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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM BHOPAL, MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI

NATION > 02

Attack on Kejrival was orchestrated by BJP workers: Gopal...



HOLLYWOOD > 06

Ben Affleck is 'ready to date again...'



SPORTS > 07

2nd Test: It's a collective failure, we failed to respond to challenges...



Israeli military launches strikes on military targets in Iran

CONFLICT DEEPENS

Jerusalem | Agencies

Israel's military said that it launched "precise strikes" on military targets in Iran early Saturday morning. The strikes against Iran were in response to "months of continuous attacks" from Tehran. Israel said the air strikes on the military facilities in Iran are completed. Iran informed that two soldiers were killed in the air strikes.

Iran's state TV also confirmed that several strong explosions were heard around the capital, but there was no official comment about the source of the explosions. A few hours later, several explosions were heard in the capital Tehran, which



the Iranian state media said was because of the activation of air defence systems. According to Fox News, the White House was notified shortly before Israel carried out air strikes on Iran.

Ongoing hostilities are to nobody's benefit: India

New Delhi: Reacting to the ongoing developments in West Asia, after Israel's revenge strikes on Iran, India reiterated its call to exercise restraint and return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy. "We are deeply concerned by the evolving escalation in West Asia and its ramifications for peace and stability in the region and beyond. We reiterate our call to all concerned to exercise restraint and return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy. The ongoing hostilities are to nobody's benefit, even as innocent hostages and civilian populations continue to suffer. Our Missions in the region are in contact with the Indian community," said India in a statement.

"Right" To Defend Itself: Iran

Tehran: Iran warned on Saturday it would defend itself after Israeli air strikes killed at least two soldiers and further stoked fears of a full-scale regional war in the Middle East. Israel warned Iran would "pay a heavy price" if it responded to the strikes, and the United States, Germany and Britain demanded Tehran not escalate the conflict further. Other countries, including many of Iran's neighbours, condemned Israel's strikes and some, such as Russia, urged both sides to show restraint and avoid what Moscow dubbed a "catastrophic scenario". The Islamic republic insisted it had the "right and the duty" to defend itself, while its Lebanese ally Hezbollah said it had already launched rocket salvos targeting five residential areas in northern Israel. Read more.

Qatar, Jordan and UAE join Saudi Arabia in condemning Israeli airstrikes

Doha: Qatar, Jordan and UAE joined Saudi Arabia on Saturday in condemning the airstrikes launched by Israel on the territory of Iran while expressing deep concern over the continued escalation and its repercussions on security and stability in the region. "The State of Qatar expresses its strong condemnation and denunciation of Israel's targeting of the Islamic Republic of Iran, considering this act a blatant violation of Iran's sovereignty and a clear breach of the principles of international law," read a statement issued by Qatar's Foreign Ministry. Jordan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates asserted that Israeli airstrikes were in violation of international law and could lead to a dangerous escalation and more tension in the region. Ambassador Sufian Al-Qudah, the spokesperson for Jordanian foreign ministry, stressed the Kingdom's "absolute rejection" of the dangerous escalation in the region and violations of international law, warning against slipping into a conflict that threatens the stability of the region and international security. The UAE, while strongly condemning the military targeting of Iran, expressed its deep concern over the continued escalation and its repercussions on security and stability in the region. Earlier, Saudi Arabia expressed its "condemnation and denunciation" of the Israeli military's action of targeting Iran, which it said is a violation of its sovereignty and a violation of international laws and norms. "The Kingdom affirms its unwavering position in its rejection of the continued escalation in the region and the expansion of the conflict that threatens the security and stability of the countries and people of the region. Russia reacts to Israeli airstrikes on Iran, terms it as 'explosive escalation' Meanwhile, Russia on Saturday called for the earliest possible normalization of the military and political situation in the Middle East, urging all parties involved to prevent the situation from developing into a catastrophic scenario.



Act against unsafe helmet makers to boost road safety: Centre to district officials

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In an effort to minimise road accidents in the country, the government on Saturday said it has asked district collectors and district magistrates to launch a nationwide campaign targeting manufacturers and retailers who sell non-compliant helmets for two-wheeler riders.

Substandard helmets, which lack the requisite BIS certification, are being sold on the roadside which pose a severe risk to public safety and has been linked to numerous fatalities in road accidents. The government has already made wearing a helmet mandatory under the Motor Vehicles Act 1988.

The government has called for strict enforcement against manufacturers operating

without BIS licenses or using counterfeit ISI mark, as well as retailers peddling these non-compliant products to unsuspecting consumers. "Consumers can verify whether a helmet manufacturer is licensed by BIS through the BIS Care App or by visiting the BIS website," said the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. This initiative comes as a response to the growing concerns over the quality of helmets available in the market and their critical role in safeguarding lives on the road.

"Helmets save lives, but only if they are of good quality. This initiative is crucial in removing unsafe helmets from the market and educating consumers about the importance of BIS-certified products. We urge all stake-

holders to actively participate in this campaign for the safety of our citizens," said Nidhi Khare, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs. The government urged district officials to take a personal interest in this matter and launch a special campaign to ensure the enforcement of the Quality Control Order. District officials are encouraged to collaborate with the District SP and BIS field officers to identify and address violations. To date, 162 licenses have been cancelled/expired related to manufacturing of substandard/non-ISI helmets. Also, a total of 27 search and seizure have been conducted on misuse of BIS standard mark/violation of quality control orders and cases were filed in various court, informed the Department.

FIR against Digvijay Singh, Umang Singhar and Hemant Katare: Action taken for sharing video of Minister Rawat

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A case has been registered against Rajya Sabha MP Digvijay Singh, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Umang Singhar and Deputy Leader of Opposition Hemant Katare at Vijaypur police station in Sheopur district. BJP District General Secretary Arvind alias Guddu Singh Jadoun has complained against these Congress leaders on Saturday evening.

He alleged that these three leaders have shared the video of Forest and Environment Minister and BJP candidate Ramniwas Rawat in the by-election to be held on Vijaypur assembly seat on their social media X handle. This video is 6 years old. An attempt has been made to tarnish Rawat's image. BJP said-Congress shared 6 year old video

BJP leader Arvind Jadoun said that the three leaders including Digvijay Singh shared the



video on social media on Friday. This video is of Pahela village of Karahal. In this, Ramniwas Rawat is seen visiting the village. In the video, the villagers have reprimanded Rawat about the water problem. They have also raised slogans. The BJP leader said that actually this video is from the time when there was a water problem in the village 6 years ago. Now there is no water problem in the village. Congress is publicizing it by calling it the current situation. In such a situation, an attempt has been made to tarnish Rawat's image by posting the video in a wrong way.

K'TAKA CM'S WIFE ADMITS TO PUTTING WHITENER ON LETTER TO MUDA

Mumbai | Agencies

During a three hour grilling session by the Karnataka Lokayukta that is probing the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) case, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi admitted that she had put whitener on the letter submitted to the authority, sources said on Saturday.

CM Siddaramaiah is the first accused in the case and his wife is the second accused.

Parvathi appeared before the office of the Mysuru Lokayukta, SP T.J. Udesha on Friday.

The statements of the CM's wife were recorded on video camera.

During the investigation she clarified that she had put the whitener on the letter submitted to the MUDA regarding the allotment of compensatory sites. She had maintained that as there was a mistake in the sentence she had to use the whitener.

She further maintained she doesn't remember exactly what the mistake was. It was alleged that the



whitener was put on the submitted letter after the MUDA case came to light to hide the fact that the sites were demanded to be allotted in upscale Vijayanagara locality of Mysuru.

Sources stated that she was questioned about

the disputed property of 3.16 acres at Kesare village on the outskirts of the village and her letters submitted towards allotment of 14 sites as compensation.

The CM's wife said that she does not put her signatures regularly on documents and hence her signature varies a little.

She further informed the Lokayukta that she had not seen the land after it was gifted to her and paid a visit to the property after three-four years. Parvathi was given a notice on Thursday evening to appear for the questioning.

She arrived at the Lokayukta office accompanied by a family friend.

Parvathi was also asked about how many letters she had submitted to the MUDA for compensation. She has maintained that five to six letters were given and she doesn't know the exact numbers.

Parvathi told the Lokayukta that she had not asked for sites at a particular location and added that the land was a gift from her parent's side and petitioned the Lokayukta as her land was acquired.

PUNJAB FARMERS TO BLOCK HIGHWAYS IN PROTEST OVER FIRS FOR STUBBLE BURNING

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Punjab farmers will launch a protest on Saturday against various issues plaguing the farming community, including FIRs registered for stubble burning, slow paddy procurement and the state government's decision to reduce DAP (di-ammonium phosphate) fertiliser stocks by 30 per cent.

Punjab Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Samiti leader Sarwan Singh Pandher announced on Friday that the highways in Majha Malwa-Doaba area would be blocked on the issue of FIRs registered for stubble burning, slow paddy procurement and DAP.



"We will completely block the highways in Batala, Sangrur, Phagwara and Megha," Sarwan Singh Pandher said on Friday. However, emergency services will remain operational on

Saturday despite the protest. This is the second day running that protests are being held by Punjab farmers. On Friday, activists of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM),

blocked roads across Punjab for four hours to protest the tardy paddy procurement, leading to traffic disruptions and inconvenience to tens of thousands of commuters at many places in the state.

Significantly, there were no reports of violence from anywhere in the state. Emergency and essential services like ambulances and school buses were also exempted from the blockade. However, commuters are likely to face more inconvenience on Saturday with Pandher's Kisan Mazdoor Morcha announcing a road blockade for an indefinite period at many places to protest against the "tardy" paddy procurement.

CBDT extends deadline to file income tax returns by corporates to Nov 15

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on Saturday extended the deadline for filing income tax (I-T) returns by corporates by 15 days till November 15 for the assessment year 2024-25. The earlier deadline was October 31.

The CBDT said in a circular that it has extended due date for furnishing return of income for the assessment year 2024-25 under the



Income-tax Act, 1961 (the Act) to November 15.

According to experts, this move will help corporates file their return with ease in the extended festive season this year. Taxpayers and professionals alike can prioritise

accuracy and compliance without the stress of last-minute filings amidst celebrations, they mentioned.

As per a latest SBI report, with an increasing alignment with progressive taxation regime, contribution of direct taxes to total tax revenue reached 56.7 per cent in AY24 (54.6 per cent in AY23) - the highest in 14 years.

The taxpayers and tax professionals made their compliances in time, leading to a surge in filing of ITRs.

India to have its own space station by 2035: Dr Jitendra Singh

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India will have its own space station by 2035, which will be known as "Bharatiya Antriksh Station", Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh, said on Saturday.

He made the announcement at the signing of a landmark MoU between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the



Department of Biotechnology (DBT), that aims to integrate biotechnology with space technology, heralding a new era of scientific innovation in the country. The MoU outlines several key initiatives, including the establishment of a 'Bharatiya Antriksh Station' and the unveiling of the 'BioE3'

(biotechnology for economy, environment and employment) policy. According to the government, the collaboration will focus on areas such as microgravity research, space biotechnology, space biomanufacturing, bioastronautics, and space biology. The minister lauded ISRO Chairman S. Somnath and Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Dr Rajesh Gokhale, for their efforts in making this collaboration possible.

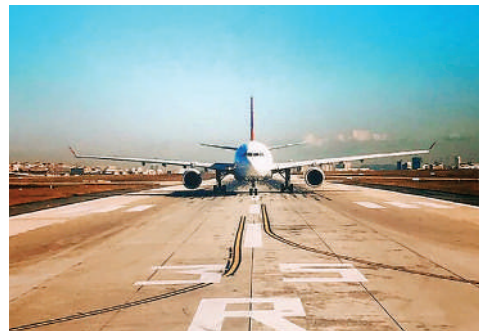
'WANTED ATTENTION': UNEMPLOYED DELHI MAN ARRESTED FOR THREATS TO AIRLINES

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A 25-year-old unemployed man from Delhi has been taken into custody for making hoax bomb threats, marking only the second arrest since a spate of such threats began being issued to airlines last week. Officials from the Delhi Police said the man admitted to making the threats to draw attention to himself after seeing reports of similar calls on television.

Over 275 flights have received hoax bomb threats since October 14 and the Mumbai Police had taken a 17-year-old into custody last week.

The Delhi Police said on Saturday that two threat messages were received at the capital's Indira Gandhi International Airport between Friday night and early on Saturday from a social



media account. A case was registered and investigations revealed that the account belonged to Shubham Upadhyay from Rajapuri in west Delhi's Uttam Nagar area. Upadhyay was arrested and, on

being questioned, revealed that he had made the threats to garner attention after seeing reports of similar calls on TV.

Officials said Upadhyay, 25, is unemployed and has studied up to Class 12. "We reassure the public that all necessary security measures are in place, and there is no cause for alarm. We encourage everyone to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities to the authorities," the Delhi Police said in a statement.

On October 16, the Mumbai Police had taken a 17-year-old school dropout from Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh into custody for threats made to four flights on October 14. After a dispute with a friend over money, the teenager had allegedly created an X handle in his name and made the threats to frame him.



ATTACK ON KEJRIWAL WAS ORCHESTRATED BY BJP WORKERS: GOPAL RAI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)'s claims of attack on former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during his 'Padyatra', Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Saturday claimed that it was "orchestrated" by BJP leaders.

Talking to reporter, Gopal Rai said, "All those who attacked Kejriwal are BJP leaders. The videos and photos that are surfacing show that those people were leaders and workers of BJP. They should refrain from making false claims that people of Delhi are frustrated."

"First, they filed a fake case against Kejriwal, arrested him and conspired to kill him by stopping his insulin. When the court released him, the BJP got its goons to attack him," he added.

He further claimed that the attacks would not stop him from contesting election.



"BJP is trying to stop him from contesting election. But, I want to tell you that Kejriwal neither stopped nor he is going to stop in the future. I feel that if the BJP have confidence and faith in their work and policies, then

they should go among the public. They will decide whether they want AAP or BJP in the national capital. Such condemnable acts will not help anyone. It will only deteriorate the level of politics," Gopal Rai further

AIIMS Bhopal holds brainstorming session on diagnosis, treatment of blood cancer in children

Team Absolute | Bhopal

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bhopal held a brainstorming session on advanced technology and innovative strategies for enhancing the diagnosis and treatment of blood cancer in children.

More than 50 doctors from across the country, including from AIIMS New Delhi delivered lectures and shared their experiences during the two-day long session concluded on Saturday.

The session aimed to foster collaboration among specialists, including pathologists, paediatricians, and pediatric oncologists, to ensure better outcomes for young patients.

During the discussion, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal Dr. Ajay Singh highlighted the importance of collaboration among medical professionals on this serious issue. He noted the treatment of childhood cancer requires a multidisciplinary approach.

"Collaboration between pathologists, paediatricians, and pediatric oncologists is extremely important for correct diagnosis and effective treatment of blood cancer in children," he said while addressing the gathering of doctors and medical students. Briefing about the multi-layer process of diagnosis, Dr. Singh noted that paediatricians typically suspect blood cancer based on symptoms such as prolonged fever, bleeding, nodular swelling, abdominal swelling, and difficulty in breathing while pathologists then confirm the diagnosis by identifying cancer cells in the



blood, and the exact type of blood cancer is determined through specialised tests.

"Pediatric oncologists, in collaboration with pathologists and molecular oncologists, create individualised treatment plans based on the child's risk group to ensure the appropriate dose of chemotherapy," Dr. Singh said.

He advised practising doctors and medical students that an excessively high dose can lead to additional side effects and costs, while a low dose may increase the risk of cancer recurrence.

Dr. Singh asserted that the collaboration and exchange of knowledge among various specialists are expected to lead to more precise and effective treatment strategies for blood cancers in children.

"Such meetings are essential to understand each other's viewpoints and improve patient care, which is part of the mission of AIIMS Bhopal. I congratulate the departments of pathology and paediatrics for this important initiative to enhance the quality of healthcare provided to our young patients," he said.

Nationalist Congress Party-SP, Shiv Sena-UBT name more candidates for Maha polls

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Hours after the Congress on Saturday released its second list for the November 20 Maharashtra Assembly polls, its Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) allies, the Nationalist Congress Party-SP and the Shiv Sena-UBT announced the names of more candidates.

The NCP-SP has fielded 22 more contenders including several bigwigs, sitting MLAs, and defectors from other parties from different parts of the state, taking the total in the fray to 67 so far, its state President Jayant R. Patil said.

Its candidates include Omi Kalani from Ulhasnagar, Satish Anna Patil from Erandol, Satish Chavan from Gangapur, Pandurang Barora from Shahapur, Rahul Mote from Paranda, Sandeep Kshirsagar from Beed, Mayura Kale from Arvi, Deepika Chavan from Baghlan, Manikrao Shinde from Yeola, Uday Sangle from Sinnar, and Sunita Charoskar from Dindori. Ganesh Geete will contest from Nashik East, Satyashree Sherkar from Junnar, Sulakhana Sheelvant from Pimpri, Sachin Dodke from Khadakwasla, Ashwini Kadam from



Parvati, Amit Bhandgre from Akole, Abhishek Kalambar from Ahilyanagar City, Uttamrao Jankar from Malshiras, Deepak Chavan from Phaltan, Nandini B. Kupekar from Chandgarh, and Madan Karande from Ichalkaranji.

The SS-UBT has announced the names of three candidates from Mumbai, including the sole Muslim, Harun Khan who will contest from Versova, as well as Sanjay Bhalerao

from Ghatkopar West and Sandeep Naik from Vile Parle, signalling the end of a tug-of-war on these constituencies with the Congress.

As per the new tentative formula, the Congress-NCP-SP-SS-UBT will be contesting 90 seats each, making 270 of the total 288, and the remaining 18 shall be allotted to other smaller allies. On Friday, MVA partner, Samajwadi Party state President Abu Asim Azmi had served a day's ultimatum to the MVA asking them to allocate the constituencies to the smaller allies failing which it would contest the polls solo on 20-25 winnable seats. However, the MVA's main constituents have indicated that all the lists will be finalised and declared by Saturday night or Sunday even as the October 29 deadline for filing nominations looms close, creating huge anxiety among the parties and the candidates.

GRIHA Council hosted its Third regional conclave in Jaipur to "Accelerate Climate Action in the Built Environment"

Jaipur | Agencies

GRIHA Council hosted its 3rd GRIHA Regional Conclave in Jaipur, Rajasthan on 25th October centered around the theme 'Accelerating Climate Action in the Built Environment'. This was the third in the series of conclaves that are planned throughout the year, lining up with the annual GRIHA Regional Conclave, all centered around the same theme.

Sanjay Seth, Vice President & Chief Executive Officer, GRIHA Council & Senior Director, Sustainable Infrastructure Programme, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) welcomed the esteemed guests, dignitaries and participants at the inaugural session. He encouraged everyone to take a moment and reflect on our actions today which will ultimately impact the world as we pass it on to our future generations. He emphasized that it's no longer enough to



nearly explore sustainability and resilience, the time has also come to have certain robust systems in place that can reduce and effectively respond to the escalating crisis that we are facing today. The event was graced by the presence of Alok, Additional Chief Secretary, Energy Department, Government of Rajasthan. In his inaugural address emphasized the escalated pace of climate change and the need to sensitize ourselves to combat

it, to secure the lives of our future generations. He shared about one of the initiatives of the Rajasthan government - under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthan Mahabhiyaan (PM-KUSUM) scheme. He shared the overwhelming and huge response from different sectors including businessman, farmers. 4500 MW orders have been placed and work for 3000 MW has already been started. He emphasized on the importance of green building, sustainable

construction and building practices, which will significantly contribute to climate action in the built environment. He was appreciative of the GRIHA Council's initiative to organize the Regional Conclaves and building new partnerships with three different institutions - IPA, FSAI and AHSRAE, to advance sustainability in the built environment. Nishant Jain, IAS, Secretary, Jaipur Development Authority, Government of Rajasthan, in his keynote address highlighted his concern over the growing urbanization and carbon emissions which have grave impact on the climate and our environment. He also shared about the green building relaxations and incentives provided by the Jaipur Development Authority, Government of Rajasthan. He also highlighted that Jaipur Pink city being declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site which is based on the traditional architecture designs.

10 Rajkot hotels receive bomb threat, police launch investigation

Rajkot | Agencies

Police swung into action and initiated extensive security measures after at least 10 hotels in Gujarat's Rajkot received bomb threats via email.

Authorities deployed bomb squads and dog squads to conduct thorough checks at all affected locations.

The hotels which received bomb threats included the Imperial Palace, Grand Regency, Sayaji Hotel, and Hotel Seasons, among others.

Police are on high alert, and an investigation is underway to trace the origin of the threatening message. The email, sent from a user named "Kan Din", delivered a stark warning: "I placed



bombs in every location of your hotel. Many lives will be lost today; hurry up and evacuate the hotel."

The message spurred hotel management and police teams into swift action. At around 12:45 p.m., units from the SOG, Crime Branch, LCB, PCB, and Bomb Squad arrived at the specified hotels and other popular venues in Rajkot to conduct meticulous checks. So far, no suspicious

objects have been located, though security remains highly alert as investigations continue.

PI R.G. Barot of Rajkot's A Division Police shared updates with the media: "Following a tip-off from the crime branch, we began a comprehensive security sweep of hotels, including Bhabha Hotel, Jyoti Hotel, and Imperial Hotel. Currently, teams from the SOG and local police are on-site, performing exhaustive checks to ensure safety. Nothing alarming has been found." Earlier in August, shoppers were evacuated from VR Mall on Dumas Road in Surat after an email threat, later deemed a hoax by authorities, was received.

Huge row erupts over Jharkhand Minister's remark; BJP and Cong take complaints to EC

Ranchi | Agencies

A major controversy has erupted over remarks made by Jharkhand Minister and Congress candidate from Jamtara, Irfan Ansari.

Both the BJP and the Congress have lodged complaints with the Election Commission, with the BJP accusing Ansari of using derogatory language against Sita Soren, the party's candidate from Jamtara.

The Congress, in turn, has accused the BJP of distorting Ansari's statements.

On October 24, after filing his nomination papers, Ansari allegedly made disparaging comments about BJP candidate Sita Soren, referring to her as a "borrowed player" and "rejected..." and suggesting that the BJP "hijacks" such candidates. When the video of his statement went viral, Sita Soren demanded an apology, accusing Ansari of crossing all limits with his language.

She said: "Candidate Irfan Ansari will have to apologise for the indecent language he used for me in front of the media immediately after nomination. Earlier also, he had made personal remarks about me, but this time he has crossed all limits."

BJP leaders, including state president and former Chief Minister Babulal Marandi con-



demned Ansari's remarks, further intensifying the controversy.

After the row escalated, in response, Ansari claimed that his words were misrepresented, alleging that his video was edited to portray a misleading narrative.

"An edited video has been circulated among the people. In the original video, I did not even take the name of Sita Soren. The video has been cropped and presented to spread lies against me. This is BJP's machination. After she joined BJP, she stooped to this level just to mislead the people of Jamtara and tarnish my reputation."

The need for women-led development was highlighted - "Colloquium 2024"

Lalit Sharma | Jaipur

The Center for Microfinance organized "Colloquium 2024".

In this ninth edition of the colloquium organized on the theme "Empowering Community Institutions for Rural Livelihoods", Dr. Minesh Shah, Chairman - National Dairy Development Board and Shreya Guha, Additional Chief Secretary, Rural Development - Government of Rajasthan were invited as chief guests. At the beginning of the seminar, the Chairman of the organization, Prof. M.S. Sriram welcomed the guests. Explaining the objective, the Executive Director of the organization, Mallika Srivastava said that development professionals, banks, related government departments and policy makers from Rajasthan and other states were invited on one platform to share the best practices



at the national level on the related subject and it was also an opportunity to create meaningful collaboration among stakeholders.

Rajasthan's women cooperative gets recognition: Addressing the inaugural session of the seminar, Dr. Minesh Shah, citing the example of Amul, said that for every cooperative to be successful, their organiza-

tion should have a combination of a good leader like Tribhuvan Patel and a good professional like Dr. Kurien. On the success of women cooperative, Dr. Shah said that Rajasthan's Asha Milk Producer Company got the best award in the international program organized in Paris this year. Earlier, Tirupati's Sreeja Milk Producer Company got

the honor in Chicago, which is a matter of pride for the country. While discussing the challenges, he said that it is a common notion that cooperatives are considered either government or some leader's, whereas they are an organization formed by the farmers for the farmers and their shareholders and members are its owners. After this, Shreya Guha, as the keynote speaker, shared her experience and said that when she was working as a collector, the participation of women Sarpanchs was very limited and Sarpanch husbands had more interference. The situation was such that it had come to the point of banning them. But today when I see the stalls of women and their business acumen in the Rajivika fair held at IGPRS, I feel very proud. Therefore, today is not the time for women empowerment, but the need is for women led development.



MADHYA PRADESH PREPARES FOR MEGA CELEBRATION ON FOUNDATION DAY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Mega celebrations will be held across Madhya Pradesh to mark its 69th foundation day on November 1.

The four-day-long celebration events will be organised with the collaboration of multiple departments of the state government. The event to mark the foundation day will be held at the open-air stage of Ravindra Bhavan.

The long list of events includes a band performance by the Army at Lal Parade Ground in Bhopal on October 30.

Several renowned artists, including singers KS Chitra, Papon, Javed Ali, Monali Thakur and Meet Bros would perform at the function, an official associated with the Culture Department told reporter.

A 'qawwali' session was also planned, for which, the names of Sabri Brothers, Quadri Brothers and



Nizami Bandhu have been proposed. Besides, the different wings and institutions of the culture department will showcase their exhibitions on the Bhavan's premises. The official informed that Chief

Minister Mohan Yadav and Chief Secretary Anurag Jain reviewed the preparations and directed that all the government buildings should be decorated with lights. CM Yadav has also asked district

administrations to involve local citizens in different social activities across the state. He has also urged people to help bring joy into the lives of those in need on this special occasion.

"Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has urged citizens to contribute by providing fruits, sweets, and crackers within their means to construction workers, hospitalised patients, and other vulnerable groups," the official added.

Additionally, he called on government officials, business leaders, industrialists and private sector institutions to engage in social initiatives during this occasion.

CM Yadav has directed public representatives to encourage the sale and distribution of products crafted by women from self-help groups, as well as goods made by local artisans specialising in clay, wood, and other crafts, with the support of social organisations.

Encourage the use of local materials on Diwali - Chief Minister Dr. Yadav

Everyone should have the feeling of "Vocal for Local". Chief Minister appeals to the people of the state

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has congratulated the people of the state on Diwali and wished that the blessings of Shri Mahalakshmi ji remain in everyone's life. He said that everyone should have the feeling of "Vocal for Local" on Diwali. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also inspires everyone to be Vocal for Local. He said that the enthusiasm and joy of the festival of Diwali is manifested by meeting the people and their families engaged locally in activities like diya-wick makers, cleaning and makeup items and similar activities. Lord Shri Ram also ran his state with all the people with the wish of welfare of all.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Prime Minister Modi encourages the use of local materials. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav will also go to the market himself to buy locally made products to celebrate Deepawali. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that it should be our collective effort that no member of a poor and labourer family should remain hungry, every-



one should enjoy Deepawali, we should celebrate Deepawali as a collective responsibility.

Man-son duo among six killed in separate road accidents

Team Absolute | Bhopal

At least six people, three of them from one family, were killed in two separate road accidents in Madhya Pradesh, police said on Saturday.

The first incident occurred in Barwani district where four people, including a father-son duo, lost their lives after a truck overturned on them.

According to police, the incident occurred at the National Highway, under Sendhwa police station, around 60 km from district headquarters Barwani.

While trying to save cattle, the truck driver lost control of the vehicle.

Sendhwa police station in-charge Baljeet Singh Bisen said the victims were going home from a factory after work when the truck carrying red chillies from Maharashtra to Punjab overturned and fell on them.

After the accident, the truck driver and helper fled from the spot, he said.



The deceased have been identified as Rigania Mehta (40), his son Jitendra (18), Bablu Mehta (17) and Shyamal Mehta (35), police said.

Another incident was reported in the Chhindwara district where two persons were killed when their two-wheeler rammed into a tree early on Saturday.

The incident occurred under Amarwada police station, around 60 km from district headquarters Chhindwara.

Police said the tragic accident occurred due to the heavy speed of the bike.

The biker and his pillion rider collided with a tree in a bid to save themselves from a speeding vehicle near Amarwada town, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Awadhesh Pratap Singh said.

The deceased were unidentified as Aitram Padram (60) and his son-in-law Komalbhau Dhurve (35).

Police said the victims were not wearing helmets, which caused severe injuries on their heads leading to their on-the-spot death.

Investigation into both accidents was underway.

Ban on transfers will not be lifted, transfers will continue to be done through coordination

Team Absolute | Bhopal

As was being speculated, the ban on transfer of employees in the state will not be lifted this year. The reason for this is that the government wants to avoid chaos in mid-session by ending the ban on transfer. If the ban on transfer is lifted, it will have a direct impact on the employees as well as their children.

Therefore, now the ban on transfer is likely to be lifted only in March or April next year. In such a situation, transfers will be done in the name of CM coordination.

The ministers of Mohan Cabinet have also indicated this. Now the biggest reason for not getting transferred is being told to be the impact of school education. If very necessary, then transfers will continue to be done through CM coordination.

Ever since the Lok Sabha elections, the employees of the state have been demanding the removal of the ban on transfer. Regarding this, many times ministers have also demanded relaxation of the ban on the CM in cabinet meetings and other occasions, but Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav keeps postponing it. It was discussed



for a long time in the informal meeting of the cabinet in September, then the CM postponed the matter by giving assurance of lifting the ban in the second week of October. It has not been discussed in the cabinet meetings held in October. Therefore, now its postponement is considered certain. On Friday, a minister of Mohan Cabinet, while giving indications of the transfer being postponed, said that now the ban is expected to be lifted only in March or April. The rea-

son for this is the children of school teachers and employees coming under the purview of transfer.

Officers also agreed that the School Education Department has the largest staff in the state. If transfers happen, a large number of school teachers will also come under the purview of transfer, due to which studies in schools will be affected. This will create a situation of chaos and the setup of teachers in schools will get disturbed.

One big problem is that if transfers happen now, the studies of the children of employees and officers will also be affected. Now that the half-yearly examinations have been done in the schools, there will be problems in the studies of the children along with their admission. Therefore, the government wants to avoid this situation. In such a situation, instead of mid-session, the ban on transfers is likely to be lifted in March or April after the school session is over.

Accused of threatening BJP leader: Attempted self-immolation in tehsil office

Team Absolute | Tikamgarh

A young man tried to commit self-immolation by pouring diesel in the Palera tehsil premises of the district. People present there saved him. The youth alleges that Atul Khatik, nephew of Jataara MLA, is threatening him. Troubled by this, he took this step.

Halke Sahu, who lives in ward-13 of the city, reached the Palera tehsil premises on Friday. He had brought diesel with him. He started pouring diesel on himself. Seeing this, the people present in the premises ran towards him and saved him.

Tehsildar Dr. Avantika Tiwari and the police made him sit on a chair and bathed him by pouring water. Its video surfaced on Saturday.

Halke Sahu says, I have a house near the Public Service Center in



Ward - 13. Opposite it, Atul Khatik, husband of Zilla Parishad President Shilpi Khatik, is building a house by occupying government land. I had

complained about him, but no action was taken. Ever since I lodged the complaint, I have been getting threats. I am now upset. BJP leader

Atul Khatik is the nephew of Jataara MLA Harishankar Khatik.

Jilla Panchayat President Shilpi Khatik's husband and BJP leader Atul Khatik says that the concerned land is in the inhabited area, which his father has occupied for years. Halke Sahu has built a house on this land. He is trying to occupy the remaining land as well. CMO Dilip Pathak says that on October 23, Halke Sahu had complained about the matter. After which a notice was issued to Atul Khatik. Instructions were given to remove the encroachment within 24 hours.

Tehsildar Dr. Avantika Tiwari says that it is a matter of urban area. CMO has issued notice. Instructions have been given to investigate the matter.

Palera TI Manish Mishra said that Halke Sahu tried to commit suicide to get his work done by putting pressure. Action will be taken against him.

Employees demand dearness allowance equal to that of the Centre, warn of lockout

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Employees in Madhya Pradesh have started mobilizing to demand an increase in dearness allowance and have even warned of a lockout. The demand of the employees is to give dearness allowance equal to that of the Central Government employees.

State employees currently get 46 percent dearness allowance. They have been demanding dearness allowance equal to that of the Centre for a long time. Meanwhile, the Central Government has increased the dearness allowance from 50 percent to 53 percent. The employees of the state have started demanding a seven

percent increase while demanding dearness allowance equal to that of the Centre. The employees have warned that if the dearness allowance is not increased by Diwali, they can even go for a lockout.

The employees have also started protests regarding their demand and have asked the government to fulfill their demand. Officer Employee Joint Front has said that their demand for dearness allowance has the support of the state's employee organizations and they are ready to agitate for their demands.

It has been told that there are more than seven lakh officers and employees in the state, while there are four and a half lakh pensioners who

demand an increase in dearness allowance and dearness relief. Various employee organizations of the state have supported the movement for other demands including dearness allowance. It is believed that the state's functioning will be affected due to the agitation and lockout of the employees.

Leaders associated with the employee organization say that the state government has always been saying that its employees should be given dearness allowance equal to the center, but at present there is a difference between the dearness allowance of the state employees and the center for a long time.

PM Modi to virtually inaugurate three medical colleges in MP on Oct 29

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually inaugurate three new medical colleges, three nursing colleges and primary health care centres in Madhya Pradesh on October 29, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced on Saturday. During an interaction with the media at the BJP headquarters in Bhopal, Yadav informed that PM Modi will inaugurate three medical colleges in Shivani, Neemach, and Mandsaur districts.

He said the development is part of the state government's commitment to strengthen the healthcare system of Madhya Pradesh. "Besides medical colleges, three newly established nursing colleges and primary care units will also be virtually inaugurated



by PM Modi on October 29," Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said. Yadav further stated that he will attend the programme (inauguration) in Mandsaur, while Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel will be present in Shivani. Some other ministers will be attending the programme in Neemach. Notably, it would be the second project PM Modi will be inaugurating in Madhya Pradesh within a span of 10 days. Earlier, on October 20, he had virtually inaugurated newly established Airport in Rewa district

of Vindhya region.

Joining the launch of the airport in Rewa, CM Mohan Yadav announced that for the next month, passengers between Rewa and Bhopal will fly at Rs 999 fare only under the PM Narendra Modi's dedicated flight scheme. Yadav further said, "While Rewa will get a series of domestic passenger flights in the coming weeks and months, the new airport will also have cargo flights in the future. As per the plan for the Rewa Airport, big planes will also take off and land here in the coming times."

Rewa Airport, the first in the Vindhya region has been developed under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) -- UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) of the Central government and flight operations are expected to begin shortly.

Devotees will have to have darshan from a distance in Mahakal temple, no plan to enter the sanctum sanctorum

Team Absolute | Ujjain

Devotees will now have to have darshan of Lord Mahakal from a distance in Jyotirlinga Mahakal temple located in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh. Due to the increasing number of devotees after the inauguration of Shri Mahakal Mahalok, the temple committee has postponed the plan to enter the sanctum sanctorum for the time being.

Ujjain Collector Neeraj Kumar Singh said that since the establishment of Mahakal Mahalok, the number of devotees is increasing continuously. Every day about one lakh devotees come to the temple to have darshan of Lord Mahakal.

On Saturday, Sunday and Monday, the number of visitors reaches two to two and a half lakhs on these three days. On special festivals like Mahashivratri and



Nagpanchami, this number reaches five to seven lakhs. It is not possible to allow such a large number of devotees to enter the sanctum sanctorum. If devotees are allowed to enter the sanctum sanctorum on the

basis of paid receipts, then it obstructs the entry and exit of devotees to the sanctum sanctorum. Due to this, devotees visiting Nandi, Ganesha and Kartikeya Mandapam also face difficulty, due to which

there is a crowd in the Nandi Hall. Therefore, to make arrangements for smooth darshan, there is no plan to enter the sanctum sanctorum, and all devotees will be allowed to have darshan of the Lord from a distance. In this way, devotees will be able to spend some time in the Nandi Hall.

The collector said that entry into the sanctum sanctorum is given only to VIPs like the President, Prime Minister, Governor, Chief Minister. Sometimes some VIPs get entry into the sanctum sanctorum as an exception, for which action is taken against the protocol staff. Satish Gosain, who came from Melbourne (Australia) to visit Mahakal, has donated eleven wheelchairs for the convenience of disabled devotees. Assistant Administrative Officer RK Tiwari said that the visitors were impressed by the arrangements of the temple and they also visited Mahakal Mahalok.



EDITOR'S SPECS

More Jan Aushadhi Kendras needed

The demand for opening more Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendras across the country is increasing as more and more people avail of the cheap generic drugs available at the centres which are as effective as the expensive, branded drugs in the market. There is an increasing demand for the centres as the Jan Aushadhi Kendras help reduce the Out Of Pocket medical expenses of the common man and saves them from paying exorbitant prices for branded medicines. Rajesh Aggarwal, the owner of a Jan Aushadhi Kendra located at Deoli Road in New Delhi, told that the generic medicines sold at his medical store are 90 per cent cheaper than the branded drugs. He said that the majority of the people are getting the benefits of cheap medicines, especially the economically weaker sections of society. Rajesh Aggarwal's shop is the only Jan Aushadhi Kendra located on Deoli Road because according to government rules, there can be only one such centre in a specific area due to which he earns a decent income. Another customer who buys medicines from Jan Aushadhi Kendras said that he has been taking medicines from the centres for the last two years. Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) was launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Central government in November 2008. The number of such centres was only 80 in the year 2014 but now there are around 10,000 such centres in nearly all the districts of the country. Prime Minister Modi virtually inaugurated the 10,000th Jan Aushadhi Centre at AIIMS in Deoghar, Jharkhand, on November 30, 2023. The Union government has set a target of opening 25,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras across the country by March 2026.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF OCTOBER 26 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR JAMMU & KASHMIR

The accession of Jammu & Kashmir to India on October 26, 1947, was a landmark event in the history of the Indian subcontinent. On this day, Maharaja Hari Singh, then ruler of Jammu & Kashmir, formally signed the Instrument of Accession, thus integrating the Princely State into the newly formed Indian Dominion. This decision was a progressive and strategic step that to date, continues to shape both the internal and external dynamics of Jammu & Kashmir. The geopolitical environment as an immediate aftermath of British decolonisation was characterised by uncertainty and conflict mostly provoked by a newly formed Pakistan. Following the Partition of India, on October 22, 1947, Jammu & Kashmir found itself surrounded by chaos and destruction in the wake of an illegal tribal invasion backed by Pakistani forces. Maharaja Hari Singh decided to accede to India in order to secure Indian assistance with the vision of a peaceful and prosperous future. This accession was not only a response to immediate security concerns but also a decisive political act that altered the course of the region's future for the better. The Maharaja's decision to accede to India was a highly strategic and futuristic approach to support growth in Jammu and Kashmir. Faced with the pressures of an external invasion and the internal demand for stability, the Maharaja made a calculated choice in favour of India, seeking military and political support to preserve the integrity of his state. Contrary to claims of coercion or haste, the decision to accede was informed by a clear understanding of the consequences, reflecting a preference for the governance structures and democratic principles offered by India, in contrast to Pakistan's military-backed aggression. The Instrument of Accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh remains legally valid and unassailable under international law. Enacted in accordance with the Government of India Act, 1935, and the Indian Independence Act, 1947, the accession granted India jurisdiction over Jammu & Kashmir's defence, communications, and foreign relations, while maintaining the state's internal autonomy. The aftermath of the accession saw Pakistan engaging in sustained efforts to distort the United Nations resolutions concerning Jammu & Kashmir. Central to this narrative is the selective emphasis on the plebiscite clause, which suggests that the people of Jammu & Kashmir should have



the right to determine their own future. However, this interpretation overlooks critical preconditions set by the UN, including the requirement for the withdrawal of Pakistani forces from territories they occupied during the conflict. Two additional clauses of the UN resolutions emphasise the need for a ceasefire and the establishment of a line of control, which have also been misrepresented by Pakistan in its mischievous quest to challenge India's claim. The UN Resolution 47, adopted in 1948, called for a ceasefire, urging both parties to withdraw their forces and facilitate a plebiscite, conditional upon the complete withdrawal of Pakistani troops. Furthermore, subsequent resolutions stressed the importance of demilitarisation as a precursor to any future plebiscite, conditions that remain unfulfilled. Despite Pakistan's continued efforts to undermine the legal framework of the acces-

sion, India took the matter to the United Nations, seeking international mediation to address the conflict. This decision marked a significant moment in the global discourse surrounding the Kashmir issue, placing the regional dispute within the context of international law and human rights. Over time, the decision to accede to India has been vindicated by the socio-economic progress observed in Jammu & Kashmir. The region's development trajectory, supported by substantial investments from the Indian government, has contrasted sharply with the economic challenges faced by Pakistan. Jammu & Kashmir's development budget now exceeds the bailout packages secured by Pakistan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), highlighting the region's progress within India. This comparative analysis underscores the long-term benefits of the accession, as Jammu & Kashmir

continues to experience significant improvements in infrastructure, education, and economic opportunities. The accession of Jammu & Kashmir to India on October 26, 1947, stands as a pivotal event with enduring consequences. The Maharaja's decision to join the Indian Union was legally and politically sound, rooted in the need for security and long-term stability. Pakistan's continued misrepresentation of UN resolutions and its selective interpretation of historical events cannot diminish the legal and historical legitimacy of the accession. In retrospect, the development and progress of Jammu & Kashmir serve as a testament to the correctness of the decision, reinforcing the region's integration into India.

international

PAKISTAN WORLD'S THIRD WORST COUNTRY IN MANAGING LAW AND ORDER

Islamabad | Agencies The World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index 2024 has ranked Pakistan as the world's third worst nation among 142 countries, when it comes to maintaining the law and order situation. According to the report, Pakistan was ranked 140th along with Mali (141) and Nigeria (142) in terms of order and security. Pakistan is referred to as a state where the military might is supreme and stands above all, thus putting the rights of people and the rule of law on an extremely poor footing, especially in the areas of civil and criminal justice. Among the areas most affected by the poor justice system include civil and criminal justice, fundamen-

tal rights, open government, corruption, regulatory enforcement and order and security. The WJP index rated Pakistan's global ranking at 129 out of a total of 142 countries assessed. With the top judges of the country fighting publicly against each other - claiming to be the savior of the country's legal system - the WJP's report is a serious blot on the country, exposing its deteriorating justice system and governance. The WJP report factored in issues like constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice and criminal justice to determine rule of law performance of a country. The report further high-

lighted that Pakistan's global ranking in the area of criminal justice stands at 98 out of 142 countries. In the area of provision of civil justice, Pakistan stands at 128 out of 142 countries globally. In the area of regulatory enforcement, Pakistan's global ranking remains at 127. Pakistan is also ranked 125 in the field of fundamental rights and 124 in the field of absence of corruption. The World Justice Project is an independent, multidisciplinary organisation working to create knowledge, build awareness, and stimulate action to advance the rule of law worldwide. The WJP Rule of Law Index was first piloted in 2008. Since then it has evolved, expanding to include over 142 countries.

Polls show tie as Harris appears to slip; 2 US dailies refuse to endorse candidates

New York | Agencies

Underscoring the uncertainty election ten days away, two major newspapers, The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times, have decided in a break from tradition not to endorse either Vice President Kamala Harris or former President Donald Trump. Two separate polls by The New York Times and CNN released on Friday have them locked in a tie. The Times poll showed them both at 48 per cent, with Harris' lead of 3 per cent in a poll earlier this month vanishing, although it was - like the latest - within the margin of error. Analysing the poll, the Times ominously wrote, "The result, coming less than two weeks before Election Day, and as millions of Americans have already voted, is not encouraging for Ms Harris". The CNN poll had them tied at 47 per cent. The RealClearPolling, the authoritative poll aggregator showed that Harris' lead shrunk to 0.2 per cent on Friday from the 2 per cent on October 1.



Tellingly, the Times opinion section which is tilted towards Harris, ran an essay on Friday by a highly regarded election statistics analyst declaring that his "gut" feeling is that Trump is going to win. Nate Silver, who runs the FiveThirtyEight website that was with the Times and is now in the ABC

News stable, wrote, "My gut says Donald Trump. And my guess is that it is true for many anxious Democrats." He added the caveat, "In an election where the seven battleground states are all polling within a percentage point or two, 50-50 is the only responsible forecast."

If the polls are correct - a big IF given their failure in 2016 when they predicted a Hillary Clinton victory - it would appear that neither Harris nor Trump have managed a breakthrough with their intensive campaigns. Polls showing a setback for a candidate can also have the effect of the base redoubling its efforts and making a late hour impact. Harris calling Trump a "fascist" and a threat to democracy, and hammering away on his age, his character, his lies, and his instability has not made an impact. Nor had her stand on nationally legalising abortion or her moderating her policies moving towards the centre, shown any effect. The star power -- Taylor Swift, Beyonce, and Leonardo DiCaprio among others -- she has deployed hasn't yet turned things around. Trump calling her a "Communist" and also a threat to democracy, nailing her to President Joe Biden's failures, and harping on illegal migration and inflation, failed to move the needle significantly.

19 killed in Mexico gang clashes

Mexico City: At least 19 people have been killed in gang clashes in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero, said Security Minister Omar Garcia Harfuch. Garcia Harfuch stated in a press conference that at least three clashes occurred, resulting in the deaths of 17 individuals involved, Xinhua news agency reported. "There were multiple attacks against military personnel. The result is 17 attackers killed, 11 detained, two municipal officers killed, and four wounded. We are investigating the incidents," he said. Investigators will trace the origins of the weapons used by the armed group in their attacks, said Garcia Harfuch.

WILL RESPOND IF IRAN INITIATES NEW ESCALATION: ISRAEL

Tel Aviv | Agencies

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) announced on Saturday the successful completion of "precise and targeted strikes" against multiple military targets in Iran that posed an immediate threat to Israel. These strikes, conducted in three waves in collaboration with the Israeli Air Force (IAF), took place early Saturday in response to a ballistic missile attack on October 1, according to the IDF. "The IDF has fulfilled its mission. Should the Iranian regime make the mistake of initiating a new escalation, we will respond," the IDF stated, adding that IAF planes had safely returned from the operation. In a stern message, the IDF said, "Those who threaten Israel and attempt to escalate tensions in the region will face severe consequences. Today's actions showcase our ability and commitment to deci-

sively defend the State of Israel and its citizens both offensively and defensively." The IDF reported that, based on intelligence, the IAF targeted missile manufacturing sites in Iran used to produce the missiles fired at Israel over the past year. These missiles posed a "direct and immediate threat" to Israeli citizens, the IDF added. Additionally, the operation struck Iranian surface-to-air missile arrays and other aerial capabilities that aimed to limit Israel's operational freedom in Iranian airspace. Iran has launched hundreds of missiles toward Israel during two attacks in April and October. The IDF accused Iran of "funding and directing terrorist activities" through proxies across the Middle East to target Israel and destabilise the region. The IDF confirmed the use of advanced offensive operational capabilities during the strikes on

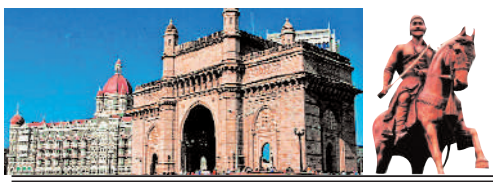
Iranian strategic assets and reiterated Israel's "right to defend its citizens" if Iranian aggression continues. In Tehran, explosions were reportedly heard, with Iranian state media attributing some of the sounds to air defence systems. Meanwhile, Syrian state media reported the targeting of "hostile targets" by Syrian air defences. Separately, Israeli ground forces have initiated an incursion into Lebanon. The strike coincided with the return of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken from a Middle East tour, where he had urged Israeli officials to avoid escalating the conflict and to exclude nuclear facilities in any Iranian operation. White House National Security Council spokesman Sean Savett acknowledged Israel's targeted strikes on Iranian military targets, referring further inquiries to the Israeli government.

US awaits India's inquiry into Khalistani activist's killing plot

Washington | Agencies

The US expects India's inquiry into the foiled plot to kill a Khalistani activist to nail those "responsible" for it and not merely, by implication, those who tried to carry it out. Nikhil Gupta, an Indian businessman accused by the US of implementing the plot by trying to hire a killer, is already in US custody after extradition from Poland, where authorities had stopped him. We have indicted Vikas Yadav, a former RAW operative in the same case and the FBI has put up "Wanted" posters for information leading to his arrest. "We expect India's Enquiry Committee to conduct a thorough investigation that ultimately holds accountable those found responsible for lethal plotting in the US," said Vedant Patel, a State Department spokesperson. "This issue remains the subject of both US and Indian investigations." The statement came in response to a request seeking clarification from the US State Department about remarks by its spokesper-

son Vedant Patel at a daily briefing in which he had said the US expects "meaningful accountability" from India. India had set up an inquiry committee to investigate charges filed by federal US prosecutors in New York in 2023 in a murder-for-hire case accusing Gupta of hiring a man to kill the activist and making an advance payment of \$15,000 for the job. This committee visited Washington D.C. last week to exchange findings and updates with American counterparts. The day after the meeting, prosecutors filed additional charges naming Yadav as an accused. The US has kept up the pressure on India through public remarks and private conversations and has demanded accountability, although it has been unclear what exactly is being asked of India. "We continue to expect and want to see accountability based on the results of that investigation, and certainly the US won't be fully satisfied until there is meaningful accountability resulting from that investigation," Patel said earlier this week.



MAHA POLLS: CONGRESS ISSUES SECOND LIST OF 23 CANDIDATES, NAGPUR LEADER BHOYAR TO FACE STATE BJP CHIEF

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Congress on Saturday released its second list of 23 candidates for the November 20 Maharashtra Assembly elections, fielding a "strong" contender against state Bharatiya Janata Party President Chandrashekar Bawankule.

Bawankule, who is contesting Kamthi seat in Nagpur district - which he had bagged in 2004, 2009 and 2014 till he was dropped in 2019, will lock horns with Suresh Y. Bhojar, a former President of the Nagpur Zila Panchayat. Similarly, in Samner in Nagpur district, the Congress has fielded Anuja S. Kedar, the wife of former minister and five-term MLA Sunil C. Kedar, who was convicted in a graft case and disqualified.

The Congress' second list comes two days after the first list with 48 candidates was issued as the party was purportedly in a tug-of-war with Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) ally Shiv Sena-UBT over certain seats in the Vidarbha region. The others figuring in Saturday's list also include Rajesh Manavatkar (Bhusawal), Swati Wakekar (Jamod), Mahesh Gange (Akot), Shekhar Shende (Wardha), Girish Pandav (Nagpur South), Pooja Thavker (Bhandara), Dalip Banson (Arjuni-Morgaon),



Rajkumar Puram (Amgaon), Vasant Purke (Ralegaon), Anil Balasaheb Mangulkar (Yavatmal), Jitendra Moghe (Arni), Sahebrao Kamble (Umardhed), Kailas Gorantyal (Jalna), and Madhukar Deshmukh (Aurangabad East). Vijay Patil will contest from Vasai, Kalu Bhadeliya from Kandivali East, Yashwant Singh from Charkop, Ganesh Kumar Yadav from Sion-Koliwada, Hemant Ogle from Srirampur, Abhay K. Salunkhe from Nilanga, and Ganpatrao Patil for Shiro.

BJP WORKER'S 'SLUR' AT CONGRESS LEADER'S DAUGHTER SPARKS RIOTS, ARSON; 4 BOOKED

Quaid Najmi | Ahmednagar

Sangamner town witnessed protests, all-night siege of a police station, arson and road-blocks after a BJP worker made scurrilous remarks against the daughter of a senior Congress leader.

The unlikely venue was a Sankalp Sabha by ex-BJP MP Sujay Vikhe-Patil in Dhandarphal village where one of the speakers and a local big-wig Vasant Deshmukh referred to cancer specialist medico Jayshree Thorat, daughter of the Congress Legislative Party Leader Vijay alias Balasaheb Thorat.

Thorat is the party candidate for the ninth consecutive time from Sangamner and his daughter Jayshree is managing his political affairs this time as he is busy with the seat distribution and campaign for the Maha Vikas Aghadi allies Congress-Nationalist Congress Party (SP)-Shiv Sena (UBT).

At the public meeting last night, where Sujay Vikhe-Patil was also present on the stage, Deshmukh made certain disgusting remarks against Jayshree and her father Thorat that enraged the Congress supporters in Ahmednagar.

Hundreds of party activists gathered and laid siege to the Sangamner



Taluka Police Station from 10 p.m. (Friday) till 6 a.m. (Saturday) demanding stringent action against Deshmukh and Sujay Vikhe-Patil, who is the son of MahaYuti Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil.

With tears welling up in her eyes at the investigations she encountered, Jayshree demanded strong action against Deshmukh and those behind him.

"We were outside the police station the whole night for nearly eight

hours. Why so much delay in lodging a complaint? It shows that the police were under tremendous pressure. Who was behind and why are they being protected? The person (Deshmukh) who hurled abuses has fled," Jayshree told mediapersons on Saturday.

Her aunt and political leader Durga Tambe and cousin Satyajet Tambe slammed the Vikhe-Patils for the slur on Jayshree, as another sit-in protest continues outside the police

station, as the cops booked four persons. On his part, Sujay Vikhe-Patil claimed that Jayshree was like a "sister", he did not say anything against her, but soon after the meeting, hundreds of angry protestors trooped with cans of petrol and set ablaze several private vehicles in the vicinity.

"I was planning to return home by that road... I was cautioned that there could be an attempt to attack me or torch my vehicle, so I went by an alternate route. The entire state has witnessed what happened last night, it's a gross violation of the ECI rules," contended Sujay Vikhe-Patil.

Hoping to assuage feelings, he also sought action against his party worker (Deshmukh), but also to book those who indulged in the violence and arson.

"On one hand they talk of 'Ladki Bahin' and on the other, they abuse a daughter in such demeaning terms. Politics has stooped to a new low and the incident must be probed," demanded Durga Tambe, the sister of Balasaheb Thorat.

The issue snowballed into a huge political row with MVA leaders slamming the MahaYuti government and BJP for degrading political debate with demeaning statements on women merely to seek votes.

NCP INTENSIFIES POLL CAMPAIGN, HITS THE GROUND WITH 150 LED VANS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on Saturday further intensified its campaign for Maharashtra Assembly polls with the party roping in 150 LED vans to convey its achievements and promises to the voters.

NCP National President and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar flagged off the LED vans from the party office in Mumbai. These LED vans will travel across the state to reach out to people with developmental works done by the NCP for various sections of society and its people-centric poll promises.

With audio-video campaign materials, three LED vans will travel in each Assembly constituency being contested by the NCP to spread the messages and welfare works undertaken by Ajit Pawar.

To find newer ways to connect with voters, the party also experimented with Artificial Intelligence.

On the occasion, NCP State

President Sunil Tatkare said these LED vans would highlight the government's welfare schemes including the 'Ladki Bahin Yojana' which provides Rs 1,500 financial assistance to women. Over 2.5 crore women have already received the benefits of the Ladki Bahin scheme and Baliraja Vij Savlat scheme through which the government was providing electricity waiver to over 44 lakh farmers.

He reiterated NCP's commitment to work for the welfare of the people of Maharashtra and exuded confidence that Mahayuti will return to power to serve the people of the state. He asserted that NCP will have a better strike rate in terms of winning seats in Assembly polls.

Responding to a media query about an alleged controversial remark made by a BJP leader on Congress leader Balasaheb Thorat's daughter, Tatkare underlined that both Mahayuti and NCP believe in dignity in public life.

"Yashwantrao Chavan has shown us how to engage in politics in a dig-



nified and civilised way. We should continue this tradition by communicating our words and ideas respectfully," added Tatkare.

Ahead of polling on November 20, dozens of prominent leaders of different parties, including MLAs Zeeshan Siddique (Vandre East), Sulbha Khodke (Amravati) and Hiran

Khoskar (Igatpuri), joined the NCP. Earlier this week, senior congress tribal leader Bharat Gavit joined the party. Shiv Sena UBT Pune district president Dnyaneshwar (Mauli) Aaba Katke, former Minister Rajkumar Badole and former MLA Kalyanrao Patil were among others who joined the party.

IN JOINT OPERATION MUMBAI, PUNJAB POLICE ARREST MAN WANTED FOR NCP LEADER SIDDIQUE'S MURDER

Team Absolute | Chandigarh

In a major breakthrough, Mumbai Police in a joint operation with Punjab Police apprehended Sujat Sushil Singh, a resident of Mumbai, wanted in the high-profile murder of NCP leader and former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique, Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said on Saturday.

"Sujeet was involved in the murder conspiracy and was informed about the plan to kill Baba Siddique three days in advance by Nitin Gautam Sapre, another accused. He also provided logistical assistance," Yadav wrote on X. He has been handed over to Mumbai Police for further investigation, he said.

"United in our commitment to seamless cooperation, @PunjabPoliceInd and @MumbaiPolice have successfully executed an interstate operation. This highlights our unwavering dedication to public safety and justice, strengthening security across state boundaries," Yadav added.

A day earlier, the Delhi Police's Special Cell arrested seven suspected shooters from the

Lawrence Bishnoi gang, which claimed responsibility for the killing.

They were allegedly planning an attack in Rajasthan. The seven accused were arrested from Punjab and other states and a huge quantity of arms and ammunition have also been recovered from those nabbed, police claimed.

"It is suspected that they were planning to target someone in Rajasthan on the direction of Arzoo Bishnoi, who is a close confidant of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi," a police official was quoted as saying, adding, "the accused are being further interrogated and it will also be probed if they are in any manner linked to the attack on Baba Siddique."

The NCP leader was shot dead on October 12 near his MLA son Zeeshan Siddique's office in Nirmal Nagar in Bandra East.

According to Mumbai Police, the investigation has revealed that four guns were used in the crime. The police have also recovered the fourth weapon, raising further questions about the circumstances surrounding this high-profile assassination.

AAP To Not Fight Maharashtra Polls, Arvind Kejriwal Will Campaign For Allies

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Aam Aadmi Party will not contest the upcoming assembly elections in Maharashtra. Instead, party chief Arvind Kejriwal will campaign for the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition, AAP leader Sanjay Singh said on Saturday.

The MVA coalition comprises Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT), Sharad Pawar's NCP-SP, and the Congress. "In the Maharashtra elections, the party's National Convener, Arvind Kejriwal, will campaign for the MVA candidates. Aam Aadmi Party will not contest elections in Maharashtra," Singh, who is a Rajya Sabha MP, said on X.

According to AAP sources, the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP-SP contacted the party about Arvind Kejriwal campaigning in Maharashtra. Arvind

Kejriwal is also set to campaign for Hemant Soren's ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in Jharkhand assembly polls, they said. There are 288 assembly seats in Maharashtra, and voting will take place on November 20.

In Jharkhand, polling will be held in two phases on November 13 and 20, while the counting of votes in both states will take place on November 23. AAP and the MVA constituents are part of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance



(INDIA), which was formed before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls to take on the BJP. AAP entered into an alliance with the Congress, the largest constituent of the INDIA bloc, in Delhi, Gujarat and Haryana for the Lok Sabha polls. However, it contested on its own in Punjab.

Will discuss supporting Amit Thackeray with Mahayuti: Mumbai BJP chief Shelar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai BJP president Ashish Shelar on Saturday said that he would speak to the Mahayuti leaders, including Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar to extend support to Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray's son Amit Thackeray who will contest from Mahim on MNS ticket.

Shelar's move is important as he expects that by supporting Amit Thackeray, the division in votes of the Marathi "Manoos" (people) will be avoided. It is necessary as the division of votes may help Shiv Sena-UBT. "If Raj Thackeray, who has retained his stance



over Hindutva, who supports us and cherishes our relationships, has announced his son's candidacy, then we ought to maintain our relationship. If Amit Thackeray is contesting elections from our clan, then as Mahayuti we must support him. I will discuss supporting

him with Chief Minister Shinde, Deputy Chief Ministers Fadnavis and Pawar," he added. "I believe Mahayuti should maintain this friendship. We are not against Sada Sarvankar (who has been denominated by the Shinde faction from Mahim). But I sincerely feel that as Mahayuti, everyone needs to take a positive political stance. This will convey a positive message to the people of Maharashtra, said Shelar. Criticising state Congress chief Nana Patole's anti-reservation stance, Shelar said former president of the grand old party Rahul Gandhi has previously demonstrated his "political acumen" on the reservation issue abroad. "And by endorsing Rahul, Patole has disrespected the reservation.

Hence, Patole must apologise to the people of Maharashtra," Shelar said. He must reverently bow before Mahamanav Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Ambedkar at Chaityabhoomi. Also, NCP legislator Jeetendra Awhad, who had "destroyed" the picture of Mahamanav Babasaheb Ambedkar, should not utter a word about reservation, said Shelar. Meanwhile, Shelar said the BJP would not support Nawab Malik if Ajit Pawar-led NCP fields him. "We are against Nawab Malik. Whether or not to announce his candidacy will be up to his party leaders to decide. However, the BJP workers will not work for Nawab Malik, who is accused of having ties with Dawood. And we are firm on our decision," asserted Shelar.

MAN LYNCHED TO DEATH, 7 HELD

Thane: A 20-year-old man was allegedly lynched to death in Maharashtra's Thane district and the police has arrested seven people in connection with the case, an official said on Saturday.

He said that the deceased identified as Mohammad Rahmat Saha Alam, originally from West Bengal, was reportedly accused of stealing a mobile phone and beaten to death by a group of people in the Bhiwandi area of Thane district on Wednesday. "Seven persons have been arrested in connection with the lynching of a man," a police official said.

Working on several inputs, the police took seven from the group of attackers into custody, while teams of police officials have been sent to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in search of the others involved in the crime, the official said.

Initially, the police found it difficult to identify the victim. Subsequently, they shared his photo on social media which helped them gather more information about him, leading to his identification. The police investigations revealed that the victim had come to Bhiwandi in Maharashtra from West Bengal six months ago, said Thane city police public relations officer Sailesh Salvi.

He added that further investigations in the matter were underway.

PM Modi, HM Shah among BJP's 40 'star campaigners' for Maharashtra polls

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Saturday released a list of 40 'star campaigners' for the November 20 Maharashtra Assembly and by-election to Nanded Lok Sabha seat, featuring heavyweights like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, party's National President J.P. Nadda, among others.

PM Modi, who is expected to address over 10 rallies between November 7 and 14, tops the list of 'star campaigners' which also includes Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

The other star campaigners include Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel, Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister



Mohan Yadav, Rajasthan CM Bhajan Lal Sharma, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sharma, Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini, state in-charge for Assembly elections and Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav, co-in-charge and Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. The list also features the names of Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union Minister and party MP from Mumbai North Piyush Goyal, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Minister of State Murlidhar Mohol and BJP joint-secretary Shiv Prakash.

Maharashtra BJP leaders, whose names were included in the list of 'star campaigners', are Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, state unit party chief Chandrashekar Bawankule, former CM and MP Narayan Rane, former chief minister Ashok Chavan, former Union Minister Raosaheb Danve, party MP

Udayanraje Bhosale, national general secretary Vinod Tawde, Mumbai unit BJP chief Ashish Shelar, legislator Pankaja Munde, state ministers Chandrakant Patil, Sudhir Mungantiwar, Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil, Girish Mahajan and Ravindra Chavan.

Former Union Minister Smriti Irani has also been named as a star campaigner. Besides, state council member Pravin Darekar and state assembly member Sanjay Kute, former MPs Amar Sable, Ashok Nete and Navneet Rana are also included in the list of star campaigners.

Meanwhile, State President of Prahar Jan Shakti Party Anil Gawande and Sai Dahake, wife of former legislator Prakash Dahake and the functionary of Ajit Pawar-led NCP from Washim district, on Saturday, joined BJP in the presence of state unit chief Chandrashekar Bawankule.



Ben Affleck is 'ready to date again'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Ben Affleck is ready to move past his very public split from Jennifer Lopez as he finally feels ready to date again. However, he has one strict condition for the next woman that walks into his life, as claimed by sources to Daily Mail. Lopez filed for divorce in August after two years of their marriage. The former Hollywood couple rekindled their romance in 2021.

A source revealed to the media outlet that Affleck's condition for the next woman he dates. Reportedly Affleck was in a "tough" condition after splitting from Lopez and hence has understood the



importance of never jeopardizing his sobriety.

The insider told the outlet, "Ben has not given up on relationships and finally feels ready to move forward and start dating again. He is not going to jump into anything serious until the divorce is finalised but that does not mean he cannot date." They divulged, "He only wants to date someone who is sober or in recovery. These past two years have been tough for Ben and as he begins to heal, one thing is very clear: his recovery comes before anything. He is not going to put his sobriety in jeopardy."



HUGH JACKMAN AND SUTTON FOSTER TO KEEP THEIR ROMANCE UNDER WRAPS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Following Sutton Foster's divorce, sources revealed to Page Six that the Younger actor and Hugh Jackman are keeping their romance away from the public eye. According to the sources, the pair is inseparable and madly "in love". Foster filed for divorce from her estranged husband,

Ted Griffin, this week. Their divorce came after 10 years of their marriage to the Ocean's Eleven screenwriter.

Sources exclusively told the media outlet, "They spend all of their free time together. They are a regular couple, they are just in private." They also divulged that the pair "sneak around" so they do not get caught and to keep a distance from the limelight. The X-Men actor attended Foster's latest hit show Once Upon a Mattress in August.

Jackman and Foster have known each other since they worked together on the Broadway The Music Man which had a great run from December 2021 to January 2023. A source previously revealed to the media outlet, "They are 100 per cent together and are in love and want to spend the rest of their lives together." Meanwhile, according to a recent source, "They are still together. They go out of their way to hide it, but it's common knowledge."

James Franco says 'It's over' with Seth Rogen

Los Angeles | Agencies

James Franco is pulling back the curtain on his fallout with Seth Rogen, revealing that their two-decade friendship is officially "over". In a recent chat with Variety, the 46-year-old actor opened up about the challenges he faced and the changes he underwent during his hiatus from the spotlight, since the sexual misconduct allegations in 2018 that changed the trajectory of his career.

As he prepares for his comeback in the Italian film Hey Joe, he' discussed renewed outlook on work and life, saying he's "grateful to be working" and "proud of the person" he's becoming.

Franco, widely recognised for his roles in Pineapple Express, Spider-Man, and more, spoke about his friendship with longtime collaborator Seth Rogen. In 2021, Rogen stated he had "no plans to work with Franco again" after allegations surfaced accusing Franco of coercing his film students into performing explicit scenes on camera. "No. I haven't talked to Seth. I love Seth, we had 20 great years together, but I guess it's over," Franco told Variety when asked if he had since communicated with Rogen. "And not for lack of trying. I've told him how much he's meant to me," he added.



Had to "draw a line" on drinking and smoking : Paul Mescal

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Paul Mescal admits it was "fun" getting ripped to play Lucius in the upcoming historical epic, Gladiator II and had to "draw a line" on drinking and smoking. "I ate a lot of chicken and lifted heavy things," Mescal said on "The Graham Norton Show", reports people.com.

While preparing to play the former-royal, who was forced into slavery, the Kildare, Ireland, native worked "with a trainer who circled me like a shark and said, 'There is a canvas to work with.'"

Mescal got so muscular that his co-star Pedro Pascal gave him a nickname.

"I call him Brick Wall Paul... He got so strong, I would rather be thrown from a building than have to fight him again," Pascal told Vanity Fair in July.

Mescal told Norton his trainer "went to town, and I saw him every day. It was fun."

However, Mescal said to have some caveats when it came to his fitness regimen.

"I did everything he asked, but I like to drink, and I like to smoke, so I drew a line in the sand where those were concerned." Mescal flaunted his abs in the trailer for the film, where he fights a rhino, among others, in the famed Roman Colosseum.

But another of Norton's guests disagreed with Mescal's assessment of working out being "fun" - Eddie Redmayne, who recently underwent his own physical transformation, getting shredded to play an assassin in the series "Day of the Jackal". "I profoundly disagree with Paul - it was not fun, it was horrendous," said the actor.

"You read a scene in the script that says, 'He is topless, sinuous and ripped,' and you think, 'Oh, here comes the chicken diet.'"



Kate Winslet: If we don't make mistakes, we can never learn

Los Angeles | Agencies

Oscar winning-actress Kate Winslet has shared some advice for young and aspiring actresses and said that they should not worry too much about making mistakes.

Asked about the advice she has for younger women coming up in the industry, Winslet told people.com: "It's such an interesting question, because I give it a lot of advice all the time. The main thing I say is that mistakes are not only celebrated, but they're important. Because if we don't make mistakes, we can absolutely never learn."

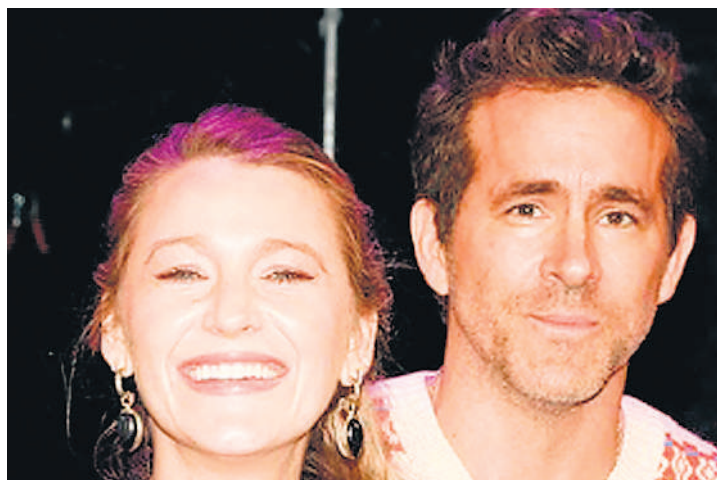
"And we all make mistakes, and there is no such thing as perfect. And just to completely be themselves. Because if they can be themselves, they've always got that to hang on to and to keep them grounded."

Asked how she's managed to overcome her own mistakes, Kate replied: "Honestly, dig deep, keep going, and just believe in myself. I mean, that's honestly what I do. And try not to be hard on myself. I think women in general, we're hard on ourselves all the time."

"It's a terrible waste of energy, and I don't ever want to look back at my life and think to myself, 'I wish I had been kinder on myself.' I want to do that now, and always be doing that. So that's what I do."



Ryan Reynolds cheered for their BFF Taylor Swift's



Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor couple Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds cheered for their BFF, Taylor Swift during her Eras Tour performance in New Orleans, Louisiana.

On Friday, October 25, the 'I Can Do It with a Broken Heart' singer, 34, hit the stage at the Caesars Superdome in New Orleans and during her performance of 'Cruel Summer' a fan captured a video of Lively, 37, and Reynolds, 48, in what appeared to be a VIP area of the venue, reports 'People' magazine.

In the clip, which was posted on X, formerly Twitter, the actress stood behind her husband as he danced to the music, chatting to another attendee before turning back to

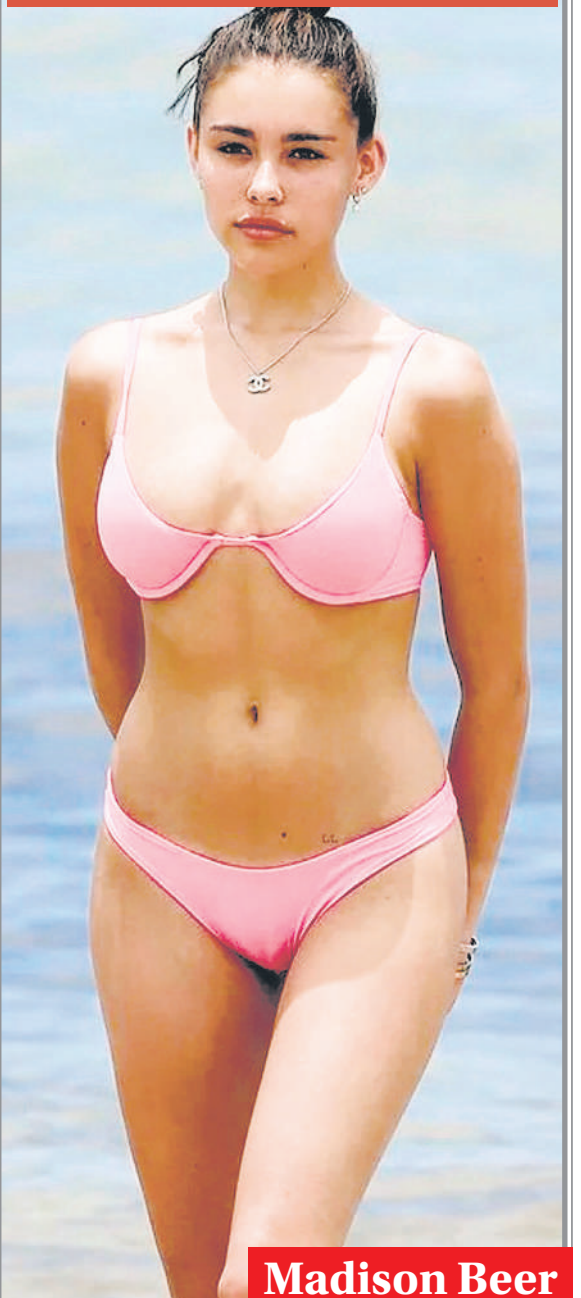
Reynolds.

As per 'People', another video posted on TikTok, showed the couple at various points throughout the show, and gave a closer look at their matching outfits.

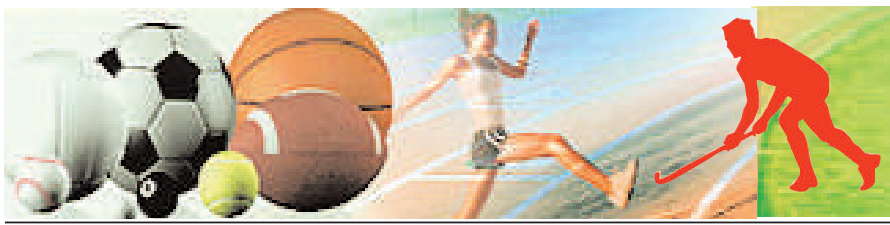
Reynolds opted for a short sleeved, white shirt and dark pants, while Lively also wore white, sporting a fitted white vest and white shirt over the top.

The pair was captured cuddling up at several points in Swift's concert, with Reynolds standing behind Lively with his arms appearing to be wrapped around her waist as they swayed together to the music. The 'It Ends With Us' actress was also spotted filming Swift's performance on her phone and singing along to the show.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Madison Beer



NEW ZEALAND END INDIA'S 12-YEAR HOME TEST DOMINANCE WITH HISTORIC 2-0 TEST SERIES WIN

Pune | Agencies

India's 12-year unbeaten streak in home Test series came to a stunning end as New Zealand clinched a historic 2-0 lead with a 113-run victory at the Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) Stadium here on Saturday.

This loss marks India's first home Test series defeat since England's Alastair Cook-led squad overcame the hosts 2-1 back in 2012.

Across these 12 years, India played 18 Test series, figuring in 52 Test matches, winning 42 of them, losing four, and drawing six. The series against New Zealand ended the fairytale as the series opener in Bengaluru set the tone. Dismissed for a meagre 46 in overcast conditions in the first innings, India found themselves under early pressure. New Zealand capitalised on their advantage with Rachin Ravindra's steady century and a timely contribution from Tim Southee, establishing control despite a fighting century by Sarfaraz Khan and Rishabh Pant's 99 in a counter-attack. The modest 107-run target was chased down comfortably by New Zealand, secur-



ing the first win.

The second Test in Pune saw a similar story unfold. New Zealand's bowlers restricted India to 156 in the first innings, creating a 103-run lead that skipper Tom Latham built on

with a composed 86, setting India a daunting 359 to chase. India's chase began promisingly with Yashvi Jaiswal's brisk start, but the middle-order faltered, sealing India's series defeat on home soil. India's reign of

18 consecutive home series wins, starting from a 2013 whitewash of Australia, ended as New Zealand's clinical performance redefined the landscape.

WTC Standings: India retain top spot

Pune | Agencies

India's massive 113-run loss against New Zealand in the second Test gave a huge blow to their World Test Championship final (WTC) hopes as they hold a very slim edge over second-placed Australia in the standings.

Despite loss in the first two Tests against New Zealand, India continue to lead the standings with 98 points after 13 matches while Australia have 90 points to claim the second place. However, India's points percentage dropped to 62.82 after the first series loss at home in over a decade. On the other hand, Australia are not that behind in points percentage with 62.50.

With the three-match series already in their kitty, New Zealand have climbed to the fourth spot in the WTC standings with back-to-back wins over India. They have 60 points same as third-placed Sri Lanka but fall behind in the points percentage. Currently, South Africa are placed fifth with 40 points in seven Tests above England, Pakistan Bangladesh and West Indies, respectively. India's road to the WTC final will face an uphill task with six Tests remaining including five against Australia in Down Under. India need to win at least four matches in the remaining games to bolster their case for the third consecutive WTC final. However, anything short of that will make



them depend on other teams for the summit clash. Apart from Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and South Africa are in contention for the top two finish in the current WTC cycle.

After the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series against India, Australia will host Sri Lanka for two Tests while South Africa will play one more Test against Bangladesh before hosting Sri Lanka and Pakistan for a two-Test home series. Whereas, New Zealand will play a three-Test home series against England after the third Test against India at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, starting on November 1.

New Zealand won the inaugural WTC title while Australia are the defending champions in the format. Both teams won against India in the finals.

Tennis: Kenin beat Boulter in Pan Pacific Open semifinal

Tokyo | Agencies

British number one Katie Boulter lost to American wildcard Sofia Kenin in straight sets to miss out on the final of the Pan Pacific Open on Saturday.

Boulter, who was aiming for a third title of the year, lost 6-4 6-4 in one hour and 30 minutes to the former world number four.

Boulter was broken twice in the first set and despite recovering one of those breaks when Kenin first served for the set, she couldn't break again. The 2020 Australian Open champion ultimately claimed the set on her second opportunity.

In the second set, Kenin faced four break points in the sixth game but held on to level at 3-3, then broke Boulter in the following game. She kept her lead from there, advancing to the final.

Kenin will now face either top seed and Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen of China or Russian Diana Shnaider, the sixth seed, in the final.



SHAHEEN, VAUGHAN LAUD PAKISTAN FOR TEST SERIES WIN OVER ENGLAND

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Pakistan pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi and former England captain Michael Vaughan lauded Pakistan for their emphatic 2-1 Test series win over England after securing a nine-wicket victory in the third and final match in Rawalpindi on Saturday.

Pakistan bounced back strong in the series after suffering an innings and 47 runs drubbing in the first Test in Multan. The hosts dropped former captains Babar Azam and Sarfaraz Ahmed along with pacers Shaheen and Naseem Shah for the second and third Tests. They brought in uncapped Kamran Ghulam, Sajid Khan and Mohammad Ali among others for the final two games of the series and the move worked for them.

Pakistan went on to win the second Test by 152 runs at the reused strip in Multan as Kamran Ghulam struck a century on his Test debut while Noman Ali and Sajid Khan shared England's all 20 wickets between them. The result of the third Test at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium was no



different with Saud Shakeel scoring a ton and the spin duo of Sajid and Noman clinching 19 scalps across innings to register another dominating win. It was also Pakistan's first home series win since 2021 after four Test series. "What an emphatic way to introduce #AqibBall to the world! Pitch-perfect performance from the spin duo Noman and Sajid, and incredible

century by Saud Shakeel. Congratulations Pakistan!", Shaheen wrote on Instagram story. On the other hand, former English cricketer Vaughan flagged England's approach on turning surfaces after their surrender against Pakistan spinners in the final two Tests of the series. "Fantastic series win for Pakistan... As soon as the pitches started to spin they dominated England... It

happened in India last year and now Pakistan... England's high risk strategy doesn't work against the spinning ball," Vaughan wrote on X. Pakistan's Saud Shakeel, who scored 134 runs in the first innings, was named Player of the Match while Sajid Khan bagged the Player of the Series accolade after finishing with 19 scalps in two matches.

2nd Test: It's a collective failure, we failed to respond to challenges thrown at us, says Rohit

Pune | Agencies

After India lost a Test series at home for the first time in 12 years through a 113-run defeat to New Zealand here on Saturday giving the visitors an unassailable 2-0 lead, skipper Rohit Sharma admitted that the result happened due to a collective failure as the team could not respond to the challenges thrown at them.

After losing by eight wickets in the first Test in Bengaluru, India needed to win the second game in Pune to keep their series-winning record intact at home. But Mitchell Santner's match figures of 13-157, including triggering a collapse in India's chase of 359, meant the hosts were bowled out for 245 on Day Three.

"Disappointing, as it's not what we expected. I have to give credit to New Zealand - they played better than us. We failed to capitalise on certain moments. We failed to respond to those challenges thrown at us, and we sit here today with this result." "We want to show up well at



Wankhede and try and win that Test. It's a collective failure. I'm not some-

body who would blame just the batters or the bowlers. We will come out

with better intent, better ideas, and better methods at Wankhede," said a disappointed Rohit in the post-match presentation ceremony.

Defeat in Pune also snapped India's streak of 18 successive home series wins. The issue of Indian batters falling in a heap, especially against spinners, came back to haunt them on a spin-friendly pitch in Pune. In the first innings at Pune, India lost nine wickets for just 106 runs to be all out for 156 and give a 103-run first-innings lead to New Zealand. "Didn't think we batted well enough to get runs on the board. You've got to pick 20 wickets to win, yes, but batters have to put runs on the board. Was a great fightback to restrict them to 250-odd but we knew it was going to be challenging."

"When they started, they were 200/3 and for us to come back and get them bowled out for 259 was a great effort. Wasn't a pitch where a lot was happening. We just didn't bat well enough. Things would've been slightly different had we got a bit closer in the first innings," added Rohit.

Shanto likely to step down as Bangladesh captain

Dhaka | Agencies

Bangladesh's all-format captain Najmul Hossain Shanto is likely to step down from the leadership role after the conclusion of the ongoing home Test series against South Africa.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board had appointed Najmul as captain across formats for a year in February 2024, with plans for him to lead the team in the Champions Trophy next year. However, Najmul has informed the board of his decision to step down and is awaiting approval from board president Faruque Ahmed, who is currently abroad and expected to return soon.

"Yes, he informed us that he is not ready to lead the side after the South Africa series," Cricbuzz quoted a top BCB official as saying. Najmul confirmed the



same with elaborating on his decision to leave the leadership role. "Let's see what happens (as far as leading Bangladesh is concerned) because I am still waiting to hear it from the president (BCB)," he said. A senior BCB director is attempting to persuade Najmul to reconsider his decision to step down as captain, though a

reversal appears unlikely at this point, the report said. Following the 2024 T20 World Cup, Najmul initially planned to resign from T20 captaincy, but later decided to quit as captain across all formats. Najmul's leadership has recently faced criticism due to a prolonged period of poor results. A BCB official mentioned that if Najmul ultimately declines to continue as captain after the ongoing Test series against South Africa, the board may consider appointing Mehidy Hasan as captain for Tests and ODIs, with Towhid Hridoy likely to lead in T20s. During his tenure, Najmul led Bangladesh in nine Tests, winning three and losing six, highlighted by a historic series win over Pakistan. In ODIs, he captained in nine matches with three wins and six losses. In T20Is, he led the team in 24 games, securing 10 victories.

McCullum praises Pakistan's spin mastery

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Brendon McCullum, England's head coach, accepted his team's "missed opportunity" after Pakistan sealed a 2-1 series victory with decisive spin-friendly tactics in Multan and Rawalpindi. McCullum remained magnanimous but acknowledged that his side, despite a historic 800-plus first-innings total in the opener, faltered as Pakistan overhauled their lineup and capitalized on turn-heavy pitches.

Following a ruthless innings win on Multan's flat deck, Pakistan, with a refreshed selection panel, introduced spinning surfaces that saw Sajid Khan and Noman Ali share 39 out of 40 English wickets. Their bowling transformed the series, dismantling England for just 814 runs across four innings, turning the tide sharply in Pakistan's favour. "Credit to Pakistan, the way that those two spinners bowled was superb," McCullum told Sky Sports. "I thought they varied the pace beautifully. Noman from one end, taking pace off most of the time with the occasional fast one, and Sajid flipping that around and putting pace on with the occasional slow one. I thought was great partnership bowling. And our guys weren't able to sustain the pressure, unfortunately."

"When teams come to England, ideally we play on the surfaces that we're more accustomed to, which allow our strengths to really flourish and maybe paper over some of the weaknesses as well, which every team naturally has," said McCullum. England's batting struggles, notably those of Ollie Pope, Zak Crawley, and Harry Brook, revealed a lack of adaptability under pressure. Brook, after shining in the first Test, faltered with a high score of 26 in the last four innings.

"I'm a little bit surprised it's taken Pakistan as long as it has. Because when you go to Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh, the ball is always going to turn. What we had here a couple of years ago, or in that first Test match, where it was pretty flat, was a different challenge. It'll be interesting to see over the next couple of years whether they persist with these types of services, but certainly, there are no excuses from our point of view. We had our chances, and we ran second," the England head coach said.

McCullum defended England's batting unit as the best they've assembled but admitted that adaptation was lacking as Pakistan played on their strengths. He also pointed to England's spinners, Shoaib Bashir and Jack Leach, who couldn't replicate the Pakistani spinners' success despite similar

conditions. "It's pretty much the same batting group that came here two years ago and were outstanding in these conditions, and it's the same batting group that put on 800 in the first Test match," McCullum said. "As the conditions changed, we were presented with different challenges and we weren't quite able to adapt to those challenges. And that's a missed opportunity."

"I have no doubt, and the skipper has no doubt, that the batting group that we've now had together for the best part of 18 months is the best that we've got," he added. "We're very confident, we've just got to make sure we keep allowing guys to develop them and keep becoming the players that they want to become and will benefit from that," he added.

Reflecting on the lessons learned, the former New Zealand batter added, "You're always trying to improve, but you've got to be really careful that you're not seeking perfection because it doesn't exist in an inconsistent game. The game we play is going to come with periods where it's not going how you want it to, but you've still got to hold firm."

"We will be confronted with spinning conditions at some stage in the future, and we hope that some of the lessons, good and bad that we've had throughout this series, will give us a bit more of a base to be able to be successful," he said.





Coldplay, Diljeet concerts:

ED raids in 5 cities against ticket black marketeers

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The outcry of British rock band Coldplay and actor-singer Diljeet Dosanjh has pushed the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) to seize laptops and other digital devices during multi-city raids at 13 locations across five cities, an official said on Saturday.

The ED search operations in Delhi, Mumbai, Jaipur, Chandigarh and Bangalore came amid allegations of illegal sale of tickets for Diljeet Dosanjh's 'Dil-Luminati' tour (October 21-December 29) and Coldplay's 'Music of the Spheres World Tour' (Mumbai, January 18-19, 2025) concerts, reportedly being sold in the grey market for as high as Rs 1,00,000 each.

The ED action was aimed at investigating the illegal sales of tickets, and the financial networks supporting



these scams and tracing the Proceeds of Crime generated from such illegal activities, a statement said.

Several culprits were identified by the ED during searches that pointed towards alleged wrongdoings

through social media platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp and Telegram.

The ED initiated an investigation under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 and conducted searches on Friday at multiple locations and seized incrim-

inating materials such as mobile phones, laptops and SIM cards used in the alleged scam, according to a statement.

The official ticketing partners for the concerts, Bookmyshow and Zomato Live, claimed that tickets sold within minutes on their platforms leading to the black marketing of tickets at exorbitant prices.

Following the rapid sellout, numerous reports emerged of fans being cheated by connmen who either sold fake tickets or charged a high premium for selling them the tickets over social media platforms.

Multiple FIRs have been filed in various states, including one filed by the online ticket booking platform Bookmyshow, against unnamed suspects believed to be exploiting conn-

The FIR alleged that these individuals sold counterfeit tickets at drastically inflated prices, taking advantage of the high demand.

SHILPA RAO

talks about discrimination between male and female singers

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shilpa Rao has spoken up about discrimination between male and female singers in the music industry and also about equal share in songs.

During a podcast with Shubhankar Mishra, Shilpa talked about how the pay is by the work and not because of a gender.

"The pay is always by your work so it is never that oh he's being paid more because he is a guy.

No. You are being paid because you have done all this work," said Shilpa, when asked if female singers get

paid less as compared to male singers.

Talking about female singer's getting shadowed by male counterparts, she said: "That's true. you should ask the makers. We say that we need equal share in the song, film, in the story. The makers have to realize."

Shilpa has recorded songs in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil languages. During her college days, composer Mithoon offered her to record the song "Tose Naina" from the 2007 film "Anwar", marking her Hindi debut. "Abacha" from Konchem Ishtam Konchem Kashtam and "Oru Maalai Neram" from Naan Mahaan Alla were her debut songs in Telugu and Tamil respectively.



Salman Khan tells Avinash 'aap khud apna vinash kar doge'



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Bollywood superstar Salman Khan will be seen schooling contestant Avinash Mishra over his behaviour towards other housemates and telling the housemates that "aapka naam Avinash hai par aap khud apna vinash kar doge".

In a promo of the upcoming Weekend Ka Vaar episode of the controversial reality show, Salman was seen losing his cool at Avinash over his attitude.

He will be seen asking Avinash: "Aap kya iss ghar ke bhagwaan hai?"

The superstar adds: "There's a thin line between being frank and rude, you have crossed that line. Naam aapka Avinash hai par aap khud apna vinash kar doge. Vinash. Khatam."

Salman will also be seen talking to contestant Karanveer Mehra. He will be seen pointing out his habit of running away from meaningful connections.

The star will be heard saying: "Aapke life me dukh bhi hai ke bahar aap parivaar jod nahi paaye aur yahan bhi aap parivaar jod nahi pa rahe. Karanveer Mehra, aap jo kone kone me kar rahe ho, main kehta hu ke ye aap khulle me karo."

The episode will also see a dollop of glamor as Bollywood star Ajay Devgn will be seen as a guest on the show. He will be coming to promote his upcoming film "Singham 3", which will have a cameo of Salman's Chulbul Pandey. The star will be accompanied by filmmaker Rohit Shetty.



BOLLYWOOD PERSONALITIES ATTEND AYUSHMANN, TAHIRA KASHYAP'S DIWALI PARTY

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A string of Bollywood personalities including Karan Johar, Huma Qureshi, Sharvari, Ali Fazal and Richa Chadha among others attended actor Ayushmann Khurrana and his wife Tahira Kashyap's Diwali bash.

Others who were seen soaking in the festive fervor included names such as Sanya Malhotra, Bhumi Pednekar, Sonali Bendre, Angad Bedi, Surveen Chawla and Nushratt Bharuccha. Ayushmann took to his Instagram stories, where he shared a string of pictures posing with his "Dum Laga Ke Haisha" co-star Bhumi, who looked every inch beautiful as she dressed in an earthy coloured saree paired with a mirror work blouse. Ayushmann looked dapper in black Indian wear.

He also re-shared a picture posing with his wife and his "Dream Girl" co-star Nushratt for a selfie at the gathering that took place at Ayushmann and Tahira's Mumbai home.



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Actress Preity Zinta revealed that her last two weeks have been difficult as her husband Gene Goodenough was travelling for work and she was holding fort doing mama duties.

She also talked about "how much work, sacrifice parents put in for their children" and gave a shout out to all.

Preity took to Instagram, where she shared a picture of her walking with her twins Jai and Gia.

The actress captioned: "Walking towards the weekend... The last two weeks have been particularly difficult as Gene was travelling for work and I was holding fort doing mama duties which include - waking up the kids, getting them ready for school, packing their lunch box, dropping and picking them up from school, dinner and finally putting them to bed."

Preity said that she "was so excited about our solo time together"

PREITY ZINTA TALKS ABOUT HOW MUCH WORK, SACRIFICE PARENTS PUT IN FOR THEIR CHILDREN

She added: "cuz I want to spend as much time as I can with the kids before I'm off to another shoot. Although this time together has been so rewarding, so full of love, it's also been very stressful. (sic)."

Preity revealed that she has "hardly had a moment to myself or ended up doing any work except looking after them. This made me realise how much work and sacrifice all parents put in for their children specially single mothers and fathers!"

"A big shout out to all the Single Moms & dad's out there I just want to say - What a GREAT JOB you guys are doing! Loads of love always #mommyandme #family #Jai #Gia #Ting."

Preity welcomed her twins, Jai and Gia, via surrogacy in 2021 with her husband Gene, whom she married in 2016 at a private ceremony in Los Angeles.

MRUNAL THAKUR GIVES A GLIMPSE OF 'BEST VATAVARAN' IN RISHIKESH

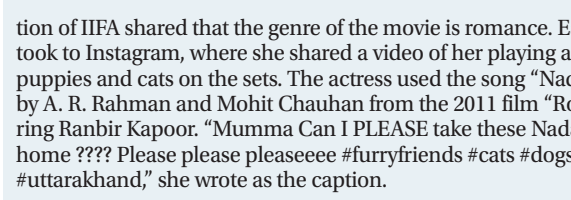
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Bollywood actress Mrunal Thakur went trekking in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand and gave a glimpse of the "best vatavaran." Mrunal took to Instagram, where she shared a string of pictures from her early morning trek. The photographs had Mrunal enjoying the sun, greens and the view of the mountains along with a few friends.

"Best vatavaran... Jab aap ghode bech kar soo rahe the #tichkitrek

#trekking #himalayas #rishikesh #travel," she wrote.

Mrunal is currently shooting in Uttarakhand for a yet-untitled film, which also features actor Siddhant Chaturvedi. The actress at the 24th edition of IIFA shared that the genre of the movie is romance. Earlier, Mrunal took to Instagram, where she shared a video of her playing around with puppies and cats on the sets. The actress used the song "Nadaan Parindey" by A. R. Rahman and Mohit Chauhan from the 2011 film "Rockstar" starring Ranbir Kapoor. "Mumma Can I PLEASE take these Nadaan parindeys home ??? Please please pleaseeee #furryfriends #cats #dogs #love #pets #uttarakhand," she wrote as the caption.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Taa_ssh