

absolute india



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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM MUMBAI, BHOPAL AND NEW DELHI

NATION > 02

About 10,000 Litres Of Liquor Seized In Noida In Run-Up To...



HOLYWOOD > 06

Cameraman Emilio Garcia Accuses Rapper of Sexual Harassment ...



SPORTS > 07

Swiatek surprised on joining 100-week club as world No.1 ...

RAHUL GANDHI PROMISES FARMERS' COMMISSION, MECHANISM FOR LOAN WAIVER



Amravati | Agencies

In a major announcement, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi here on Wednesday assured of setting up a special farmers commission to tackle the problems of agriculture loans and set up a mechanism to ease the financial burden of the land-tillers, and ensure 'nyay' (justice) to various sections of the society. Addressing an election rally in the Amravati (SC) Lok Sabha constituency, Rahul Gandhi said that if elected, the INDIA bloc-Congress government will immediately write off the loans of all farmers in the country. "Not only this, we shall also set up a farmers' commission which would advise the government whenever a loan waiver is required, and it will be done, as many times as required," the Wayanad MP said.

In a speech punctuated with huge rounds of applause and cheers from the gathering, Rahul Gandhi claimed that in the last 10 years of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rule, the peasants' loans have not been waived off. Promising to uplift crores of families and make them millionaires, the Congress leader said that the Mahalakshmi Scheme will be first implemented as mentioned in the party's election manifesto. "We shall prepare a list of all the poor families in the country and one woman shall be selected per household, and the INDIA bloc government will deposit Rs 1 lakh into their bank accounts, or Rs 8,500 per month. The entire family would benefit from this amount. They (BJP) made 25 billionaires, we shall make crores as millionaires," Rahul Gandhi said, to a deafening roar of applause. On the question of Anganwadi workers, he said that the salaries of these women shall be doubled, and women shall be entitled to reservations in government and public sector jobs. Slamming Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led regime for failing on its promises of 2 crore jobs, Rahul Gandhi said that this has resulted in the highest unemployment rate facing the country in the past 45 years. "Many of the jobless youth are wandering around aimlessly... our government shall provide apprenticeships to all the qualified jobless persons in the country with a job guarantee in the government, public or private sector and Rs 1 lakh per year in their bank accounts," the Congress leader said.

Apologise to families of farmers who committed suicide in Vidarbha: Amit Shah

Amravati | Agencies

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday dared the NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar to apologise to the families of farmers from Vidarbha who committed suicide. Addressing an election rally in support of the BJP nominee from Amravati, actress-turned-politician Navneet Kaur Rana, the Home Minister said, "Sharad Pawar should apologise to the families of the farmers who committed suicide in Vidarbha for not doing anything for the farming community of the region. "Sharad Pawar was the Chief Minister of Maharashtra and the Agriculture Minister at the Centre, but he did nothing for the farmers of Vidarbha. That's why thousands of farmers committed suicide." Amit Shah also criticised



Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, claiming that the latter has deserted the values and teachings of his father and Shiv Sena founder, the late Balasaheb Thackeray. "Uddhav Babu, you left Balasaheb Thackeray's values and teachings which are now being taken forward by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. The so-called 'Hindu Rakshak' did not do anything when Umesh Kolhe, who ran a medical

store in Amravati, was killed in 2022 (for allegedly supporting the statement of suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma on Prophet Muhammad). But such killings will not take place under the Shinde-Padnavis government in Maharashtra, as no one will dare to commit any such act," the Home Minister said. Amit Shah also accused the Congress and the INDIA bloc of opposing the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya.

Congress distances itself from Sam Pitroda's inheritance tax comment

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Following remarks by Indian Overseas Congress (IOC) Chairman Sam Pitroda on inheritance tax in America, the grand old party has distanced itself saying that it is not always the case that Pitroda's views reflect the position of the Congress and many times his views are not those of the party. According to Pitroda, a 55 per cent inheritance tax is levied in America and the government takes 55 per cent share. He said that property should be left for the public. "If a person has property worth US dollars 10 million, then after his death, 45 per cent of the property goes to his children and 55 per cent of the property goes to the government," Pitroda said and added that there is no such law in India. "Such issues should be discussed. We are talking about policies that are in the interest of the people, not just the rich," said Pitroda. However, Pitroda's statement led to a controversy, with the BJP tearing into the Congress.



Even as Pitroda accused the BJP of twisting his remarks to divert attention from core issues, the grand old party was quick to distance itself from his statement. Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said that Pitroda's views do not always reflect the position of the Congress. "Sam Pitroda has been a guru, friend, philosopher and guide to many people across the world including me. He has made many important contributions to the development of India. He is the President of the Indian Overseas Congress," Ramesh wrote on X. "Pitroda ji openly expresses his views on the issues that he feels necessary to speak about. In a democracy, a person is certainly free to express his views, discuss and debate personal views," the tweet further read.

Rahul and Priyanka to contest from Amethi, Rae Bareilly: Congress took the decision after internal survey

Lucknow | Agencies

Rahul Gandhi is certain to contest from Amethi and Priyanka Gandhi from Rae Bareilly. Congress conducted internal survey on both these seats. On the basis of its report, it was decided that candidates from the Gandhi family would be fielded on both the seats. If Priyanka contests from Rae Bareilly, it will be her first election. Rahul is contesting elections from Wayanad (Kerala), voting there is on 26th April. After this, Congress will announce candidates from Amethi and Rae Bareilly any time. The last date for nomination on both the seats is May 3, voting will



take place in the fifth phase on May 20. According to sources, Rahul-Priyanka can file nomination till April 30. Senior Congress leader and former Union Minister, on the condition of anonymity, said - Sonia

Gandhi wants Priyanka to be fielded from Rae Bareilly seat and Rahul from Amethi. A consensus has also been reached on this. Rahul-Priyanka were not ready at first, but now both have been convinced.

RAMDEV'S APOLOGY IN NEWSPAPERS IN MISLEADING ADS CASE, SECOND IN TWO DAYS

New Delhi: Yoga guru Ramdev and his aide Balkrishna put out a public apology in newspapers today for not complying with the Supreme Court's directions in the misleading ads case against Patanjali Ayurved Limited. Patanjali put out an apology yesterday too, but the court had asked if its size was as big as the misleading ads of its drugs. The ad published this morning covers one-fourth of a newspaper page and is titled "Unconditional Public Apology". "In wake of ongoing matter before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India (Writ Petition C. No. 645/2022), we in our individual capacity as well as on behalf of the Company, unconditionally apologise for the non-compliance or disobedience of directions/ orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India," it read.

"WE CAN'T CONTROL POLLS": SUPREME COURT IN VVPAT CASE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court today said it is not the controlling authority for elections and cannot dictate the functioning of Election Commission, a constitutional authority. The remarks came during the hearing on petitions seeking thorough cross-verification of votes cast on Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) with paper slips generated through the VVPAT system. The court has reserved the judgment for now. The bench of Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Dipankar Datta questioned if it can act on mere suspicion. Responding to concerns raised by Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner Association for Democratic Reforms, the court



said, "If you are predisposed about a thought-process, then we cannot help you... we are not here to change your thought process." Amid the Opposition's apprehensions regarding the EVM voting system, the petitions seek a direction to cross-verify every vote cast on EVMs with the paper slips generated by the VVPAT system.

Currently, this cross-verification is done for five randomly selected EVMs in every Assembly constituency. In the earlier hearings, the petitioners raised the issue of public trust and drew comparisons with European countries that have gone back to the ballot voting system. The court shot down such comparisons, observing that the challenges here are different. The Election Commission, on its part, stressed that the current system is foolproof. An EVM has a control unit and a balloting unit. These are connected by a cable. These are also connected with a VVPAT -- Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail -- machine. This machine enables a voter to see if the vote was cast properly and went to the candidate he/she supports.

RBI bars Kotak Mahindra Bank from onboarding new customers online, issuing fresh credit cards

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday directed Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited to stop onboarding of new customers through its online and mobile banking with immediate effect and also barred the bank from issuing fresh credit cards. The bank shall, however, continue to provide services to its existing customers, including its credit card customers, the RBI said. "In the absence of a robust IT infrastructure and IT Risk Management framework, the bank's Core Banking System (CBS) and its online and digital banking channels have suffered frequent and significant outages in the last two years, the recent one being a service disruption on April 15, 2024, resulting in serious customer inconveniences. The bank



is found to be materially deficient in building necessary operational resilience on account of its failure to build IT systems and controls commensurate

with its growth," the RBI order states. The business restrictions on Kotak Mahindra Bank have been imposed in the interest of customers and to prevent any possible prolonged outage which may seriously impact not only the bank's ability to render efficient customer service but also the financial ecosystem of digital banking and payment systems, according to the RBI order. The RBI said Kotak Mahindra Bank was assessed to be deficient in its IT Risk and Information Security Governance for two consecutive years, contrary to requirements under Regulatory guidelines. During the subsequent assessments, the bank was found to be significantly non-compliant with the Corrective Action Plans issued by the Reserve Bank for the years 2022 and 2023, as the compliances submitted by the bank were found to be either inadequate, incorrect or not sustained.

Akhilesh to contest from Kannauj, will file nomination on Thursday

Lucknow | Agencies

About 48 hours after announcing the candidature of his nephew Tej Pratap Yadav from Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj Lok Sabha seat, Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav has now declared himself as a candidate from the same seat. The Samajwadi Party posted on its X account that Akhilesh Yadav would file his nomination papers in Kannauj at noon on Thursday. According to sources, the Samajwadi Party's cadres were allegedly upset at Tej Pratap's candidature and wanted the party chief to contest the seat. Akhilesh Yadav had won the seat in a by-election in 2000, and then in 2004 and 2009. His wife Dimple Yadav won the seat in the 2012 by-election and then



in 2014. However, she lost the seat to the BJP in 2019. Party sources said that Akhilesh Yadav had decided against contesting the elections since he wanted to devote his time to the campaign. Tej Pratap Yadav was earlier the MP from Mainpuri.

DRDO develops India's lightest bulletproof jacket against highest threat level

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Unit of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully developed the lightest bulletproof jacket for security forces in the country designed to withstand the highest threat level, known as Level 6, officials said on Tuesday. The jacket, according to a DRDO official statement, provides protection against 7.62 x 54 R API ammunition and novel material along with new processes has been used to develop it. "DRDO's Defence Materials and Stores Research and Development Establishment (DMSRDE), Kanpur, has successfully developed the lightest bullet-

proof jacket in the country for protection against 7.62 x 54 R API (level 6 of BIS 17051) ammunition. Recently, this bulletproof jacket was successfully tested at TBRL, Chandigarh, as per BIS 17051-2018," the statement said. The front Hard Armour Panel (HAP) of the jacket is a standout feature, capable of withstanding multiple hits (up to 6 shots) of 7.62 x 54 R API (Sniper rounds) in both ICW (in-conjunction with) and standalone designs. What sets this jacket apart is its ergonomically designed front HAP, crafted from a monolithic ceramic plate with polymer backing. This design not only ensures maximum protection but also enhances wearability and comfort during operations.

'Bha', The New Shoe Sizing System For Indians

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A new footwear sizing system, specifically designed for Indians, is in the works. Named 'Bha' for 'Bharat', it aims to replace existing UK/European and US sizes. The findings of a recent survey -- conducted between December 2021 and March 2022, included 3D foot scanning of over 100,000 Indians across 79 locations -- provided insights into the size, dimensions, and structure of the average Indian foot. The survey revealed that Indian feet are generally wider than those in Europe or America. It also revealed that the current footwear sizing system has many Indians wearing shoes that are either too large or have poor fitting. The survey further found that the average foot size growth for Indian women peaked at 11 years old, while for Indian men, it peaked at around 15 or 16 years old.



It revealed that shoelaces were often tightened excessively, disrupting normal blood flow for the wearer, which, in turn, led to discomfort, injuries, and foot health issues, especially among the elderly and people with diabetes.

The 'Bha' shoe sizing system is a simplified approach with 8 footwear sizes suited to fit different age groups. It aims to provide a better fit for about 85% of Indians. The change is expected to simplify manufacturing by eliminating half-sizes. It also

promises increased comfort, increased comfort, wider dimensions and an additional 5mm allowance for foot length. Production will primarily focus on sizes III to VIII to cater to the needs of the majority of Indians.

THE 'BHA' SHOE SIZING SYSTEM INTRODUCES 8 SIZES:

- I - Infants (0-1 year)
- II - Toddlers (1-3 years)
- III - Small children (4-6 years)
- IV - Children (7-11 years)
- V - Girls (12-13 years)
- VI - Boys (12-14 years)
- VII - Women (14 years and above)
- VIII - Men (15 years and above)



ABOUT 10,000 LITRES OF LIQUOR SEIZED IN NOIDA IN RUN-UP TO LOK SABHA POLLS

Noida | Agencies

About 10,000 litres of illicit liquor has been seized across Noida and Greater Noida in the Gautam Buddha Nagar constituency since the model code of conduct for the Lok Sabha elections came into effect, officials said on Wednesday.

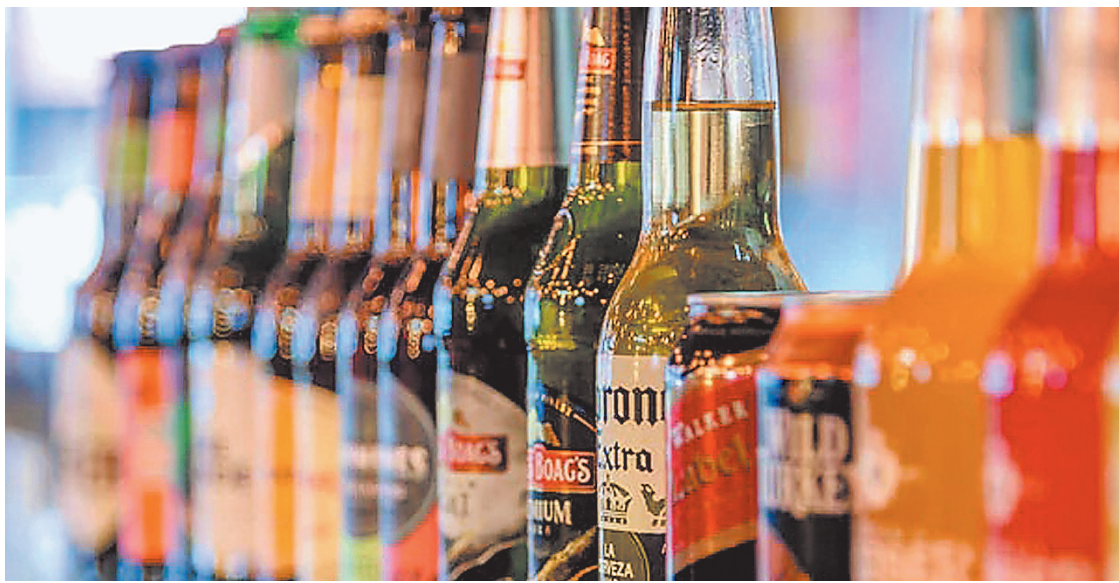
During the seizure of the illicit liquor, 86 people have been arrested since March 16, they said.

Uttar Pradesh Excise Commissioner Adarsh Singh on Tuesday held an enforcement and revenue meeting in Greater Noida in view of the polls.

"As much as 9,943 litres of illicit liquor has been seized in the run-up to the polls. The value of this liquor is estimated to be Rs 27,20,709 (Rs 27.20 lakh)," District Excise Officer Subodh Kumar Srivastava told news agency.

"A total of 86 persons have been arrested during these seizures and sent to jail after legal proceedings," Srivastava added.

He said the Excise department is ensuring continuous monitoring in the district, especially along its bor-



ders with Delhi and Haryana, to check any illegal liquor transportation or sale.

He added, "We have seven mobile teams on surveillance. Additionally, there are six teams on border duty --

three each at Kalindi Kunj and at Jewar." Excise officers are working in tandem with police and coordinating with their counterparts in Delhi, Haryana and neighbouring districts in Uttar Pradesh as well, Srivastava

said. Gautam Buddha Nagar goes to polls on April 26. Liquor shops in the district have been shut for 48 hours from 6 pm on Wednesday, according to the officials.

SEBI probes 2 funds for shorting Adani stocks before Hindenburg

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Adani Group stocks remained steady on Wednesday after the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) initiated a probe against two foreign portfolio investors, including one accused of allegedly shorting stocks in Adani Group companies prior to a report from Hindenburg Research.

The capital market regulator is seeking explanations from these two separate groups of foreign funds for "possible rule violations".

The group, facing market manipulation allegations, is suspected to have shorted stocks in firms led by billionaire Gautam Adani after getting wind that a short seller report would be published soon, the people said, asking not to be identified as the details are not public.

The people did not name the funds. The second group of investors faced scrutiny in June 2021 for investing heavily



ly in Adani stocks. The Adani Group has already denied any association with these funds.

The market regulator will issue a final order in new probes after hearing the funds' explanations.

The SEBI or Adani Group did not comment on the

reports. According to reports, the SEBI has accused the funds of failing to maintain and disclose information about their "ultimate beneficial owners as well as for breaching investment limits in listed entities of Adani Group during certain periods".

DESTROYED OVER 170 MOBILES IN SCAM PERIOD

ED files affidavit in SC against CM Kejriwal's plea challenging arrest

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday submitted an affidavit to the Supreme Court in response to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest in connection with a money laundering case related to the alleged excise policy scam.

In the affidavit, the ED has claimed that Kejriwal's arrest was prompted by extensive evidence tampering, including the destruction of approximately 170 mobile phones during the 'scam' period. The agency also stated that Kejriwal had evaded interrogation despite being summoned nine times.

Moreover, it refuted allegations of politically motivated timing for Kejriwal's arrest, saying that it was based on substantial evidence and did not compromise the integrity of elections.

The agency said that the arrest of an accused individual, regardless of their stature, is justified when supported by evidence. Furthermore, the affidavit argued against granting immunity from arrest to politicians facing criminal charges, stating that this would undermine the integrity of the electoral process. It said that the arrest of individuals based on evidence does not vio-



late the principles of free and fair elections. The ED arrested CM Kejriwal on March 21 after questioning him for over two hours at his official residence in Delhi. It has termed CM Kejriwal the "kingpin and the key conspirator" of the alleged excise scam in collusion with other ministers of the Delhi government, AAP leaders, and other persons. A Delhi court had, on Tuesday, extended till May 7 the judicial custody of Kejriwal and BRS leader K. Kavitha in the case. Special Judge Kavari Baweja of the Rouse Avenue Court had passed the orders upon the expiry of the previously granted judicial custody.

BJP'S HYDERABAD CANDIDATE HAS ASSETS OF RS 221 CRORE

Hyderabad | Agencies

BJP's candidate for the Hyderabad Lok Sabha seat, Kompella Madhavi Latha owns family assets of Rs 221.37 crore, making her one of the richest candidates in Telangana.

She, her husband Kompella Viswanath, both business persons, and their three dependent children, have movable assets of Rs 165.46 crore and the couple has immovable assets of Rs 55.91 crore.

Madhavi Latha revealed details of the family assets in an affidavit submitted to the Election Commission on Wednesday while filing her nomination. The 49-year-old, who resides in the twin city of Secunderabad, recently joined the BJP and is making her electoral debut.

She declared that she has movable assets of Rs 31.31 crore including investment of Rs 25.20 crore in listed and unlisted companies. She has investments of Rs 7.80 crore in Virinchi Ltd. She also owns gold jewellery worth Rs 3.78 crore.

Her husband has movable assets of Rs 88.31 crore including shares worth Rs 52.36 crore in Virinchi Ltd. Their three dependent children also own total movable assets of over Rs 45 crore.

The BJP candidate also owns immovable assets of Rs 6.32 crore while the value of her husband's immovable assets is Rs 49.59 crore.

The assets include non-agriculture land and commercial and residential buildings in and



around Hyderabad.

Madhavi Latha has liabilities of Rs 90 lakh while her husband's liabilities stand at Rs 26.13 crore. Her income during 2022-23 was Rs 3.76 lakh while it was Rs 1.22 crore during 2021-22.

Viswanath's income during 2022-23 was Rs 2.82 crore while the same was Rs 6.86 crore during 2021-

22. The BJP candidate faces one criminal case. The case was registered against her last week at Begum Bazar Police Station under Indian Penal Code (IPC) section 295-A. The allegation against her is that she made a gesture of drawing an imaginary arrow and shooting at the Masjid located at the circle of Siddi Amber Bazar.

'Ashok Gehlot hatched phone-tapping plan during Rajasthan political crisis', claims ex-OSD

Jaipur | Agencies

The alleged phone-tapping incident -- which created a huge uproar during the political crisis in Rajasthan in 2020 -- took a fresh turn on Wednesday after Lokesh Sharma, the then OSD to Ashok Gehlot, held the ex-Chief Minister responsible for phone-tapping, alleging that Gehlot himself handed him a pen drive which carried three audio clips along with a piece of paper.

Addressing a press conference here, Sharma said: "The clippings and papers given to me by Ashok Gehlot were shared with the media on his direction."

"I came to know about the content in the pen drive after the news was flashed," he claimed.

Accusing the senior Congress leader of using him as a 'tool' to keep his political career intact, Sharma said, "Till now, I was saying that I received these audio clips and the paper via social media, but the reality is it was then Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot who gave them to me."

"Ashok Gehlot gave me a pen drive with audio clips referring to alleged horsetrading in the state along with a written material on the same topic. Also, I was asked to destroy the phone on which I shared the clipping. He also asked me to send the laptop on which I downloaded the clippings to some other state."

Sharma added that the entire plan was concoct-



ed after former Deputy CM Sachin Pilot turned rebel and went to Manesar.

At that time, Pilot had said that they were not being heard by the government and hence they went to Manesar to ensure the high command listens to them.

"However, Ashok Gehlot wanted to give the impression that BJP's Gajendra Singh Shekhawat wanted to topple the government with Pilot's help, and hence the former Chief Minister hatched the plan. He put all his MLAs' phones on surveillance. Even those MLAs who were camping at Hotel Fairmont were put on surveillance," claimed Sharma, adding that the entire plan was scripted to defame the BJP and build a picture that the

opposition party wanted to topple the government.

Sharma also claimed that Union Minister Shekhawat was added to the plot to show that the BJP in connivance with Pilot aimed to topple Gehlot's government.

He also showed the media the pen drive which was allegedly given to him by Ashok Gehlot along with the laptop he used to download the clippings which he then transferred to his phone to be shared with the media later.

To recall, the Crime Branch of Delhi Police had registered a case against Sharma after Union Minister Shekhawat filed a complaint alleging phone tapping.

Sharma had moved the Delhi High Court against the lodging of the case. His petition is still pending in the high court. During this period, the Crime Branch has interrogated Sharma about half a dozen times.

Sharma said he was exposing the truth now as Gehlot had betrayed him. "I was promised that I will be taken care of and my case will be taken to the Supreme Court. But everyone has gone silent now, leaving me in the lurch," he claimed.

Sharma also said that Gehlot and his team continued conspiring against Shekhawat at his residence. They called those associated with the Sanjivni case and shot their videos and made them viral intentionally, he claimed.

SC orders immediate cleaning of Yamuna river bed in Agra

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court has ordered authorities to immediately clean the river bed of the Yamuna in Agra.

A bench of Justices Abhay S. Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing the application moved by an NGO seeking directions for the restoration of the river bed to its natural state and removal of the silt, sludge, and garbage up to a depth of 5-6 metres.

The Bench has asked the Centre, the Uttar Pradesh government, and the Agra Development Authority to file compliance affidavits by

the end of June 2024. "The three authorities, while filing the affidavits, shall take a clear stand setting out the name of the authority which is under an obligation to undertake continuous work of removal of silt, sludge, and garbage from the bed of river Yamuna," it said.

The top court said that if the authorities concerned need advice from an expert agency to ensure the cleaning of the river bed, the Union government will take an appropriate decision in such a case. "Needless to add that removal of the silt, sludge, and garbage from the

bed of river Yamuna has to be a continuous activity," the SC order said.

The matter will be taken up for further hearing on July 11.

In its application filed before the apex court, the Agra Development Foundation said that around 90 surface drains flow towards and join the River Yamuna and many of them have untreated and untapped wastewater, carrying the wastewater load with solid waste, sludge, polythene and plastic, which fall in the river and get deposited on the river bed.

BJP MP'S WIFE TO CONTEST AGAINST HIM FROM UP'S ETAWAH

Etawah: BJP candidate from Etawah and sitting MP, Ram Shankar Katheria, has landed in an uncomfortable situation.

His wife Mridula Katheria has also filed her nomination papers against her husband as an independent candidate. Ram Shankar Katheria filed his nomination from Etawah Lok Sabha seat on Wednesday. It may be recalled that in 2019 also, Mridula Katheria had filed the nomination against her husband, but later withdrew her name. Talking to reporters after filing her nomination papers, Mridula Katheria said, "There is democracy in the country. Here everyone is free. Anyone can contest elections here. We are standing against my husband and he is standing against me. This is an election and everyone is free to contest here."

When asked whether she would withdraw her nomination this time too, she replied that she had not filed her papers to withdraw from the fray.



Where are the two crore jobs that were promised: Kharge

Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies

ICC President, Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday slammed the BJP and the Prime Minister during an interaction with the media at the Congress' headquarters in Kerala.

Kharge has been in Kerala for the last two days and is travelling across the state addressing election rallies in the run up to polling on April 26.

"PM Modi has been speaking of 'Modi guarantee' all the time, but his guarantee is not to implement whatever he gives," said Kharge. Kharge pointed



out that the BJP knows things are slipping and hence PM Modi now says he will get over 400 seats.

"He has forgotten everything he said in 2014 and in 2019. Where are the two crore jobs that the PM promised. He said he will bring all the black

money which the Congress kept outside," said Kharge. Kharge said that the BJP has a big laundry and all who are put in that laundry, come out clean.

"There are chief ministers, ministers and Rajya Sabha members," said Kharge.

Kharge said while they were fighting unemployment, the BJP just doesn't care and inflation is high too. Then turning on the BJP candidate in Thiruvananthapuram, Union Minister of State, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, the Congress chief said, "We in Karnataka know him well as he has done nothing in 18 years."



12 per cent, within the next four weeks.

Besides directing the WBSSC to start the recruitment process afresh, it also directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to carry on with its investigation into the matter.

Taking cognisance of the state cabinet's decision for the creation of super-numeric posts, the high court said that the CBI, if necessary, can question the masterminds

behind the creation of the seats in excess of the vacant posts. These super-numeric posts, which have remained under the cloud since the beginning, are perceived to provide room for ineligible candidates recruited illegally.

The Calcutta High Court made only an exception in the case of one candidate named Soma Das on humanitarian grounds. Her recruitment will not be cancelled as she is a cancer patient.





Sunetra Pawar gets clean chit in Rs 25,000-crore 'scam'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a reprieve for Sunetra Pawar, wife of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and NDA candidate for the Baramati Lok Sabha seat, the Mumbai Police has given her a clean chit in an alleged Rs 25,000-crore cooperative bank scam. In a closure report filed in January - details of which have now emerged - the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai Police, which is investigating the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) case, has said that no criminal offence is made out in the transactions allegedly linked to Ms Pawar and her husband.



"washing machine".

Pawar will be contesting from the Baramati seat, a bastion of Sharad Pawar, against his daughter Supriya Sule, who is also her sister-in-law. The filing of the report has given more ammunition to the opposition, which has consistently accused the BJP of using central agencies and police forces against leaders opposed to it and either going slow on the investigation or giving them a clean chit as soon as they align with the safe party. The opposition parties call this the BJP's

to attend the next meeting. Thank you for your love and good wishes," the Union Minister said in a reassuring tweet. Nitin Gadkari, 66, was campaigning for the ruling MahaYuti-Shiv Sena candidate Rajashri Hemant Patil who is contesting the Yavatmal-Washim Lok Sabha constituency, going to polls on April 26 (Friday). Nitin Gadkari is also a candidate from the Nagpur LS constituency where he is aiming for a hat-trick.

Janardeshwar Sugar Mill. The mill was then bought by a firm called Guru Commodity in an auction for Rs 65.75 crore but given on lease again to a company in which relatives of Ajit Pawar, including Rajendra Ghadge, were directors.

Guru Commodity was given Rs 65.53 crore by this company as rent. The EOW said it found nothing illegal in these transactions.

The clean chit has come under fire from the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) which is in an alliance with the NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) and the Congress in the state. Party leader Anand Dubey said the police's action is proof that opposition's washing machine claim is completely justified. Speaking in Hindi, Dubey said, "Sunetra Pawar has been given a clean chit in a case in which an allegation of a Rs 25,000-crore scam was levelled by none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had called the entire family corrupt. This proves that the opposition's claim that leaders are cleaned of all allegations after being washed with washing powder is completely true. Every leader who was accused by the BJP has been given a clean chit after switching sides."

Nitin Gadkari faints while addressing Yavatmal poll rally; fine now

Team Absolute | Yavatmal

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday fainted while addressing a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) election rally in Pusad town of Yavatmal district in the blistering summer heat.

A video of the incident went viral on social media, showing Nitin Gadkari stumbling and almost falling but was helped by his aides around the stage.

They helped carry him away and managed to revive him, after which he returned to the stage after a while, said local eyewitnesses. Pusad recorded 39 degrees Celsius on Wednesday.

Subsequently, Nitin Gadkari also posted on X saying he was "absolutely healthy" and was leaving to address another election rally at the next venue.

"I felt uncomfortable owing to the heat during the rally in Pusad, Maharashtra. But now I am completely healthy and leaving for Varud



to attend the next meeting. Thank you for your love and good wishes," the Union Minister said in a reassuring tweet.

Nitin Gadkari, 66, was campaigning for the ruling MahaYuti-Shiv Sena candidate Rajashri Hemant Patil who is contesting the Yavatmal-Washim Lok Sabha constituency, going to polls on April 26 (Friday).

Nitin Gadkari is also a candidate from the Nagpur LS constituency where he is aiming for a hat-trick.

Congress amended Constitution 80 times, Rahul Gandhi only confusing people: Vinod Tawde

Team Absolute | Mumbai

BJP General Secretary Vinod Tawde on Tuesday countered the Congress' claims that if re-elected, the BJP will change the Constitution by stating that the grand old party had amended the Constitution 80 times. "The Congress nominee from South Goa has said that the Constitution does not apply to Goa, saying that he made the statement after a nod from Rahul Gandhi. The BJP has no plans to change the Constitution, yet Rahul Gandhi is confusing the people," Tawde said during a media interaction here.

The BJP leader also said that since the opposition has nothing new to counter Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it is targeting him by making statements about changing the Constitution. "The BJP and the Modi government celebrate



Constitution Day. The BJP released its Sankalp Patra (manifesto) on the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar while keeping the Constitution in front of everybody. It has no plans to change the Constitution," he asserted.

Tawde also said that the voters will vote for Narendra Modi because they know what the government can do to transform their lives and boost development, adding that the Centre has provided interest-free loans worth Rs 11,711 crore to Maharashtra.

IMD issues heatwave alert for Thane, Raigad and Mumbai from April 27 to 29

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a heatwave alert for Maharashtra's Thane, Raigad districts and parts of Mumbai from April 27 to 29.

IMD scientist Sushma Nair on Wednesday told PTI that there is an anti-cyclonic circulation over Thane, Raigad and parts of Mumbai which will lead to a rise in temperature.

This is the second heatwave alert issued for Mumbai and neighbouring region this month.

On April 15 and 16, Mumbai and its neighbouring areas had witnessed severe hot weather and temperatures in parts of Navi Mumbai reached 41 degrees Celsius.

The IMD had advised people to avoid prolonged heat exposure, drink sufficient water and stay hydrated, wear light coloured, loose and cotton clothes, cover head or use wet cloth or hat or umbrella while going out during afternoon hours, and schedule strenuous jobs during cooler times of the day.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday said that the intense heatwave scorching large parts of east India will continue for another five days.

The ongoing spell of heat wave, the second this month, is broiling parts of West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar.

Heatwave conditions have been prevailing in Odisha since April 15 and the Gangetic West Bengal since April 17, according to the MeT department.

In a statement, the IMD said heat wave to severe heat wave conditions are expected in parts of West Bengal, Karnataka, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand during the next five days.



High humidity could add to people's inconvenience in coastal Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karnataka, Goa, Kerala, West Bengal and Bihar, it said. Substantially high night temperatures are likely in east Madhya Pradesh on April 22 and April 23. High night temperatures are considered dangerous because the body doesn't get the chance to cool down.

Increasing nighttime heat is even more common in cities because of the urban heat island effect, in which metro areas are significantly hotter than their surroundings.

The threshold for a heat wave is met when the maximum temperature of a weather station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, 37 degrees in the coastal areas and 30 degrees in the hilly regions, and the departure from normal is at least 4.5 notches.

A severe heat wave is declared if the departure from normal temperature exceeds 6.4 notches.

Amid the prevailing but weakening El Nino conditions, the IMD had earlier warned of extreme heat during the April-June period when around a billion people are expected to exercise their franchise during the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections, heightening concerns about vulnerability to heat

waves. Voting for the first phase of elections took place on April 19. The second phase of polling is scheduled for April 26.

The Met office has said four to eight heatwave days are expected in different parts of the country in April against a normal of one to three days. Ten to 20 days of heatwave days are expected against a normal of four to eight in the entire April-June period.

The areas and regions predicted to witness a higher number of heatwave days are Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Maharashtra, Vidarbha, Marathwada, Bihar and Jharkhand. Some places may record more than 20 heatwave days.

The intense heat could strain power grids and result in water shortages in parts of India.

Global weather agencies, including the IMD, are also expecting La Nina conditions to develop later in the year.

El Nino conditions -- periodic warming of surface waters in the central Pacific Ocean -- are associated with weaker monsoon winds and drier conditions in India. La Nina conditions -- the antithesis of El Nino -- lead to plentiful rainfall during the monsoon season.

Mumbai Patra Chawl case ED attaches properties valued at over Rs 73 cr

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Mumbai has provisionally attached immovable properties worth Rs 73.62 crore consisting of several land parcels belonging to businessman Pravin Raut and his close aides in the Patra Chawl redevelopment case under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), an official said on Wednesday.

The attached properties are in and around Palghar,



Dapoli, Raigad, and Thane. The total attachment in this case stands at Rs 116.27 crore. The money laundering probe by the ED is based on an FIR filed by the Mumbai

Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW). It involves Guru Ashish Construction Pvt. Ltd., a company in which Pravin Raut, who's reportedly associated with Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut, served as a Director.

According to the ED, the company was tasked with the redevelopment of the Patra Chawl in Mumbai's Goregaon area, aimed at accommodating 672 tenants. "There were substantial financial irregularities in this redevelopment project," said a senior ED official.

4 persons fall in septic tank in Malad; 3 rescued, 1 still missing

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Four persons, on Wednesday, fell into a 40-feet-deep septic tank of an under-construction building in Mumbai's Malad area. According to the officials, the incident was first reported to the Mumbai Fire Brigade around 3.50 pm and it happened in Malad's Pimpripada area.

According to the officials, upon reaching the scene, it was discovered that several individuals had fallen into the building's drainage system. Firefighters quickly initiated a rescue effort, plunging into the tank with ropes and breathing apparatus. As of 4:30 pm, three people had been safely retrieved from the septic tank and taken to Trauma Care Hospital for treatment, said officials. However, one person remains unaccounted for, and rescue attempts are underway to find them. The officials said that they're yet to receive an update on the health condition of the rescued persons. It is yet to be ascertained as to how they fell into the septic tank.



DRI seizes valuables of Rs 10.48 cr after busting gold smuggling syndicate; 4 held



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has busted a gold smuggling syndicate in Mumbai and seized the precious metal, cash and other valuables of Rs 10.48 crore, a DRI official said on Wednesday, reported news agency.

Four persons, including two African nationals, were arrested following a search operation at a gold melting facility in south Mumbai on Monday, he said.

The DRI had received an input that gold smuggled

from Africa through the Mumbai international airport was being processed at a melting facility in Zaveri Bazar here to remove the foreign markings and it was then being diverted to the local market, the official said in a statement.

During the search at the melting facility, the officials seized 9.31 kg of gold in various forms, including of foreign-origin, and 16.66 kg of silver. They nabbed the unit operator and a recruiter, who was responsible for arranging carriers, collecting the smuggled gold from African nationals for melting

and further processing, the statement said.

The recruiter was a key member of the gold smuggling syndicate. He used to collect gold from carriers who were African nationals, get it processed and hand it over to a buyer nearby, it said. After the interrogation of the accused persons, a search was conducted at the recruiter's office premises and the DRI recovered USD 190000 in cash which had been allegedly handed over to him by a buyer as advance payment for the smuggled gold, the statement said.

Maharashtra came up with law on acquisition of 'Cessed Property': Supreme Court

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Maharashtra government came up with a law for acquiring old and dilapidated buildings that were unsafe as the tenants were sitting tight over the properties and landlords had no money for repairs, the Supreme Court observed on Tuesday while examining whether privately owned resources can be considered "material resources of the community".

Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud made the observations while dealing with a host of petitions filed by landlords who are up against the Maharashtra law.

He is heading a nine-judge constitution bench which is considering the vexed question arising from the petitions about whether private properties can be considered "material resources of the community" under Article 39 (b) of the Constitution, which is a part of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPP).

Article 39(b) makes it obligatory for the State to create policy towards securing "that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good". Mumbai is a densely populated city with old, dilapidated buildings that house tenants despite having become unsafe due to lack of repairs. In order to repair and restore these buildings, the Maharashtra Housing and Area



Development Authority (MHADA) Act, 1976 imposes a cess on its occupants which is paid to the Mumbai Building Repair and Reconstruction Board (MBRRB) that oversees repair and reconstruction of these "cessed buildings".

Invoking the obligation under Article 39(b), the MHADA Act was amended in 1986. Section 1A was inserted into the Act to execute plans for acquiring lands and buildings in order to transfer them to those needy and in possession of such lands or buildings.

The amended law has Chapter VIII-A with provisions allowing the state government to acquire cessed buildings and the land they are built on if 70 per cent of the occupants make such a request.

The Property Owners Association has challenged Chapter VIII-A claiming that the provisions discriminate against the owners and violate their right to equality under Article 14.

As many as 16 petitions including the lead petition filed by the Mumbai-based Property Owners Association (POW) was heard by the bench which also comprised Justices Hrishikesh Roy, BV Nagarathna, Sudhanshu Dhulia, JB Pardiwala, Manoj Misra, Rajesh Bindal, Satish Chandra Sharma and Augustine George Masih.

The lead plea was filed by POW way back in 1992 and it was referred thrice to larger benches of five and seven judges before being referred to a nine-judge bench on February 20, 2022.

The CJ referred to the distinction between a case of a private person as opposed to title in the community. He gave the example of private mines and said, "They may be private mines. But in a broader sense, these are material resources of the community. The title may rest in a private individual but for the purpose of Article 39 (b), our readings should not be constricted but must have that broad understanding." "Take a case like these buildings in Mumbai. Technically, you are right that these are privately owned buildings, but what was the reason for the law (MHADA Act)... we are not commenting on the legality or the validity of the law that will be tested independently," the CJ said. "The reason why the state legislature came out with this (Act) was that these are old buildings of the 1940s... With a kind of monsoon in Mumbai, these buildings get dilapidated because of the saline weather," Justice Chandrachud said.



EDITOR'S SPECS

India's first woman 'mahout' breaks the glass ceiling

Popularly known as 'Elephant Girl' (Hasti Kanya) in Assam, 67-year-old Parbati Baruah is India's first woman mahout (elephant keeper) who was conferred the Padma Shri award on Monday in recognition of her work in animal conservation and dispelling preconceptions to make a name for woman in a field that has historically been dominated by men. She was handed over the Padma award in a ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. Born into the Gauripur royal family in the Goalpara district of Assam, Parbati and her father Prakritesh Barua caught their first elephant together when Parbati was 14-years-old in the Kachugaon woods of Kokrajhar district. Parbati spent 40 years reducing human-elephant conflicts and fighting against gender stereotypes in this field. Human-elephant confrontations have a long history in Assam, and Parbati was instrumental in developing government regulations to keep them under control. She became a master at taming wild elephants. Her expertise on the behaviour of elephants made her well-known not just in Assam but also in nearby states like West Bengal and Odisha. Parbati also assisted the forest authorities in driving troublemakers back into the forests from agricultural fields. 'Queen of the Elephants' is the title of a book written about her by British travel writer and naturalist Mark Roland Shand, published in 1996. Later, the BBC produced a documentary that was widely praised. Following at least 40 years of continuous service as a mahout, Parbati committed her life to animal conservation, and she is currently a part of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Asian Elephant Specialist Group (IUCN). This is her family's second Padma honour. The Union government earlier also awarded the renowned folk singer Pratima Pandey Barua, her sister, a Padma Shri. Pramathesh Barua, an award-winning filmmaker, is also related to this family.

Baghpat, without Chaudhary family, ready to return to BJP-RLD fold

Baghpat, which has been won by Chaudhary Charan Singh and Ajit Singh for 10 terms, can rightly be termed as a Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) bastion. It has been a stronghold of Jat politics and has emerged as the epicentre of farm politics in recent years. Ironically, this is the first time that no member of Chaudhary Charan Singh's family is contesting the poll from this seat yet the family continues to rule the hearts of the people here. By conferring the Bharat Ratna on the late Chaudhary Charan Singh, the BJP has also turned the tide in its favour. Late Charan Singh won this seat in 1977, 1980 and 1984 while his son Ajit Singh won it six times in 1989, 1991, 1996, 1999, 2004 and 2009. His son Jayant Chaudhary lost the election from Baghpat to Satyapal Singh in 2019. This time, the Rashtriya Lok Dal is all set to wrest back this seat and the alliance between BJP and RLD is making it easier. The RLD has fielded Rajkumar Sangwan, as the candidate of the BJP-RLD alliance while the BJP denied a ticket to former Mumbai commissioner Satyapal Singh to pave the way for Sangwan. Congress-SP alliance candidate is Amarpal Sharma and the BSP has fielded Praveen Bansal. Rajkumar Tyagi, a local farmer, explains, "This is not the time to discuss old issues. Chaudhary Saheb (Charan Singh) has been given Bharat Ratna and we must honour Jayant Chaudhary's decision to align with BJP. Our vote is for the alliance and there is no denying it."



However, people do not deny that there will still be a fiercely contested battle in the constituency. The constituency has 22.4 per cent Jat, 18.8 per cent Muslim, 20.4 per cent Dalit, 11.4 per cent Gujar, 3.2 per cent Yadav, 3.2 per cent Vaishya, 3.1 per cent Tyagi, 3.1 per cent Thakur and 6.4 per cent Brahmin among others. A local advocate Harish Malik says, "RLD needs to stitch voters of other castes with dominant Jat votes to ensure victory of its candidate as division in votes of these castes would turn the contest into a close fight." Besides, Baghpat is known to spring surprising

results in the past. The then RLD chief Ajit Singh had finished at third place with 19.86 per cent votes in the 2014 Lok Sabha election held a few months after communal riots in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli districts. The riots had affected RLD's trusted winning equation of Jats-Muslims and angry Muslims did not vote for Ajit Singh which paved the way for the victory of BJP's Satya Pal Singh who secured 42.15 per cent votes. Baghpat, incidentally, is going to polls on April 26 in the second phase of elections with a new identity --its connection with Mahabharata. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was the first to mention the Mahabharat connection of Baghpat when, along with RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary, he launched the election campaign earlier this month. Baghpat is believed to be one of the five villages of the epic age that the Pandavas requested from Duryodhana to avoid the battle of Mahabharat. Baghpat, said to be the site of Lakshagraha (a palace made of wax built to kill the Pandavas) at Barnawa in nearby Baraut, now basks in the glory of its epic age connection. Situated in the agriculturally enriched western region of Uttar Pradesh, Baghpat is also known for its home furnishing products. Baghpat derives its name from 'Vyaghraprastha' (tiger city), owing to its historical population of tigers. However, political parties in their rallies are using a lesser-known name 'Vakyaprashta' (city of delivering speeches) as the word of origin for Baghpat.

Asia was world's most disaster-hit region in 2023: WMO

Asia remained the world's most disaster-hit region from weather, climate and water-related hazards in 2023. Floods and storms caused the highest number of reported casualties and economic losses, whilst the impact of heatwaves became more severe, a new report from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said on Tuesday. The State of the Climate in Asia 2023 report highlighted the accelerating rate of key climate change indicators such as surface temperature, glacier retreat and sea level rise, which will have major repercussions for societies, economies and ecosystems in the region. In 2023, sea-surface temperatures in the north-west Pacific Ocean were the highest on record. Even the Arctic Ocean suffered a marine heatwave. Asia is warming faster than the global average. The warming trend has nearly doubled since the 1961-1990 period. "The report's conclusions are sobering. Many countries in the region experienced their hottest year on record in 2023, along with a barrage of extreme conditions, from droughts and heatwaves to floods and storms. Climate change exacerbated the frequency and severity of such events, profoundly impacting societies, economies, and, most importantly, human lives and the environment that we live in," said WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo. In 2023, a total of 79 disasters associated with hydro-meteorological hazard events were reported in Asia, according to the Emergency Events Database. Of these, over 80 per cent were related to flood and storm events, with more than 2000 fatalities and nine million people directly

affected. Despite the growing health risks posed by extreme heat, heat-related mortality is frequently not reported. "Yet again, in 2023, vulnerable countries were disproportionately impacted. For example, tropical cyclone Mocha, the strongest cyclone in the Bay of Bengal in the last decade, hit Bangladesh and Myanmar. Early warning and better preparedness saved thousands of lives," said Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which partnered in producing the report. "In this context, the State of the Climate in Asia 2023 report is an effort to bridge gaps between climate science and disaster risk through evidence-based policy proposals. ESCAP and WMO, working in partnership, will continue to invest in raising climate

ambition and accelerating the implementation of sound policy, including bringing an early warning to all in the region so that no one is left behind as our climate change crisis continues to evolve," she said. Approximately 80 per cent of WMO members in the region provide climate services to support disaster risk reduction activities. However, less than 50 per cent of members provide climate projections and tailored products that are needed to inform risk management and adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and its impacts, according to the report. The report, one of a series of WMO regional State of the Climate reports, was released during the 80th session of the Commission in Bangkok, Thailand. It is based on input from National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, United Nations partners and a network of climate experts. It reflects WMO's commitment to prioritise regional initiatives and inform decision-making. **Temperatures** The annual mean near-surface temperature over Asia in 2023 was the second highest on record, 0.91 °C [0.84 °C-0.96 °C] above the 1991-2020 average and 1.87 °C [1.81 °C-1.92 °C] above the 1961-1990 average. Particularly high average temperatures were recorded from western Siberia to central Asia and from eastern China to Japan. Japan and Kazakhstan each had record warm years.



international

Negotiations on global plastics treaty open in Ottawa

Ottawa | Agencies The fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-4), opened in Canada's capital, Ottawa. The session aims to advance negotiations so that the Committee can finalise, at its fifth session (INC-5) in November, the text of the instrument. Members will also decide on inter-sessional work -- informal INC sessions taking place between the official meetings -- required between the INC-4 and INC-5, to support the further development of the text. INC-4, which began on Tuesday, is the penultimate stage of the negotiations; it follows three earlier rounds of negotiations: INC-1, which took place in Punta del Este, in November 2022; INC-2, which was held in Paris in June 2023; and INC-3, which happened in Nairobi in November 2023. "We are seeing convergence on eliminating the uses that are problematic and avoidable. We will continue to need plastic for specific uses, such as renewable energy technologies. But there is growing agreement that short-lived and single-use can go," said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme. "We can be proud of what we have achieved. But a job half-done is a job not done. Time is against us -- both in terms of finalising the instrument and how much more the planet can take. As we deliberate,



regional consultations and a conversation with observers, and Canada hosted a Partnerships Day and a Ministerial Day on the sidelines of the session. "Agreeing to a global agreement on plastic pollution by the end of 2024 would mark one of the most significant environmental decisions and would be a first-of-its-kind agreement to unite the world around a shared goal to end plastic pollution," said Steven Guilbeault, Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change. "Canada has put in place several measures to stem the tide of plastic pollution at home, and we are keen to keep up the momentum for a global agreement that aligns with our ambition. We welcome delegations, partners, and stakeholders from around the world to Ottawa for INC-4 to continue the ambitious work needed to achieve this united goal." At the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in February 2024, Canada convened the other host countries of the INC process -- France, Kenya, Korea, and Uruguay -- for a ministerial meeting, under the umbrella of the Host Country Alliance, to galvanise momentum toward the global instrument. "Seize this opportunity, make these seven days count, and deliver a text that is as close as possible to the final agreement that we all want to see," said Jyoti Mather-Filipp, Executive Secretary of the INC. "You delegates know the issues that need to be addressed at this session, and that flexibility will be needed to reach a consensus. This is the only way forward."

plastic pollution continues to gush into ecosystems," she added. "So, I ask for INC-4 to show energy, commitment, collaboration, and ambition. To make progress. And set the stage for INC-5 to finalise an instrument that will end plastic pollution, once and for all." INC-5, to be held in Busan, Korea, from November 25 to December 2, is intended as the end of the INC process. It will be followed by a Diplomatic Conference where heads of state will sign the agreement. "We are here seeking to advance these negotiations and deliver a treaty because collectively we have recognised that multilateral cooperation -- this INC process, a new legally binding international instrument -- has a critical role to play in providing the effective and impactful solutions needed to end plastic pollution. The spirit of multilateralism is: 'together, we are stronger,'" said Luis Vayas Valdivieso, Chair of the INC. "Let us negotiate with accountability and integrity -- grounded in the scientific evidence and facts on the scale and urgency of ending plastic pollution. Let us also approach this task with optimism, that it is both necessary and possible for us to achieve this new treaty," he added. The start of INC-4 was preceded by

Turkish police detain 11 suspected IS members



Istanbul | Agency Turkish police detained at least 11 suspected members of the Islamic State (IS) group in Turkey's western province of Izmir on Wednesday, local media reported. The state-run TRT broadcaster said anti-terror teams launched simultaneous operations against 13 sites across the province to capture 13 suspects. During the raids, 11 suspects were apprehended, while arrest operations are

NATO drills near Russian border increase risks of military conflict: Russian spokesperson



Moscow | Agencies The upcoming NATO exercises near the Russian border increase the risks of military incidents, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova was quoted by local media as saying on Wednesday. NATO exercises are scheduled to begin on Friday in Finland near the Russian-Finnish border, Xinhua news agency reported. "The alliance continues the practical military development of a once neutral state, an authoritative participant in discussions on strengthening stability and security," Zakharova said, cited by Russia's RIA Novosti news agency. Zakharova said that the Russian government is keeping a close watch on "the aggressive actions of the collective West." She added that Russia is prepared to take "all necessary political and military-technical measures" to counter any threats to its national defense capabilities.

Stadium ban for women to be reintroduced in Iran

Tehran | Agency A stadium ban for women is to be reintroduced in Iran, multiple local news reports said on Wednesday. The reports said that the Iranian FA has ordered the ban to be imposed in the north-western city of Tabriz in the wake of "repulsive incidents" at a home game of local top flight club Tractor-Sazi. It was not clear whether the stadium ban only applies in Tabriz or for all matches. Tractor-Sazi is one of the most popular clubs in Iran, with a large fan base including many women. Observers believe that a female pitch invader at a match last week is a reason for the latest decision by the FA. A woman ran onto the pitch during the Pro League match between Tehran club Esteghal and Aluminium Arak and embraced Esteghal and national team goalkeeper Hossein Hosseini. Hosseini was fined around \$7,500 and suspended for one match after he reportedly briefly held her. In Iran, it is forbidden to touch



women who are not a part of the close family. Iran's arch-conservative clergy has argued that women had no business in stadiums with fanatical male fans. Under pressure from the world governing body FIFA, the ban was relaxed somewhat in recent years, with a certain number of women allowed to attend matches.

US Congress approves \$61 billion in aid for Ukraine

Washington | Agency The US Congress has approved a \$61-billion aid package for Ukraine after months of stalling. The US Senate on Tuesday approved the bill with 79 votes in the 100-seat upper chamber days after the US House of Representatives on Saturday approved the bill with overwhelming bipartisan support. It now needs the approval of US President Joe Biden. "I will sign this bill into law and address the American people as soon as it reaches my desk tomorrow so we can begin sending weapons and equipment to Ukraine this week," Biden said shortly after the vote, adding he wants to start delivering weapons and equipment to Ukraine this week. By passing the legislative package, which also includes billions of dollars in aid for Israel and Taiwan, the US Congress has demonstrated the power of American leadership in the world, Biden said. "We stand resolutely for democracy and freedom, and against tyranny and oppression."



There is an urgent need for support for Ukraine, which is being subjected to relentless bombardment from Russia, Biden said. The bill also contains aid for Israel, which has recently faced unprecedented attacks from Iran. "This critical legislation will make our nation and world more secure as we support our friends who are defending themselves against terrorists like Hamas and tyrants like Putin," Biden said. The US aid package provides for around \$23 billion to increase the US military stockpile. The money will therefore go indirectly to Ukraine, as the US usually provides the country with equipment from its stocks. The remainder is earmarked for further military support and financial aid, which is designed as a loan.



10TH-12TH BOARD RESULT, ANUSHKA TOPPER IN 10TH, ANSHIKA TOPPER IN 12TH

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Board of Secondary Education has declared the results of class 10 and class 12 exams on Wednesday at 4 pm. Principal Secretary of School Education Department, Rashmi Arun Shami, the result is being released. The 10th examination started on 5th February and continued till 28th February 2024. Class 12 exams started on 6 February and ended on 5 March. This year, 9,92,101 students appeared in the 12th examination and 7,48,238 students appeared in the 10th examination. Last year, MP Board's class 12th result was 55.28% and class 10th result was 63.29%.

Anushka Aggarwal of Nainpur Mandla topped in class 10th. He scored 495 marks out of 500. Anshika Mishra of Rewa stood first in Science Mathematics group in class 12th. He got 493 marks out of 500. In Commerce group, Muskaan Dangi stood first with 493 marks, who is from Saraswati Shishu Mandir Siroj



Vidisha. Jayant Yadav of Shajapur Kalapal has topped in Arts. He got 487 marks out of 500. 64.4 percent children passed in higher secondary

whereas 58 percent children have passed in high school. This year, girl students have defeated boys among the regular candi-

dates. The result of passing boys was 54.35% and the result of passing girls was 61.88%. The results of the mentally handicapped, blind and deaf and dumb students who appeared in the Board's High School Certificate Examination for the year 2024 were also declared. In this category, the passing percentage of boys has been 41.69% and the passing percentage of girls has been 37.86%. Thus, 40.29% candidates of this category have been declared passed.

Anshika Mishra of Rewa stood first in Science Mathematics group. He got 493 marks out of 500. Biology group Anjum Khan Chhapra Shivani stands first with 487 marks. In Commerce group, Muskaan Dangi stood first with 493 marks, who is from Saraswati Shishu Mandir Siroj Vidisha. In the Agriculture group, Vinay Pandey from Pahadi Kheda Panna stood first with 480 marks, in the Fine Arts and Home Science group, Nandini Balmam Girls Higher Secondary School Samanpura Dindori stood first with 464 marks.

Modi government built a new India in 10 years: Vishnudutt Sharma

Team Absolute | Katni

Bharatiya Janata Party's Madhya Pradesh unit president and candidate from Khajuraho parliamentary constituency Vishnudutt Sharma has said that this Lok Sabha election is not just an election to elect an MP, but an election to make India a big power in the world in the next five years.

Addressing the meeting of Kaimor Mandal workers of Vijayraghavgarh in Katni district on Wednesday, Vishnudutt Sharma said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given us a target of increasing 370 votes at every booth. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee agitated and sacrificed his life to remove Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir. All of us workers have to pay a true tribute to Dr. Mukherjee by increasing 370 new votes at every booth.

He said that under the leadership of PM Modi, India is moving rapidly on the path of development. He is engaged in the work of making India a developed and world leader. This election going to be held in the country is not an ordinary election but an election to make India a developed India by 2047. During the Congress tenure, there were terrorist incidents, loot, corruption, fear and insecurity everywhere. Our borders were



unsafe and terrorist incidents took place every day. In these 10 years, Modi government has created a new India. He said that the 2024 election is an election to ensure the future of the coming generation. Before 2003, during the Congress rule, Madhya Pradesh was called Bimaru State. Law and order was in disarray. After the coming of BJP government, Madhya Pradesh has become an island of peace. During Congress rule, soldiers used to play football with their heads. But, Modi government entered Pakistan and carried out surgical strike. Today India has become corruption free and has got freedom from terrorism.

Jyotiraditya Scindia son campaigning in favor of his father in a bullock cart

Team Absolute | Shivpuri

Campaigning was in full swing before the second phase of Lok Sabha elections. BJP has fielded Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia from Guna seat.

At the same time, Congress has made Virendra Raghuvanshi its candidate from this seat. Both the stalwarts tried their best to woo the voters.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, the Union Minister arrived with his son Aryaman Scindia to campaign for the elections. Aryaman campaigned in support of his father in an interesting manner. He was seen campaigning in favor of his father and Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia while riding on a bullock cart. Its video also surfaced. It was seen in the video that Aryaman was campaigning riding on a bullock cart and flowers were being showered on him from a JCB.

The video is said to be of Naya Chauraha under Pichhore assembly. Mahaaryaman Scindia had come here to campaign. During this time Aryaman also listened to the prob-



lems of the people.

CONGRESS WILL WIN AT LEAST TEN SEATS IN MP: ARUN YADAV

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Union Minister and former President of Madhya Pradesh Congress Arun Yadav has said that the results this time will be shocking. Congress will win at least ten seats in Madhya Pradesh. He said that the people of the country have become disillusioned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This was clearly visible even in the first phase of voting for the Lok Sabha elections.

Former president of Madhya Pradesh unit of Congress, Arun Yadav, while talking to IANS, said, "The public has come to know about the false promises made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the last 10 years. Therefore, in the Lok Sabha elections, the voters will vote out PM Modi and the BJP from power. Have made up my mind to throw him out." Promises were made in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Then in the 2019



elections, a box of new promises was opened. These promises have been proved to be completely false and the

public is no longer going to be deceived. In response to a question, Arun

Yadav said that voting for the first phase of Lok Sabha elections has been completed. This time the voting percentage was low, which is a clear indication that the common people are disillusioned with the BJP and Modi government.

There are clear indications in the first phase of voting that the India Alliance is going to get a huge lead. If we talk about Madhya Pradesh, then Congress is sure to get lead in more than three out of six seats in the first phase. Not only this, the position of Congress and India alliance will continue to strengthen in the next phases also.

Before the Lok Sabha elections, on a large number of Congress leaders joining BJP in Madhya Pradesh along with other parts of the country, former minister Yadav said that if any person leaves the family, it causes some loss, but those people left. Who neither have a mass base nor have they been very useful to the party.

Annual dissection and histology drawing competition organized at AIIMS Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Annual Dissection and Histology Drawing Competition were organized by the Department of Anatomy, AIIMS Bhopal on 24 April 2024. On this occasion, Professor (Dr.) Ajai Singh, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal was the chief guest. He carefully observed the dissection done by the students and also asked questions related to it.

Along with asking questions, he explained the children about different organs. Professor Singh also awarded prizes to the winning participants of the Dissection and Histology Drawing Competition. Expressing his views, Professor Singh said that I see a better future in the medical field in these students and the dissection done by these students today definitely reflects their knowledge and their dedication. All the children who participated in today's competition should be rewarded, because every-



one has done their work with hard work and dedication. 125 first year MBBS students participated in this dissection competition.

A total of five teams were formed from these 125 students, who demon-

strated their knowledge based on dissection techniques and anatomy. Each team had to dissect different parts of the human body. In this day long competition, the students performed this dissection work with full

dedication. Their dissection work was seen and appreciated by experts from AIIMS Bhopal as well as experts from outside and also evaluated the performance done by the students.

Modi ji uplifted the prestige of India: Shivraj Singh Chauhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan participated in the public meeting of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi held in Harda on Wednesday. The former CM addressed a huge public meeting in village Pipliya Nankar of Seoni-Malwa and Vidisha parliamentary constituency in support of BJP candidate Darshan Singh Chauhan from Hoshangabad Lok Sabha. During this, the former CM said that we are in Bharatiya Janata Party so that we can serve the country and our people. For me, service to the public is worship of God.

Chauhan said that Congress leader Sam Pitroda is saying that when someone dies in America, a part of his property goes to the family, the rest is kept by the govern-



ment. What are the intentions of Congress, if these come to light then even your fields, houses and shops will not be safe. He said, Rahul Gandhi, this is India, not America. If India runs, it will run on Sanatan tradition, culture and in our tradition, after the death of the father, property comes in the name of son and daughter. Shivraj Singh Chauhan

said that under the leadership of Modi ji, a glorious, prosperous, powerful, prosperous and prosperous India is being built. Modi ji has increased the respect of India. Today, in every corner of the world, the slogan of India is being heard and slogans of Modi-Modi are being raised, this honor is not only of Modi ji but of 140 crore Indians.

Congress candidate Satyapal Singh Sikarwar complains to the Election Commission against Narendra Singh Tomar

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Amidst the Lok Sabha elections, once again a complaint has been lodged against Assembly Speaker Narendra Singh Tomar in the Election Commission of India. Congress candidate Satyapal Singh Sikarwar has complained against him of misuse of constitutional post. The election of Sheopur Lok Sabha seat of Madhya Pradesh is becoming interesting. Here the troubles of Legislative Assembly Speaker and Dimani MLA Narendra Singh Tomar may increase again. Once again Congress candidate Satyapal Singh Sikarwar has complained to the Election Commission against Assembly Speaker Narendra Singh Tomar and accused him of misusing his position. This complaint was made on 24 April.

Congress candidate from Sheopur seat Satyapal Singh Sikarwar has written in the complaint sent to the



Election Commission on Wednesday that Madhya Pradesh Assembly Speaker Narendra Singh Tomar is misusing his position. Satyapal has also given a video of last 16th April in this complaint.

Satyapal says that the video is from Panchayati Dharamshala of the city. In this, businessmen were gathered in the name of New Year meeting and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly said from the stage that earlier he was only a minister and he had only two-four depart-

ments, but now I am the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and all the ministers come under me. Whenever I want, I can call them here and get your work done.

Citing this video as the basis, the Congress candidate said that the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly is continuously misusing his position. He is respected more. Therefore they should not do this again and again. He has been accused of influencing people by showing the influence of his position.

Vadilal Unveils New Quirkiest Summer Campaign Where Joy, Flavor, and 'WAAH' Moments Unite

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Vadilal Enterprise Limited, India's leading ice cream brand announces the launch of its newest summer campaign, poised to elevate every celebration to its utmost potential. Unveiling a series of three films depicting the significance of celebrations & Vadilal, the brand uniquely showcases "Har moment ko banaye Kamaal! WAAH Vadilal!"

The campaign revolves around the central theme of 'WAAH', embodying the utter delight experienced by consumers when indulging in Vadilal ice creams. Vadilal captures the essence of celebration through three poignant films, each showcasing moments of life's milestones that go unnoticed until Vadilal ice cream makes its heartwarming entrance. From the jubilant arrival of a newborn in the hospital to the poignant reunion of a long-lost son in India, and the groundbreaking news of a Mars landing in the newsroom, Vadilal's presence elevates these moments into indelible celebrations. The films ingeniously convey Vadilal's essence by humorously echoing the central themes, where protagonists only fully



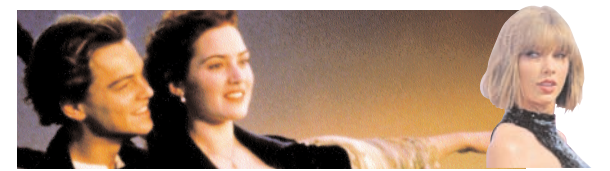
react to the news once Vadilal ice cream is served, emphasizing the joyous association with ice cream as the core ingredient. In a mere fortnight, two out of three campaign films have already graced the screens, captivating audiences with their ingenuity and message. Yet, the thrill continues to mount as the eagerly awaited third film is poised for release in the forthcoming week, promising heightened entertainment and engagement for consumers. For over a century, Vadilal has woven itself into the fabric of

countless family narratives, enriching moments of celebration with its signature flavors, both grand and intimate. Vadilal has cleverly played with the sentiments of the Indian culture where every moment, be it festivals or intimate news is celebrated with delightful treats. Over the past three years, the brand has passionately pursued the essence of the 'WAAH' factor in life's experiences. With each indulgence in Vadilal's delectable ice creams, protagonists find themselves exclaiming 'WAAH', a sentiment

that under the leadership of Modi ji, a glorious, prosperous, powerful, prosperous and prosperous India is being built. Modi ji has increased the respect of India. Today, in every corner of the world, the slogan of India is being heard and slogans of Modi-Modi are being raised, this honor is not only of Modi ji but of 140 crore Indians.

Niraj R. Presswala, General Manager, Marketing & Branding says, "With loyal consumers spanning three generations, Vadilal Ice Creams is thrilled to connect with every age group in the quirkiest way possible this year, and we will continue doing campaigns like these year on year. Our summer ad films promise not only the best laughs but also a trip down memory lane, recalling your fondest celebratory moments. Vadilal has been there for countless 'WAAH' moments - from birthdays to anniversaries to new jobs and to making every small moment a WAAH moment in your life. We're excited to keep being a part of your cherished memories in the years ahead."

The TVCs are crafted by Moonshot Digital creative agency feature scripts written by Tanmay Bhat, Devaiah Bopanna, Puneet Chadha and Deep Joshi, with direction films by Rahul Bharti and production by Zuleikha Gupta at Sun City Studios.



Kim Kardashian

Confirms rumours about her sleeping with eyes open

Los Angeles | Agencies

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian revealed that some rumours about her doing the rounds on the Internet are true. The 43-year-old shared on 'Jimmy Kimmel Live!' that it is true that she sleeps with her eyes slightly open. Kim said that she knows the fact because her "sisters have taken videos and pictures" of it, reports aceshowbiz.com.

She also said that it is "very true" that she blow-dries her jewellery before she puts it on to warm it up. "I hate being freezing," she said. "When you put on cold jewelry or anything with a zipper, I just need it warm."

When host Jimmy Kimmel asked if it was true that she has "someone take the Starbucks sleeve off (her) coffee because (she hates) the sound of cardboard," Kim answered: "Yes, that's true, and I hate the feeling."

She added: "I just can't see it being done, or I can't hear it and I can't feel it. The cardboard getting moved off of the cup is like nails on a chalkboard to me."



Cameraman Emilio Garcia Accuses Rapper of Sexual Harassment

Los Angeles | Agencies

Megan Thee Stallion was accused of sexual harassment and of creating a hostile work environment by her former cameraman Emilio Garcia. The photographer filed the lawsuit on April 23, 2024, at the Los Angeles County Superior Court against Stallion and her companies Hot Girl Touring LLC, Megan Thee Stallion

Entertainment, Inc., and Roc Nation. According to court documents obtained by multiple outlets, Garcia pointed to an alleged 2022 incident involving him and the "Hot Girl Summer" rapper while they were in a car. He accused her of forcing him to watch a sexual encounter between her and an unidentified woman.

As first reported by NBC News, Garcia alleged he was trapped inside a moving vehicle in Spain next to Stallion while she had sex with a woman in June 2022. Per Garcia's lawsuit, he claimed Stallion told him not to "ever discuss what you saw," then subsequently

berated and fat-shamed him, allegedly calling him a "fat bitch." Moreover, he pointed out that he was left "embarrassed, mortified and offended throughout the whole ordeal."

Garcia added in the lawsuit that the "harassment was so severe or pervasive" that it perpetuated a "hostile, abusive work environment," making his "working conditions intolerable."

While speaking with NBC, Garcia noted he "felt uncomfortable" following the alleged sexual incident, adding, "I was kind of frozen, and I was shocked. At kind of just be the overall audacity to do this right, right beside me."

Nicole Kidman celebrates four decades of acting

Los Angeles: Hollywood star Nicole Kidman has completed 40 years in the world of films and she celebrated it on social media.



The 56-year-old actress shared a heartwarming video of her first role at 14 in 'Bush Christmas', which was released in 1983.

"This 14-year-old girl could never have predicted all the talented people she would work with and the many different characters she would play," Kidman wrote in the caption. Kidman gained the spotlight with her portrayal of Rae Ingram in 'Dead Calm' in 1989. Since then, she has worked with prestigious directors such as Jane Campion, Sofia Coppola, Baz Luhrmann, Sydney Pollack, Aaron Sorkin and Stanley Kubrick.

In recognition of her outstanding contributions to cinema, the American Film Institute (AFI) bestowed upon Kidman its Life Achievement Award on April 27, reports aceshowbiz.com.

The actress is the first Australian to receive this honour. Kidman has earned numerous accolades over the years, including five Academy Award nominations and an Oscar win for her portrayal of Virginia Woolf in Stephen Daldry's 'The Hours'.

How Schwarzenegger, Sly Stallone battled over fat levels, body counts in their films

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood stars Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone warred over everything from their earnings to their muscles and the size of the weapons they wielded in their films at the peak of their action movie popularity in the 1980s. In an upcoming joint TV interview titled 'TMZ Presents: Arnold and Sly: Rivals, Friends, Icons', the actors said they are still unsure who had the bigger career, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

A preview of the chat shows Schwarzenegger sitting alongside Stallone, saying: "We ended up kind of like, 'Well, you killed 28 people in the movie; I killed 32.'"

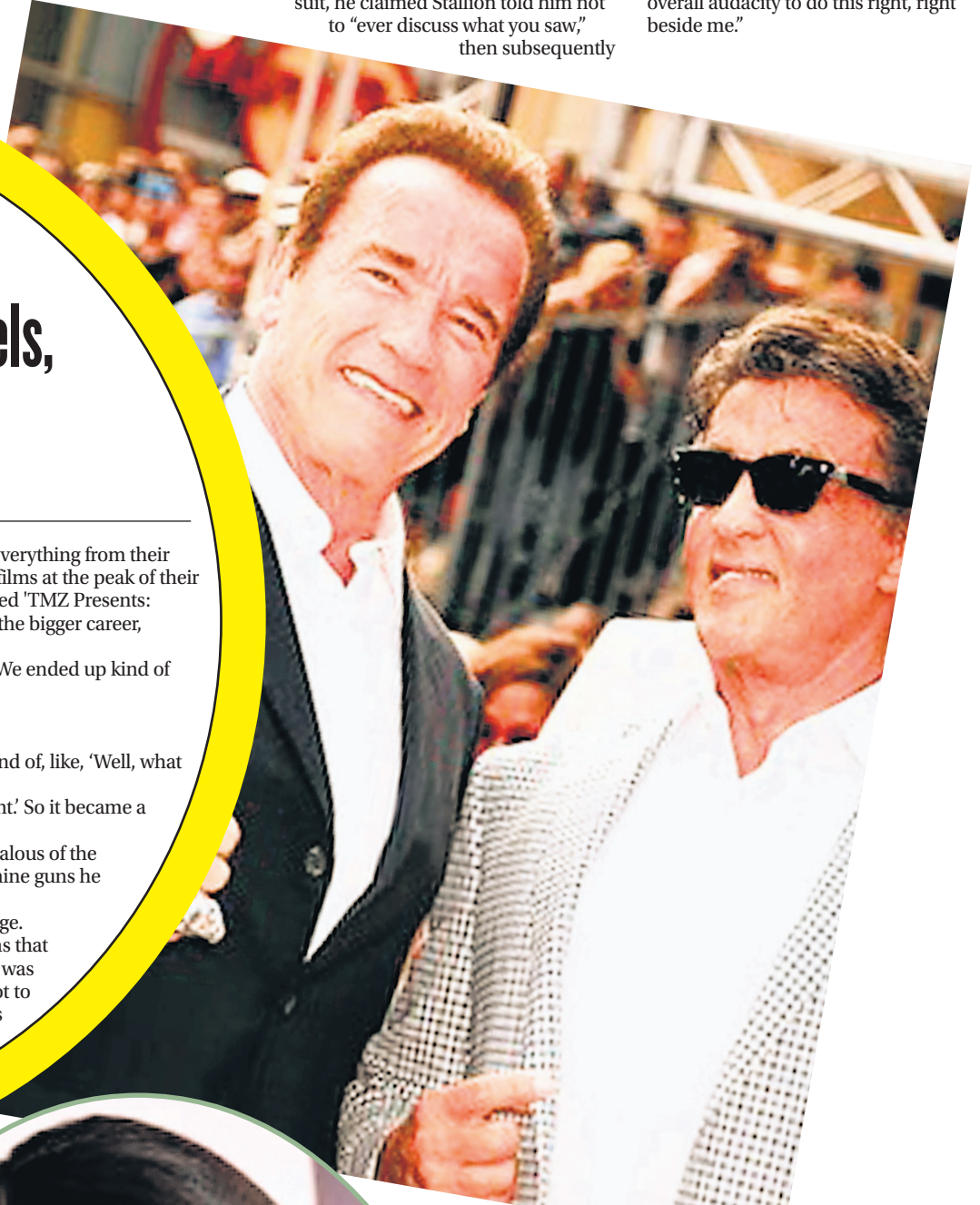
Stallone added: "I got to top that." Schwarzenegger then said: "He killed 80 people, so I had to kill 87 people." 'Rambo' and 'Rocky' star added: "It was now the body count and then it was kind of, like, 'Well, what was your body fat?' I was down to seven per cent."

To which, Schwarzenegger added: "And then I said, 'I was down to 10 per cent.' So it became a competition with the body."

The 'Terminator' star and former governor of California said that he got jealous of the weapons Stallone used on camera, from his 'Rambo knife' to the sub-machine guns he wielded in the 'Rambo' franchise.

He admitted he soon demanded automatic guns that were just as huge. Schwarzenegger went on: "And then he started using machine guns that were kind of, like, huge machine guns. I was running after him, he was not running after me. So I said, when we did 'Predator'... 'I've got to have a bigger machine gun than Sly used in 'Rambo'. So this is how it went."

The two have enjoyed a decades-long friendship since they were arch-rivals in the 1980s.



Christina Applegate had to wear diapers after contracting virus from salad

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Christina Applegate shared how she ended up wearing diapers after contracting a virus from a tainted salad. Applegate recalled the health experience in the latest installment of the Messy podcast, which she co-hosts with Jamie-Lynn Sigler.

In the episode 'Can I Be Honest?', Applegate spoke about how her experience began after she contracted Covid from a close friend who "dropped the ball and went to a bowling alley, and came home with the stuff," reports people.com.

The actress, who revealed she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in August 2021, said it turned into long-term COVID, causing her to develop a chest infection where her heart began to do "weird stuff where it speeds up all of a sudden."

She recalled "p****ng out of my a-- for a few days to the point where I was so dizzy. I was so sick, I couldn't eat, I couldn't (do) anything."

After doing a stool test, she was diagnosed with sapovirus, which is "responsible for both sporadic cases and occasional outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis," according to National Institutes of Health.

The actress said: "It is when you ingest the fecal matter of someone else from your food. Someone else's poop went into my mouth and I ate it."

Applegate believes she got the virus from a takeout salad at a restaurant she's frequented for 15 years and expressed that she woke up "at three o'clock in the morning in a pool of s---."

"Didn't know it happened, and having MS at three o'clock in the morning and trying to change your sheets, it's not fun. But this brings me to my next point, which we can talk about: I'm wearing diapers," Applegate said.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Thandiwe Newton is the latest addition to the cast of the second season of the Netflix series 'Wednesday'.

Exact character details are being kept under wraps. She is the latest new cast member to be revealed, as it was previously reported that Steve Buscemi will also appear in Season 2, reports variety.com.

Newton has held a number of TV roles in her career, perhaps most notably starring in series 'Westworld'. She received three Emmy nominations for best supporting actress in a drama for that show, winning the award in 2018.

Her other TV credits include 'The Slap', 'Big Mouth', 'Human Resources', and 'Rogue'. Among films, Newton is known for starring in features such as 'Crash', 'Beloved', 'The Pursuit of Happyness', and 'W'.

Not much is known about the second season of the show, however, it will have Jenna Ortega returning as the titular Addams Family daughter going through her teenage years. The first season ended with Wednesday successfully solving a series of grisly murders while also thwarting an attempt to destroy Nevermore Academy and its students.

The show first streamed in 2022 and became a hit on the streaming giant. It ranks as one of the most-watched shows the streamer has ever released and was nominated for 12 Emmys, winning four.



Thandiwe Newton joins cast of Jenna Ortega

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Amber Turner



Swiatek surprised on joining 100-week club as world No.1

Madrid | Agencies

Iga Swiatek, the world No.1, recently reached the milestone of becoming the ninth player to spend 100 weeks at the top of the WTA rankings. Reflecting on this achievement, the Pole expressed her surprise, saying it's hard to "get a grasp of this milestone" because it happened so fast.

Among the select group of nine players who have spent 100 weeks at the summit of the WTA rankings, Swiatek stands as the fifth youngest after Martina Hingis, Monica Seles, Stefanie Graf, and Chris Evert to achieve this feat at the age of 22 years and 326 days.

"Honestly it's hard for me to get a grasp of it because it happened so fast," Swiatek said of joining the 100 club. "It's pretty crazy. I never expected to be in that position. Actually, staying at the top of the game for so long is something that really makes me proud," Swiatek said in a Madrid Open pre-tournament presser on Tuesday.

"I think we made some tough decisions sometimes. I have good people that are guiding me and helping me so for sure I wouldn't be here if I would do it by myself and I'm really grateful that everything led to that.

The four-time Grand Slam champion first took over the top spot in April 2022 when Ashleigh Barty retired from tennis and has remained at the summit ever since, except for an eight-week period last season when



Aryna Sabalenka replaced her.

"As you know, especially last year, getting back to No.1 was a big deal and it happened in an unpredictable way, so I'm just proud of myself that I could cope with all the pressure that comes with that. But overall it's kind of fun," she added.

Swiatek will reach the milestone 749 days after first ascending to World No.1 -- the fourth-quickest player to reach 100 weeks following Graf, Evert and Seles, according to WTA stats.

Arriving in the Spanish capital, Swiatek is celebrating her 100th week as the world No.1. Having been a runner-up in Madrid last year, she will kick off her campaign against Wang Xiyu of China.

The three-time Roland Garros winner started her clay season with a semifinal showing in Stuttgart last week, where she lost to eventual champion Elena Rybakina in three sets. However, she remains unfazed by her defeat to Rybakina, emphasizing that she never takes her victories for granted, whether on clay or any other surface.

"Well it puts you back on the ground but on the other hand I never felt like I am taking these tournaments for granted because still, you know, I lost here last year and I lost in Rome.

"We're competing really against the best players in the world so it's not like you're going to win every tourna-

ment. Even though it is my favourite surface, it doesn't mean that my tennis is going to be perfect," said Swiatek.

As Madrid welcomes the best players in the world for its two-week tennis extravaganza, the sport bids farewell to a future Hall-of-Famer in Garbine Muguruza, who announced she is officially hanging up her racquet on the eve of the tournament.

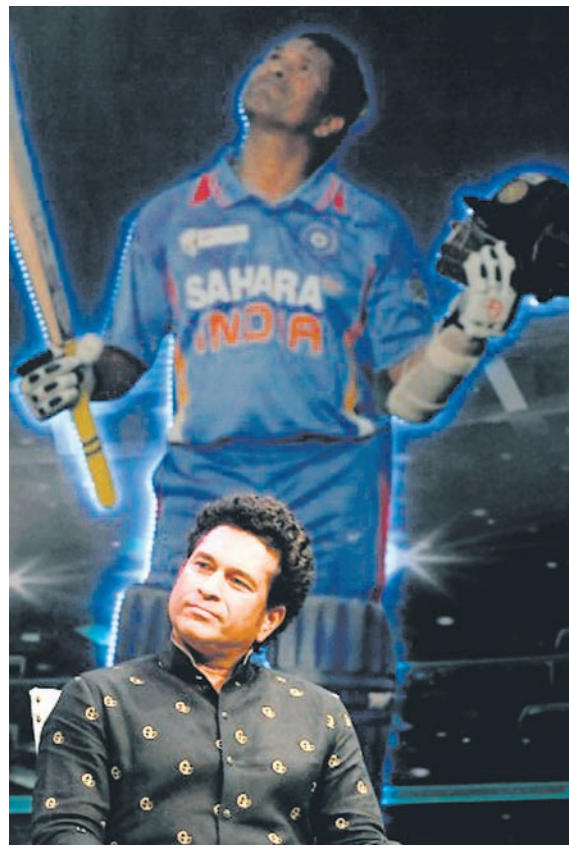
Swiatek has been a long-time fan of the Spanish former world No.1 and took time to pay tribute to Muguruza.

"When I was younger I was looking at her achievements when she won Roland Garros and Wimbledon, I was thinking maybe she's going to be my favourite WTA player. Because I always liked Rafa (Nadal), but I never really had anybody on the WTA to follow. Garbine was actually one of them for a while and then I started playing on tour so it was pretty weird to be fangirling about anybody," revealed Swiatek.

"I'm still trying to understand tennis on grass so hopefully I'll also be able to do it one day and maybe Garbine can help me a little bit with that, I'll ask her," the 22-year-old said with a smile.

Swiatek hopes she can one day match the Spaniard and add the Wimbledon title to her resume. "I'm still trying to understand tennis on grass so hopefully I'll also be able to do it one day and maybe Garbine can help me a little bit with that, I'll ask her," the 22-year-old said with a smile," Swiatek concluded.

'God of Cricket' celebrates 51st birthday



Team Absolute | New Delhi

As India's batting legend Sachin Tendulkar is celebrating his 51st birthday on Wednesday, social media is exploding with heartfelt wishes, painting the digital realm with hues of admiration and celebration for the cricketing icon, who is often hailed as the 'God of cricket'.

Conferred the Bharat Ratna in 2014, Tendulkar is a veteran of 15,921 runs in 200 Tests, besides amassing 18,426 runs in 463 ODIs. He had been a part of the Indian team at ODI World Cups since 1992 but had to wait till 2011 to fulfill his ultimate dream of clinching the World Cup after missing out on five previous occasions.

Tendulkar is the only cricketer to have scored 100 centuries. Of his 100 international tons, 51 came in Tests and 49 in ODIs. He retired from ODI cricket in 2012 and a year later, in November 2013, he bid adieu to the game by retiring from all forms of cricket after playing his 200th Test.

His retirement marked the end of an era in Indian cricket, leaving behind a

legacy that continues to inspire aspiring cricketers around the globe.

On the occasion of his 51st birthday, the sports fraternity extended loads of love and wished Tendulkar good health and happiness.

Former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh posted on X, "Happy birthday paaji! From smashing bowlers on the field to smashing life goals, you're the reason I learned to aim higher in life (and sometimes on the field too). Here's wishing you loads of love, good health and happiness always."

Ex-India spin master Harbhajan Singh said, "Happy Birthday paaji @sachin_rt. Sending you lots of love and good vibes.. have a fantastic day. We all must meet soon and celebrate your birthday and dance on our fav song gili gilli londa (Milkha Singh movie) dance."

BCCI secretary Jay Shah: "Happy Birthday to the legend of cricket @sachin_rt as he turns 51 today! He has inspired millions worldwide with his heroic deeds with the bat and immaculate display of character both on and off the field. Warmest wishes to

the Master Blaster!"

Irfan Pathan: "When Sachin Tendulkar use to play those gorgeous straight drive I had a privilege to stand on the non-striker's end. This is the story will be told to my grandkids. May you have blessed birthday with happiness, health and abundance of Karisma which u carry with u all the time. Happy birthday paaji"

Mohammad Kaif: "Sachin Paaji, you continue to inspire all of us. So much to learn from your grace and humility. Have a great day"

Ex-Indian women cricket team captain Mithali Raj also extended a birthday greetings to 'master blaster', "To the one who defined greatness on and off the field, happy birthday @sachin_rt! You've inspired generations with your talent and humility. Hope you have a great birthday and a year filled with success and happiness!"

Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA), posted on X, "Celebrating the man who brought billions of smiles to the nation with his incredible performances for nearly decades Wishing a very Happy Birthday to our very own Sachin Tendulkar." Gautam Gambhir: "Many happy returns of the day @sachin_rt! May god bless you with a long and healthy life!"

Dinesh Karthik: "We won't even be able to count how many players started playing cricket after watching him play. Happiest birthday to the Master of the game we love!"

Cheteshwar Pujara: "Wishing you a very happy birthday @sachin_rt paaji. It has been an honour to share the field with you. Have a wonderful day and year"

Wasim Jaffer: "Happy birthday to the cricketing genius who set the standard for batsmanship all across the globe! Have a great one @sachin_rt"

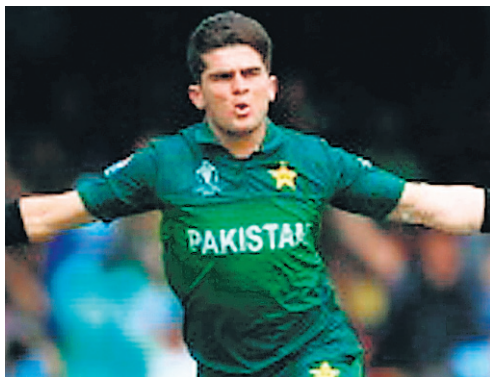
Suresh Raina: "Happy Birthday Paji, @sachin_rt! Your legendary career has inspired millions and your grace both on and off the field continues to set the bar. Wishing you health, happiness, and a year as splendid as your cover drives!"

Afridi, Chapman rise; Suryakumar remains No.1 T20 batter in latest ICC T20I rankings

Dubai | Agencies

Pakistan pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi rose two spots to 17th in the latest ICC Men's T20I bowlers rankings on the back of his strong start to Pakistan's ongoing T20I series at home against New Zealand, where the 24-year-old is the leading wicket-taker in the series through the first three matches. The pacer took the only wicket in the opening match of the series that was ruined by rain and his haul of 3/13 in Pakistan's decisive seven-wicket triumph over the Kiwis in the second game of the series has led to the rise up the rankings and past teammate Haris Rauf in 22nd place.

England's Adil Rashid remained the No.1 ranked T20I bowler in the latest T20I rankings, while New Zealand spinner Ish Sodhi also gained some ground following three wickets for New Zealand in the series against Pakistan.



Sodhi collected 1/18 in the second match of the series in Rawalpindi and then improved on that effort during the Kiwis' emphatic seven-wicket victory at the same ground with figures of 2/25 as New

Zealand leveled the series at 1-1 with two matches remaining. India star Suryakumar Yadav remained at the top of the T20I rankings for batters, with a pair of New Zealanders on the move following a good start to the series with Pakistan.

New Zealand opener Tim Seifert rose three places to 24th, while teammate Mark Chapman following his unbeaten half-century (87* from just 42 deliveries) and Player of the Match heroics in the third game of the series in Pakistan was duly rewarded by making a 12-place jump to 33rd overall as a result of his innings that included a quartet of massive sixes. There was also another new career-high rating for Nepal's Dipendra Singh Airee, who saw a jump of 10 places to 50th on the updated rankings for T20I batters, with the Nepal all-rounder continuing the form that saw him become just the third player to smash six sixes in an over of a T20I match earlier this month.

NIKHIL, DHRUVA & NIKEETAA SECURE TITLES IN INAC 2024

Pune | Agencies

Nikhil J of JK Tyre clocked a blistering 1:25.094 to beat fancied Dhruva Chandrashekar who managed only 1:26.267 in the INAC1 800 to 1650cc class in the finals, while Nikeetaa Takkale excelled as a woman driver, in the FMSCI Indian National Autocross Championship 2024 (INAC) at the Nanoli Stud Farm. The two fastest drivers in the class saw tough competition in the top INAC1 class.

Hosted by the Indian Automotive Racing Club, the INAC witnessed an exhilarating display of speed and skill with the National champions decided in the finals. This was the first of the 12 Nationals organised by FMSCI which completed the Nationals 2024 and Indian champions were declared.

Philippos Matthai of MRF clinched the title in the INAC1 1651 to 2400cc being the only driver in the fray. The championship finals



also highlighted outstanding performances from Dhruva Chandrashekar, Mazdayar Vatcha, Nikhil J, Dakshi Gill, and Nikeetaa Takkale, among others, across various categories. Nikeetaa Takkale, the JK Tyre driver, hoisted the women in the motorsports flag with a commendable performance by a lady driver competing on equal footing with men.

Dhruva Chandrashekar's triumph in the INAC 2 Open Class, with a timing of 1:26:738 in VW Polo underscored the intensity of competition, with his closely contested victory against Philippos Matthai and Nikeetaa Takkale, showcasing the pinnacle of racing excellence. In INAC 3-Open Class Hyderabad's Mazdayar Vatcha emerged victorious with a standout performance of 1:30.657, with Goa's Amey Desai coming in second with a time of 1:31.277 followed by Praveen Dwarkanath with a time of 1:33.474.

SANA MIR AND USAIN BOLT NAMED AMBASSADORS OF ICC T20 WC

Dubai | Agencies

Former Pakistan skipper Sana Mir and eight-time Olympic gold medalist Usain Bolt have been named as the ambassadors of women's and men's ICC T20 World Cup Qualifier 2024.

Sana Mir represented Pakistan in 226 international games, 137 of them as skipper. Sana will keep a keen eye on the tournament which will see 10 sides battle it out for two spots at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024. The teams have been divided into two groups of five, with the top two from each group entering the semi-finals. The winning semi-finalists confirm a trip to Bangladesh for the T20 World Cup later this year.

Sana was delighted with her role as the ambassador of the tournament, believing that besides being a route to qualify for the T20 World Cup, the Qualifier will also provide a competitive cricketing spectacle.

"Other than the big qualification opportunity for two teams, the tournament will provide excellent exposure to the Associate Member teams and their players," Sana said to ICC. "The women's game has become more and more competitive in recent years and the 10 nations involved in the Qualifier possess a number of quality players."

As a veteran of Pakistan cricket, Sana featured in a number of ICC tournaments for her country, including the qualifying events. Her finest moment



came in the 2008 ICC Women's Qualifying Series for the Women's Cricket World Cup, where Pakistan went all the way to the finals. Sana won the joint Player of the Series award for the tournament.

"My aim is to talk to the various teams and players during the Qualifier and help guide them on how to deal with the pressure of these events and what it takes to succeed. Pakistan had a great record in these events, and I in particular have fond memories of the 2008 edition of the 50 over World Cup qualifier event that I played."

Discussing the participating teams, Sana also thinks that the gap between the top-ranked sides and Associate Members is now closing due to ICC Pathway events, and there is a potential for an upset in the Qualifier.

"The players are playing a lot more and getting decent exposure through their domestic tournaments and the ICC pathway programme. For women's cricket to grow further, the regional events and the Qualifier are incredibly important. While Sri Lanka and Ireland will probably be favourites to qualify alongside Thailand, teams like Scotland, Netherlands, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, and Zimbabwe surely have the potential to cause major upsets and make their way through to the semis and eventually to the final as well."

A long-time friend of West Indies great Chris Gayle, Bolt said he was looking forward to playing a part in the tournament that will run in the USA and Caribbean from June 1-29.

"I am thrilled to be an ambassador for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup," Bolt told the ICC recently.

Former wrestler Narsingh elected chairman of WFI's athletes' commission

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Commonwealth Games gold-medallist Narsingh Pancham Yadav was on Wednesday elected chairman of the Wrestling Federation of India's (WFI) Athletes' Commission, here.

According to information received, a total of eight candidates were in fray for the seven positions and after polling, conducted on ballot paper, seven members got elected. They then chose Narsingh as chairman of the commission.

While lifting suspension of WFI, the

United World Wrestling (UWW) had clearly stated that the move was subject to the Sanjay Singh-led national federation constituting an athletes' commission to resolve the grievances of the grapplers.

Last year, six top wrestlers, including Bajrang Punia, Sakshi Malik and Vinesh Phogat sat on a protest at the Jantar Mantar, demanding the arrest of the then WFI president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, accusing him of sexually harassing women wrestlers. Later new members were appointed in the federation, ending Brij Bhushan Singh's tenure.

Who is Narsingh Yadav?

At the 2010 Commonwealth Games, he won the gold medal in the men's freestyle 74 kg category. He was banned for four years in 2016 for failing dope tests.

Having won a bronze at the World Championships qualified Narsingh to the 2016 Rio Olympics but Sushil Kumar, who had missed the 2016 Summer Games qualification event due to injury, asked for a trial between himself and Narsingh and moved the Delhi High Court.

It was only after his appeal was rejected that it was confirmed that Narsingh was

going to Rio. However, Yadav failed two anti-doping tests. He tested positive for methandienone, which he asserted was to "sabotage" his chances of competing at the Olympics, following which he was given a clean chit by National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA).

The World Anti-Doping Agency later challenged the decision and the case was moved to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). A day prior to Yadav's first bout at the Olympics, on August 18 2016, he was handed a four-year ban by the CAS.





Aamir Khan explains to

KAPIL SHARMA WHY HE DOESN'T ATTEND AWARD SHOWS



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan, who was last seen in 'Laal Singh Chaddha', is set to appear on the streaming comedy show 'The Great Indian Kapil Show'. The makers of the show unveiled a new promo of the show on Wednesday, which shows the actor having a gala time with

the cast of the show.

The actor also narrated several stories. This is the first time Aamir is appearing on the show. Welcoming him, Kapil seemed elated as Aamir is known to pay visits to limited places.

During the episode, Aamir also spoke about why he doesn't attend Award shows; he said that time is "very precious," and it should be invested correctly. He then

opened up on the iconic radio scene of 'PK' where he ran on the railway track bare-bodied.

Like every parent, Aamir too experiences the challenge of his kids not listening to him. The actor spoke at length about it during the show, and also mentioned that he intended on coming to the show in shorts but his team told him to wear jeans.



'MY MOTHER SUPPORTED ME SINCE BEGINNING OF MY CAREER': MADHURI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Madhuri Dixit Nene, who is a judge on 'Dance Deewane', will be seen speaking about the bond she shared with her mother.

In a heartfelt admission, she said: "Mere apne zindagi mein jo mera saarthi hain, woh hain meri maa. Shuruwaat se mere

career mein unhone humesha mujhe guide kiya hain, mera saath diya hain. (My mother was the 'saarthi' of my life. Since the beginning of my career she had always guided me and supported me.)"

Madhuri added: "Kabhi agar koi kuch bol de toh woh humesha kehti thi ki tum jo ho waisi hi raho aur mehnat se kaam karna, sincerity se kaam karna, ek din safalta tumko milegi. (If someone would say something, she would say stay the way you are, work hard and sincerely. You will succeed.)"

"She has always encouraged me and backed me up. Woh meri spine hain."

Gone the days of stopping by that panwala to hear the commentary : Amitabh Bachchan

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan shared that he had a packed schedule, which began at nine in the morning, worked without a "traditional break" and had his lunch in the car.

Amitabh was busy shooting for the upcoming new season of the quiz-based reality show 'Kaun Banega Crorepati'. He shared several pictures from the set on his blog and wrote: "Khel hone jaa raha hai naye season ka; sneh pyaar bana rahe EF pariwar ka." The thespian then spoke about how busy his schedule was.

"A non-stop schedule beginning at 9... and worked till 5 without the traditional break .. done it driven off, and lunched in car .. that rolled appropriate eat and that consumption drink," Big B wrote on his blog.

He then shared that he watched the IPL match.

"And back in the love of the game at IPL .. as exciting as all the others that are unfolding before us this season .. and unexpectedly in the Fortress of Chepauk a most stunning hard-fought result .. almost the same as the day before when the last ball decided the one run victory!"

"It be looked forward to this game and the work schedules adjusted accordingly .. interest never waning .. from that 'John Jaany Janardhan' song shoot at Filmistan when all of us sat outside what then was a miracle mechanism - a transistor monitored small TV screen .. enraptured with the game .." he added. The icon then reminisced about the days when he would stop by at the "panwala" to hear the commentary during his college days. "Gone the days of stopping by that panwala to hear the commentary beyond the walls of the College grounds at University .. err 1956-58 approx .. and now a million alternatives in immediacy available .. BUT .. Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury the experience of a Stadium is simply incomparable .." he wrote.

Varun Dhawan celebrates his 37th birthday with fans and the media



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood heartthrob Varun Dhawan celebrated his 37th birthday on Wednesday in a special way, surrounded by fans and the media outside his Juhu home. Dressed in a stylish white and pink striped shirt paired

with light blue denims, Varun looked effortlessly cool as he marked another year of his life.

The highlight of the celebration was the presence of three different cakes, each adding to the festive atmosphere. Varun cut each cake and expressed his gratitude to the paparazzi for making his day memorable.

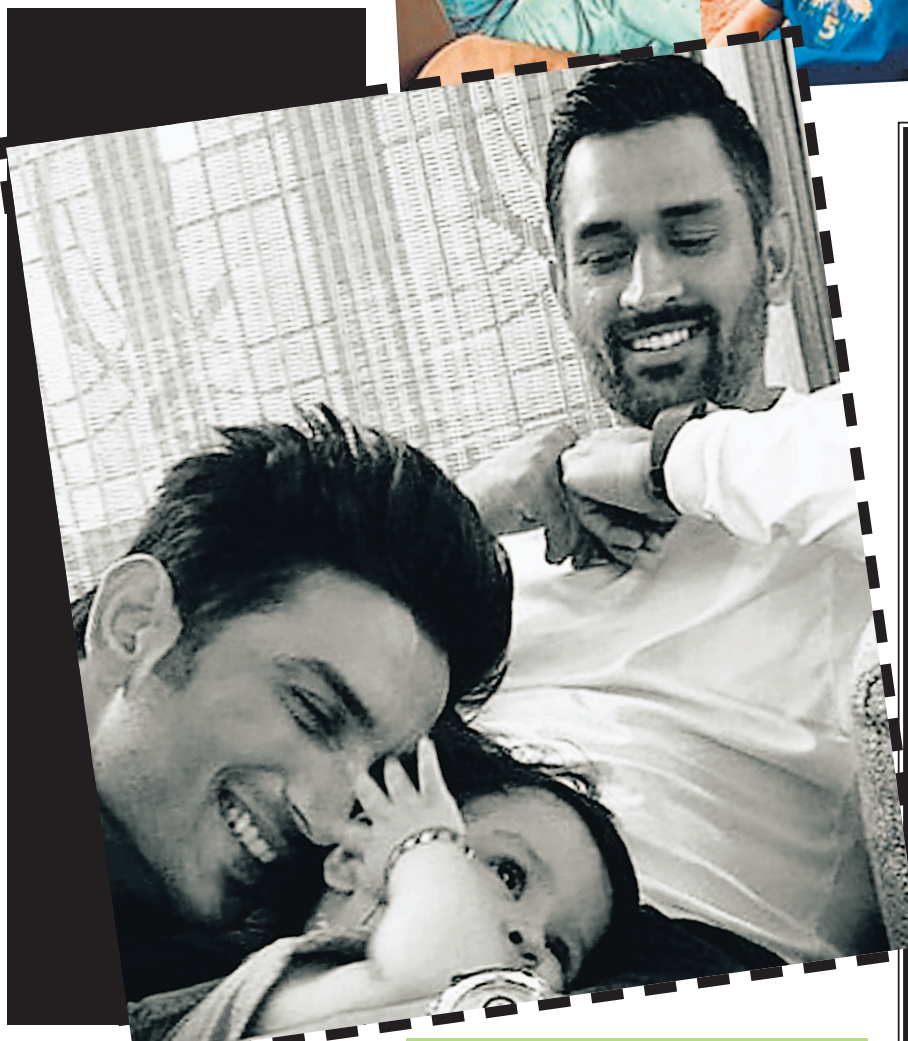
The celebrations weren't just about his birthday. Varun and his wife Natasha Dalal are expecting their first child, which added an extra layer of joy and excitement to the occasion. The couple had recently hosted a baby shower at their home with close friends and family.



Kareena Kapoor shares glimpses of her Tanzanian holiday

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood diva Kareena Kapoor Khan shared a sneak-peek from her recent vacation in Tanzania. Kareena took to Instagram, where she shared a motley of pictures from the holiday. In the first image, Kareena is seen sitting in a car for a jungle safari. In the image, she is sporting an all denim outfit paired with sneakers and sunglasses. Another image shows Taimur looking at a deer standing at a close distance from the jeep. However, Taimur's younger brother Jeh and his father Saif Ali Khan are not present in any pictures. Kareena captioned the images: "SAVANNA GIRL AND BOY," "TANZANIA 2024."



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sushant Singh Rajput's pic with Dhoni and daughter Ziva goes viral

A throwback monochrome photograph featuring late Bollywood star Sushant Singh Rajput has gone viral on social media. In the viral image, the late actor is seen cuddling star cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni's baby daughter Ziva. In the black and white image, Sushant can be seen smiling, while Dhoni happily looks at the two.

Social media users were left emotional on seeing the image. One wrote: "Miss you." "Legends never die," said another. Another commented: "Sushant ek aisa naam hai jise log kbhi bhul nhi nhi pate." "Still missing this guy," wrote another.

It was in 2016, when Sushant Singh Rajput essayed the role of Dhoni in the biopic 'M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story', which also stars Kiara Advani and Disha Patani. Sushant Singh Rajput was then found dead in his Mumbai residence in June 2020.



Shama Sikander