapatnam. "I'm excited to return to Delhi Capitals & the IPL - a tournament I enjoy so much. Our team owners and support staff have been by my side throughout with their full support, guidance and co-operation at every step, for which I am deeply grateful. I can't wait to re-unite with my DC family and play in front of the fans again," said Pant.

Pant's availability means his return to cricket could come on March 23, when Delhi open their season with an away match against Punjab Kings at Mohali. "We're delighted to welcome Rishabh back to the Delhi Capitals family. The kind of grit and resilience he has displayed in overcoming challenges is inspirational to say the least.

"We're humbled to have been a part of his journey to recovery, which has been exceptional. Rishabh's return is one of the most highly anticipated ones in recent times, and I can't wait to see him compete again," said Parth Jindal, DC's Chairman & Co-owner.

"Rishabh's return is tremendous news not just for all of us at Delhi Capitals, but for Indian cricket. We're glad to have assisted and supported him whenever there was a requirement. We are tremendously excited to see him back in DC colours, and can't wait to watch him entertain the fans. Our best wishes are with him," added Kiran Grandhi, DC co-owner.

I would've felt more excited if we'd won the Test or series: Anderson on 700 Test scalps milestone

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Veteran fast-bowler James Anderson said the excitement to reach 700 Test wickets would have been more if England had won the fifth and final Test against India at Dharamshala, where the visitors suffered defeat by an innings and 64 runs to lose the five-game series 4-1.

Anderson, 41, reached the landmark of 700 Test wickets by dismissing Kuldeep Yadav on day three of the Test at the picturesque HPCA Stadium in Dharamshala, becoming the first fast-bowler to do so. He is now third on the all-time list of wicket-takers in Tests behind Muttiah Muralitharan and Shane Warne. "It was a nice moment and nice to do it at a picturesque ground. My dad was here so we had a drink, which was nice. He was more excited than I was. Maybe I would've felt more excited if we'd have won the Test or the series. It's been a long series, and I don't know how I feel," said Anderson to the BBC Tailenders podcast. He revealed Kuldeep predicted that he would become his 700th Test wicket shortly before he was dismissed. "Kuldeep edged one down to third man for a single. As he got to the non-striker's end, and as I was walking back to my mark, he said, 'I'm going to be your 700th wicket'. He wasn't saying he was trying to get out, he was just saying he had a feeling. We both laughed at it." Anderson also talked about the conversation he had with Shubman Gill, who became his 699th scalp. "I said something to him like 'Do you get any runs outside India?' and he said 'It's time to retire'. Then two balls later, I got him out." With England's next Test assignment, a three-game against the West Indies, starting on July 10,



Anderson felt he's fine to carry on in the longer format for the upcoming home summer. "I'm really excited for the summer. I want to make sure I'm playing well and earn my place in the team." "I'm not getting any worse. 'I'm definitely in the best shape I've ever been in. I like where my game is at, and I still have that enjoyment of turning up every day and trying to get better in the nets. My place in the team is not a given so I've got to work hard to prove I'm worth a place in the summer."

Anderson signed off by saying England are in a good space for the future games under captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum, despite the 4-1 defeat in India. "I really enjoyed this tour. I've been on tours to India before where little cracks start appearing in the team and that's not happened this time." "We've stuck together really well, we really enjoy being together as a group and there is more to come from this team. Obviously we'll come in for some criticism because we did have moments where we didn't play particularly well but India are really good."



LFW x FDCL: Showstopper Karishma Tanna walks the ramp for designers

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Karishma Tanna turned showstopper for aspiring designers at the Launchpad segment of the ongoing Lakme Fashion Week x FDCL. A group of fashion and interior designers took over the stage on Wednesday to showcase their collection, a reimagined version of vintage fashion from the 1960s to the 1980s.

The creation that Karishma donned was by a cub designer named Yash Gala from Inter National Institute of Fashion Design (INIFD). He shared that he is really inspired by strong bold look and "structured garments."

While talking about Karishma turning showstopper for newbies, Disha Khosla, style mentor from INIFD said that usually stars say no to them.

To this, Karishma replied: "I know how the dream works and I know what passion they have so I really like to encourage each and everybody; and when I got to know that I had to walk for a very talented designer, I was very happy."

Another aspiring designer flaunted a collection from the 1970s fashion, which features rich art and craft from Jaipur.

Japanese vintage ready to wear was showcased by a young designer whose collection mostly featured shades of blue and white.

The fourth aspiring designer said that she drew inspiration from herself and her doodles for the eclectic collection.

Lastly, a collection called 'Checkmate' was showcased. The USP of the ensembles was that it was made out of left over fabric from factories and drew its inspiration from 1960s.



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The 'Shape of You' hitmaker Ed Sheeran danced with singer-songwriter Armaan Malik in Mumbai, and it was a 'Perfect' moment.

Armaan Malik stepped out for a fun dinner with Ed Sheeran. The singers shook a leg on Armaan's track 'Butta Bomma' from the Allu Arjun-starrer 'Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo'. Armaan, who has earlier collaborated with Ed Sheeran on a song called '2step', took to his Instagram on Wednesday and shared a video of him dancing with Ed Sheeran inside a Mumbai pub.

Addressing the 'Perfect' singer, Armaan wrote in the caption: "Favourite person in my city."

Towards the end of the video, the two singers also pulled off the signature pose of Bollywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan.

Singer

ED SHEERAN, ARMAAN MALIK SHAKE A LEG TO 'BUTTA BOMMA' IN MUMBAI

Hardeep

Kaur, who is known for 'Dilbaro' and 'Katiya Karun', took to the comments' section and wrote: "So precious." YouTuber and influencer, Aashna Shroff wrote: "Best nightttt (sic)." Ed Sheeran is currently in Mumbai for his upcoming concert at the Mahalaxmi Racecourse, and is making the most of his time experiencing the city in its every mood and flavour.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Legendary Bollywood actress and Padma Shri awardee Waheeda Rehman has donated her personal film memorabilia to Film Heritage Foundation (FHF) for preservation.

The actress was honoured with India's highest film honour, the Dadasaheb Phalke award, last year, and has worked with some of the most renowned filmmakers of the country like

Guru Dutt, Satyajit Ray, Basu

Bhattacharya and Yash Chopra, during her career, reports

Variety.

The roles essayed by her in films have gone on to become classics in the history of Indian cinema.

In a career spanning over five decades, she has worked in more than 90 feature films. Her accolades include a National Film Award and the Padma Bhushan in 2011.

As per Variety, the memorabilia includes the saree she wore to the premiere of 'C.I.D.' in 1956, her photo albums and photographs and lobby cards from 'Kaagaz Ke Phool', 'Chaudvin Ka Chand', 'Sahib Bibi Aur

**Waheeda
Rehman
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Foundation**

Ghulam' and 'Baat Ek Raat Ki'. Waheeda Rehman said in a statement accessed by Variety: "I'm giving all this to the Film Heritage Foundation, because these are very important memories that need to be preserved. People who are interested in learning about films and the history of Indian cinema can look back at this valuable memorabilia that is preserved at the FHF archive. I hope you all enjoy seeing all these albums."

Divyanka drops pics in yellow: 'Visualising sunshine, manifesting memories'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Divyanka Tripathi Dahiya has shared new pictures of herself on social media, and has said that she is "visualising sunshine and manifesting memories."

Best known for her role in shows like 'Yeh Hai Mohabbatein' and 'Banoo

Main Teri Dulhann', Divyanka took to Instagram, where she has 26.3 million followers and dropped a series of pictures wearing a yellow dress.

With minimal makeup and her hair untied, Divyanka is smiling ear to ear for the lenses. The look is rounded off with hoop earrings and a side bag.

The post is captioned: "Visualising sunshine, manifesting memories.

#HolidayDreams (they say, manifest until you get it)."

A fan commented on the post: "Relax Breathe Believe..It will manifest."

Another user wrote: "Hello sunshine, my eyes are blessed."

Urvashi Rautela's father wanted her to join JNU since she was in school

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Urvashi Rautela, who is gearing up for her upcoming film 'JNU: Jahangir National University', has shared that her father wanted her to study at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) since she was in school.

The actress essays the role of a university student in 'JNU', a film directed by Vinay Sharma.

The actress studied at Gargi College, one of the prestigious colleges under Delhi University.

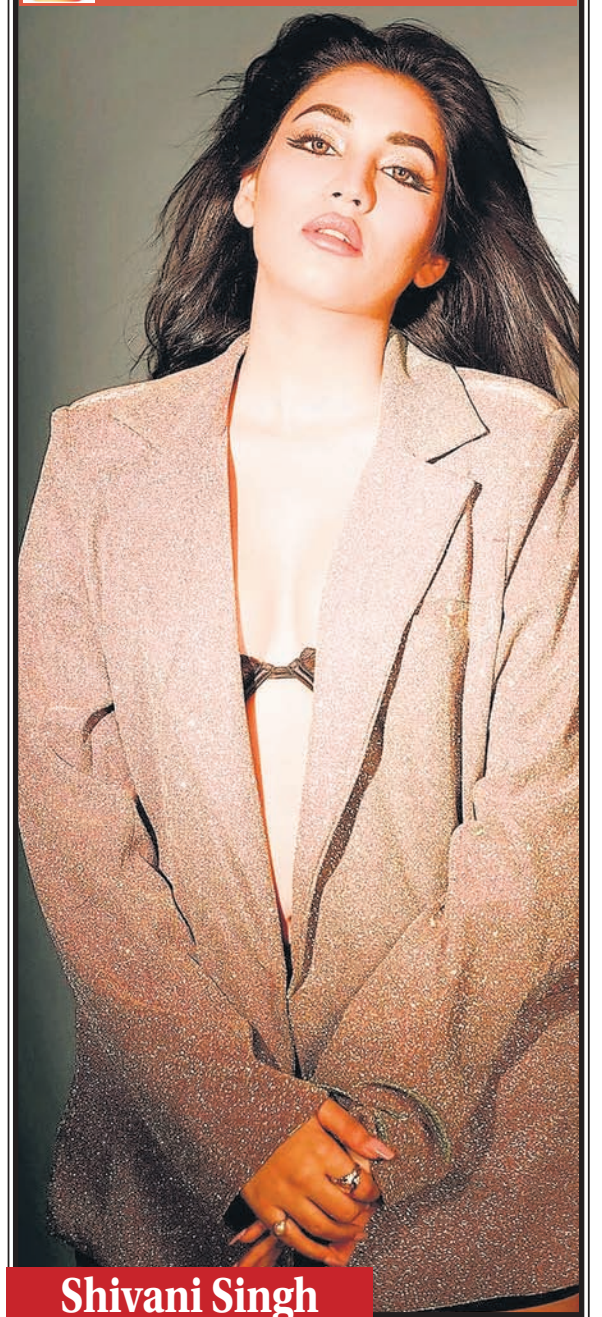
'JNU', which also stars Siddharth Bodke, Piyush Mishra, Ravi Kishan, Vijay Raaz, Rashmi Desai, Atul Pandey, and Sonnalli Seygall, is set to release theatrically on April 5.

Talking about her part in the film, Urvashi told, "I play a JNU student in the film. Actually, in real life, my father since my school days wanted me to be in JNU. So it's like a dream coming true, though onscreen. The film talks about how within the sanctum of education lies a concern, where some perceive a conspiracy to disrupt our nation's unity."

Talking about the film further, she said, "Within the confines of educational institutions, there exists a cause of concern. Some individuals have a hidden agenda aimed at undermining the unity of our nation."



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Shivani Singh