

# absolute india



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## Congress wanted to bring quota on basis of religion: PM Modi

Jaipur | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday stepped up offensive on the Congress and accused it of 'planning and plotting' to disturb the fabric of the quota system by introducing religion-based reservation, when it was in power.

Addressing a mega public rally in Rajasthan's Tonk-Sawai Madhopur, PM Modi doubled down on his attack amid a series of accusations by the Congress.

"When the Congress and INDI Alliance were in power, they wanted to give separate reservations to their special vote bank by breaking into the reservation of Dalits and backward classes. Whereas the Constitution is completely against this," PM Modi said.

PM Modi further said that the 'conspiracies' of the Congress and the INDIA alliance won't succeed as the incumbent government will not allow any alteration to Babasaheb's Constitution.



"Amidst these conspiracies of the Congress, I am giving you a guarantee from an open platform that the reservation for Dalits, backward classes and tribals will neither be abolished nor will it be allowed to be divided in the name of religion. This is Modi's guarantee," Prime Minister thundered at the rally.

Reiterating his 'wealth redistribution to infiltrators' statement, he said that Congress is in too much pain after being exposed and now they are abusing and cursing him from every platform.

"They have mentioned in their manifesto that they will survey your property. Our sisters and mothers' mangal sutra will be surveyed. This leader publicly said that if your property is more than needed then it will be distributed. If you have two houses, they will do X-ray and will say one house should be given to the government," he said.

"Do you accept it? Can these people touch the mangal sutra of women? Is this 'Hand' so powerful? Rajasthan should not have even one such hand left" PM said at Tonk rally.

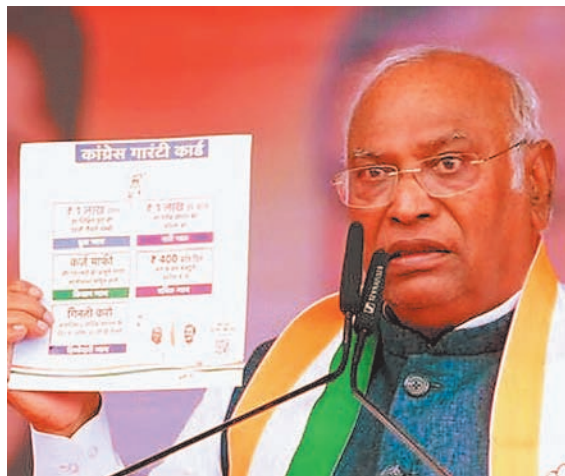
## Can explain manifesto to him: M Kharge

Wayanad | Agencies

In a series of speeches at election rallies this month, the PM had said that the promises made in Congress' manifesto were reminiscent of the thoughts that the Muslim League had before Independence.

In a strong riposte to PM Narendra Modi's twin jabs of a Muslim League imprint on the party's manifesto and an alleged promise of "wealth redistribution to infiltrators", Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge has said the PM should stop his attempts at dividing society and grant him time so that he can explain the document's contents.

In a series of speeches at election rallies this month, the PM had said that the promises made in Congress' manifesto were reminiscent of the thoughts that the Muslim League had before Independence. In a rally in Rajasthan on Sunday, PM Modi had also given rise to a controversy by claiming that



the Congress intended to seize people's property and redistribute it to Muslims. "They will not even leave your 'mangalsutra'," he had said.

Addressing a gathering in Kerala's Wayanad - Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's constituency - on Tuesday, Kharge took all the allegations head-on.

"PM Modi says the Congress Manifesto is a

Muslim League manifesto. I request him, if he gives me time, I will take our manifesto and explain it to him. Where are we saying that something is only for Muslims? We are doing things for all. Our manifesto is for the poor, farmers, youth women and everybody. He just wants to divide the society and keep talking about Hindu-Muslim," the Congress president said.

## BJP will win all 29 LS seats of Madhya Pradesh including Chhindwara: CM Mohan Yadav

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav in an exclusive interview with NDTV Editor-in-chief Sanjay Pugalia said that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will sweep the state in the ongoing Parliamentary elections and will win all 29 Lok Sabha seats, including Chhindwara.

Notably, Chhindwara is one of the high-profile Lok Sabha constituencies of Madhya Pradesh, from where Congress veteran and former Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath's son Nakul Nath is in the poll fray. Dr Mohan Yadav told NDTV that the party won 27 seats in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, and 28 seats in the 2019 polls and this time, it will register victory on all 29 seats. "This will be possible on the back of the good governance of the Modi dispensation. People have seen the progress made in the last 10 years and it will only get emboldened further," he added. When asked whether



there was any change in the party's narrative after the first phase of elections, he denied any such move and said that the next government will be formed under the leadership of PM Modi.

Taking a dig at Congress over dropping its candidate from the Khajuraho seat, the MP CM said, "The grand old party has abandoned this seat for the first time fearing defeat. It tactfully handed over its bastion to the Samajwadi Party." He further taunted the Congress party over not adhering to its poll planks and also over the state party president not contesting in this election. Airing his views on the need to dismantle VIP culture in government machinery, the Chief Minister said that he strongly opposed 'preferential treatment' for a select few and believed in equal treatment for all.

## Misleading advertisements case Issued public apologies across 67 newspapers, Patanjali tells SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Patanjali Ayurved on Tuesday apprised the Supreme Court that it has issued public apologies for publishing misleading advertisements.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohtagi, representing Patanjali, submitted before a bench presided over by Justice Hima Kohli that the company has published apologies across 67 daily newspapers.

At this, the Bench, also comprising Justice Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, questioned Patanjali's counsel if the printed apologies are of the same size as the adver-



tisements. Rohtagi explained that publishing at such a size would cost tens of lakhs.

Asking Patanjali to place on record the printed apologies by April 30, the next date of listing, the apex court directed to add the Union Ministries of Consumer Affairs and Information and Broadcasting and drug licensing authority of all the states as parties to the matter.

## RBI lists 6 factors powering India's take-off to become world's 3rd largest economy

Team Absolute | Mumbai

While India's recent growth performance has surprised many, triggering a flurry of upgrades from financial institutions such as the IMF, the RBI bulletin released on Tuesday cites six factors that will propel the country to become the world's third-largest economy. In purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, the Indian economy is already the third largest in the world. According to the OECD's December 2023 update, India will overtake the US by 2045 in PPP terms to become the world's second-largest economy, the RBI bulletin points out. According to the bulletin, the "tailwinds likely to power India's take-off" are as follows:

■ The demographics favour the rising profile of growth. Currently, India has the world's largest and youngest population. The median age is around 28 years; not until the mid-2050s will



aging set in. Thus, India will enjoy a demographic dividend window of more than three decades, driven by rising working-age population rates and labour force participation rate. This is a striking contrast to a world widely confronted with the challenge of aging.

■ India's growth performance has been historically anchored by domestic resources, with foreign savings playing a minor and supplementary role. This is also reflected in the current account deficit (CAD), which remains within a sustainable threshold of about 2.5 per cent of the GDP. Currently, the CAD averages about 1

per cent, and this is associated with various indicators of external sector resilience - illustratively, external debt is below 20 per cent of the GDP and net international investment liabilities are below 12 per cent.

■ The gradualistic path of fiscal consolidation adopted after the Covid pandemic has brought the general government deficit to 8.6 per cent of the GDP and public debt to 81.6 per cent of the GDP by March 2024.

Employing a dynamic stochastic general equilibrium (DSGE) model, it is estimated that reprioritising fiscal spending by targeting productive employment-generating sectors, embracing transition, and investing in digitalisation could lead to a decline in general government debt to 73.4 per cent of the GDP by 2030-31.

In contrast, the debt-GDP ratio is projected by the IMF to rise to 116.3 per cent in 2028 for advanced economies and to 75.4 per cent for emerging and middle-income countries.

## BIRYANI BLUNDER: LORD RAM'S IMAGE ON PLATES SPARKS OUTRAGE IN DELHI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A biryani vendor in northwest Delhi was found serving his dish on disposable plates with images of Lord Ram printed over it.

Police said that they recovered plates with Lord Ram's image on it from the vendor's shop.

The incident surfaced on Saturday afternoon when local Hindu groups noticed the plates featuring the revered deity's likeness at the biryani shop. Protests also erupted, however, police reached the spot and controlled the situation after assuring thorough probe into the matter. A senior police official said that the shop-



keeper was detained soon after they received information. "He was booked under section of 107/151 (preventive detention) CrPC and later allowed to go," said the official. A video showing Lord Ram's images on the disposable plates went viral on social media and a crowd gathered near the shop on Saturday. The locals confronted the vendor, observing people being served biryani on these plates, only to see them discarded later.

## CM Kejriwal, K Kavitha's judicial custody extended till May 7

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court on Tuesday extended till May 7 the judicial custody of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and BRS leader, K Kavitha in the money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi liquor policy scam case.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja of the Rouse Avenue Court passed the orders upon expiry of the previously-granted judicial custody.

The ED arrested CM Kejriwal on March 21 after questioning him for over two



hours at his official residence in Delhi.

The ED has termed CM Kejriwal the "kingpin and the key conspirator" of the

alleged excise policy scam in collusion with other ministers of the Delhi government, AAP leaders, and other persons.

## INDIA'S 1ST BULLET TRAIN SET TO RUN IN 2026: RAILWAYS MINISTER

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Significant progress has been made in the construction of various stations for India's first bullet train and we are geared up to run the first train in one section in 2026, Union Railways and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Tuesday.

In an interview, the Union Minister said the work on bullet trains is progressing very well on the Ahmedabad-Mumbai route.

"More than 290 kms of work has already been done. Bridges have been built over eight rivers. Work is going on at 12 stations. The stations have also come at the same level so that the work is nearing completion," Ashwini Vaishnaw informed. "The work is going on at two depots. The work is going on at a very fast pace with the



complete target of opening its first section in 2026," the Union Minister told

reporter. The Bullet Train is a very complex project. The work on it start-

ed in 2017 and it took almost two-and-a-half years to complete the design.

## MORE THAN 5 GRAMS OF ARTIFICIAL SWEETENER SACCHARIN A DAY CAN BE FATAL: DOCTORS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Consuming more than 5 grams of saccharin, an artificial sweetener known to be about 300-400 times sweeter than regular sugar with zero calories, a day can be fatal, but sudden deaths due to artificial sweeteners have not been reported yet, contended doctors on Tuesday.

They reacted to the tragic case of a 10-year-old girl in Punjab's Patiala who died, last month, after eating her birthday cake, which was reportedly baked with a high concentration of saccharin.

The girl's entire family also fell ill after consuming the chocolate cake purchased online.

"In normal quantities, saccharin is not fatal, but high quantities, especially more than five grams a day would be very fatal. And this could be a part of any preparation which is not properly mixed," Dr M Wali, Senior Consultant, Department of Medicine, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, told correspondent.

"There are no published or documented reports of humans suddenly dying from 'high levels of saccharin consumption'. There are no empirical evidence-based reports on sudden death due to saccharine in animal models or human beings," added Dr Abby Phillips, a hepatologist, in a post on X.

"Saccharine and other artificial sweeteners are generally considered safe and have undergone extensive trials which showcase safety as additives in food prod-



ucts. It is ok for you to use them in their recommended intake," explained Dr Abby, popularly known as the liver doctor on X. Saccharin sodium is among the six artificial sweeteners (aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, neotame, and isomaltulose) approved "to be used in food" products by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). Based on the available scientific evidence, saccharin is also deemed "safe for the general population under certain conditions of use" by the US Food and Drug Administration.

However, Dr Tushar Tayal, Lead Consultant, Department of Internal Medicine, CK Birla Hospital, Gurugram told IANS that "research suggests that artificial sweeteners can disrupt bacteria's delicate balance in the digestive system and encourage types of bacteria that can raise glucose intolerance leading to an increased risk of metabolic disorders, such as obesity, cancer, and diabetes".

Dr Wali noted that commonly people who consume these sweeteners, including saccharin, experience very severe headaches.

But in the case of the young girl, "she would have consumed the portion of the cake which might have an accidentally high concentration of saccharin". He suggested "avoiding artificial sweeteners at all costs".

Yet the question remains: How much of the cake did the young girl consume? "Acute saccharine toxicity leading to sudden death in the child is highly assumptious; and adulteration, contamination or other causes -- deliberate or unintentional must be sought," the liver doctor said.





# DON'T GET PROVOKED, THINK TWICE AND VOTE FOR COUNTRY, YOUR DEVELOPMENT: PRIYANKA GANDHI

Team Absolute | Chitradurga

Senior Congress leader, Priyanka Gandhi, on Tuesday appealed to voters of Karnataka not to get provoked by hate speeches.

She also stressed that the voters must think twice before voting. Addressing a huge gathering in Chitradurga located in the central part of Karnataka, Priyanka Gandhi gave a call to the electorate to vote for the country and for their development too.

"What is happening in the country is wrong. The poor, middle class, labourers are being bulldozed to benefit the few. National wealth is being given away to a few people," Priyanka Gandhi underlined.

She charged that the Centre did not give drought relief to Karnataka. "The demand for AIIMS at Raichur city in north Karnataka has been made for years, but no discussion has been done on it till date.

"From the Kalasa-Banduri scheme, people will get water. The central government is denying permissions. For the Upper Bhadra Project which provides water to Tumakuru, Chikkamagaluru and Davanagere districts, the funds are not being released," Priyanka Gandhi slammed. She alleged that the central govern-



ment had caused a Rs 62,000 crore loss in terms of funds to Karnataka.

"The Prime Minister claims that he works day and night. However, why this biased mindset? The state of Himachal Pradesh which was in crisis also did not get anything. It shows there is no concern for the nation," Priyanka Gandhi attacked.

She also announced that if the Congress was voted to power, the Kadu Golla community would get ST status. "Minimum Support Price (MSP) will become law. There would be no GST on agricultural products.

There would be insurance cover for crops where compensation would be given in 30 days in case of crop loss, if the Congress is voted to power," Priyanka Gandhi assured.

She added that during the election there is no talk about inflation, health and only provocative speeches are made and the BJP ensures the collapse of governments.

"The media says it's a master stroke and does not raise the question of erosion of democratic values," Priyanka Gandhi pointed out.

"I am here to talk about the country

which you have built with your hard work. There is the harsh truth of inflation, unemployment and on the other hand there is talk about the country achieving great heights. The struggle in the lives of people has been increasing. Petrol, diesel, gold, silver and LPG cylinder costs have gone up. There is no MSP for crops but there is GST everywhere. The farmer is sinking under load of loans, there is no talk of loan waiver. But, few are benefited," Priyanka Gandhi stated.

She added, "The bank account of the Congress party has been seized and two CMs have been sent to jail. Cases have been lodged against Opposition leaders to weaken them. There are talks about changing the Constitution if the BJP is given 400 seats." "This has to be observed carefully. The Constitution empowers you. It provides safety and security, and voting power. If someone is talking about changing the Constitution, they are talking about changing your lives," she noted.

Priyanka Gandhi said, "Hindu religion, values of politics give the message of service and path of truth. Lord Ram also gives the same message. Mahatma Gandhi and all other PMs, cutting across party lines, followed those principles. It is not to be seen anywhere now."

# It is PM Modi's guarantee that all passengers will get confirmed tickets in next 5 years: Ashwini Vaishnaw

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Railways and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Tuesday that in the next five years, it is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantee that almost any passenger who wants to travel can easily get a confirmed ticket.

In an interaction, Ashwini Vaishnaw said that in the last 10 years, PM Modi has done unprecedented transformation in Railways.

"In the next five years, PM Modi's guarantee is that the capacity of the Railways will be increased so much that almost any passenger who wants to travel can easily get a confirmed ticket," the Union Minister emphasised.

Sharing an example of how the Indian Railways has transformed in the last decade, the Union Minister informed that in the process of building railway tracks, only 17,000 kilometers of tracks were built between



2004 and 2014.

"From 2014 to 2024, 31,000 kilometers of new tracks were built. In the 10 years from 2004 to 2014, only around 5,000 kilometers were electrified, whereas in the last 10 years, a staggering 44,000 kilometers of railway electrification took place," Ashwini Vaishnaw noted.

"Only 32,000 coaches were made from 2004-2014. In the last 10 years, 54,000 coaches were built. For the dedicated

freight corridor, not even a single kilometer was commissioned before 2014. Now, two dedicated freight corridors of 2,734 kilometers have been commissioned," the Union Minister informed.

In the next five years, Railways, which is a strong link in the growth of the country's economy, "will be further strengthened and the facilities, especially for the passengers, will be expanded at a much faster pace".

# MP Congress leader Arun Yadav hits out at ex-colleague Suresh Pachouri

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Congress leader Arun Yadav on Tuesday hit out at his former party colleague Suresh Pachouri saying that the latter is a leader of his loyalists only.

Former minister Yadav alleged that the Congress weakened under Pachouri's leadership in Madhya Pradesh.

He claimed Pachouri used to deny tickets to genuine party workers and used to push his loyalists' name.

Addressing a public rally in Itarsi (under Hoshangabad Lok Sabha seat), Yadav said, "When Pachouri was state Congress chief, we were not allowed to visit anywhere without his permission. He led the party like a dictator."

He also took a jibe at Pachouri saying the latter was three-time Rajya Sabha MP without contesting an election. "He contested two elections in his political career so far and lost, but represented the Rajya Sabha thrice," Yadav said in Itarsi, the home town of Pachouri.



Pachouri, who was Madhya Pradesh Congress President from 2008 to 2011 and was a three-time Rajya Sabha MP before it, resigned from the party and joined the BJP last month.

Pachouri's switching to the BJP was a major setback to the Congress ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. He was considered close to the Congress high command and the Gandhi family.

# INDIA CARRIES OUT SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF MEDIUM-RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILE'S NEW VERSION

New Delhi: India on Tuesday carried out a successful launch of the new variant of a medium-range ballistic missile.

The Ministry of Defence in a statement said that the successful launch of the new variant of a medium-range ballistic missile was carried out under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command on Tuesday.

The user launch has proven the operational capability of the Command and validated new technologies, the ministry added.

Earlier on April 18, the DRDO conducted a successful flight-test of Indigenous Technology Cruise Missile (ITCM).

The flight of the missile was monitored from the Su-30-Mk-I aircraft of the Indian Air Force. The missile was equipped with advanced avionics and software to ensure better and reliable performance. The ITCM followed the desired path using way point navigation and demonstrated very low altitude sea-skimming flight. The successful flight test had also established the reliable performance of the indigenous propulsion system developed by Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE), Bengaluru.

# Nagpur school management faces action in poll code violation complaint against Gadkari

Nagpur | Agencies

Maharashtra's Chief Electoral Officer has initiated action against the management of a school for allegedly allowing the use of its students in the poll campaign of BJP's Nagpur Lok Sabha candidate, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, officials said on Tuesday.

The action came after state Congress chief spokesperson Atul Londhe lodged a complaint with the CEO and Election Commission against Union Minister Gadkari for the alleged use of school students in his poll event, thus violating the model code of conduct.

"We welcome the state CEO for taking cognisance of our complaint and initiating action against the Director of NSVM Fulwari School. However, when will the CEO take action against the BJP candidate Gadkari who has flouted the poll code?" Londhe asked.

As per the April 3 complaint to the CEO, on April 1, students of the prestigious NSVM Fulwari School, a privately run and government-aided institution, had reportedly been drawn in to welcome Gadkari at his election rally held at Vaishali



Nagar between 12-1 pm.

"Making use of school children for political propaganda is wrong and is in complete violation of the election code of conduct and violative of the ECI's clear directives which were ignored by the BJP and its candidate," Londhe said.

# MAMATA BANERJEE SLAMS JUDICIARY OVER COURT RULING IN SCHOOL JOBS CASE

Kolkata | Agencies

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday launched a scathing attack against the judiciary over the Calcutta High ruling on Monday that cancelled 25,753 appointments in teaching and non-teaching posts made by the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) in 2016.

Addressing an election rally at Bhatar in East Burdwan district, the Trinamool Congress supremo said, "I do not want to name anybody. The judges will earn their livelihood from the public exchequer. The state exchequer will bear the cost of their security. Yet they will terminate services."

In a crucial ruling on Monday, a division bench of the Calcutta High Court cancelled the appointment of all the 25,753 persons empanelled in 2016 for various categories of jobs at secondary and higher secondary schools in West Bengal. The case is being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Speaking at the rally, the Chief Minister also indi-



rectly linked a section of the judiciary to the BJP. "We provide appointments, which they terminate using the court. Had there been any irregularity, we could have been informed. We could have rectified the errors. I cannot look after everything. There are

different departments in the state government," the Chief Minister said.

She also asked who would take the responsibility in case anyone takes a drastic step following the termination of his or her service.

After the court ruling on Monday, the Chief Minister had indirectly alleged a clandestine link between the BJP and a section of the judiciary, as she questioned how could someone predict in advance what the court's decision would be.

Although Banerjee did not name anyone, her hint was at the leader of the opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, who on Saturday claimed that Trinamool Congress would receive a major jolt that will shake the entire party next week. "Someone said there will be an explosion. What sort of explosion? Is it the termination of service of 26,000 people? I condemn that. How could someone predict the court's ruling in advance? The verdict was pronounced on Monday but some predicted it on Saturday.

"How could this happen unless the person who made the projection himself drafted the court order," the Chief Minister said on Monday.

# Surat Congress leader Nilesh Kumbhani 'vanishes' amid election controversy

Surat | Agencies

Congress leader Nilesh Kumbhani from Surat, whose Lok Sabha candidacy was recently cancelled due to inconsistencies in his nomination form, seems to have 'vanished' into thin air.

Kumbhani is not reachable on phone, raising alarms within his party and among his followers.

The development follows the Election Commission declaring BJP's Mukesh Dalal as the unopposed winner from the Surat Lok Sabha seat after all the other candidates withdrew their nominations.



"Kumbhani is neither at his home, nor is he taking calls. He also didn't contact any party workers since the election of Mukesh Dalal," a Congress worker said.

After rumors that Kumbhani may switch allegiance to the BJP, several Congress supporters staged a demonstration outside his residence with posters labeling him a "betrayer of the people".

Recently, the Returning Officer (RO), Surat Collector Sourabh Pardhi, rejected the nomination of Kumbhani and his substitute candidate due to alleged discrepancies in the signatures of their proposers.

# Lucknow Police installs tyre crushers to check wrong-side driving



Lucknow | Agencies

The Lucknow Police, for the first time, has installed tyre crushers at two prominent crossings - Awadh Crossing and Baikunth Dham to check wrong-side driving.

The tyre crusher (iron spike) installed, is designed to shred tyres of vehicles coming from the wrong direction.

DCP Traffic, Salmantaj Patil, said that if suggestions come from the public to install tyre crushers at other places, the department will install them after surveying the place.

Wrong-side driving is one of the major causes of accidents in the state capital.

"People giving suggestions for a smooth and safe traffic system will be given a citation in the office of Joint Commissioner of Police Law and Order," the DCP added.

In a statement, the Lucknow traffic department said, "Suggestions were sought from the public for the smooth operation of traffic, following which many suggestions were received. Vehicles come on the wrong side and block traffic, which is said to be the main reason for accidents and jams."

# Fire at Bandhwari landfill site raises concerns; no casualties reported

Gurugram | Agencies

A fire broke out at the Bandhwari landfill site about 20 km from here on Monday evening which is yet to be doused completely.

However, no casualties were reported in the incident, a fire department official said.

While the exact cause of the fire is known yet, fire tenders have been rushed to the site, officials said on Tuesday.

According to fire officials, the incident took place at around 5 p.m. on Monday in the Bandhwari landfill area. The fire is suspected to have started due to a build-up of methane, a flammable gas, at the landfill site due to the decomposition of solid municipal waste. The fire also spread due to polythene and other plastic waste in the landfill.

"A fire broke out at the top of the landfill due to which it



is taking time to douse the flames. Several fire tenders from Gurugram and Faridabad fire stations were pressed into action. Also, around 40 fire personnel were present at the spot to control the blaze. It took fire-

fighters more than 22 hours to control the flames," Manoj Kadyan, a fire official, told reporter.

"Every effort is being made to douse the fire fully," Kadyan added.

In 2013, a major fire made

the Bandhwari waste management defunct for some time, before its operational municipal bodies in Gurugram and Faridabad continued to dump over 1,000 tonnes of untreated garbage at the site every day.

# PayU gets RBI's in-principle nod to operate as payments aggregator

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Digital financial services provider PayU on Tuesday announced that it has received in-principle authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a Payments Aggregator (PA) under the Payment Settlements Act, 2007.

This approval will now allow PayU to onboard new merchants on its platform.

"This license is pivotal in our mission to establish a globally renowned digital payment infrastructure rooted in India," PayU CEO Anirban Mukherjee said in a statement.

"Aligned with the government's Digital India initiative and the RBI's forward-thinking regulations, we are dedicated to driving digitisation and financial inclusion, particularly for small merchants," he

added. Moreover, the company said the RBI's in-principle approval underpins PayU's mission to build a world-leading digital payment infrastructure that originates from India, for India and the world, accelerating its next growth phase in the country. Earlier this month, PayU partnered with US-based fintech company PayPal to enhance the cross-border payment experience for Indian merchants. PayU provides payment gateway solutions to online businesses through its technology and has empowered more than five lakh businesses, including India's leading enterprises, e-commerce giants and SMBs. It allows businesses to collect digital payments across over 150 online payment methods such as credit cards, debit cards, net banking, EMIs, BNPL, QR, UPI, wallets, and more.





## CORRUPT INDI ALLIANCE LEADERS UNITED TO SAVE THEMSELVES FROM JAIL: J.P. NADDA

Team Absolute | Bhopal

BJP President J.P. Nadda on Tuesday claimed that all those united in the name of 'INDI Alliance' have been indulged in corruption and are trying to protect themselves and their family members from jail.

The BJP chief made the remarks while addressing a public rally in Madhya Pradesh's Tikamgarh on Tuesday.

He further said half of the Opposition leaders are out on bail while the remaining half are in jails.

"They (opposition) keep two chairs vacant during public rallies thinking that they will return from jail and occupy those chairs," Nadda said while referring to the Opposition's tactic of keeping chairs vacant for Delhi Chief



Minister Arvind Kejriwal and JMM leader Hemant Soren.

The BJP chief is on a day-long tour to Madhya Pradesh to campaign for the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections scheduled for April 26.

He first addressed a public rally in Tikamgarh, a Lok Sabha constituency in the Bundelkhand region of

Madhya Pradesh, and then left for Rewa, and then to Satna to address public rallies.

The second phase of elections will cover as many as seven Lok Sabha constituencies of Madhya Pradesh -- Tikamgarh, Damoh, Khajuraho, Satna, Rewa, Hoshangabad and Betul.

# Bhopal will be saffron in PM Modi's road show

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's road show is going to be held in Madhya Pradesh's capital Bhopal on Wednesday, April 24. BJP is busy preparing for the road show. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has claimed that an amazing sight will be seen during this road show and Bhopal will be saffron.

Chief Minister Yadav took stock of the preparations for the Prime Minister's road show on Monday night and also passed through the road from where the road show is going to start. While discussing with the reporters at the BJP Media Center on Tuesday, he said that while Bhopal will be saffron in the Prime Minister's road show, the culture and prosperity of the state will also be visible.



Chief Minister Yadav said that Bhopal will be decorated like a bride for the Prime Minister's road show, here representatives of various societies will shower flowers and women

of Bengali society will be especially welcomed. On this occasion, along with drums and drums, laser will also be welcomed. Tribal parties will also welcome the Prime Minister. The

scene in the road show will be exactly the same as the great poet had said that all the people have come down. A slogan was echoed during the assembly elections - Modi ke man mein Madhya Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh ke man mein Modi.

Chief Minister Yadav claims that it is the same during the Lok Sabha elections and this will be visible in the results also. The Prime Minister's road show will start from Airtel intersection and will reach Nanke Petrol Pump. This road show will be about one and a half kilometer long.

Strict security arrangements have been made in view of the road show. Barricading is being done. Apart from this, more than 2000 police personnel will be deployed under the direction of more than 30 officers of the Indian Police Service.

# Wanted cousin of jailed gangster Nasir nabbed from Bhopal

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Bhopal

After a massive hunt, a member of the infamous Nasir gang, who was wanted in cases of murder and under MCOCA, has been arrested from Bhopal along with his aide, the Special Cell of Delhi Police said on Tuesday.

The arrested gangster has been identified as Danish Jamal, while his aide has been identified as Gaurav a.k.a Chuddi.

According to the police, a Special Cell team while working on wanted gangsters received information about the movement of Jamal in Delhi a few months ago.

Jamal is also the cousin of gangster Nasir, who is presently lodged in jail in a MCOCA case. Ever since Nasir was arrested, his brother Adil, Danish, and Badar took charge of the gang operating in the North-East



Delhi area. "It was earlier revealed that Jamal was hiding somewhere around his native village in Bulandshahr, UP, to evade arrest. A team was sent there only to find that he had already left the place," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell), Pratiksha Godara.

However, information was again received that Jamal was residing

somewhere in the South-East Delhi area. "A team was stationed in the vicinity of his probable hideouts in the area, but Jamal was found to have fled to Bhopal on the night of April 15," the DCP said.

Subsequently, he was followed and arrested from Gandhi Nagar in Bhopal on April 16 along with Gaurav, also a declared 'Proclaimed Offender' in a murder case.

The DCP said Jamal has a long history of committing heinous crimes for more than 15 years. "He joined the criminal nexus in 2009 with the aides of his cousin Nasir. At that time, Nasir was associated with another jailed gangster, Hashim Baba. The Nasir-Hasim gang had a rivalry with the Chhenu gang and the Aqil Mama gang. During that period, inter-gang rivalries had claimed many lives," the officer said.

In 2013, Jamal along with his aides

allegedly killed gangster Aqil Mama, while in 2014, they killed the brother of Aqil Mama to claim complete dominance in the North-East Delhi area.

"The same year, Jamal along with his aides killed a person named Firoz near the Holy Family Hospital in Delhi, which was a contract killing," the DCP said.

As per police records, Jamal was involved in settling property disputes/grabbing of properties, extortion, satta, and drug rackets in North-East Delhi.

To check the criminal activities of the Nasir-Hasim gang, the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) was invoked against Nasir, Hasim, and other gang members, including Jamal, in July 2019 by the Crime Branch of Delhi Police.

# Pragya Thakur slams land mafia on the charge of breaking the crematorium wall

Team Absolute | Bhopal

MP Pragya Singh Thakur has cornered the land mafia on the allegations of breaking the wall of the crematorium for the ashram in Nayapura area of Newri, Bhopal.

On Monday night, MP Pragya Thakur was accused of breaking the wall of the crematorium for the ashram. On this the people of the village also came out in protest and raised slogans. Local people alleged that an attempt was made by MP Pragya Thakur to capture private land.

On the allegation of breaking the wall of the crematorium ground, MP Thakur wrote on Twitter, "Bhopal is dominated by land mafia. The land leveling work with JCB is going on for several



days on the land purchased for the temple. Just two hours ago, land mafia people The government land has been encroached upon. The JCB driver was beaten up and a lot of damage was done to it. I also informed the collector on the spot but the police turned me back sent." She further wrote, "Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, please alert your

Home Department to rein in the land mafia. I will neither give even an inch of the land taken for national work, nor will I take an inch of anyone's land. The loss that has been caused by the land mafia will be taken care of." Compensation should also be made from those who are involved in this work. Strict action should be taken against them by filing FIR."

# Election campaign will stop from 6 pm on April 24 for the second phase of voting

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the second phase of Lok Sabha Elections-2024, the election campaign will stop from 6 pm on April 24 in the 6 Lok Sabha parliamentary constituencies of Madhya Pradesh where voting is to be held from 7 am to 6 pm on Friday, April 26.

Chief Electoral Officer Anupam Rajan has said that there is a provision to stop the election campaign in the parliamentary constituency 48 hours before the scheduled end of voting. After the deadline for campaigning ends, persons from outside the area, who are not voters in that Lok Sabha Parliamentary Constituency, have to leave that constituency. For this, an intensive monitoring campaign is conducted. In the second phase, voting is to be held



on April 26 in Lok Sabha parliamentary constituencies of Madhya Pradesh number-6 Tikamgarh (SC), number-7

Damoh, number-8 Khajuraho, number-9 Satna, number-10 Rewa and number-17 Hoshangabad.

# The fate of heavyweight candidates like Digvijay, Shivraj and Scindia will be decided in the third phase of MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The third phase of Lok Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh is interesting. In this phase, the fate of two former Chief Ministers Digvijay Singh and Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia is going to be decided.

There are 29 Lok Sabha seats in the state and voting is taking place in four phases. The first phase of voting has taken place on April 19 and the second phase of voting is to be held on April 26. Voting in the third phase is to be held on May 7. There are nine parliamentary constituencies in the third phase. These include Vidisha, Rajgarh, Guna, Morena, Sagar, Gwalior, Bhind, Bhopal and Betul.

Out of these, everyone's eyes are on three Rajgarh, Vidisha and Guna. Congress has fielded former Chief Minister Digvijay Singh from Rajgarh and he is contesting against BJP's



Rodmal Nagar. In Vidisha, former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan is in the fray as a BJP candidate and is facing Congress's Pratap Bhanu Sharma. Whereas in Guna, Union Minister

Jyotiraditya Scindia is contesting elections for the first time as a BJP candidate and in front of him is Congress's Yadvendra Singh Yadav. Digvijay Singh has returned to Rajgarh to contest Lok Sabha elec-

tions after almost three decades. He has been MP from here in the year 1984 and 1991. He had contested the last election from Bhopal and was defeated by BJP's Pragya Singh Thakur. This time Rajgarh is being counted among the high profile seats. Shivraj Singh Chauhan is once again contesting elections from Vidisha. He has represented this parliamentary constituency five times from 1991 to 2004. This is his sixth election from here. Guna parliamentary constituency is considered the stronghold of the Scindia family, but Jyotiraditya Scindia had contested the last election as a Congress candidate in which he had to face defeat. Vijayaraje Scindia and Madhavrao Scindia have also been elected from here.

The contest has become exciting due to the presence of veterans in the third phase of the state elections. Both the political parties BJP and Congress are trying their best to register victory at these places.

# FOUR LUMINARIES FROM MP GET PADMA SHRI AWARD

Team Absolute | Bhopal

As many as four luminaries from Madhya Pradesh -- Omprakash Sharma, Bhagwatilal Rajpurohit, Kaluram Bamaniya, and Satendra Singh Lohiya -- were bestowed the prestigious Padma Shri Award on Monday.

Sharma was bestowed with the prestigious award for promoting Mach folk theatre, Rajpurohit for his contribution in literature, Bamaniya received award for promoting Kabir bhajans, and Lohiya, a 70 per cent disabled, for swimming.

Sharma (86), a resident of Madhya Pradesh's religious city Ujjain, was bestowed with the prestigious award for promoting a 200-year-old traditional dance drama of Malwa region. Hailing from a humble background, Sharma learned Mach from his father at Ustaad Kaluram Mach Akhada. He has penned scripts for Mach folk theatre productions and adapted Sanskrit plays in Mach style. As an educator, he trained students at NSD, New Delhi, and Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal.

In a telephonic conversation with IANS earlier on January 25, Sharma



had said that he had begun performing Mach at the age of 10 and has dedicated the prestigious award to every artist associated with Mach theatre. Born at a village in Dhar district, Bhagwatilal Rajpurohit (80) is known for well-researched writings. At present, he lives in Ujjain and has been continuously writing on literature and culture in Sanskrit, Hindi and Malvi. He worked as a director, Vikramaditya Shodh Peeth, Ujjain, for 10 years, and a professor of Hindi, Sanskrit and Ancient History for 38

years at Sandipani Ashram in Ujjain. He has published more than 100 books and over 50 dramas. He has also written a Sanskrit drama, Samarth Vikramaditya. His play, Kalidas Charitam, has been staged in Sanskrit, Hindi and Malvi.

He was earlier awarded with Sangeet Natak Akademi Amrit Award for his contribution to scholarship in Indian theatre.

Kaluram Bamaniya (54), a resident of Pardeshipura village in Tonkshurd tehsil of Dewas district, was

bestowed the Padma Award for his contribution to Kabir bhajans along with bhajans of Mirabai and Gorakhnath in Malvi dialect for several years.

He has performed at concerts including Kabir Festival organised by Embassy of India, Kathmandu, Nepal, in 2009. He has also received Tulsi Samman and Bheraji Samman in 2022. Bamaniya said he learnt singing from his grandfather and father. 36-year-old Indian swimmer with 70 per cent disability, Padma Shri recipient Satendra Singh Lohiya is a resident of Gata village in Bhind district in Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh. He is India's finest open water swimmers.

Despite underdeveloped thigh bones that don't allow him to straighten his limbs, Lohiya went on to become one of India's finest open water swimmers, crossing the English channel in 2018.

He had completed the English channel in 12 hours and 26 minutes, setting a new record.

Lohiya received Vikram Award, the highest state-level sports awards in Madhya Pradesh for swimming in 2014.

# BJP crossed 400' is not a slogan but a mission: Jyotiraditya Scindia

Team Absolute | Shivpuri

BJP candidate from Guna Lok Sabha seat Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Tuesday that this time the slogan of crossing 400 has become the mission of the country. BJP government is going to be formed in the country for the third time with the help of the people. In which Guna Lok Sabha constituency is also going to play a big role. The development work happening in the country shows how the double engine government of BJP has taken care of every section.

Union Minister Scindia said during public relations that the Modi government at the Center has taken care of every section. Be it a farmer or a woman or a poor or a youth, everyone is getting the benefits of various welfare schemes.

He appealed to all the residents of the area to come out of their homes in large numbers on May 7 and strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Modi and make BJP win.

Scindia claimed that Guna has got the benefit of double engine government. Guna Lok Sabha parliamentary constituency is also not untouched by the development work done in the country. Various schemes are running here for the welfare of every section. Every section is getting the benefits of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana and Ladli Brahmin Yojana. With the help of the Central



Government, today 10 crore women are getting the benefits of Ujjwala Yojana.

He said that just as a tailor makes clothes from each thread, similarly as a tailor he has built a network of roads in Pichor and Shivpuri areas. Built five sub-stations, built 236 kilometers of roads at a cost of about Rs 150 crore and started NTPC and NTPI colleges. The highway from Gwalior to Dewas was built, which gave impetus to the development of the area.

No Prime Minister of Congress thought about the poor, youth, food providers and women power. Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took oath as the Prime Minister in 2014, he has been working for the development of every caste and every class.





EDITOR'S SPECS

In Kerala, it's a mad rush to garner minority communities' votes

As the poll battle has come to the wire in Kerala, the three political fronts are in a mad rush to garner the minority communities' votes and whoever gets, it could well have the last laugh. Kerala goes to the polls on April 26 to elect 20 new Lok Sabha members and the public campaign comes to a close on Wednesday evening. The minority communities' votes are pivotal for all the political fronts as the Muslims (around 26 per cent) and the Christians (around 18 per cent) together account for as high as 44 per cent of the 3.30 crore state population. Already the first shot has been fired and contrary to the general perception that the BJP might get a raw deal, a new generation Church- The Believers Church headquartered at Thiruvalla has made its intentions clear and they have decided to go with the BJP. But the Manipur issue appears to have hurt the Catholic community which accounts for more than 50 per cent of all the Christians and hence that's not something the BJP-led NDA would be happy with. Among the Muslim community, the EK Samastha wing which controls over 10,000 madrasas, has a difference of opinion with the Indian Union Muslim League, which is the second biggest ally of the Congress-led UDF and that's good news for the CPI-M-led Left Democratic Front (LDF). A political analyst on condition of anonymity said the minority communities' voting patterns will definitely play a big role this time. Now all eyes are on April 26 and the voter turnout and if previous figures of turnout are any indication, then the Congress-led UDF can sit pretty, as any turnout over 75 per cent has favoured them hugely, while if it hovers around the 70 per cent mark, then the Left can smile.

India's foreign policy navigates a new flux in international relations

D.C. Pathak

India's three-fold strategy of handling international relations by opting for bilateral and even multilateral friendships designed to bring in mutual security and economic benefits without prejudice to world peace, asserting the country's position as a major power influencing matters of global security and economic betterment and developing India as a self-reliant nation capable of building its own economic strength as well as defence, has worked to the country's great advantage so far. However, the current geopolitical developments highlighting the injection of religion in international politics, the advent of a new Cold War between the US and China-Russia axis, and the sudden preoccupation of the Joe Biden administration in the US with 'measures to counter Islamophobia' in the environ resulting from Israel-Hamas conflict, have added to the task of policymakers here in keeping India on top of the issues of foreign relations. Pushing Indo-US strategic partnership to a new height to lead the democratic world against shared threats of terrorism, 'radicalisation' and dictatorship, and in the Indian context, countering the Sino-Pak axis which represented an alliance of a Marxist state with a fundamentalist regime, have been the two major planks of India's foreign policy. India believed that both the US and this country were on the same side of the fence on global commons. On both the Ukraine-Russia military confrontation and the Israel-Hamas conflict, India took an independent stand favouring cessation of hostilities and talks for settlement -- in one case on the plea that security concerns of both sides should be understood and in the other, on the acceptance of a two-state solution in Palestine. India's stand was acknowledged as an unbiased policy by the international community and this enhanced the stature of this country as a world power whose voice mattered on global issues. The political divide between the US-led West on one side and the China-Russia combine on the other that was still ideological -- though economic rivalry also mattered a great deal -- is getting impacted now by faith-based conflicts that were playing out across the world -- particularly in the Middle East. This was compelling the US to temper its foreign policy with the domestic compulsion of not alienating its Muslim population following the killing of over 30,000 Palestinians by Israel -- mostly women and children -- in the ongoing conflict. India, on its part, has to watch out for the consequences of the new-found initiative of the White House to roll out steps against 'Islamophobia' and be more assertive about rebutting any attempts by international lobbies to run down this country on matters of internal freedom and treatment of the minorities. The Islamic radical forces represented by the Taliban-Al Qaeda axis and ISIS attack US interests because of political animosity and go after Shiite Iran, the Alawite regimes of Syria and Iraq and the Iranian proxies like Hezbollah active in the Middle East, on account of religious hatred. The attack of ISIS on a hugely attended concert on the outskirts of Moscow on March 22 -- barely 20 kilometres from the Kremlin -- as a result of which 143 persons were killed and more than 300 injured, was attributed by the radical Islamic outfit, to the Russian support for the Syrian President -- who belonged to the Alawite sect of Shism -- and also to the "atrocities" of Vladimir Putin's Russia on Chechen Muslims who are Sunnis. ISIS -- and also the Taliban-Al Qaeda combine -- carry the historical legacy of the anti-West Wahhabi 'revolt' of the 19th century and the 'revivalist' memory of animosity towards Shiites. The faith-based motivation of ISIS thus can be said to have led it to target Russia keeping the latter at par with the US-led West -- political opposition in this case also accruing direct-



ly from religious antagonism. In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is a Sunni extremist state but as a close US ally in the Muslim world, was inclined towards accepting the Abraham accord of UAE with Israel. In the wake of the Israel-Hamas conflict that broke out with the terror attack of Hamas on Israel on October 7 last year, Saudi Arabia -- like India -- emphasised the need for a pause in Israel's military attack on Gaza to minimise civilian casualties there. Iran and its armed proxy, Hezbollah, have sided with the Sunni Hamas because of their political antipathy towards Israel -- the closest friend of the US in today's geopolitics -- would override everything else. Israel and Iran happened to be the major contenders for power in the Middle East and the political rivalry between them guided their responses. Iran would also, to a certain degree, share concern on the broader Islamic issue of Israeli encroachment on Al Aqsa mosque in East Jerusalem -- the third holiest centre for Muslims of the world. As regards China, the Chinese move of making it up with the Taliban that had reestablished its Emirate at Kabul in 2021 -- again with the help of Pakistan -- in return for the facility granted to China for extending its B&RI to Afghanistan, invited the ire of ISIS which attacked Chinese diplomats in Kabul in December 2022. Of course, ISIS attacks on the Shias in Pakistan and the Hazaras in Afghanistan also continued. ISIS now leading the Islamic radical forces would not take kindly to Pakistan's effort to draw close to the US. An interesting fallout of the Israel-Hamas conflict is that the huge military assault of Israel in Gaza in retaliation to the October 7 attack of Hamas, had produced a wide-scale pro-Muslim demonstration in the US and elsewhere. Hamas had justified its attack on Israel on the grounds that Israel had imposed its authority on Al Aqsa mosque in April 2023 and had continued with the creation of settlements in Gaza and the West Bank. From India's point of view, as already mentioned, a concern is that the pro-Palestine opinion could encourage anti-India lobbies to raise the issue of protection of Muslim minority in India. Any demonstrations in India in this regard would impact the internal security situation here. India is rightly pursuing a foreign policy that best suits a multi-polar world order and allows for a non-aligned approach that serves the best national interests in the spheres of both security and economic development. Notwithstanding the concerns of the Biden administration over the fallout of the Israel-Hamas conflict, Indo-US friendship has to be pushed deeper for the most important reason that China in strategic alliance with Pakistan, posed a major threat to India's national security. While India was strengthening its role in Quad led by the US because there was convergence on threat perception relating to China between the US and India, this country would be justifiably concerned over any attempt by the Biden administration to keep Pakistan on the side of the US at the cost of India's national interests. There are fresh indications that the US and Saudi Arabia -- two

countries that mattered to Pakistan the most -- wanted India to pick up the thread of talks with Pakistan. India has once again made the point that it would be willing to attack terrorists behind cross-border, on the soil of Pakistan itself, which was a way of reminding Pakistan that it would have to draw down on terrorism before India could respond to the suggestion of Indo-Pak talks. India can of course handle the narratives of 'majoritarianism', 'illiberalism', and 'safeguarding of minorities' on its own since secularism was built into this country's electoral democracy by way of the universal adult franchise. India is welcoming defence imports from the US, Russia, and France in line with its own sovereign requirements and this should work well since India's handling of international relations rested on the country's assertion as a major power of the world on issues of global peace and economic advancement. A priority for India's security is to have the capabilities of dealing with both China and Pakistan on the borders, on the sea and in the air. At the same time, India has to continue raising its voice against global threats of terrorism, radicalisation and drug trade from all multinational platforms. In a nutshell, India's handling of international relations has to reckon with a shifting geopolitics where potential friends and adversaries have to be taken stock of, from time to time. Intelligence agencies have to be specially geared to tracking the operational plans of the two adversaries in our neighbourhood -- China and Pakistan -- of causing internal destabilisation here. National security is incomplete without economic security which raises among other things, the question of safeguarding India's strategic establishments against infiltration and sabotage. The vigilance and security set-up of each of these entities should be strengthened under the guidance of the Intelligence Bureau. India is already working on protecting the country's lifelines against cyber attacks and is on the front line of pressing Artificial Intelligence into use for the cause of national security. Intelligence liaison with established and tested friends must be an important component of our foreign policy. In informal Indo-US interactions, India should continue to 'educate' the Americans on the threat of 'radicalisation' translating into faith-based terrorism that would pose a danger to the entire democratic world. Keeping up relations with friendly neighbours has acquired a newfound importance in view of the Chinese determined effort to extend the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) to these countries. Our approach to international relations reflects the political will of India as a major world power, to assert its sovereignty and independence in formulating foreign policy while demonstrating a commitment to global peace and human welfare. India being sensitive to communal conflicts can counsel the democratic countries on how to quell 'radicalisation' that justified recourse to violence in the name of religion and gave a fillip to proxy wars and cross-border terrorism. The danger of faith-based conflicts may get deeper as Iran had already carried out a military offensive against Israel and Yemen's Houthi movement with its Shiite origins, was coming out in support of Iran. The recent attacks of ISIS from Moscow to Syria further point to the induction of religion into international politics in no uncertain terms. The democratic world order led by the US and India must wake up to this new danger and work together to defuse it. (The writer is former Director of the Intelligence Bureau. Views are personal)

international

Iran vows 'harsher' response should Israel 'make another mistake'

Tehran | Agencies Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani has warned that his country will make a "harsher and more decisive" response should Israel make another mistake. He made the remarks on Monday at a weekly press conference in the capital Tehran while commenting on Iran's recent massive retaliatory military operation against Israel, which was carried out in response to a deadly Israeli strike on April 1 against the Iranian consulate in Syria, Xinhua news agency reported. Kanaani said the Israeli attack on Iran's diplomatic premises constituted an aggres-



sive violation of international laws and regulations. He stressed that Tehran deemed its retaliatory operation concluded and its objectives achieved, but "if Israel makes another mistake, Iran's response will be harsher and more decisive".

Turning to the explosions heard early Friday near the Iranian city of Isfahan in an apparent Israeli strike, Kanaani denounced the attack as "vexatious and malicious," adding no party has yet claimed responsibility for it. He noted that Iran's air defence had carried out its duty and foiled the attack conducted by "a small flying object and micro air vehicle," stressing the perpetrators did not achieve anything. Commenting on Iran's potential countermeasures in response to the incident, Kanaani said necessary actions had been taken and the incident did not warrant any follow-up.

Employee of German EU lawmaker detained as suspected China spy

Karlsruhe, Germany | Agencies An employee of a German member of the European Parliament, lawmaker Maximilian Krahl, has been detained in Dresden on suspicion of spying for China, according to security sources. Federal prosecutors reported the arrest in Dresden on Tuesday, without naming Krahl. The suspect is said to have passed on information from the European Parliament to China, prosecutors said. Prosecutors said the suspect was detained by police in Dresden, in the state of Saxony on Monday. The accused's flats were searched. According to the statement, he is accused of acting as an agent for a foreign secret service. Several German media outlets also reported that the suspect is an employee of Krahl, who is the leading candidate for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) in the upcoming European Parliament elections in June. Krahl was initially unavailable for comment. The announcement comes a day after three Germans were arrested in the western German cities of Dusseldorf and Bad Homburg on suspicion of spying for the Chinese secret service. At the time of their arrest, the suspects were in negotiations about research projects that could be useful for the expansion of China's maritime combat power in particular, according



to the prosecutors. "As the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, we tracked down these people very early on and continued to monitor their behaviour and activities," said the president of the domestic intelligence services, Thomas Haldenwang, at a meeting of his agency in Berlin on Monday. According to the Federal Public Prosecutor General, those detained are "strongly suspected of spying since an unspecified date before June 2022." One of the men is said to have procured information on innovative military technologies for an employee of the Chinese secret service MSS who was in China. To this end, he had "used" the detained couple, who ran a company in Dusseldorf, the federal prosecutor's office said in a statement. The company had served as a "medium for establishing contacts and collaborating with people from the German scientific and research community."

Kremlin warns against potential nuclear deployment in Poland



Moscow | Agencies Russia will take necessary measures to ensure its security if Poland deploys nuclear weapons, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. Polish President Andrzej Duda said earlier on Monday that Poland is ready to host US nuclear weapons in the country, according to media reports. Peskov added the Russian military would analyse the situation if such an action were implemented, Xinhua news agency reported. "I think, in any case, they will take all the necessary response steps to guarantee our security." Under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) nuclear sharing scheme, the US is authorised to station its nuclear armaments within the territories of member states that do not possess them. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in October 2023 that Russia would be forced to resort to "compensatory measures" in response to the US deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe.

10 killed after two Malaysian military helicopters crash

Kuala Lumpur | Agencies Ten people were killed following a mid-air collision involving two Malaysian military helicopters on Tuesday morning in Perak state, the country's Navy said. The incident occurred at 9.32 a.m. local time over the Lumut Royal Malaysian Navy base while undergoing a flypast rehearsal, the Royal Malaysian Navy said in a brief statement. One helicopter carried seven personnel while the other had three on board, Xinhua news agency reported. "All victims died at the scene of the incident and have been sent to the Lumut base hospital for identification," it said, adding that the public is urged not to spread videos and photos of the victims. Details are awaited.



FIVE KILLED WHILE TRYING TO CROSS FROM FRANCE TO BRITAIN IN SMALL BOATS

Paris | Agencies At least five people died while trying to cross the English Channel to Britain off the coast of northern France, local media reported. It is unknown how many migrant boats attempted to set sail on Monday night. A major rescue was underway offshore and on the beach of Wimereux, reported French daily La Voix du Nord. The region around Calais in northern France is the jumping-off point for the shortest crossing to Britain, Xinhua news agency reported. In 2023, about 36,000 people made the dangerous crossing in small boats, according to figures by the French maritime authorities. Details are awaited.

North Korea will face end of regime if it uses nuclear weapons, warns South Korea

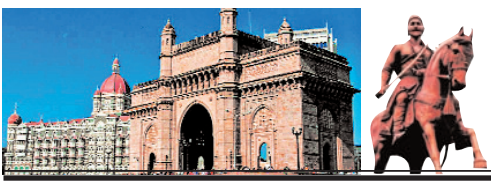
Seoul | Agencies North Korea will face the end of its regime if it attempts to use nuclear weapons, the South Korean defense ministry warned on Tuesday, after the former said it conducted rocket drills simulating a nuclear counterattack. North Korea's state media said leader Kim Jong-un on Monday guided a tactical drill simulating a nuclear counterattack involving super-large multiple rocket launchers against enemy targets, Yonhap news agency reported. "If North Korea attempts to use weapons, it will face an immediate, overwhelming and decisive response from the South Korea-US alliance, and the North Korean regime will face its end," ministry spokesperson Jeon Ha-kyu said in a regular press briefing. Jeon said North Korea's continued provocations would only strengthen South Korea's military capabilities and US extended deterrence, and their trilateral security cooperation involving Japan.



Extended deterrence refers to America's commitment to using the full range of its military capabilities, including nuclear, to defend its ally. The allies have been pursuing an integrated form of extended deterrence with Seoul leveraging its high-tech conventional military capabilities. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said the North's latest missile tests appear to be "a show of force" against the ongoing military drills between Seoul and Washington as well as demonstrating its capabilities in lieu of its delayed spy satellite launch and arms sales abroad. The South Korean military said earlier North Korea appears to be making preparations for its next launch of a spy satellite, although there are no signs of an imminent launch. JCS spokesperson Lee Sung-jun evaluated North Korea's claim of a nuclear attack capability as "exaggerated" and the South Korean military is ready to detect and shoot down its ballistic missiles. "North Korea is known to have not yet concluded its experiments with small tactical nuclear weapons," Lee said during the briefing. The North's super-large

multiple rocket launch system is classified as a short-range missile that could put the entire South Korean territory within range. Pyongyang has claimed a tactical nuclear warhead could be mounted on such a weapon. The North said Monday's missiles accurately hit the target island within a 352-kilometer range, which is enough to hit South Korea's Gyeongdae military headquarters, 160 kilometers south of Seoul, and an air base in Gunsan on the southwestern coast, where the joint aerial drills have been underway. On Tuesday, JCS Chairman Adm. Kim Myung-soo visited the 707th Special Mission Group, an elite counter-terrorism unit under the Special Warfare Command, to review its military readiness. Kim highlighted the special force's role in eliminating the enemy's leadership in covert operations during a conflict and called for heightened vigilance against North Korean threats.





# NCP has not left its claim over Nashik, clarifies Chhagan Bhujbal

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Senior NCP leader and Samata Parishad founder Chhagan Bhujbal on Tuesday said that his party has not left its claim over the Nashik seat as it has many names for nomination.

Bhujbal's statement comes days after he opted out of the electoral fray but now he has clarified that NCP is also a claimant over the Nashik seat along with Shiv Sena and BJP. He also indicated that the deadlock still continues saying that it will soon end.

Bhujbal gave his statement after the meeting of the Samata Parishad members who strongly demanded that he should contest the Nashik Lok Sabha seat. His statement also came a day after party working President Praful Patel revealed that NCP has not left its claim over Nashik seat and the discussions with BJP and Shiv Sena were in progress.

"Our (NCP) claim on the Nashik seat remains. We have many candidates including former MP Devidas Pingale, MLA Manikrao Kokate, and district president Prerna Balakwade. Similarly, front runners from BJP include Dinkar Patil and Shantigiri



Maharaj and from Shiv Sena the sitting MP Hemant Godse and Ajay Boraste. One thing is clear we will all campaign for the MahaYuti candidate after it is

finalised," said Bhujbal.

Bhujbal admitted that the Samata Parishad activists are insisting that he should contest from the Nashik constituency though he has taken a decision to opt out of the electoral fray.

"Activists are insisting that I should contest the elections. I listened to their views. They are our colleagues and I respect them. Different factors work in politics. But I have taken a decision not to contest the Lok Sabha elections," he said.

Bhujbal recalled, "I had asked Balasaheb Thackeray for a ticket only once in my life for the post of corporator of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. After that, I had never asked for my ticket." He further said, "During the ongoing elections, some leaders of Delhi suggested that I should contest from Nashik seat. Therefore, I along with my team started the preparations. However, even though three weeks have passed the deadlock still remains. So, I voluntarily decided to opt out of the contest," he added.

Bhujbal reiterated that he was not upset saying "Jo Mil Gaya Usi Ko Muqaddar Samajh Liya, Jo Kho Gaya Main Usko Bhulata Chala Gaya, Mai Zindagi Ka Saath Nibhata Chala Gaya".

## Bombay HC rejects suit challenging Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin's elevation as Dawoodi Bohra community chief

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ending a decade-long legal battle, the Bombay High Court on Tuesday upheld the elevation of Dawoodi Bohra community's spiritual leader Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin as the 'Dai-al-Mutlaq' and dismissed a suit filed by his cousin, Syedna Taher Fakhruddin. The much-anticipated verdict was pronounced by Justice G. S. Patel, just a couple of days before his superannuation, in the high-profile succession case that had shaken up the small sect of Shias.

The long-winded trial in the Syedna succession controversy was concluded nearly two years ago, the final arguments were taken up in November 2022 and ended in April 2023, and the reserved verdict was delivered on Tuesday. Dismissing the suit, Justice Patel noted that he had kept the verdict as neutral as possible and had pronounced the judgement "based on the issue of proof and note faith". The row had erupted after the passing of the 52nd Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin on January 17, 2014, paving the way for his son, Mufaddal Saifuddin to take over as the new 53rd Syedna, the spiritual and religious head of the Dawoodi Bohras, spread globally.

However, the late 52nd Syedna's step-brother Khuzaima Qutbuddin anointed himself as Syedna headquarters in Thane and challenged the elevation of Mufaddal Saifuddin as the 53rd Syedna, at the traditional base in Mumbai.

Among other things, Syedna Khuzaima Qutbuddin - who passed away in the US in 2016 - claimed that the late 52nd Syedna had privately conferred 'nass' (the official successor or inheritor) upon him in December 1965, which was valid as per the Bohra doctrine and precedents, and that Mufaddal Saifuddin had taken over as 53rd Syedna in a fraudulent manner. After the demise of Syedna Qutbuddin, his son Syedna Taher Fakhruddin continued the succession case against the 53rd Syedna, whose contention was that his



father, the 52nd Syedna, had named him as the successor in June 2011 while he was recuperating from a stroke at a London hospital.

While Syedna Taher Fakhruddin's legal team was led by advocate Anand Desai, the 53rd Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin's side was headed by senior counsel Iqbal Chagla.

The office of 53rd Syedna expressed its gratitude for the landmark judgement passed by Justice Patel, after carefully considering the evidence and arguments made by both sides before conclusively ruling in favour of the defendant.

"The rather unfortunate challenge to 53rd Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin's appointment and the various falsehoods that it was based on has been conclusively dealt with in the court judgement and the claims of (the late) Khuzaima Qutbuddin, the Original Plaintiff and his son Taher Qutbuddin, the current Plaintiff, have been comprehensively rejected," the team said.

The judgement has firmly dealt with and dismissed the misinterpretation and misleading portrayal by the plaintiffs of the facts and the religious doctrines of the Dawoodi Bohra faith, it added. Meanwhile, the Dawoodi Bohra community members calmly accepted the verdict on an issue that had been much debated and discussed in hushed tones.

## Teli, Kunbi communities to decide fate of Ramdas Tadas & Amar Kale in Wardha



Sanjay Jog | Wardha

In Maharashtra's Wardha, which gained prominence as the central place for the Indian National Movement after Mahatma Gandhi came to this place, it is a fight between a youth and an old guard in the Lok Sabha election this time.

The BJP has renominated its sitting MP Ramdas Tadas, who is hopeful to score a hat-trick, against Amar Kale, the NCP-Sharad Pawar candidate who had recently joined the party after leaving the Congress. The Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi nominee Rajendra Salunkhe and BSP candidate Mohan Raikwar are also in the fray.

Incidentally, it is for the first time in recent years that the Congress party and its hand symbol will be missing from the Wardha constituency. Congress is a key ally in the Maha Vikas Aghadi but is engaged in activating its cadres for Kale's campaigning.

Wardha remained the Congress bastion till 1989 but later it was also represented by Communists and

the BJP. Since 2014, the BJP has won this seat.

Kunbi and Teli communities will have a major role in the victory of either of the two. Tadas come from the Teli community and Kale from the Kunbi community. Both these communities are politically crucial not just in Wardha but in several districts of Vidarbha and the rest of Maharashtra.

Tadas, who is the president of the wrestling association, is banking on the work he carried out in the last 10 years for the transformation of Wardha apart from riding on the 'Modi guarantee'. A well-oiled election machinery is his major strength as the party has charged its booth and Panna-level workers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address at the campaign rally in Wardha, held last week, wooed the voters by saying those who have turned up in large numbers have come to bless him and inspire him to work harder. He also assured that the BJP-led government at the Centre after the elections will give a necessary

push for Wardha's development which was neglected during the successive Congress governments.

On the other hand, Kale is carrying on his father and former minister Sharad Kale's legacy and the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA)'s network. Interestingly, former ministers and erstwhile political rivals Anil Deshmukh (NCP-SP) and Sunil Kedar (Congress) are working hand in hand and reaching out across the Wardha constituency to mobilise support for Kale.

Kedar, who had worked as the Wardha district guardian minister during the MVA government, has been quite active in reaching out to the voters, especially from villages and hamlets. Kale is appealing to the voters to vote for him and the MVA or INDIA bloc to protect the Constitution and democracy, and also to speed up the development process in Wardha. MVA top guns including Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray held rallies for Kale while Pawar was also present at the time of filing of nomination by Kale.

## Congress fortress Nanded gave a father-son CMs to Maharashtra



Team Absolute | Nanded

Nanded is famous for the Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib gurudwara, one of the Five Takhts in Sikhism, built in 1837 at a place where the 10th and last Sikh Guru Gobind Singhji had succumbed to war-related injuries (1708). The region's other claim to fame is the father-son -- Shankarrao B. Chavan and Ashok S. Chavan -- being elected as CM on different occasions, the first duo spanning two generations of a single political family to achieve this honour in the state. Nanded has elected Congress Lok Sabha candidates 13 times since 1952, plus a bye-election, twice Bharatiya Janata Party nominees (2004 and 2019), plus the Scheduled Castes Federation, Janata Party and Janata Dal once each. This time, the way Nanded votes will be interesting as the Congress strongman and ex-

CM Ashok S. Chavan has joined the BJP, and the party has re-nominated its sitting MP Prataprao G. Chikhlikar. In the main triangular contest, Chikhlikar's main rivals shall be Maha Vikas Aghadi-Congress nominee Vasantrao B. Chavan and Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi's (VBA) Avinash V. Boskar, in the LS elections scheduled on April 26. Nanded Lok Sabha seat is made up of six assembly segments of which three are with the Congress, two with BJP and one with ruling ally Shiv Sena. Among the big-wigs elected here, S. B. Chavan was twice a Union Home Minister and held other major central cabinet positions besides being the state CM twice. Similarly, his son was the CM twice but had to quit in his second innings (in November 2010) following the Adarsh Society scam, while another prominent personality elected from Nanded was the cooperatives sector stalwart, Bhaskarrao B. Khatgaonkar-Patil.

## A New Putin is in the Making in India": Sharad Pawar on PM Modi



Team Absolute | Amravati

NCP (SP) leader Sharad Pawar on Monday claimed former prime ministers worked to make a new India but PM Narendra Modi only criticises others and doesn't speak about what his government had done for the people in the last ten years.

Addressing a campaign rally in Amravati for a Maha Vikas Aghadi candidate, Pawar said former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's contribution to the country cannot be questioned.

He claimed some BJP leaders had spoken publicly about changing the Constitution and appealed to the people to not allow

autocracy to take shape in India. A high-profile poll battle is shaping up in the Amravati Lok Sabha constituency where the BJP has fielded Navneet Rana, the sitting MP who won the 2019 polls as an Independent candidate, against Balwant Wankhede of Congress.

Pawar alleged PM Modi was trying to create fear and emulating Russian President Vladimir Putin. Pawar said he has come to apologise to the people of Amravati for the "mistake" he had committed in the 2019 elections by supporting the candidate (Navneet Rana).

"In the last elections, I had sought the support of people and made an appeal (to

## Pune doctors perform life-saving surgery on 4-year-old boy with twisted intestines

Team Absolute | Pune

A four-year-old boy has been given a new life by doctors in Pune, after surgery to treat Midgut Volvulus -- a condition in which the intestine gets twisted.

Midgut volvulus is a severe condition that is common among children and infants and often occurs within the first few weeks of life, caused by a congenital anomaly of the intestines -- leaving the child susceptible to sudden twisting of most of the intestines.

Symptoms such as upper abdominal distension, bilious vomiting, and abdominal tenderness are the first signs of midgut volvulus in infants. While the condition is treatable, late detection of the condition could rapidly deteriorate the patient's health and can be fatal.

The boy, Sankalp, was admitted to Surya Mother and Child Hospital, Pune, in an extremely deteriorated condition with wasted mus-



cles, an immensely bloated abdomen, and dehydration.

"Delayed detection of midgut volvulus increases treatment challenges and risks of a high fatality rate," said Sachin Shah, Director - Neonatal and Pediatric Intensive Care Services, Surya Mother and Child Super Speciality Hospital, Pune.

Sankalp was initially treated at a tertiary care hospital in Varanasi, where he underwent surgery. However, his recovery was fraught with challenges, leading to multiple corrective surgeries that failed to improve his condi-

tion. Despite the efforts, Sankalp's health continued to deteriorate, and his family was informed that further medical intervention seemed futile.

At the Pune hospital, the team of doctors assessed Sankalp's condition and opted for a re-surgery to address the condition.

During the subsequent extensive four-hour surgery, the surgical team encountered adhesions in Sankalp's abdomen that had caused the intestines to adhere together, severely compromising their function.

## Salman Khan house firing

## Mumbai Crime Branch recovers 2 guns, 10 live cartridges from Tapi river



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Mumbai Crime Branch has recovered two guns from the Tapi River at Surat which were used by the accused in the Salman Khan house firing incident. They also recovered 10 cartridges from the river.

According to the sources, one of the shooters Vicky Gupta gave the information about the location where they disposed of the gun used in the Salman Khan house firing case.

The Mumbai Crime Branch Unit 9 arrested the accused Vicky Gupta and Sagar Pal, who opened fire outside Salman Khan's residence in Galaxy Apartments on April 14, from the Kutch Bhuj area. During the investigation, the

accused revealed that they threw the gun in the Tapi River at Surat.

Following that, on Monday morning the Mumbai Crime Branch Unit 9 reached Surat and began a search operation following which they recovered both guns and live bullets. Crime Branch Unit 9 was assisted by the Surat Crime Branch and the best divers to retrieve guns from the Tapi River.

During the probe, the crime branch also found that the accused were told to fire 10 rounds on Salman Khan's residence but they only shot five rounds and escaped.

Until now, the crime branch has recorded 10 people's statements in connection with the Salman Khan house firing incident.

## aDiamonds worth crores found in noodles at Mumbai airport, passenger arrested



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Customs department has seized diamonds concealed in packets of noodles and gold hidden in the body parts of passengers and baggage, collectively valued at Rs 6.46 crore, at the Mumbai airport, an official said.

Four passengers were arrested after the seizure of more than 6.8 kg of gold valued at Rs 4.44 crore and diamonds of Rs 2.02 crore over the weekend, the Customs official said in a release issued late Monday night.

An Indian national travelling from Mumbai to Bangkok was intercepted and found smuggling the diamonds concealed in packets of noodles inside his trolley bag.

The passenger was later arrested, the official said. A foreign national travelling from Colombo to Mumbai was intercepted and found carrying gold bars and a cut piece, with a net weight of 321 grams, concealed inside her undergarments, he said.

Besides, 10 Indian nationals - two each travelling from Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and one each from Bahrain, Doha, Riyadh, Muscat, Bangkok and Singapore - were also intercepted and found carrying 6.199 kg gold, valued at Rs 4.04 crore, "concealed in the rectum, on body and inside the baggage," the release said without providing further details. Three of them were subsequently arrested, it said.





## Kim Kardashian Chats About Online Rumors

Los Angeles | Agencies

**K**im Kardashian enjoyed her summer vacation with baby Saint and North West as they all play in the sand together at Casa Aramara in Punta Mita Mexico. North was joined by her baby brother for his first tropical trip in the water together as a fami-

ly. Kim was having fun on the ground with the baby as she and her daughter spent some quality time together all in their summer swimwear. Mandetory mention of "Casa Aramara in Punta Mita Mexico"

Kim Kardashian made an appearance on Jimmy Kimmel Live for her first interview since Taylor Swift released The Tortured Poets Department. Kim, 43, took time to address some online rumors about her while talking to Jimmy Kimmel, 56, on Monday, April 22. Towards the end of the interview, Jimmy took some time to ask the reality star if there was any validity to rumors about her, and Kim said that many of them are true.

Jimmy asked Kim about whether or not she blow-dried her jewelry, which she said is true, because she "hates being freezing." He also asked if she washes her feet before bed or if she sleeps with her eyes slightly open, which Kim admitted her sisters have taken pictures of. He also asked if Kim had celebrated a teenage birthday at Neverland Ranch and if she has someone take the cardboard sleeve off of her coffee cup, both of which are true. "Were some of these not supposed to be true, but they really are," she said. Ultimately, the only rumor that Jimmy asked about that turned out not to be true was that the American Horror Story star had six toes.

The interview was Kim's first since Taylor, 34, dropped The Tortured Poets Department, which had the scathing song "thank you aMee," which many fans have speculated was inspired by her feud with the SKIMS founder. With the letters of Kim's name capitalized in the title, fans have also dug into the lyrics, believing the song to be about their rivalry. "It wasn't a fair fight/Or a clean kill each time that Aimee stomped across my grave/And then she wrote headlines/In the local paper, laughing at each baby step I'd take," she sang.

Los Angeles | Agencies

**P**regnancy is already a difficult journey, and Hilary Duff has been managing an extra task with it — fans' questions. The 36-year-old How I Met Your Father alum penned a polite public note, responding to the apparent DMs she's received from social media followers, asking Hilary when her fourth baby is coming.

"Hi friends — this is meant in the kindest tone (I promise)," Hilary began via a note she shared to her Instagram Stories on Monday, April 22. "I am no longer responding to texts or dm's about 'when baby is coming'. I know everyone is checking in with love and humor, however, trust me... nobody wants it more than me!!!!" The Disney Channel alum added, "Babies

**PREGNANT HILARY DUFF POLITELY CLAPS BACK AT FANS WHO KEEP ASKING HER FOR THE DUE DATE**

come when they are ready. I am trying my best to be patient! The days are long and uncomfortable. Promise I will let you know."



## RYAN SEACREST & 'AMERICAN IDOL' JUDGES REVEAL WHICH SINGERS COULD REPLACE KATY PERRY

Los Angeles | Agencies

**R**yan and judges Luke Bryan and Lionel Richie teased which A-list artists they'd like to replace Katy after she leaves the show. Katy Perry's departure from American Idol hasn't happened yet, but her fellow judges already have their "list" of candidates to replace the 39-year-old pop star. Luke Bryan, Lionel Richie and host Ryan Seacrest all weighed in on who they'd like to see at the judges table next season during a new interview.

During the Monday, April 22, episode, Meghan Trainor appeared as an advisor for the contestants. Luke, 47, told Entertainment Tonight that the "All About That Bass" hitmaker would "certainly" make a strong candidate to replace Katy.

"I think Megan's always been real fun," the country music singer said while admitting he also has 10 other names in mind. "You know, that's kinda been her brand, to have fun. [She's] real witty, so certainly."



## Anne Hathaway recalls 'gross' audition where she had to kiss 10 boys

Los Angeles | Agencies

**A**ctress Anne Hathaway reminisced about the beginning of her career, recalling an audition where she had to fake excitement about kissing ten boys, describing it as "gross."

In an interview, Hathaway, shared that back in the 2000s it was "normal" to ask actors to "make out" with potential co-stars during chemistry tests.

"Which is actually the worst way to do it," she told V Magazine, as reported by deadline.com. "I was told, 'We have ten guys coming today and you're cast. Aren't you excited to make out with all of them?' And I thought, 'Is there something wrong with me?' because I wasn't excited. I thought it sounded gross."

She elaborated, "And I was so young and terribly aware of how easy it was to lose everything by being labeled 'difficult', so I just pretended I was excited and got on with it. It wasn't a power play, no one was trying to be awful or hurt me. It was just a very different time, and now we know better."

As a producer on the 2024 film 'The Idea of You', during the casting process to find her on-screen romantic interest, Nicholas Galitzine, the approach for the chemistry test was different.

"We asked each of the actors coming in to choose a song that they felt their character would love, that they would put on to get my character to dance, and then we'd do a short little improv."

"I was sitting in a chair like we had come in from dinner or a walk or something, we pressed play, and we just started dancing together," she said.

## Tiffany Haddish uses an undisclosed X account to troll her trolls



about whatever they want to talk about. And now I wish I was back to illiterate again.

"So, people talk about me. I don't know why y'all talking about me so damn much, but that's okay. I like to talk about you too. (I) made me a fake page and now I'm talking about (stuff) — how about that?"

"Why is this lady attacking me? You talk about what goes around comes around, don't worry."

Haddish added she had restricted her secret account to X.

The actress said: "I don't know about fake Instagram, but I definitely got fake Twitter... I mean a fake X — a fake X."

Additionally, she said that her forthcoming memoir 'I Curse You With Joy', slated for release on May 7, is full of the "mistakes" she has made in her life and career, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

During her appearance at the book festival, she credited her high school drama teacher with recognising her struggles with reading and taking the time to help her catch up.

The actress added: "I would come to her class and I would bring my food with me and I would read to her and it would be newspaper articles, books, different things she would get me to read. And I had to read it out loud to her and she would help me."

"My brain is different — the way my brain works is a little different, so I needed somebody to be sitting there for me and guiding me. I needed guidance. (My teacher) gave me the fundamentals that I needed, and they were always there but I didn't know how to use them. So then she helped me learn how to use them."

Los Angeles | Agencies

**A**ctress and comedian Tiffany Haddish talked about how she felt the need to give her army of critics a taste of their own medicine.

Haddish, who revealed last month she had been sober for more than two months after being charged with driving under the influence in November 2023 when she allegedly fell asleep at the wheel in Los Angeles, shared the details during an appearance at the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books at the University of Southern California.

She talked about the motivation behind her bogus X account: "The Internet came out and people got the freedom to talk



Seoul | Agencies

**A**ctress Park Eun Bin has reunited with director Yoo In-shik, with whom she previously worked in 'Extraordinary Attorney Woo', for an upcoming superhero K-Drama titled 'The B Team'.

According to a report from Star News, Park Eun Bin, who is known for her roles in 'Castaway Diva' and 'Hot Stove League', among others, will portray the female lead in the upcoming K-Drama 'The B Team', reports koreaboo.com.

'The B Team' revolves around individuals possessing superpowers but struggling to control them at will.

The concept originates from the intellectual property (IP) of the late renowned writer and former head of Marvel Comics, Stan Lee, and was initially pitched six years ago as a show depicting the emergence of Asian superheroes.

Despite Stan Lee's passing in 2018, his IP remains influential in the comic community. Park Eun Bin will portray Eun Chae Ni, the

**PARK EUN BIN REUNITES WITH 'EXTRAORDINARY ATTORNEY WOO' HELMER IN SUPERHEROES K-DRAMA**

granddaughter of the owner of the Big Hand Restaurant. She is depicted as intelligent, polite, and hardworking, but as she grows older, she becomes more stubborn, pursuing her own dreams and often living a life on thin ice. 'The B Team' is directed by Yoo In-shik, known for his work on acclaimed shows such as 'Romantic Doctor Kim', 'Vagabond', and 'Extraordinary Attorney Woo'.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Olivia Wilde





## Indian Premier League 2024

# STOINIS' MAIDEN 100 PROPELS LSG TO 6-WICKET WIN OVER CSK

Chennai | Agencies

In a ton-for-ton response, Marcus Stoinis scored his maiden IPL century to overcome Ruturaj Gaikwad's hundred for Chennai Super Kings and helped Lucknow Super Giants to a six-wicket victory in Match 39 of the Indian Premier League at M.A. Chidambaram Stadium here on Tuesday.

Coming in after the fall of the first wicket in the first over, Stoinis hammered a 63-ball 124 not out as Lucknow Super Giants romped to 213/4 after Gaikwad's 60-ball 108 not out helped Chennai Super Kings to 210/4 in 20 overs.

Chasing a big target, Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) suffered an early setback as Quinton de Kock got out for a duck. The batter went for a cut only to chop it back onto his stumps to the swinging delivery outside off. In the first four games of the season, KL Rahul scored at a strike rate of



125.49 in the Power-play. But after that, he smashed it at 185.11 in this phase. Devdutt Padikkal came in as an Impact Player. He has struggled for runs this IPL, and it was the same story against CSK as he was on 12 off 16 balls. The sole reason LSG opted

to chase was the dew in the second half. And it seemed to be making a difference as a couple of overs ago, Tushar Deshpande bowled a high no-ball. Pooran looked to take on Pathirana as well but ended up missing it to Shardul Thakur at long-

off. Deepak Hooda was the new batter and smashed his second ball over deep square leg for a six. Stoinis broke the record for the highest individual score in an IPL chase, overcoming Paul Valthaty's 120\* in 2011, also against CSK, after scoring 124 not out in 63 deliveries. In three games before this, no team had come to Chepauk this season and beaten CSK. No team has come here and chased down 211. LSG did in the same match, led by a magnificent hundred by Marcus Stoinis.

### Brief scores

Chennai Super Kings 210/4 in 20 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 108 not out, Shivam Dube 66; Matt Henry 1-28, Yash Thakur 1-47) lost to Lucknow Super Giants 213/4 in 19.3 overs (Marcus Stoinis 124 not out, Nicholas Pooran 34; Matheesa Pathirana 2-35, Deepak Chahar 1-11) by six wickets.

# India may not even travel to Pakistan for Champions Trophy: BCCI sources

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Team India may not travel to Pakistan for the ICC Champions Trophy next year, and the venue for the event will likely get shifted or a hybrid model used, sources in the BCCI told IANS on Tuesday. They added that a bilateral series with the neighbours is "unlikely" in the near future.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Monday reportedly said that they would think about a bilateral series with India if they send their team to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy.



However, sources in the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said, "Forget bilateral series...Team India may not even travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy. There might be a change of venue, a hybrid model is also possible." "The Indian board would need permission from the government for travel, currently our relations with Pakistan are not that good either," sources told IANS. "Champions Trophy is an ICC event, so it would be a tough call for India but nothing without the government's order/green signal. Bilateral series, I don't see in the near future, that's

next to impossible." India and Pakistan last played a bilateral limited-overs series in 2012-13, when Pakistan visited India. Last year, India refused to send its team to play the Asia Cup in Pakistan and eventually, the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) had to adopt a hybrid model for the event which was split with a vast majority of the matches being organised in Sri Lanka.

# Olympic Selection Trials: Ashi, Swapnil take top spots in 3P trials

New Delhi | Agencies

Ashi Chouksey and Swapnil Kusale out-gunned the rest of the field in their respective Women's and Men's 50M Rifle 3-Positions (3P) field of five, to take the qualification honours on the fifth day of the on-going Olympic Selection Trials (OST) Rifle/Pistol, here at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting range in the national capital region on Tuesday.

Ashi shot a world-class 590 in the Women's 3P OST to leave behind World Record-holder Sift Kaur Samra in second with 583. Tokyo Olympian Anjum Moudgil came in third with 581 while Paris quota holder Shriyanka Sadangi was fourth with 575. Nishchal too matched Shriyanka's score but fell behind on inner 10s.

The Men's 3P was tighter at the top with Swapnil edging it with two superlative 199s in the first Kneeling and Prone positions, to end with 592. The seasoned army small-bore rifle specialist Chain Singh came in second with 591, while Akhil Sheoran despite a perfect 200 in Prone, came in third with 589.

Niraj Kumar and Aishwary Tomar brought up the rear of that field with scores of 579 and 576, respectively. Trap shooters bow out in Doha



# Novak Djokovic, Aitana Bonmati win top honours at Laureus Sports Awards

New Delhi | Agencies

World no. 1 Serbian tennis great Novak Djokovic was named Laureus World Sportsman of the Year at a ceremony held in Madrid to tie another all-time record, with his fifth Laureus Award (he won in 2012, 2015, 2016 and 2019). Djokovic had a remarkable 2023, winning three of the four major titles -- Australian Open, Roland Garros and the US Open -- in men's tennis and only missed out on a Calendar Slam after a classic Wimbledon final against eventual winner Carlos Alcaraz.

The 36-year-old ended the year by winning a record seventh ATP Finals title and by claiming Year-End No. 1 for a record eighth time. The Serb is now on a record-equalling 24 Grand Slams. "I am truly blessed to be among sports greats as a winner, but also as a supporter and admirer of Laureus Sport for Good as I too believe in the power of sport to make a difference in the world. Finally, this Laureus Statuette stands alone



because it represents more than sporting achievement. "The Laureus mission of using sport as a power for good has been changing lives for 25 years and embodies the values of its founding patron, Nelson Mandela. I want to add my support to Laureus Sport for Good and the work they are doing to transform lives around the world," said Djokovic.

Spanish footballer Aitana Bonmati won the Laureus Sports Woman of the Year and in doing so became the first footballer to win the prestigious Award.

Bonmati, who represented the Spain team which won the FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, took to the stage once again as the world champions Spain took the Laureus World Team of the Year award and became the first all-female team to win the award.

The Rafael Nadal Foundation was recognised for helping more than 1,000 vulnerable young people in Spain and India, empowering them to realise their potential and believing in the transformative power of sport.

The English midfielder Jude Bellingham won the Laureus World Breakthrough of the Year Award -- the first footballer to do so -- after an electrifying start to his time with Real Madrid. Former World No. 1 tennis player Carlos Alcaraz presented Bellingham the award which the Spaniard won last year. American artistic gymnast Simon

Biles was honoured with the Laureus World Comeback of the Year Award after a sensational return to gymnastics following a two-year hiatus.

Biles left the World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Antwerp, Belgium with four gold medals in her first global event since leaving the Tokyo Olympics and entering a near two-year break from the sport she had dominated.

Her journey from an Olympic exit that stunned the sporting world, through a recovery that platformed the issue of mental health in elite athletics, to a triumphant comeback, has been as inspirational as anything Biles has done in competition.

She is a three-time winner of Sports Woman of the Year (2017, 2019, 2020) and adds another statuette to her collection with the 2024 Laureus World Comeback of the Year Award.

Shortlists for seven categories (Sports Woman, Sportsman, Team, Breakthrough, Comeback, Action and Sport for Good) are created by votes from more than 1,000 sports media from over 70 countries.

# 'I MADE PEACE WITH THAT DECISION': SUNIL NARINE



New Delhi | Agencies

West Indies all-rounder Sunil Narine, who has been in red-hot form in the ongoing IPL 2024, has ruled himself out of a recall to West Indies' squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and USA, saying "that door is now closed" and he sees his retirement decision as final and has made peace with it.

The Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) all-rounder last played for the West Indies in August 2019 and announced his retirement in November last year. His impressive performance in the ongoing IPL sparked speculations of his comeback to the national team.

But Narine played down all the prospect of playing for the West Indies again by issuing a statement in which he said, "I'm truly flattered and

humbled that my performances recently have moved many people to publicly express their wish for me to come out of retirement and play in the upcoming T20 World Cup.

"I have made peace with that decision and whilst I never wish to disappoint, that door is now closed and I will be supporting the guys who take the field in June for West Indies. Guys who have worked hard for the past few months and deserve to show our wonderful fans that they are capable of winning another title - I wish you all the best."

The 35-year-old is currently topping the tournament's MVP standings. His remarkable run includes a stellar innings of 109 not out from 56 balls against Rajasthan Royals last week, marking his first T20 century. On the bowling front, Narin has 9 scalps in seven games.

# SL captain Athapaththu returns to top of women's ODI batting rankings



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Following a knock of 195 not out in the third ODI against South Africa in Potchefstroom, Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu returned to the top in the latest ICC Women's ODI batting rankings, released on Tuesday.

Athapaththu's ninth ODI century, which is the highest score in a successful chase in Women's ODIs, helped her overtake England all-rounder Natalie Sciver-Brunt to the top spot.

The left-hander had earlier been number one from July 3 to 12, 2023 before Beth Mooney and then

Sciver-Brunt overtook her, ICC reports.

The Sri Lankan also jumped two spots in the all-rounder rankings to enter the top 10 at ninth position.

Laura Wolvaardt of South Africa moved up two places to third position after scoring an unbeaten 184 that helped her side post a huge total of 301 for five in the third ODI.

West Indies captain Hayley Mathews, following her knocks of 140 not out and 44 in Pakistan, jumped seven places to be placed joint-eleventh in the batting rankings. She also jumped three places in the ODI all-rounder rankings to go sec-

ond behind South Africa's Marizanne Kapp.

Former captains Stafanie Taylor of the West Indies (up two places to 18th) and Bismah Maroof of Pakistan (up one place to 27th) are other notable gainers in the batting rankings.

Pakistan's left-arm spinner Sadia Iqbal has progressed from 23rd to 17th position after grabbing three wickets in the first two matches against the West Indies. Kavisha Dilhari of Sri Lanka (up seven places to 48th) and Umm-e-Hani of Pakistan (up nine places to 60th) are others to move up the bowling rankings.

# Australian pacer Xavier Bartlett joins Kent for 2024 Vitality Blast season

Canterbury | Agencies

Australian quick Xavier Bartlett has joined Kent for the first eight matches of the 2024 Vitality Blast after Cricket Australia blocked the fast bowler from playing for them in the County Championship. Bartlett will join fellow Australian seamer Wes Agar and South African Beyer Swanepoel as three overseas options for Kent's Blast campaign, which begins on May 31 against Middlesex at Chelmsford. Only two of them are permitted in any given playing XI.

In a statement released by Kent on Tuesday, director of cricket Simon Cook said, "We've been working extremely hard with Cricket Australia to ensure that Xavier can join us in some capacity this season,

and we're really pleased to have secured his services for eight matches of our T20 campaign.

"He is hot property at the moment and fully deserves his new central contract with Australia. I know that Spitfires supporters around the world will be extremely excited that the BBL's top wicket-taker this Winter will be pulling on a Kent shirt this June."

Although Bartlett was initially signed for Kent's first five Championship games, CA denied him a No Objection Certificate on the eve of the season and a week after the 25-year-old was given a central contract. It was Bartlett's maiden national contract after an incredible Australian summer in which he headed the Big Bash League wickets list for Brisbane Heat



with 20 and made his debuts in both ODI and T20I cricket.





# Big B says asking for a dance is no more about gracefully holding the lady in the arm

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**M**egastar Amitabh Bachchan took a stroll down memory lane, reflecting on the evolution of asking a lady for a dance at an evening from a formal affair to a more casual approach.

Big B took to his blog, expressing, "It's work tomorrow... for the invites for KBC season... er, whichever it be... to begin the beguine...!"

He then delved into the meaning of "beguine".

"Ha ha... the beguine being the very popular Caribbean Dance -- a form that I have always loved and enjoyed... it's one that stimulates the body to move in moves which are so alien to the traditional dancing from the Western world e.g., the waltz, the fox trot... though the beguine be fairly close in movement to the 'fox trot', he elaborated.

"Wonder where the word for the dance form originated... certainly not by observing the foxes - the



lomdi... hahahaha... so asking the lady for a dance at an evening as used to be the formal approach and say - 'ma'am, care to do the lomdi with me!' And off they go," Big B added.

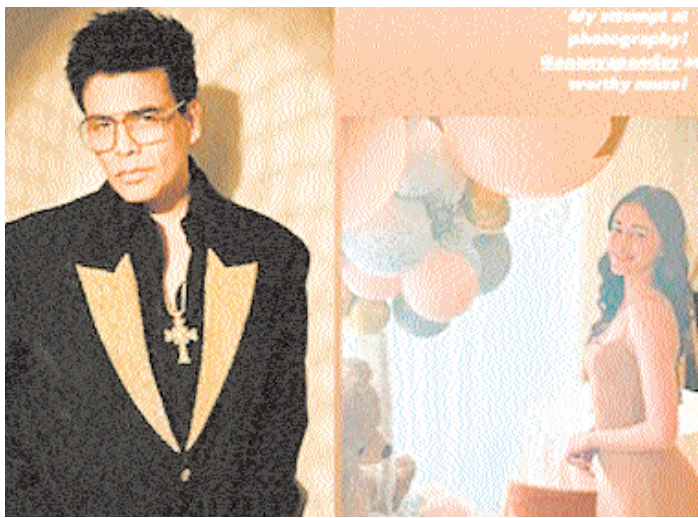
Reflecting on the changing times, he noted the disappearance of formality in seeking permission to dance.

"Times have changed, have they not... no more formality in the permission to dance with the lady... just get onto the floor or balcony or wherever and start moving - no gracefully holding the lady in the arm, making her comfortable and then begin... those were the days, my friend..."

# "My attempt at photography! with Ananya Panday as his Muse : Karan Johar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**B**ollywood director-producer Karan Johar, who last directed 'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani', recently explored his photography skills by capturing his muse, Ananya Panday. Taking to Instagram stories on Tuesday, KJo shared a picture of the 'Kho Gaye Hum Kahan' actress, which he clicked himself. Karan captioned the picture: "My attempt at photography! @ananyapanday as a worthy muse!" In the picture, Ananya stands beside a set of balloons, dressed in a cedar-coloured outfit. The actress gazes sideways into the camera lens, her shoulder aligned with the camera axis. Ananya also re-shared it on her Instagram story and wrote: "@karanjohar hehe love you," followed by a red heart emoji. KJo has been actively sharing shayaris and random musings on his social media lately. The director-producer often shares words of wisdom infused with satire.



# Tiger holds a special place in my heart : Priyanka Chopra

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**P**riyanka Chopra Jonas, who narrated the documentary film 'Tiger', has shared why the story surrounding these majestic big cats holds a special place in her heart. Reflecting on her experience narrating the documentary, the actress expressed, "Tiger holds a special place in my heart. This film has played such an important role in reconnecting me not only with Mother Nature but also with the beauty of India and her forests."

Narrating Ambar's journey through the untamed wilderness, navigating her hardships, mysteries, and struggles, was an exhilarating experience. "The documentary unravels the remarkable life of Ambar, a young tigress, as she faces the challenges of nurturing her cubs amid the lush wilderness. Priyanka added: "Ambar's journey holds invaluable lessons for us all. It serves as a poignant reminder of the resilience and beauty found in the natural world, and the ways in which we can draw inspiration and strength from these magnificent creatures."



# Water baby Nargis Fakhri recalls her first clamming experience

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctress Nargis Fakhri, confessed to being a water baby. She shared her first experience with clamming.

The actress expressed her fondness for engaging in various water-based activities like sailing, paddle boarding, kayaking, and jet skiing.

Nargis revealed that her preferred way of spending vacation or leisure time involves sitting on the deck, gazing at the water, and relishing tranquility.

The actress also recounted her unsuccessful first attempt at scuba diving, admitting that she was overwhelmed and panicked upon encountering numerous underwater creatures.

Talking about her "super fun" clamming experience, Nargis said: "I did it for the first time in Abu Dhabi. You get off your boat and onto the sandbars. The water is just above your knee."

The actress added: "You have to dig in the sand for clams. I went home with the fresh catch and made pasta with the clams."



Team Absolute | Mumbai

**M**alayalam megastar Mohanlal on Tuesday took to X to invite Shah Rukh Khan to groove on 'Zinda Banda' from the blockbuster 'Jawan' over a meal (actually, from dinner to breakfast!).

SRK took to his X account on Tuesday and re-shared a video from an award function where Mohanlal can be seen dancing to 'Zinda Banda'.

Sharing the video, SRK wrote that he was eagerly waiting for dinner with the veteran actor. He wrote, "Thank u @Mohanlal sir for making this song most special for me now. Wish I had done it half as good as you. Love u sir and waiting for dinner at home as and when. You are the OG Zinda Banda."

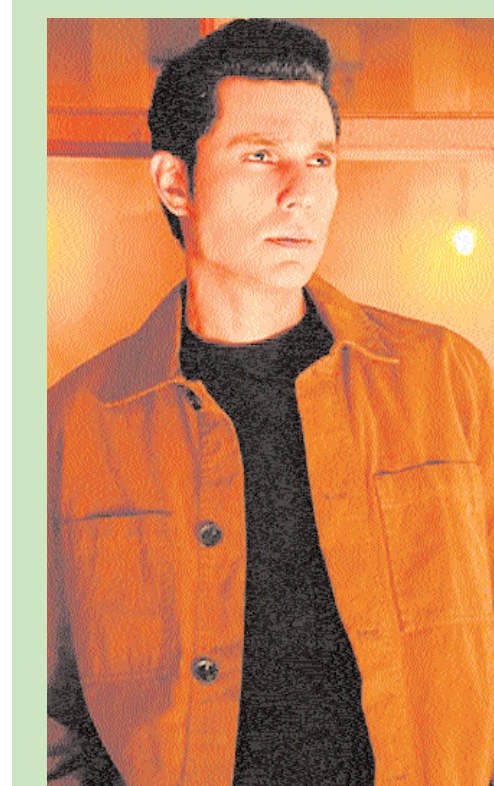
Mohanlal humbly replied to SRK's tweet with these words: "Dear @iamsrk, nobody can do it like you! You are and always will be the OG Zinda Banda in

your classic,

inimitable style. Thanks for your kind words. Also, just dinner? Why not groove to some Zinda Banda over breakfast, too?"

Seeing one of his favourite actors respond with such warmth, SRK replied, "Done sir. Your place or mine?"

# YOU ARE THE OG ZINDA BANDA SRK TO MOHANLAL



Team Absolute | Mumbai

**R**andeep Hooda shared that he won't confine himself to one theme and will explore various genres.

The actor also hinted at his next project as a filmmaker, possibly an

action film.

When asked about the topics he plans to explore in his next project, Randeep told: "Even as an actor, I have jumped genres and I have jumped roles and characters. So similarly, as a filmmaker, I'll be jumping genres, and topics. Maybe the next one I will be making an action film."

Randeep made his Bollywood debut in 2001 with 'Monsoon Wedding'.

Over his two-decade-long journey in Hindi cinema, the actor has delivered some iconic characters and films, including 'Saheb Biwi Aur Gangster', 'Murder 3', 'Highway', and 'Sarbjit'.

Does he feel there's an oligarchy that keeps natural talents at bay?

"The industry is not one person or a group of people. It's different islands trying to do their own thing. As I am one. With a successful return to the big

screens after seven years in a disruptor

movie that challenges a lot of narratives, the love I have gotten from the audience as an actor and director has reinstated my belief that ultimately it's the audience that decides the worth of a talent."

The actor added: "I'm not the one to crib about what I should have gotten, instead, I believe in working harder to keep winning the audience's love."

This isn't the first time he underwent a physical transformation for a film. Randeep lost 18 kg for his role in the 2016 film 'Sarbjit'.

On social media, the actor has been compared to Hollywood star Christian Bale, known for his extensive transformations for various roles.

Responding to this, Randeep said: "Well, he's a great actor, whose work and work ethic I've always admired."

"To be compared to him is a matter of great satisfaction to me personally, as I have been ploughing on in the same vein as an artiste in an industry that doesn't encourage or facilitate that kind of approach to one's work."

# Maybe I will now make an action film: Randeep Hooda

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Aditi Bhatia