

# absolute india

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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM NEW DELHI, MUMBAI AND BHOPAL



**NATION** > 02

Govt should bulldoze inflation, unemployment: Rahul...



**HOLLYWOOD** > 06

Sierra McCormick, Jade Pettyjohn to star in super natural thriller...



**SPORTS** > 07

Deepak Chahar's availability for CSK in doubt due to back injury...

**RETAIL INFLATION SOARS TO 16-MONTH HIGH OF 6.95% IN MARCH ON HIGH FOOD PRICES**

# INFLATION ON FIRE

► IN TERMS OF CPI INFLATION RATE, PULSES AND PRODUCTS' PRICES JUMPED BY 2.57 PER CENT IN MARCH 2022 YOY. BESIDES, MEAT AND FISH PRICES ROSE BY 9.63 PER CENT, EGGS WERE DEARER BY 2.44 PER CENT, AND OILS AND FATS PRICES ROSE 18.79 PER CENT.

► THE OVERALL PRICE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGES CATEGORY WAS UP 7.47 PER CENT.

► FURTHERMORE, AS PER THE OFFICIAL DATA, THE INFLATION RATE FOR FUEL AND LIGHT WAS HIGHER BY 7.52 PER CENT.

► APART FROM FOOD AND BEVERAGES, THE FUEL AND LIGHT SEGMENT ROSE 7.52 PER CENT, CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR GAINED 9.40 PER CENT, HOUSING SEGMENT INCHED UP 3.38 PER CENT AND THE PAN, TOBACCO AND INTOXICANTS CLIMBED 2.98 PER CENT.

“The CPI inflation shot up well beyond our expectations, touching a 17-month high of 6.95 per cent in March 2022, led predominantly by a sharper than anticipated surge in some components of food and beverages such as meat and fish. Most other components printed broadly in line with our forecasts, suggesting that a gradual pass through of the commodity price pressures has commenced.”

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA.



April-June and July-September will see the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) failing to meet its mandate.

The RBI's latest forecast pegs average CPI inflation at 6.3 per cent in April-June and 5.8 per cent in July-September.

Similarly, on a YoY basis, last month's retail inflation rose at a faster rate than the 5.52 per cent increase in prices recorded for

March 2021. The trend assumes significance as retail inflation rate remained well above the target range of the Reserve Bank of India, which has a CPI target range of 2 to 6 per cent.

As per the NSO data, the rate of rise in the Consumer Food Price Index, which measures the changes in retail prices of food products, increased by 7.68 per cent last month from 5.85 per cent in February 2022 and 4.87 per cent

in March 2021. In addition, sub-group of clothing and footwear showed a price acceleration of 9.40 per cent. Separately, India's factory output, measured in terms of Index of Industrial Production (IIP), witnessed a growth of 1.7 per cent in February, two separate data released by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) showed on Tuesday.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Higher cost of food items, as well as expensive fuel and manufactured goods like clothing and footwear, pushed India's retail inflation to a 17-month high in March 2022.

As per the data furnished by the

National Statistical Office on Tuesday, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 6.95 per cent last month from 6.07 per cent in February 2022. This is the third consecutive month in which inflation has come in above the 6 per cent upper bound of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) mandate, averaging 6.4 per cent in January-March. As such, 6 percent-plus inflation in

owners to either sell/hire out their homes, yet many managing committees are insisting on their clearance.

"Now, if the owner wishes to sell-rent out his flat, he/she will not need the society's NOC," Dr Awhad declared, justifying it on grounds of Mumbai being a leading cosmopolitan city in the world and such tactics were sully the image of the country's financial capital.

Several individuals, societies, and the Maharashtra Societies Welfare Association have approved and welcomed Dr Awhad's initiative, and urged that it should be formalised through a 'Government Resolution' with punitive clauses for the errant societies/managing committee members.

## COW VIGILANTES BRUTALLY THRASH 5 IN DELHI, 1 DIES

New Delhi: A group of men brutally thrashed five persons in the national capital for allegedly slaughtering cows, leading to the death of one person who succumbed to his injuries. The deceased, identified as Raja Ram (40), was the caretaker of a farmhouse where he was allegedly involved in cow slaughtering.



According to a senior officer of the Delhi Police, the incident took place on the intervening night of April 10-11 at a farmhouse in the Dwarka area of Delhi.

"The incident of cow slaughtering was reported at 2.10 a.m. on April 11 after which five people involved were arrested by the police," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka), Shankar Choudhary, said.

However, before the police reached the spot to arrest them, a group of 10-15 men barged into the farmhouse and thrashed the alleged cow slaughterers.

One of the accused persons told the police that he and his friends were beaten severely and threatened by alleged miscreants, who claimed to be 'gau rakshaks'.

One of the arrested accused, Raja Ram, was taken to the Rao Tula Ram Memorial Hospital, where he was declared dead, Choudhary said. "A probe is on to nab the alleged miscreants," the officer added.

## Now, no NOC needed from housing society to sell/rent flats in Mumbai

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a significant decision, Maharashtra Housing Minister Dr Jitendra Awhad on Tuesday announced that henceforth no prior permission or no objection certificate (NOC) from a cooperative housing society would be necessary for owners wanting to sell/rent out their flats.

This would enable the owners to conduct his/her rental/sale transactions without hassles or delays and prevent harassment by the society committees to green signal such proposals.

"We have come to know that many housing societies discriminate on the basis of caste, creed, religion, community, vegetarians and don't permit the owners to



sell/rent out their properties," Dr Awhad said.

He pointed out how in some societies or localities dominated by any particular community, certain communities are barred in the name of preferring only 'vegetari-

ans', or preventing Dalits and Other Backward Classes, which is leading to increasing hatred among the people.

He said that as per the by-laws, the society's permissions are not required for

owners to either sell/hire out their homes, yet many managing committees are insisting on their clearance.

"Now, if the owner wishes to sell-rent out his flat, he/she will not need the society's NOC," Dr Awhad declared, justifying it on grounds of Mumbai being a leading cosmopolitan city in the world and such tactics were sully the image of the country's financial capital.

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## STUDENTS CAN PURSUE 2 FULL-TIME DEGREE PROGRAMMES SIMULTANEOUSLY: UGC



Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a first, the government has decided to allow students to pursue two full-time and same-level degree programmes in physical mode simultaneously either at the same university or from different universities, UGC Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar said on Tuesday.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) will soon issue detailed guidelines in this regard and the option will be available to students from the 2022-23 academic session.

"As announced in the new National Education Policy (NEP) and in order to allow students to acquire multiple skills, UGC is coming up with new guidelines to allow a candidate to pursue two degree programmes in physical mode simultaneously," Kumar said at a press conference.

"The degrees can either be pursued from the same or different universities. Students will also be allowed to pursue two degree programmes in physical and online mode simultaneously," he said.

In India, a student was not allowed to pursue two different courses simultaneously. However, under NEP 2020, the central government is aiming to transform India's education system by 2040. For higher education, a four-year multi-disciplinary bachelor's degree in an undergraduate programme with multiple exit options will be proposed under NEP 2020.

## Chennai IT firm gifts 100 Maruti cars to 100 employees



Chennai: After a software solutions provider gifted five of its trusted employees with BMWs each worth Rs 1 crore, in Chennai another IT firm has gifted 100 Maruti cars to 100 of its employees. The company Ideas2IT, in a statement on Tuesday, said that the company is gifting 100 cars to 100 employees who have been part of the company for the past 10 years. The company has a bench strength of 500 employees. The Chairman and CEO of the company Murali Vivekanandan while speaking to reporter said, "We are not gifting the cars, it is the employees who have earned these cars through their hard work."

He said that the employees have made a lot of efforts to develop the country to the position it is in.

The employees also are happy at the company providing gifts to them. The Ideas2IT company in the statement said that it's a high-end product engineering company headquartered in Chennai and that it has high-end clients. The clientele includes Facebook, Motorola, Oracle, Bloomberg, and Microsoft.

## 13 SHOT AT IN SUBWAY STATION IN NEW YORK

New Delhi: Several people were shot at in a subway station in New York's Brooklyn today. People tweeted photos showing commuters with blood on their clothes being helped by others, as they sat with their back to a metro train. At least 13 were injured, the New York Fire Department said.

The shooter is suspected to be still active in the area, local media reported. Some reports said explosives were found at the site of the attack, which happened during the morning rush hour at 8:30 am local time. Trains have been stopped, local media reported.

The New York Police Department, or NYPD, tweeted, "Due to an investigation, avoid the area of 36th Street and 4th Avenue area in Brooklyn. Expect emergency vehicles and delays in the surrounding area." The NYPD said there are "no active explosive devices".

## LOUDSPEAKERS IN MOSQUES SHOULD BE SHUT TILL MAY 3: RAJ THACKERAY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) on Tuesday reiterated its warning to the state government asking it to shut down loudspeakers in mosques till May 3. MNS chief Raj Thackeray asserted that this was a 'social issue and not a religious issue', and affirmed that his party would not back down on the subject. Thackeray further threatened to play Hanuman Chalisa on speakers, if the government refused to listen to him.

"Loudspeakers in mosques should be shut till May 3 otherwise, we will play Hanuman Chalisa on speakers. This is a social issue, not a religious one. I want to tell the state government, we will not go back on this subject, do whatever you want to do," said MNS chief Raj



Thackeray. Keeping in line with Raj Thackeray's proclamation, MNS workers on April 10 played the Hanuman Chalisa outside the Shiv Sena office in Kalyan. The leaders reportedly installed loudspeakers right outside the Shiv Sena Headquarters in Mumbai, issuing an open challenge to the Uddhav Thackeray-led party. With speakers mounted on vehicles outside 'Shiv Sena Bhawan', the party announced it would play Hanuman Chalisa there on the occasion of Ram Navami, and would continue to do so if volumes were not turned down during Azaan.

## New Omicron BA.4 & BA.5 sub-variants detected in Africa, Europe

► BA.4 AND BA.5 SUB-VARIANTS ARE ALSO ON THE RADAR OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO).

► THE GLOBAL HEALTH AGENCY SAID IT HAD BEGUN TRACKING THE TWO SUB-VARIANTS BECAUSE OF THEIR "ADDITIONAL MUTATIONS THAT NEED TO BE FURTHER STUDIED TO UNDERSTAND THEIR IMPACT ON IMMUNE ESCAPE POTENTIAL".

► GLOBALLY, ONLY A FEW DOZEN CASES OF BA.4 AND BA.5 HAVE BEEN REPORTED TO OPEN ACCESS DATABASE GISAI. THE EARLIEST BA.4 SAMPLE REPORTED TO GISAI WAS FROM SOUTH AFRICA, WITH A SAMPLE COLLECTION DATE OF JANUARY 10, 2022, THE INDEPENDENT.CO.UK REPORTED.



New Delhi | Agencies

South African scientists have detected two new sub-variants of the highly contagious Omicron variant - BA.4 and BA.5. According to Tulio de Oliveira, Director of Centre for Epidemic Response and Innovation (CERI), South Africa, the sub-variants have been detected in South Africa, Botswana, Belgium, Germany, Denmark and the UK. Although "early indications show these new sub-lineages are increasing as a share of genomically confirmed cases in South Africa", there is, however, "no cause for alarm as no major spike in cases, admissions or deaths" are seen in the country, de Oliveira shared in a series of tweets. Incidentally, South Africa and Botswana were also the first to report on Omicron in November last year. South Africa was also the first country to be hit by the super mutant and vaccine evading variant of concern, before it became a global wave.

## XE VARIANT JUST ANOTHER FORM OF OMICRON: MANDAVIYA

"The XE variant is a combination or recombinant of both sub-variants - BA.1 and BA.2 - of Omicron. No new variant of Covid has been detected this time. This is the only variant which has been found and majorly we have passed the phase of this variant."



## COVID 4TH WAVE WILL START IN JUNE-JULY: K'TAKA HEALTH MIN

Bengaluru: Predictive studies opine that the 4th wave of the Covid-19 will start in June-July and last till September, stated Karnataka Health Minister K. Sudhakar on Tuesday. "Karnataka is prepared to face it," he added. He said that there is no need to worry as of now. The new XE variant of Covid-19 is prominent in 8 countries and people arriving from that country are being screened, he said. Answering a question, he said that the mask is still essential and there will be no relaxation but said that there is no need to worry about the 4th wave. 5,000 children in the age group 6-12 who are not yet eligible for vaccine will be said.



# BJP SWEEPS UP COUNCIL POLLS, SP DRAWS A BLANK

Lucknow | Agencies

The BJP scored a massive victory in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council polls on Tuesday by winning 33 of the 36 seats where voting was held through local bodies. The Samajwadi Party suffered a humiliating defeat and could not win even a single seat.

Three seats were won by independent candidates. The Jansatta Dal, floated by Raghuraj Pratap Singh a.k.a. Raja Bhaiyya, retained the Pratapgarh seat where Akshay Pratap Singh Gopalji was the candidate.

Vikrant Singh Rishu, son of expelled BJP MLC Yashwant Singh, won the Azamgarh seat.

In Varanasi, Annapurna Singh, an independent, won the seat. Annapurna Singh is the wife of jailed mafia don Brijesh Singh.

The BJP has already won nine seats unanimously in the elections.

This is for the first time that the ruling party has attained a thumping majority in the Legislative Council.

The chief minister said that the results proved that the people had immense faith in BJP and in the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



With a thumping majority in the Legislative Council as well as the state Assembly, the government will be able to do even better work in the interest of public welfare, women's safety and self-reliance, employment of youth, and farmers," he added.

The chief minister said: "We were able to form our government with two-thirds majority under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 2017 and 2022 Assembly elections. This will be probably the first time that the ruling party will have a majority in the State Legislative Council."

## YOGI CURTAILS LUNCH BREAK TO 30 MINUTES FOR GOVT EMPLOYEES

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday curtailed the lunch break of the state government employees to half an hour. The chief minister, while addressing the Team 9 meeting at his residence, said that he had received complaints of officials and employees taking long lunch breaks which was affecting the work in offices. He asked concerned officials to ensure that lunch breaks do not extend beyond 30 minutes. It has been a normal practice for government employees to take their lunch break at 1.30 p.m. and return to work around 3.30 p.m. or 4 p.m. Even senior officials who go home for lunch take a break that extends to three hours.

# RJD Bihar President's son joins JD-U

Patna | Agencies

In an embarrassment for the RJD, the younger son of its Bihar unit President Jagadanand Singh joined the ruling JD-U in Patna on Tuesday.

An event was held in JD-U office located at Veerchand Patel path where Ajit Singh joined the party in the presence of national President Lalan Singh and state President Umesh Kushwaha.

"The workers of the RJD have no future in the party. They (party leaders) ignore workers during ticket distribution and give it to financially sound people. The workers are undergoing humiliation every day. I am seeing my father who is facing humiliation in the RJD," he said, in a veiled reference to RJD supremo Lalu Prasad's elder son Tej Pratap Yadav who openly criticized Jagadanand Singh several times in the last one year.

"I am inspired by CM Nitish Kumar more compared to Lalu Prasad Yadav. Hence, I became a rebel in my family and joined the JD-U."

"The RJD has become a graveyard for dedicated workers who are working for years. People, who are associ-



ated with other fields, used to come with the suitcases during election time, obtaining tickets and becoming MPs, MLAs, and MLCs. Every person knows about such practices in RJD. Hence, a large number of dedicated RJD workers want to join JD-U," he claimed. Lalan Singh said: "Jagada Babu is my old friend but I don't know why he is

staying with the RJD and facing humiliation every day. We have learnt from Jannayak Karpooori Thakur Ji who often said that compromise cannot be done with self-respect. Jagada Babu is facing humiliation is just not understandable. The pain of Jagadanand Singh is rightly understood by his son. That's why he is here with us."

# Trinamool MP contradicts Mamata's 'love-angle' twist to Hanskhali minor rape

Kolkata | Agencies

A day after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee gave a "love-angle" twist to the rape of a minor girl, who died later at Hanskhali in Nadia district, a first-time Trinamool Congress member chose to contradict the theory on legal grounds.

Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha member from Krishnanagar in Nadia district, Mahua Moitra, said that consensual sex with a minor, i.e., someone below 18 years of age, is rape as per the law and a crime. She said this after visiting the residence of the minor victim and interacting with the members of her family. As per the Prevention of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, even consensual sex is considered rape if it involves a minor girl. "A girl below the age of 18 is minor and the law does not identify the right of a minor to give consent for



sex. Consensual sex with a minor, as per the law, is considered as aggravative penetration for sexual assault. "As a party MP, all I want to say is that I am totally against such incidents. I cannot speak of others. But I will not tolerate such things," Moitra said.

# Govt should bulldoze inflation, unemployment: Rahul

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Criticising the BJP, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said "the government should bulldoze inflation and unemployment" but instead of that the BJP's bulldozer is driven by hatred to instill fear.

"Inflation and unemployment choked the people in the country and government should drive bulldozer on these problems but BJP's bulldozer is driven by hate to create fear," Gandhi tweeted on Tuesday.

The Congress has been critical on the violence which has taken place in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and actions taken after that incident.

On Monday he had said: "Hate, violence and exclusion are weakening our beloved country. The path to progress is paved with the bricks of brotherhood, peace and harmony."



Let's stand together to secure a just, inclusive India." Communal violence

erupted in at least two districts of Madhya Pradesh during the Ram

Navami celebrations on Sunday. The first incident of violence was reported in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone district, where nearly half-a-dozen police personnel got injured while a similar incident occurred in the Sendhwa town of Barwani district. In Khargone, stones were hurled at a Ram Navami procession, triggering incidents of arson wherein some vehicles were set on fire, prompting authorities to clamp curfew in three areas and section 144 of CrPc in the entire city. Police fired tear gas shells to control the situation. A similar incident took place in Gujarat's Sabarkantha. Communal tension had also erupted in Rajasthan's Karauli following stone-pelting at a motorcycle rally passing through a Muslim-dominated area on 'Nav Samvatsar', the Hindu New Year.

# Vaishno Devi to get 1,281-metre ropeway from Katra to Adhkuwari

Jammu | Agencies

To facilitate the pilgrimage in the 700-year-old Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu, the shrine board on Tuesday gave approval to the much awaited proposal to construct a 1,281-metre long ropeway between Katra and Adhkuwari.

The proposal was approved in the 69th meeting of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, presided over by the board Chairman Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

The trek between Katra and Adhkuwari is 6 km.

Sharing details, Delhi-based shrine board member K.K. Sharma of AIMIL Pharmaceuticals Ltd told IANS the discussion on this proposal was going on for a



long time.

"In fact, for the first time in 2012, in the 51st meeting, the board had decided to conduct a study with RITES Ltd, a railway undertaking, to explore the possibilities of

ropeway. RITES submitted its report to the board in 2017 which found it suitable for the construction of the ropeway between Katra and Adhkuwari.

"Since then, this proposal

was continuously pending, which was approved in the first meeting of the newly constituted board held on Tuesday itself."

One of the holiest Hindu temples, Vaishno Devi, is

located at Katra town in Jammu district.

The temple is situated at an altitude of 5,200 feet, about 12 km from Katra.

As per the proposal, 1,281.20-metre long ropeway will be constructed with a maximum height of 590.75 metres.

It will have the capacity to carry 1,500 people on one side per hour with each cabin having a capacity of eight persons.

While its construction is estimated at Rs 94.23 crore, RITES says 63 per cent of the operating cost can be recovered if the per passenger travel fee is kept at Rs 200.

Sharma said the construction would start soon.

The pilgrim footfall at the shrine was over 55.77 lakh in 2021, compared to 17 lakh the previous year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

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# India declares JeM cadre Ali Kashif Jan as designated terrorist

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India has declared Ali Kashif Jan, a member of Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) who was involved in the Pathankot Air Force station terror attack, as a designated terrorist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Jan alias Jan Ali Kashif is the third terrorist to have been designated as a terrorist by the Centre in the last five days.

According to the Gazette notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Jan is accused in various cases and is being investigated by the National Investigation Agency, including for the Pathankot Air Force station terror attack of 2016.

"Ali Kashif Jan continues to operate from the JeM launching detachments located in Pakistan and is involved in recruitment of cadres for their training and coordinate attack plans at targets in India," the MHA notification said.

Born on January 30, 1982, Jan is a resident



of Charsadda in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. He is the operational commander and part of the core planning committee of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, which is listed as a terrorist organisation, the MHA said.

Jan was the handler of the Pathankot Air Force station terror attack in January 2016 in which seven security personnel and one civilian were killed.

## 50 SHANTIES GUTTED IN MASSIVE FIRE IN DELHI; NO CASUALTIES

New Delhi: Around 50 shanties were gutted in a massive fire that broke out at a transit camp in central Delhi on Tuesday evening, an official said. The fire department received a call at around 2.14 p.m. at a transit camp in Anand Parbat following which as many as 18 fire tenders were immediately pressed into the service. "No casualties were reported in the incident," Delhi Fire Services chief Atul Garg told IANS, adding the situation is under control. In the video recorded by the onlookers and the fire department, thick fumes of black smoke along with massive blaze could be seen billowing out of the houses that were on fire.

## GUARD YOUR LEMONS, THIEVES STEAL 60KG IN UP

Shahjahanpur | Agencies

Anything that is valuable is a thief's delight. And with the prices of lemon skyrocketing in the market, thieves in Shahjahanpur stole 60 kilograms of lemon stored in a vegetable trader's godown.

The thieves also stole some other high-priced vegetables from the godown.

Manoj Kashyap, the vegetable trader, said the thieves took away 60 kilograms of lemon, 40 kg of onions, 38 kg of garlic and a fork from his godown.

The trader from Bahadurganj Mohalla, who has a shop in the Bajar area, said that on Sunday morning when he reached the vegetable market, he saw that the lock of the godown was broken and the vegetables were lying scattered on the road.

On receiving information about the theft, in this case, the traders gathered and expressed their displeasure. The police spokesman said that they were apprised of the matter and would track down the thieves at the earliest.

The prices of lemon have shot up to an



unimaginable extent in the recent weeks. In Lucknow, lemon is selling at Rs 325 per kilogram and Rs 13 per piece which is decidedly higher than other fruits in the market. The twist of lemon in Dal tadka, a sprinkle on tandoori chicken and the tang in salads has gone out due to escalating prices. Lemonade, popularly known as 'shikanji', is no longer served to guests in the scorching heat.

**CHANGE OF NAME**  
I No. JC 571878W SUB BASANTA KUMAR TARAI presently residing at Deulkur PO Badachana Distt- Jaipur St- Odisha Pin-754296 have changed my son's name from MASTER SMRUTI RANJAN to SMRUTI RANJAN TARAI Vide affidavit no BC 336489 dated 03/03/2022.

**CHANGE OF NAME**  
I SASMITA TARAI is legally spouse of No. JC 571878W SUB BASANTA KUMAR TARAI presently residing at Deulkur PO Badachana Distt- Jaipur St- Odisha Pin-754296 have changed my name from SMT SHASHIMITA to SASMITA TARAI and changed my DOB from 15/08/1982 to 28/03/1981 Vide affidavit no BC 336488 dated 03/03/2022.



### Cabinet meeting held under the chairmanship of CM

# CABINET APPROVED THREE IRRIGATION PROJECTS WORTH MORE THAN RS 900 CRORE

### Irrigation facility will be available in 50 thousand hectares

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A meeting of the Cabinet was held in Ministry Bhopal today under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. The Cabinet gave administrative approval for irrigation projects worth more than Rs.900 crore in Rewa, Burhanpur and Singrauli. These projects will provide irrigation facility in an area of 50 thousand hectares.

In Rewa, administrative approval was given for the amount of Rs 89 crore 83 lakh to Tyonthar Micro Irrigation Project. The project will provide irrigation facility to an area of 7600 hectares in 52 villages of Tyonthar tehsil. Administrative approval has been given for Pangri Medium (Hose) Irrigation Project costing Rs 145 crore 10 lakh with irrigation potential of 4400 hectare rabi irrigation in Burhanpur district. Under the project, 10 villages of Khaknar tehsil will get irrigation facility from underground pipeline through micro-irrigation (hose) method. The Cabinet granted



administrative approval to Rihand micro irrigation project costing Rs 672 crore 25 lakh for irrigation facility in 113 villages through high pressure micro irrigation (sprinkler) method from underground pipeline in 38 thousand hectares of irrigation area in Singrauli and Mada tehsil of Singrauli district. The Cabinet gave its approval to create 5,204 new posts in Patwari cadre. Along with this, it was decided to

construct one sector for every 50 thousand population and to sanction the post of a city surveyor for each sector. Approval will be given for creation of at least two posts of city surveyor in any one urban body. The Cabinet decided to operate the Kanya Shiksha Parisar, Sehore district as a pilot project through Surya Foundation on the basis of nomination under private participation. The Cabinet

approved the acceptance of award money of Rs 11 lakh to Sushri Kaveri Dhimar for earning a gold medal in the National Canoe Competition, considering it as a special case. The Cabinet granted approval to hike the honorarium of guest spokesperson for 11 months against the vacant posts of training officers in government industrial training institutions. As guest spokesperson, an honorarium of Rs.125 per hour (maximum 5 hours per day) and a maximum of Rs.14 thousand in a month has been fixed. VandeMataram was sung before the meeting of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet approved the collection of toll only on commercial vehicles on 13 routes under the user fee scheme. At the same time, 10 contracts of Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation have been terminated as per rules and as the case may be, after inviting tender for toll from commercial vehicles only, the Managing Director, MP Road Development Corporation has been authorized for further action.

# Home Minister Blames Muslims For Ram Navami Clashes

► "IF MUSLIMS CARRY OUT SUCH ATTACKS THEN THEY SHOULD NOT EXPECT JUSTICE," MADHYA PRADESH HOME MINISTER NAROTTAM MISHRA TOLD NDTV, ACCUSING THE COMMUNITY OF RIOTING.

Team Absolute | Khargone

In escalating tensions over clashes during a Ram Navami procession in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone on Sunday, the state Home Minister today directly accused Muslims of violence and rioting. He also defended the state government's widely criticized move to demolish the homes of those who allegedly threw stones at the procession to mark the birth of Hindu god Ram.

"If Muslims carry out such attacks then they should not expect justice," Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra said, accusing the community of rioting.

He also said action would be taken against Congress leader and former Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh.

The state government, he said, is taking action against "rioters and encroachers".

On Sunday, clashes erupted in Khargone in Madhya Pradesh when a Ram Navami procession was passing through a Muslim-dominated locality. According to the police, stones were thrown at the procession after a row over loud devotional music played from loudspeakers. The police fired teargas shells to control the situation.

Many policemen, including police superintendent Siddharth Chaudhary, were injured. Four houses were set on fire and a temple vandalised. "94 people have been arrested. The SP (Superintendent of police), who was shot, is better now. The boy who is on ventilator, is also better than before," Mishra said.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has ordered the demolishing of "illegal buildings" of those involved in the stone throwing. Bulldozers were used to raze about 45 houses and shops.

Around 16 houses and 29 shops were demolished on Monday.

Several opposition parties have protested what they call the use of bulldozers to target a community. In neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was praised as "bulldozer baba" in the recent BJP election campaign. Madhya Pradesh votes next year.

Asked why the administration had launched action against those accused of violence without any due process of law, Mishra said: "Those who can be seen on camera throwing stones, these are not just allegations. We are following due process and they are going to jail," the minister said.

On the demolition of homes targeting entire families even if only one member has been accused of throwing stones, the minister said: "Those who were injured also have families. Why did they not think before doing what they did, using weapons?"

Defending the demolitions, Mishra said action was being taken only after it was established that the property is illegal.

### Chouhan Reviews Law and Order

# Conspiracy to Spread Riots In the State Will Not Be Tolerated: CM



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan reviewed the law and order situation. Home Minister Narottam Mishra, Chief Secretary Shri Iqbal Singh Bains, Director General of Police Sudhir Saxena and other officers were present in

the meeting held at the residence office.

Chouhan told the media after the meeting that strict action is going on against the rioters in the state. He said that this morning the former Chief Minister of the state Digvijaya Singh has tweeted about hoisting of the flag at a religious place. This place is

not from Madhya Pradesh. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that this is a conspiracy to spread religious frenzy in the state. There is a conspiracy to throw the state in the fire of riots. If anyone conspires to spread riots in the state, whoever it is, I will not tolerate it.

It was informed in the meeting that so far 95 rioters have been arrested in Khargone. The arrests are continuing. The rioters have also been identified from the video. Even today, the process of demolition of the property of the rioters will continue in Khargone. It was informed in the meeting that 4 IPS, 15 DSPs and a large number of police forces besides a company of RAF have been deployed in Khargone.

# REPLICA OF SHRI RAM DARBAR PRESENTED TO CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan attended the conclusion of Akhand Ramayana recitation at the residence of Cooperative and Public Service Management Minister Arvind Singh Bhadauria at Swami Dayanandnagar. Bhadauria presented a replica of Ram Darbar to Chief Minister Chouhan.

# FIR Against Digvijaya Singh in Madhya Pradesh Over Tweet Linking Mosque to Khargone Violence

■ CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan also took to the micro-blogging site, saying, Digvijaya Singh has tweeted a photo of youths hoisting saffron flag at a religious place, which is not from Madhya Pradesh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government on Tuesday accused Congress veteran Digvijaya Singh of hatching a "conspiracy to spread religious frenzy" in the state. An FIR was lodged against Singh for allegedly disturbing religious harmony in Madhya Pradesh. This comes after the government said that it was contemplating legal action against him over a tweet in which he sought to link a mosque in another state to violence in MP's Khargone city during a Ram Navami procession.

The FIR was lodged under IPC sections 153(a), 295(a), 465 and 505(2). In the morning, Singh in a tweet posted a picture showing some youths hoisting a saffron flag at a mosque while mentioning about Khargone violence. He later deleted the tweet.

Singh on Tuesday also raised questions over the Khargone administration in connection with the violence there, while tagging a video of BJP leader Kapil Mishra in which he was seen exhorting Hindus to protect their identity while referring to Hindi film "The Kashmir Files", which is based on the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley. Curfew was clamped in the entire Khargone city on Sunday evening after stone-pelting during a Ram Navami procession earlier that day triggered arson.

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FIR was lodged against Singh for allegedly disturbing religious harmony in Madhya Pradesh. This comes after the government said that it was contemplating legal action against him over a tweet in which he sought to link a mosque in another state to violence in MP's Khargone city during a Ram Navami procession. The FIR was lodged under IPC sections 153(a), 295(a), 465 and 505(2). In the morning, Singh in a tweet posted a picture showing some youths hoisting a saffron flag at a mosque while mentioning about Khargone violence. He later deleted the tweet. Singh on Tuesday also raised questions over the Khargone administration in connection with the violence there, while tagging a video of BJP leader Kapil Mishra in which he was seen exhorting Hindus to protect their identity while referring to Hindi film "The Kashmir Files", which is based on the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley. Curfew was clamped in the entire Khargone city on Sunday evening after stone-pelting during a Ram Navami procession earlier that day triggered arson.

"Digvijaya Singh wants to fuel communal tension by spreading confusion. The picture of hoisting the flag at a mosque is not from Madhya Pradesh. Opinions are being taken from legal experts regarding action in this matter." MP Home Minister Narottam Mishra told reporters. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also took to the micro-blogging site, saying, Digvijaya Singh has tweeted a photo of youths hoisting saffron flag at a religious place, which is not from Madhya Pradesh. "This tweet of Digvijaya Singh is a conspiracy to spread religious frenzy in the state and a conspiracy to throw the state in the fire of riots, which will not be tolerated."

# GOVERNOR OF MP AND GUJARAT AND CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN WILL ATTEND WORKSHOP

► WORKSHOP ON ZERO BUDGET BASED FARMING METHOD TO PROMOTE NATURAL FARMING

Team Absolute | Bhopal

There will be a workshop on zero budget based farming method to promote natural farming on 13th April at Kushabhau Thackeray International Convention Center. Governor of Gujarat Acharya Devvrat, Governor of MP Mangubhai Patel and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will attend the workshop. Farmer Welfare and Agriculture Development

Minister Kamal Patel has informed that the state is still number one in the country in terms of organic farming. The workshop will give more boost to organic farming in the state.

Principal Secretary, Farmers Welfare and Agriculture Department KC Gupta has informed that this workshop will be focused on zero budget "natural farming method" to make the state the leading state in the country in agriculture. Subject experts, representatives of voluntary organisations, non-governmental organisations will also participate in this. The workshop will be broadcast live through Doordarshan Madhya Pradesh, Webcast, YouTube, cebook Live etc.

# Voluntary Organisations Should Encourage the Mothers and Sisters of the Family to Receive Education

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH, Ram Kishore Kawre has urged voluntary organisations and social workers to make concerted efforts to bring the mothers and sisters of the family ahead in the field of education to build an ideal society. By doing this we can fulfil the dreams of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. Minister of State Shri Kawre was addressing the anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule at village Bagholi in Balaghat district on Monday.

Kawre said that the State Government is continuously making efforts for the empowerment of women through various schemes. He also garlanded the statue of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule on this occasion. Rs. 20 crore approved for the construction of academic building of Pt. Khushilal Sharma Ayurveda Institute



The Department of AYUSH has approved an amount of about Rs. 20 crore for Pt. Khushilal Sharma Government Ayurveda College and Institute of Bhopal. Along with this,

the college has also sent a proposal for the construction of boys hostel to the AYUSH department of the Central Government. Provision for animal house, pharmacy building and research lab has also been included in the proposal. The works

of construction of a 50-bed super specialty Panchkram hospital and a 500-seater auditorium and furnishing in the institute are in the final stages. The work of herbal garden is being started soon for research work in the institute.

# CM PLANTS KARANJ AND SAPTAPARNI SAPPLINGS

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Karanj and Saptaparni saplings in Smart City Park on Tuesday. Vibha Srivastava, Nepal Singh, Manjula Shrivastava and Rajesh Narayan Srivastava of Rang Socio Cultural Society also planted saplings. Rang Socio Cultural Society is working on environment-protection and cleanliness in Bhopal. This organisation works to make the society aware about environment, cleanliness, Beti Bachao (save daughter) through plays. People are constantly encouraged to plant saplings by the organisation. The organisation has done plantation programmes at more than 50 places in Bhopal. Among the saplings planted today, Karanj is considered important in Ayurvedic medicine. Karanj is also used in religious ceremonies. Saptaparni plant is an evergreen medicinal tree, which has great importance in Ayurveda. This plant is used in the manufacture of various medicines.



# 21 THOUSAND ACRES OF LAND FREED FROM MAFIAS SO FAR: CM

- Land Freed From Mafias Will Be Distributed to the Poor
- Conspiracy to Spread Religious Frenzy in the State Will Not Be Allowed to Succeed
- Chief Minister Addressed the Ministers before the Meeting of the Cabinet
- Presentation Given on Action Taken against Illegal Encroachments and the Land Freed

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan addressed the ministers before the meeting of the Cabinet. Chouhan said that Ram Navami was celebrated with enthusiasm and gaiety in the state, but

attempts were made by anti-social elements to create unrest in Khargone and Sendhwa. The state government has taken both the incidents very seriously.

Chouhan said that strict action will be taken against those who create unrest, no one will be spared. Action is continuing against the goons and rioters. Chief Minister Chouhan apprised the members of the Cabinet that the tweet regarding hoisting of the saffron flag at the religious place is not from Madhya Pradesh. Chouhan said that the conspiracy to spread religious frenzy in the state and throw the state in the fire of riots will not be allowed to succeed. Chief Minister said that I will not allow unrest in my state at any cost. Whoever is involved, such activities will not be tolerated. Trying to incite riots in the state is an unpardonable crime. Madhya Pradesh is an island of peace and this form of the state will be maintained. Chouhan asked all the mem-

bers of the Council of Ministers to discuss with each other to maintain peace and harmony in the districts of their charge. It should be ensured that the law and order remains well ordered, the upcoming festivals go smoothly. Chief Minister said that meetings of the peace committees should be organised, those who cause disturbance should be caught. It is a clear instruction that the perpetrators of the crimes will not be pardoned, whatever legal actions are, will be taken. He Chouhan said that Home Department is taking action against those giving misleading information on social media.

Chief Minister said that 21 thousand acres of land has been freed so far in the actions taken against criminals in the state. This land will basically be used to build houses for the poor by distributing them. The state government has a clear intention that the illegal lands belonging to the mafia should be

freed and distributed among the poor. Where required, the land would be used for building hospitals, schools and anganwadis and other government works. A presentation was made in the meeting regarding action taken against land mafia, goons, habitual criminals and illegal encroachments removed. It was told in the presentation that from April 2020 to March 2022, 15 thousand 397 acres of land of revenue, urban bodies and forest departments were freed, which is worth Rs 11 thousand 941 crore. Along with this, 6 thousand 105 acres of land of private and other departments were also freed. It was informed in the presentation that between March 2021 and March 2022, 4 thousand 495 cases were registered against the land mafia. During this period, 9 thousand 896 illegal encroachments were pulled down, action was taken against 188 persons under NSA and 498 were externed from districts.

# FINAL PUBLICATION OF VOTER LIST OF URBAN BODIES AND PANCHAYATS ON MAY 10

Bhopal: The revised programme of annual revision-2022 of the photo voter list of urban bodies and panchayats has been released by the State Election Commission. Now the final publication of the voter list will take place on May 10, 2022. State Election Commissioner Shri Basant Pratap Singh has informed that the claims and objections received till April 11, 2022 will be resolved by April 16. Final publication of photo voter list will be done on 10 May 2022 at the designated places. Earlier the publication of voter list was to be done on 25 April 2022.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Now, No iftar politics in UP

The politics of Iftar parties in Uttar Pradesh has come to an end. Even though the pandemic restrictions have ended, political parties are now wary of hosting iftar parties that once dominated the entire political spectrum. Iftar is the meal with which Muslims break their day-long fast (Roza) in the month of Ramzan. The Samajwadi Party was known to host iftar parties that were marked by the presence of top Muslim clerics. Ten days into Ramzan, there are no signs of the SP hosting any iftar party this year. The Congress, too, has no plans of hosting it this year. The party is leaderless in the state after UPCC president Ajay Kumar Lallu resigned last month and the party, sources said, was also facing a cash crunch and could not 'afford' an iftar party. S.P. Shukla, a senior political analyst, explained, "Now that state politics is firmly entrenched in the Hindutva mould, on BJP parties are wary of hosting iftar parties and being dubbed pro-Muslim." In the BJP, it was Rajnath Singh as chief minister who hosted iftar parties but Yogi Adityanath discontinued the tradition. As chief minister, BSP supremo Mayawati also used to host iftar parties every year in luxurious five-star hotels but this was only when she was in power. The tradition of iftar parties in Uttar Pradesh was started by former chief minister Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna in the early seventies. The Congress, later followed the tradition and used the iftar party to repair ties with Muslim leaders. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was well acquainted with the traditions of Lucknow, also hosted several parties while he was in public life. While Modi's decision to discontinue the traditional iftar at the Prime Minister's residence can be seen to be conforming to his political playbook, the real mystery lies in the reason for the Congress's cancellation.

MASS VIOLENCE HAS NO PLACE IN DEMOCRACY

D.C. Pathak

Crime including a stray incident of violence in public may have a personal motivation but there was nothing personal about an episode of mass violence -- it was always instigated by politics, domestic or externally guided. For the government of a sovereign democratic nation, the test of success would lie in whether it was able to take note of the first signs of a directed violence -- as different from an agitation that might show aggressiveness -- for preventive action. These markers would always be on the radar of intelligence. Mass violence is the culmination of a brewing process that would never go unnoticed by the nation's internal watch mechanisms. It can, therefore, be said that there was never a case of lack of intelligence in reference to the specific episode of planned militant violence that aimed at causing a mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the valley in early Nineties. The much talked about film -- "The Kashmir Files" has unravelled the background and horrific dimensions of this shameful saga of violence and it is only appropriate that the entire matter was examined in depth to determine if there was connivance of those in positions of authority at that point of time which resulted in the failure of the administration including the Police to adequately respond to the first signs of the impending savagery. This is required to be done in the interest of the future of India as a democratic nation. Beyond some cinematographic liberties the movie has brought out the reality of tragic events of raw violence that was directed against a targeted community. This remained hidden from the gaze of Indian citizens -- for reasons that again were rooted in politics. The leadership of the valley-based political parties in power in the state -- supported by those at the helm of affairs at the Centre -- was so much dependant on the separatists for electoral success that it looked the other way when militants belonging to the lead player in Hurriyat-Jamaat-e-Islami- initially stepped up terrorist violence in the name of Islam. What is worse, it deliberately refused to name Pakistan for cross-border terrorism in the state- ignoring the flow of intelligence -- and the leadership at the Centre too went along with this pro-Pak stand. This is precise-

ly what encouraged the Pak ISI to ultimately plan and execute the sinister act of setting Islamic militants upon the Kashmiri Pandits with brutal violence, to drive the latter out of the valley and achieve the mission of converting the territory into a 'Muslim land' to strengthen Pakistan's claim on it. The victory of the anti-Soviet armed campaign in Afghanistan in fact strengthened Pak ISI's resolve to replicate the Afghan Jihad in Kashmir and the appearance of Harkat ul Ansar -- the first group of Jihadis of Taliban infiltrated into the valley to unleash violence in 1993 -- proved that. If the political leaders of valley parties and those at the Centre would have firmly stood against cross-border terrorism from the very beginning, the Kashmiri Pandits would not have been exposed to the one-sided onslaught of militants. Apologists for Pakistan continue to hedge the issue by alleging that 'atrocities' of Indian army were continuing in Kashmir in the name of counter-terror operations and contending that the 'will' of the Kashmiris was not being ascertained for resolving their problem -- clearly echoing Pakistan's demand for 'self determination'. The result of all this is that faith-based terrorism was still not being condemned unequivocally by the protagonists of 'minority politics' in the country. Mixing politics with religion is bad enough but clubbing politics and violence can be disastrous for democracy. The lobbies at home and abroad working against the Narendra Modi government particularly after the return of BJP in power in 2019, have spread the narrative of majoritarianism, authoritarian rule and suppression of minorities against the regime. In the run up to the recent assembly elections in five states the environ became overlaid by the shadow of communal divide in the country - an important reason for this was the political belief of the opposition parties that against a highly divided majority community the consolidated support of the Muslim minority could become a match winner. The image of integrity and strong governance and the success of schemes meant to help the common households, brought the BJP to power for a remarkable second time in Uttar Pradesh but it appears that SP also improved its position largely because of the full backing of Muslims it got in the state -- this was reflected in the loss of security deposits by the candidates of Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Musalmeen (MIM). What is of serious concern, however, is the fact that the Hindu-Muslim divide is being used by

Pakistan to fish in the troubled waters here. This is a threat to India's internal security. Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan falsely alleged that the 'pro-Hindutva' policies of Modi government had put the position of Muslim minority of India in jeopardy. The action of Pak Foreign Ministry in summoning India's Charge d'Affairs to convey its 'deep concern' over the alleged ban on Hijab in the classroom, imposed in some parts of Karnataka, shows that Pakistan has made its intervention in the internal affairs of India on 'Muslim issues' a part of its foreign policy. In his address to the nation on March 31, Imran Khan made out that US was acting against Pakistan in concert with India. Pakistan has put Indo-Pak relations in a Hindu-Muslim framework -- India has to watch out against this external attempt to cause destabilisation here. It is likely that Islamic radical organisations already active in some parts of India will intensify their covert endeavours to recruit militants while their supporters among the Ulema and the elite stepped up communal propaganda from open forums to fan 'Islamic brotherhood'. There are hardly any voices from the community's leadership warning Pakistan to mind its own business and not pretend to be a caretaker of Indian Muslims. Sponsored writings in India and abroad are already engaged in badmouthing Indian democracy in general and running down Modi government in particular. It is instructive to recall that in India, terrorism was to a significant degree whipped out of communal militancy -- a classical case was the emergence of Indian Mujahideen from the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) an offspring of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind. The Jamaat is a pro-Pak organisation that worked for establishing Hukumat-e-Ilahiya or Islamic Rule in India. Pak ISI has been able to draft militants of all hues of the Islamic spectrum - from Hizbul Mujahideen (HuM) to Taliban- Al Qaeda combine in its proxy war against India in Kashmir and elsewhere. The declared anti-India stance of Pakistan has opened up new ways in which communal front will be exploited for creating internal trouble in India and militancy injected in the name of Islam. Reports of Afghan Mujahideen making an appearance in POK after the return of Taliban Emirate at Kabul do not come as a surprise. There is added work for our Intelligence set up in the days ahead. Politically instigated public violence is becoming a rather common

spectacle in India with states like West Bengal, Kerala and Maharashtra attracting greater notice. The incident of burning down of houses with women and children inside, at Rampurhat village in Birbhum district by a rival political group on March 21, typically illustrates the failure of the law and order management. Law and order is a state subject and its maintenance is generally unsatisfactory because of two reasons -- an excessive political control on the Police machinery and a decline in the quality of leadership of the administration. Birbhum seems to be another example of politically tinted approach of the state Police -- it is significant that material large enough for preparation of 200 crude bombs was recovered in the district within 24 hours of the Chief Minister visiting Rampurhat and ordering the Police to go all out to arrest the culprits and recover arms and ammunition. The CBI now investigating the matter must examine the larger issue of working of the Police on the law and order front and identify the points of failure in this regard for helping the Centre to bring about a general reform. The administrative leadership of the state has to measure up to the new situation where the responsibility of the Police goes beyond maintenance of law and order to the safeguarding of internal security of India - often as a first responder. Political elements instigating disturbances and enemy agents provoking mass violence, have to be identified in time and proceeded against. All of this requires a kind of coordination between the Intelligence agencies of the Centre and the state and district Police set up -- that would work through a system of 'nodal officers' named in advance and made responsible for initiating an effective and integral response on the first reports on a situation of potential public violence. An early reform in the direction of making state administration and Police a little more independent professionally, in dealing with cases of instigated mass violence, is for the Centre to have a Constitutionally valid role in the preparation of panels for the selection of IAS and IPS officers by the state governments for the posts of Chief Secretary and DGP. This course of action was in fact recommended by our Apex court in its observations made in July 2018 while disapproving of the trend of state governments choosing to appoint an 'acting DGP' as a prolifically convenient option.

international

NAWAZ SHARIF WILL HAVE GO TO JAIL UPON HIS RETURN TO PAKISTAN: ABBASI

Islamabad | Agencies

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, who took office after the Pakistani courts ousted then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, has said that even though newly-elected PM Shehbaz Sharif's government is in office, Nawaz Sharif will be sent to jail when he returns to Pakistan.

Abbasi, a senior and trusted member of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), replaced Nawaz Sharif after the latter was found guilty of having assets beyond means and not declaring his designation in his son's company while being a public office holder in the country.

Abbasi has said that Nawaz Sharif will have to come back to Pakistan and go to jail, before being able to get any relief from the courts.

"Mian Nawaz Sharif will come back to Pakistan soon. He will have to go to jail upon his arrival in the country because he is convicted on the cases. So, he will have to go to jail first," Abbasi said. "This will have to happen. Because, in order to get any



relief from the court and his convictions, he needs to be in Pakistan. So, as the law stands, Nawaz Sharif will have to go to jail and then try to get relief from the Pakistani courts," he added. Abbasi also stated that one of the main focuses of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will be to hold accountable the head of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) over using the institution for politically motivated and targeted actions taken

on orders of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. "The NAB needs to be held shut down and its officials need to be held accountable for framing fake cases against political figures, which were politically motivated and had an agenda to target the former government's political opposition," he said. Abbasi also lashed out at sitting President Arif Alvi for not administering the oath taking ceremony of Shehbaz Sharif. Taking a jibe at Alvi's

profession as a dentist, Abbasi said that the President can keep working as long as his tooth doesn't hurt too often. Talking about Imran Khan's call for public protests and resignations from the Parliament, Abbasi said that Khan can keep himself on the streets and keep his demands of early elections to himself. "Imran Khan can keep roaming the streets because this government will complete its tenure," Abbasi said.

Unverified reports say a chemical agent was dropped on Mariupol from Russian drone

London | Agencies

A pro-Putin separatist leader has called for Russia to use chemical weapons to 'smoke out' 4,000 Ukrainian defenders at a key strategic steel plant in Mariupol, the media reported.

Eduard Basurin, deputy head of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, claimed up to 4,000 Ukrainian fighters are taking shelter in the Azovstal complex, one of Europe's largest iron and steel works, which has so far defied Russian attempts to seize it, the Daily Mail reported.

He made the dire warning just hours after Ukraine accused Russia of unleashing a toxic agent from a drone over Mariupol, causing breathing issues, Daily Mail reported.

This morning, the Azov Battalion showed footage purporting to show victims of the apparent attack, who said they have since suffered respiratory problems, high



temperatures and tinnitus.

Making further threats on Russian state TV, Basurin said today: "What is Azovstal? It is a plant built back in Soviet times. There is a lot of concrete, iron, there are many underground floors. So it makes no sense to take this facility by storm." "Therefore, at the moment it is necessary to deal with the blocking of this plant, find all the exits and entrances. In principle, this can be done." And after that, to turn, I think, to the chemical troops, who will find a way to smoke moles out of

their holes." Yesterday's alleged chemical attack has not been confirmed but would be the first time Russia is believed to have used toxic weapons in Putin's barbaric invasion, which the Pentagon said is 'deeply concerning'.

US Defence Department spokesman John Kirby said: "We are aware of social media reports which claim Russian forces deployed a potential chemical munition in Mariupol, Ukraine. We cannot confirm at this time and will continue to monitor the situation closely."

RUSSIA MOVES MISSILE SYSTEMS, MILITARY EQUIPMENT TOWARDS FINLAND BORDER

London: Russian heavy weapons, including missile systems, have been seen moving towards the border with Finland, hours after Russia warned its northern neighbour against joining NATO, media reports said.

An unconfirmed video uploaded last night appears to show two Russian coastal defence missile systems moving along a road on the Russian side of the border that leads to Helsinki, Daily Mail reported. The missile systems are thought to be the K-300P Bastion-P mobile coastal defence system, designed to take out surface ships up to and including aircraft carrier battle groups. The Russian deployment comes as Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin said she expects her government "will end the discussion before midsummer" on whether to apply for NATO membership, Daily Mail reported. Recent opinions polls by a Finnish market research company put 84 per cent of Finns as viewing Russia as a "significant military threat", up by 25 per cent on last year. In response to Marin's statement, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov euphemistically warned the move would "not improve" the security situation in Europe, and Russian lawmaker Vladimir Dzhabarov added more bluntly it would mean "the destruction of the country". "We have repeatedly said that the alliance remains a tool geared towards confrontation and its further expansion will not bring stability to the European continent," Peskov said.

PPP APPEARS RELUCTANT TO JOIN NEW PAKISTAN CABINET



Islamabad | Agencies

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) appears to be reluctant to join the new Pakistan federal cabinet due to division in its ranks as most of its leaders are seeking support for electoral

reforms without taking ministries while others are of the view that the coalition government won't last for even two months if they opt to keep to the sidelines, Express Tribune reported.

In this regard, sources said PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and

Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari have started consultations on the matter in the light of different and contradictory views.

The sources said most of the PPP leaders are seeking the new federal government's support for electoral reforms without taking charge of ministries.

Some of the leaders are of the opinion that they should join the federal cabinet for political stability. They believe that participation is necessary for political stability, and if they did not join the cabinet, the coalition government would not be able to function for even two months.

A decision on the PPP's inclusion in the federal cabinet will be taken in the next few days, they added.

Following an in-house change through the vote of no-confidence, the erstwhile joint opposition moved to the treasury benches after ousting the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and elected Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif as the 23rd prime minister of Pakistan.

IRAN SEEKS PROTECTION OF ITS DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

Tehran: Tehran has sought protection of its diplomatic missions in Afghanistan and "necessary guarantees" for the safe operation of its diplomatic offices in the country following rallies held by Afghans in various provinces in reaction to reported incidents of harassment of Afghan migrants in Iran. The call was made by the Iran Foreign Ministry's Spokesman, Saeed Khatibzadeh on Monday at a press conference, according to a statement by Iranian Foreign Ministry. "Referring to the deep historical and multi-layered relations between Iranian and Afghan nations and the decades of respectful hospitality of the Iranian people and government to the people of Afghanistan, he warned against the plans of conspirators and ill-wishers between Iran and Afghanistan," the statement said. "Unfortunately, some clips and comments are being published with the aim of creating phobia of Iran or Afghanistan, which targets the emotions of the people and demands more vigilance from the people and officials of the two countries." A number of Kabul residents held a rally on Tuesday morning at Sehat Ama roundabout in reaction to the issue, calling for an end to misconduct towards Afghan migrants in the neighbouring country. Meanwhile, Khatibzadeh was quoted by the statement as saying that they are in constant contact with the Ambassador and other officials of the Iran mission in Afghanistan.



# PM MODI NAMED FOR 1ST LATA MANGESHKAR MEMORIAL AWARD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi shall be conferred the First Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Award at the annual 80th Master Deenanath Mangeshkar Awards ceremony here next week, a family member said here on Monday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Prime Minister Narendra Modi shall be conferred the First Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Award at the annual 80th Master Deenanath Mangeshkar Awards ceremony here next week, a family member said here on Monday.

The new award shall be given to Modi at a function to be jointly organised by the late Master Deenanath Mangeshkar Smrutipratishthan, Pune and Hridayesh Arts.

The announcement of the new award and other awardees was made by Pandit Hridaynath Mangeshkar here, to be given away on April 24, the 80th death anniversary of his father, Master Deenanath Mangeshkar, at the event to be presided over by Usha Mangeshkar.

The awards in various fields were nurtured

and conferred for 32 years by the late Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar who passed away here on February 6.

The Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Award shall be given to only one individual every year, as decided by the family trustees, and the inaugural honour shall be conferred on the PM in the Special Individual category.

The late Deenanath Mangeshkar Puraskar shall be given to Rahul Deshpande, (Indian Music), Asha Parekh, Jackie Shroff, (Special Award for dedicated services to Indian cinema).

Besides, the famous Mumbai Dabbawalas shall also be conferred the honour for dedicated Social Work, and Sanjay Chaya for Drama.

PM Narendra Modi named for the 1st 'Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Puraskar' which was announced at a press conference by the Mangeshkar family, here today.

# 300 new 'One Stop Centres' for violence-hit women in India: Irani

Encouraged by the success of the One Stop Centres (OSC) to support women affected by violence, the government plans to open 300 more OSCs soon, Union Minister for Women & Child Development Smriti Irani said here on Tuesday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Encouraged by the success of the One Stop Centres (OSC) to support women affected by violence, the government plans to open 300 more OSCs soon, Union Minister for Women & Child Development Smriti Irani said here on Tuesday. She said presently, there are 704 OSCs functioning in the country to help out women hit by violence in private or public spaces, family, community, or at workplaces.

So far, in collaboration with Women's Helplines, over 70 lakh women have been helped by the Central and state governments and now 300 more OSCs will be opened, Irani added. She said that under the Nirbhaya Fund, various projects worth Rs 9,000 crore have been implemented between 2014-2021 to ensure the safety and security of women, with women's health and empow-



erment becoming an integral part of the government's programmes and policies.

The Minister was speaking at the Zonal Conference of States and Stakeholders from Western Region in Mumbai, on a variety of issues with participation from Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu. Other speakers included Union Minister of State Dr. Mahendra Munjpara, Maharashtra Minister for Women & Child Development Yashomati Thakur, top officials like Indevvar Pandey, I.A. Kundan and others on three women-centric topics - Mission Poshan 2.0, Mission Shakti, and Mission Vatsalya.

In this context, Irani said that a whopping Rs 171,000 crore has been allocated for women related programmes which is a 14 per cent increase.

Observing how at the fiscal year-end, states would approach the Centre with problems on implementing the schemes, so as per Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance and the spirit of cooperative federalism, the Centre now proactively reaches out to the states and all stakeholders via the Zonal Conferences, she added.

Highlighting her ministry's work, she said over 1.1 million toilets have been built for women under the Swachh Bharat Mission, and separate girls' toilets constructed in over 400,000 government schools in one year to arrest the high 23 per cent dropout ratio of girl students. According to the Minister, under Ayushman Bharat, 45 crore women have taken advantage of healthcare schemes and proved skeptics wrong, over 7 crore women have screened themselves or undergoing treatment for breast cancer or cervical cancer or other women-related issues beating social taboos. Munjpara said that 'Saksham Aanganwadi' and Poshan 2.0 are part of the Mission Shakti and Mission Vatsalya, which are pillars for strengthening women and child development works, and now 12.56 lakh 'pucca' Aanganwadi Kendras are functioning with proper toilets, drinking water and other basic amenities, and more Aanganwadis shall be equipped soon with such standard facilities.

# ED ATTACHES PROPERTY OF IQBAL KASKAR'S AIDE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday said that it has attached immovable asset worth Rs 55 lakh belonging to one Mumtaz Ezaz Shaikh, a close aide of Iqbal Kaskar, brother of Underworld Gangster Dawood Ibrahim, in connection with a prevention of money laundering case involving extortion.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday said that it has attached immovable asset worth Rs 55 lakh belonging to one Mumtaz Ezaz Shaikh, a close aide of Iqbal Kaskar, brother of Underworld Gangster Dawood Ibrahim, in connection with a prevention of money laundering case involving extortion.

The ED initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of an FIR registered against Iqbal Kaskar, Mumtaz Shaikh and Israr Ali Jamil

Saiyad for extortion under various sections of IPC.

The police also filed a charge sheet in this matter in 2017 under section 3(i)(ii), 3(2), 3(4) and 3(5) of the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, read with section 384, 386, 387, 34 and 120B of the IPC.

During the investigation, the ED found that the complainant Suresh Devichand Mehta, a real estate builder and developer, was running the business of construction with his partner through his firm Darshan

enterprises. Kaskar, Shaikh and Saiyad due to close proximity with underworld Gangster Dawood Ibrahim managed to extort one flat in Thane in the name of Shaikh.

Besides the aforesaid flat, four cheques of Rs 10 lakh as demanded by them were issued by the builder which had been encashed by the accused. These accounts were operated only for withdrawing the cash amount of Rs 10 lakh and no other transactions were carried out in these accounts. These accounts were operated to hide the end user,

the real user of the extorted amounts.

"It is also revealed that the accused persons extorted cash amounts from Suresh Devichand Mehta during that period. On February 18, 2022 Kaskar was arrested for his involvement in the offence of money laundering and is presently under judicial custody. Proceeds of Crime in the form of a flat at Thane was in the name of Shaikh. It has been attached," said the ED official. Further investigation in the matter was underway.

# Pawar home attack: Lawyer's police custody extended by 2 days

A Mumbai court on Monday extended the police custody of activist-lawyer Gunratana Sadavarte, one of the prime accused in the attack on NCP supremo Sharad Pawar's residence, by 2 days till Wednesday, officials said here.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Mumbai court on Monday extended the police custody of activist-lawyer Gunratana Sadavarte, one of the prime accused in the attack on NCP supremo Sharad Pawar's residence, by 2 days till Wednesday, officials said here.

Sadavarte, the lawyer of Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), was

arrested in connection with the April 8 attack.

Another 109 persons, mostly MSRTC staffers, were also nabbed for the incident and sent to 14 days judicial custody by the Esplanade Magistrate Court. Accused of making inflammatory speeches at a MSRTC meeting among other things, Sadavarte was sent to 2 days police custody on Saturday which has been extended by 2 more days. The Maharashtra government has ordered an enquiry into the episode that stunned political circles and sparked a huge row between the Maha Vikas Aghadi and Bharatiya Janata Party. Transport Minister Anil Parab on Sunday indicated that those MSRTC staffers found guilty in the attack would be sacked from service, even as the Mumbai Police came under severe fire for allegedly ignoring intelligence inputs warning of the possible violence at least 4 days before it occurred, and several officers have been shunted out.

# PNB loan fraud: Nirav Modi's aide Subhash Shankar brought to India

In a significant development, Subhash Shankar, a close aide of absconding diamondaire Nirav Modi has been deported to Mumbai from Egypt by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with the loan fraud case of Punjab National Bank (PNB) involving Mehul Choksi and others.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a significant development, Subhash Shankar, a close aide of absconding diamondaire Nirav Modi has been deported to Mumbai from Egypt by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with the loan fraud case of Punjab National Bank (PNB) involving Mehul Choksi and others.

Shankar was DGM Finance in Nirav Modi's company. Red corner notice had been issued against him.

The federal probe agency was working to bring him back to India for a long time in connection with the loan fraud case of PNB.

"He has been placed under arrest. We will produce him before a Mumbai court and will seek his custodial remand. He will be then further interrogated," said a CBI official.

Shankar is facing charges of criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust by a public servant or by banker merchant or agent, cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property and prevention of Corruption Act.

The CBI has already filed a charge sheet against him four years ago on the basis of



which the Interpol issued a red corner notice against him. Special CBI court of J.C. Jagdale had also issued an arrest warrant against him. Shankar, 49, fled abroad along with Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi in 2018. He is considered to be the most trusted person of Nirav Modi and handled his entire business.

# 'Convict in Mumbai blasts can't dictate terms', Centre to SC in Abu Salem case

The Centre on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that gangster Abu Salem is a convict in Mumbai serial blasts case and he cannot dictate terms either to the court or the government.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that gangster Abu Salem is a convict in Mumbai serial blasts case and he cannot dictate terms either to the court or the government.

Earlier during the day, advocate Rishi Malhotra, representing Abu Salem, had submitted that the home secretary does not have time to file an affidavit in the case, pointing at no response from the government in the matter. A bench comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and M.M. Sundresh asked the government lawyer present in the courtroom to check whether the home secretary would make an oral statement.

The matter came for hearing again in the afternoon. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the



Centre, objected to Salem's lawyer's submissions saying: "Lordship please ask him no to insist like this. He (Salem) is a convict in Mumbai serial blasts. He cannot dictate terms to the court or the government".

Justice Kaul said the court is not on this individual case, but ramifications of it. "It can impede other processes", said the bench. Mehta submitted: "Lordship please do not make such comments. It should not become a cause of concern for you in other cases. The press may report it.". The bench replied, "Let them report it, we are not bothered".

The Union home secretary failed to

file an affidavit before the Supreme Court on whether India will honour the commitment, made by its deputy PM to Portugal, on limiting Abu Salem's jail term to 25 years.

After hearing arguments, the top court gave more time to Centre to file its response in the matter and scheduled it for further hearing on April 21.

On March 8, the Supreme Court asked the Union home secretary to file an affidavit, whether the Centre is committed to adhere to the assurance given by the then deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani to Portugal authorities, to not incarcerate gang-

ster Abu Salem for more than 25 years while seeking his extradition.

The top court asked the Centre to make its stand clear on the issue. It emphasised that not abiding by the assurance made to the Portugal authorities, could have wider ramifications and it may create problems while seeking extradition of fugitives from other countries. The top court said it is not happy with the CBI's reply in the matter and sought a response from the home secretary in three weeks.

The CBI, in its affidavit, has told the top court that an Indian court is not bound by the assurance given in 2002 by the then deputy prime minister to the courts in Portugal that gangster Abu Salem would not be imprisoned beyond 25 years after his extradition to India. Malhotra, representing Salem, argued before the bench that as per the principle of reciprocity in Portugal the courts cannot award a sentence for more than 25 years. He added that based on the principle of reciprocity, the government of India had given a solemn sovereign assurance to the Portugal courts that in case Salem is permitted to be extradited back to India, he will not be given punishment for more than 25 years.

# FIRE ENGULFS 20 ELECTRIC SCOOTERS

The electric scooters from Jitendra EV were being taken to Karnataka's Bengaluru when the fire broke out

Nashik | Agencies

At least 20 electric scooters being transported on a long truck were destroyed in a fire near the company's factory in Maharashtra's Nashik.

The electric scooters from Jitendra EV were being taken to Karnataka's Bengaluru when the fire broke out.

The truck was carrying 40 scooters; some reports say all the 40 electric vehicles, or EVs, were damaged in the fire. This was the fifth incident involving fires in electric two-wheelers in the last three weeks. On March 26, an Ola S1 Pro elec-

tric scooter burst into flames in Pune, followed by another fire of an Okinawa electric scooter in Vellore, Tamil Nadu. On March 28, another incident was reported from Trichy in Tamil Nadu, while a fourth incident was reported on March 29 from Chennai. Experts have said the quality of batteries and related systems used in electric scooters could be the cause of these incidents. There is a call for proper safety regulation and thorough quality checks of EVs in the two-wheeler segment, which has seen tremendous growth in recent years. A Jitendra EV spokesperson in a statement said the situation on April 9 was immediately brought under control by timely intervention from their team. "Safety being of prime importance, we are investigating the root cause and we will come up with the findings in coming days," the spokesperson said.

# Maharashtra to start process of demarcation of ward boundaries on Population basis

Circular was issued by the urban development department of the state government directing commissioners of all the Municipal corporations whose term was over and is about to end

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Government on Monday issued a circular directing Municipal Corporations including BMC to start the process of demarcation of ward boundaries on the basis of population of their respective cities.

Circular was issued by the urban development department of the state government directing commissioners of all the Municipal corporations whose term

was over and is about to end. BMC should immediately start its work of ward demarcation and decide the number of wards on the basis of population of the city.

According to the BMC, the corporation will once again not make a fresh draft, instead, they will use two drafts that have already been prepared.

"As of now, we have two ward demarcation drafts with us, the first draft is that which we had submitted to the election commission in

the month of December for approval. And the second draft was made after hearing suggestions and objections," said Additional Municipal Commissioner Suresh Kakani. "We will not make a fresh draft on the basis of population because we already have those drafts. And again preparing new drafts and calling suggestions and objections will not be appropriate," said Kakani. Kakani also made it clear that the number of wards would be 236, but the final decision will be taken

after conducting a meeting with the Municipal commissioner, he added. During the last assembly session the state government had cancelled all the ward demarcation of the process of the BMC and other corporation elections. The state government had said that a new ward demarcation process would be undertaken under BMC Act. Recently, it has been revealed under the RTI application that BMC has spent Rs. 27.10 crore for the ward demarcation process.

# 'WHERE IS MAN WHO HAS YOUR SECURITY?': MAHARASHTRA MINISTER'S JAB OVER SOMAIYA

Mumbai: Maharashtra home minister Dilip Walse-Patil said Tuesday he will seek information from the centre regarding the whereabouts of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Kirit Somaiya, who faces a cheating case in connection with money collected to save decommissioned aircraft carrier INS Vikrant from being scrapped. Patil, a senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader, said, "We will ask the centre where is the man (Kirit Somaiya) who has your security." Somaiya, a former parliamentarian, has been given 'Z' category security by the centre. Walse-Patil hit out at Somaiya, a harsh critic of the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, and told reporters that while it is easy to level allegations against others, "... when allegations are made against you, you don't face it. This is not a sign of bravery." Raut claimed Monday the two might have fled the country in the wake of the allegation. He claimed Somaiya was hiding in either Gujarat or Goa, which is ruled by the BJP. "I fear till anticipatory bail is arranged... they may flee India. So, a lookout notice must be issued immediately," Raut declared. "Ten years after the symbolic event of BJP, Shiv Sena's 'Save Vikrant' campaign, Sanjay Raut starts 58 crore laundering bogus allegations with no document or proof to divert or stop us. We will not stop exposing the scams of the Thackeray government! Will approach the Mumbai high court next!" Somaiya's tweet, roughly translated from Marathi, read.



# Selena Gomez warns body shamers not to 'B\*\*\*H about' her weight

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-actress Selena Gomez has warned body-shamers on a social media post not to "b\*\*\*h about" her weight. Making use of her TikTok Story, the 29-year-old singer/actress shared a clip of her saying, "So I be trying to stay skinny, but I went to Jack in the Box and I got four tacos, three egg rolls, onion rings and a spicy chicken sandwich."

She added that she doesn't judge herself for what she eats and wishes other people wouldn't either, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.

"But honestly, I don't care about my weight because people b\*\*\*h about it anyway," Selena said.

"You're too small, 'you're too big,' 'that doesn't fit.' 'Meh meh meh meh,' she continued, before slamming the trolls, "B\*\*\*h, I am perfect the way I am."

This wasn't the first time Selena talked about hateful comments she received over her body.

During an interview with *Cosmopolitan* in 2020, the 'Bad Liar' singer revealed that her weight often fluctuates due to the medications she took to help her combat Lupus.

"I've gotten insecure. I also have lupus so I fluctuate in my weight a lot," she had confessed.

However, the singer-actress shared that she's learned how to deal with the

insensitive remarks after being body-shamed in 2019.

In 2019, Selena was heavily body-shamed as her health issues resulted in weight fluctuations. She even decided to quit social media because of it. During an appearance on the 'Giving Back Generation' podcast in November that year, she said, "I experienced (body shaming) with my weight fluctuation for the first time."

"I have lupus and deal with kidney issues and high blood pressure, so I deal with a lot of health issues, and for me that's when I really started noticing more of the body image stuff," she explained. "So for me, I really started to notice when people started attacking me for that."

The 'Lose You to Love Me' songstress elaborated further, "In reality, that's just my truth. I fluctuate. It depends on what's happening in my life." All of the negativity took a toll on her mental health as well.

"That got to me big time. I think for me, that really messed me up for a bit," she admitted.



# Sierra McCormick, Jade Pettyjohn to star in supernatural thriller 'Burnouts'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actors Sierra McCormick, Jade Pettyjohn, Brenna D'Amico, Gianni DeCenzo and Bentley Green have got on board to star in 'Burnouts', a supernatural thriller from writer-director Tim Donner.

The film sees a group of grieving teens, hot off of quarantine, head off for a much-needed retreat to reconnect and mend their wounds. A seance subsequently leads to an evening where anything can and does happen, reports 'Deadline'. McCormick recently had an arc on FX on 'American Horror Stories', and can currently be seen in the horror film 'We Need to Do Something', which is streaming on Hulu. Additional credits include the comedy 'Land of the Lost', with Will Ferrell and Danny McBride, and the acclaimed Amazon film, 'The Vast of Night'. Pettyjohn has recently been seen on series including 'Big Sky' and 'Little Fires Everywhere'. D'Amico plays Jane in 'Descendants' franchise, and has also appeared in films including 'Night Night and Crushed'. Other upcoming projects include Phillip Clark Davis' comedy 'Saturday at the Starlight', with Abigail Breslin, Denise Richards and Tony Cavalero, and Damian Drago's comedy 'High Adventure'.



# BRITNEY SPEARS ANNOUNCES PREGNANCY DAYS AFTER SUBTLY REVEALING SHE'S MARRIED

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Britney Spears has announced her pregnancy just a few days after she subtly revealed that she has secretly tied the knot with actor Sam Asghari. Taking to her Instagram page, the 'Oops!...I Did It Again' singer wrote, "I lost so much weight to go on my Maui trip only to gain it back. I thought, 'Geez... what happened to my stomach ???' My husband said, 'No you're food pregnant silly !!!' " She continued, "So I got a pregnancy test... and hhhhhhh well... I am having a baby," reports *aceshowbiz.com*.

"4 days later I got a little more food pregnant. It's growing !!!" Britney added. The 40-year-old pop star then said, "If 2 [babies] are in there a I might just loose it."

She later explained that she "obviously won't be going out as much due to the paps getting their money shot of me."

Elsewhere in her lengthy caption, Britney told her fans that "it's hard because when I was pregnant I had perinatal depression" and "it is absolutely horrible." Spears, who testified that she was forced to keep her IUD in during her conservatorship, concluded her post, "This time I will be doing yoga every day !!! Spreading lots of joy and love !!!"

# Sean Penn considered 'taking up arms against Russia'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Director-actor Sean Penn considered joining Ukraine's resistance against Russia. "I was at the gas station in Brentwood the other day and I'm now thinking about taking up arms against Russia? What the f\*\*\* is going on?" he told the inaugural edition of new quarterly magazine *Hollywood Authentic*, reports 'Variety'.

Penn, who was in Ukraine filming a documentary about the country when Russia invaded, said he originally met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Zoom two years ago, "early on in the pandemic".

"We first started discussing a potential documentary about his country that wasn't focused particularly on the war," Penn said.

"And since then there's been a lot of exchanges



between us. Then I went and met him face to face the day before the invasion. And I was with him during the invasion, on day one."

Penn even contemplated fighting himself.

"The only possible reason for me staying in Ukraine longer last time would've been for me to be holding a rifle, probably without body armour, because as a foreigner, you would want to give that body armour to one of the civilian fighters who doesn't have it or to a fighter with more skills than I have, or to a younger man or woman who could fight for longer or whatever."

So, where I am in life is short of doing that, but if you've been in Ukraine, (fighting) has to cross your mind. And you kind of think what century is this?"

Penn, who returned to the US at the beginning of March, also revealed he plans to return to the war-torn country. "My intention is to go back to Ukraine," he said.

# Nicolas Cage's first reaction to 'Unbearable Weight' pitch was 'absolute horror'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Nicolas Cage has won an Oscar, starred in both blockbusters and indie titles, inspired internet memes and stolen the Declaration of Independence.

Now, he's being honoured in the most Cage way

possible, by starring as a version of himself, called Nick Cage, in the new Lionsgate movie 'The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent', reports 'Variety'.

When Cage first got the pitch for the meta-comedy-drama-action film, his first response was "absolute horror."

"There was no muscle in my body that told me I should play a character named Nick Cage, it was absolute horror," he told 'Variety' at the New York premiere on Sunday.

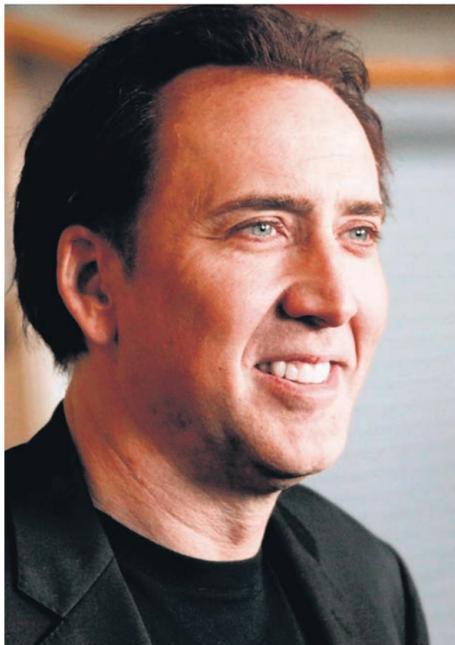
"However, the director wrote me a very intelligent, sensitive letter, and in that letter I knew he was a true film enthusiast that likes some of the earlier work. He wanted to make a movie that was about people, not about caricatures or cartoons."

The film's Nick Cage is a world-famous actor, but one who's on the verge of retirement and is a "highly neurotic" and "anxiety-filled interpretation".

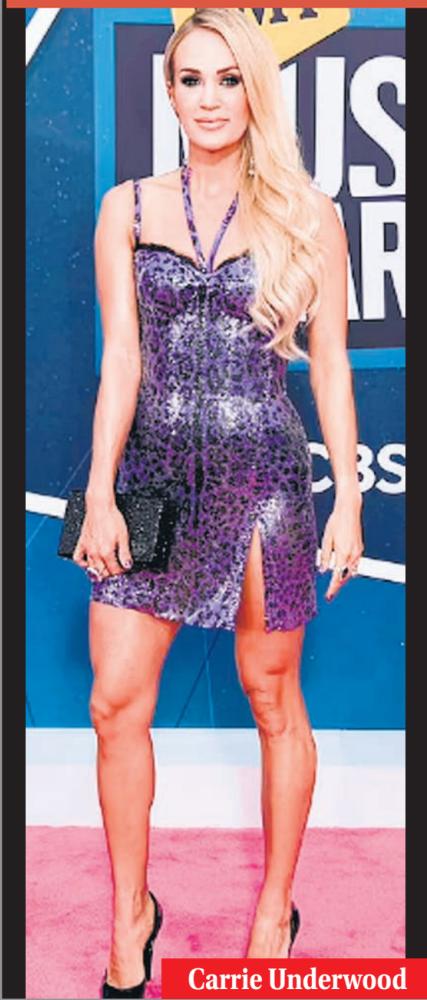
Before calling it quits from acting, Nick Cage accepts an offer from a billionaire fan, played by Pedro Pascal, to attend his birthday party. However, the super fan turns out to be a super crime boss, and Cage must escape using the action skills from his movie career.

"It was a balancing act. Like I'm on a high wire, and if I slipped it was a pretty big fall. I had to facilitate the vision of so-called Nick Cage," the actor said.

"(Cage) just wanted to make sure we weren't out to make fun of him or make fun of the things he's done. We took it seriously, and once he understood that, he became more and more comfortable with [co-writer Kevin Etten] and I as filmmakers," director Tom Gormican told 'Variety'.



# ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Carrie Underwood



## IPL 2022

# CSK BEAT RCB BY 23 RUNS FOR FIRST WIN OF SEASON

Navi Mumbai | Agencies

Superlative bowling performance by Maheesh Theekshana (4/33) and skipper Ravindra Jadeja (3/39) after brilliant fighting knocks by Shivam Dube (95 not out) and Robin Uthappa (88) helped defending champions Chennai Super Kings overcome Royal Challengers Bangalore by 23 runs for their first win in IPL 2022 at the D.Y. Patil Stadium here on Tuesday.

Left-arm medium-pacer Theekshana sent back RCB skipper Faf du Plessis for 8 and fellow opener Anuj Rawat for 12 while fellow pacer Mukesh Choudhary got former skipper Virat Kohli out for one as RCB slumped to 42/3 from which they did not recover. Theekshana returned back for his second spell and sent back Shahbaz Ahmed (41) and Suyash rabhuddesai (34)



### Brief scores :

Chennai Super Kings 216/4 in 20 overs (Shivam Dube 95 not out, Robin Uthappa 88; Wanindu Hasaranga 2/35, Josh Hazlewood 1/33) beat Royal Challengers Bangalore 193/9 in 20 overs (Shahbaz Ahmed 41, Suyash Prabhudessai 34, Dinesh Karthik 34; Maheesh Theekshana 4/33, Ravindra Jadeja 3/39).

to complete his four wickets as RCB, chasing a target of 217, were restricted to 193/9 in 20 overs. The heroics of the Chennai Super Kings' bowlers came after sensational counter-attacking half-centuries by Shivam Dube

(95 not out off 46) and Robin Uthappa (88 off 50) propelled them to a mammoth 216/4 after RCB won the toss and elected to bowl first. CSK were in a spot of bother at 36-2 after 6.4 overs but Uthappa and Dube took RCB

bowlers to the cleaners and stitched a whopping 165 runs off just 74 balls for the third wicket, helping the team post a big total, which they eventually defended successfully for their first win in five matches.

## Jr women's hockey world cup

# India lose bronze medal match in shoot-out against England

Potchefstroom (South Africa) | Agencies

India ended its campaign in the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup on a disappointing note, losing to England in the bronze medal match in a heart-breaking shoot-out on Tuesday.

India were leading 2-1 into the final quarter of the match before England struck with three minutes to go to end the match 2-2. In the shoot-out, the Indians missed all three attempts as England capitalised on all three chances to win the match 3-0 and clinched the bronze medal.

India were playing for their second bronze medal in the Junior Women's World Cup after finishing third in 2013. They started well as the first quarter ended 0-0.

Mumtaz Khan struck a brace of goals in the 20th and 46th minute as India cancelled Millie Giglio's opening strike for England in the 17th minute and surged to a 2-1 lead at the North West University. Just when it looked like the match was going India's way, Claudia Swain struck the equaliser in the 57th minute to hold India 2-2.

In the shoot-out, Maddie Axford,



Claudia Swain and Katie Curtis scored for England while skipper Salima Tete, Sangita Kumari and Sharmila Devi missed their attempts for India.

This is the second time an Indian team has lost a bronze medal match to England. Last year, the senior India women's team had lost to England in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Overall, it was a superb campaign for the Indian junior women's team as it came into the tournament without many international matches under its belt because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Mumtaz Khan was the top scorer for India with eight goals and impressed everyone with her superb anticipation and game sense.

# NZ pacer Hamish Bennett retires from cricket

Christchurch | Agencies

New Zealand fast bowler Hamish Bennett on Tuesday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket, ending his 17-year-old professional career, stating that the 2021-22 season would be his last.

The 35-year-old Bennett has made 31 appearances for New Zealand across all three formats and took 43 wickets and most recently he featured in the T20is versus Bangladesh last September.

Bennett made his inter-



national debut for the Black Caps in an ODI against Bangladesh in 2010 and made his lone Test appearance a month later against India in Ahmedabad.

The pacer was picked for the 2011 World Cup but was sidelined thereafter with a lower-back injury which eventually required him to undergo a major surgery the following year. The injury may have curtailed his New Zealand career, he remained a key member of Canterbury and Wellington sides, the latter being the domestic side he switched to in 2016.

# VICTORIA CONFIRMED AS HOST FOR 2026 COMMONWEALTH GAMES

London | Agencies

The 23rd edition of the Commonwealth Games will be held in five cities in the Victoria state of Australia in March 2026, the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) has confirmed.

The host city contract was signed in Victoria on Monday.

"In what will be a first-ever predominantly regional Commonwealth Games, Victoria 2026 will be staged in March 2026 across multiple cities and regional hubs including Melbourne, Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat and Gippsland. The Opening Ceremony will take place at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground," the CGF announced in a release.

The announcement represents a successful exclusive dialogue period between the CGF, Commonwealth Games Australia (CGAus) and Victoria, where an exciting proposal to stage the major multi-sport competition across the State was agreed upon. The proposal capitalises on the 2026/30 Strategic Roadmap, which provides renewed flexibility to be innovative and creative in delivering the Games, the CGF said.

CGF President Dame Louise Martin said, "The Commonwealth Games Federation is absolutely



delighted to award the 2026 Commonwealth Games to Victoria. Commonwealth Games Australia and the Victorian Government have set out a bold and innovative vision for hosting our major multi-sport event. In Victoria, we believe we have found the perfect partner for the next stage of our journey. "This is a very special moment for the Commonwealth Sports Family and on behalf of the entire Movement, I would like to congratulate Commonwealth Games Australia and Victoria on their successful Games submission. We now look forward to a bright future as we work together to

stage a Commonwealth Games like no other," she said. On the occasion, Premier of Victoria Daniel Andrews said, "It's a great honour to have Victoria chosen as the host venue for the 2026 Commonwealth Games -- we can't wait to welcome the world to our state." "The Commonwealth Games in regional Victoria is great for jobs, hospitality and our economy," he added. "Australia has staged the Commonwealth Games on five occasions, with Victoria playing host to the Melbourne 2006 Games; widely considered one of the most successful editions of the event in history. The country has also staged the Games in Sydney in 1938, Perth in 1962, Brisbane in 1982 and most recently Gold Coast in 2018. Victoria has also hosted the Commonwealth Youth Games in Bendigo in 2004," he added.

Victoria has a strong track record for staging high-profile sporting competitions including The Australian Open tennis grand slam, the Melbourne Formula 1 Grand Prix and the Melbourne Cup. The Melbourne Cricket Ground is a major cricket venue in Australia and hosts international and domestic matches regularly. The 2022 Commonwealth Games will be staged in Birmingham, England from July 28 to August 8.

# RR has been experimenting a lot; Ashwin's retired out not out of the blue: Samson

Mumbai | Agencies

Rajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson has said that Ravichandran Ashwin's decision to 'retire out' -- which caught everyone, including some of his team-mates, by surprise -- was not something out of the blue, and that it had been under discussion in the side before the start of IPL 2022.

Whether it had been planned by Ashwin or not, but after pushing Lucknow Super Giants' (LSG) Avesh Khan to cover for a single, he kept running after completing the run and stopped only after reaching the dressing room. The fact that Riyan Parag walked out to bat straightaway meant the team was expecting such a move from Ashwin.

Ashwin's batting partner at that time, Shimron Hetmyer struck Khan for sixes of successive deliveries and Parag too struck a big six before getting out, going for another big one off the penultimate delivery of the match to boost RR's score to 165 for six. The winners of the inaugural IPL edition then restricted LSG to 162/8 for a narrow three-run win.

Samson conceded that RR were trying out different strategies in the current edition of the IPL.



"It's about being Rajasthan Royals. We keep trying different things. Have been talking about it before the season. We thought that if some situation occurs, we can use it. Was a team decision," Samson said.

However, West Indies' Shimron Hetmyer had said after the match that he had no idea about the 'retired out' strategy. "I had no idea about it! He (Ashwin) was also a bit tired. It was a good decision, as the kid (Parag) hit a six for us."

Rajasthan's director of cricket, Kumar Sangakkara too has praised Ashwin's decision to sacrifice his wicket.

"It was the right time to do that. Ashwin himself was asking from the field as well and we had discussed just before that as to what we would do. As the coach I got one call wrong not sending Riyan Parag ahead of Rassie van der Dussen and holding Rassie back.

"so we couldn't get the full benefit of Riyan, but how Ashwin handled that situation, walking in under pressure, he batted, supported the team and then finally sacrificed himself in terms of retiring himself out and then backed it up with a magnificent bowling effort," said Sangakkara.

# Minerva Academy crowned champions of 2022 Mina Cup

Dubai | Agencies

Minerva Academy trounced Dubai-based La Liga HPC Academy 4-0 to win the Mina Cup for U12, here on Tuesday.

Minerva, who have defeated teams like Go Pro Sports Club, Barcelona before entering the finals, opened the scoring in the 13th minute. A throw-in down the left led to a bit of a scramble in the box, but the quickest to react was Thiyam, who fired the ball into the back of the net to make it 1-0. Thiyam was indeed unstoppable as he scored in the very next minute again. La Liga HPC was clearly hassled, and Minerva took the chance to open them up again. The ball was played to Thiyam in a similar position to where he scored his first from. He had just one thing in mind, took a touch and slotted it into the bottom corner.

It was looking very comfortable indeed for the team from India, who held onto their 2-goal lead through long periods of the game.

A win was imminent, but the Minervans were hungry for more. It was Thiyam yet again, who provided the third, and his hat-trick goal was his best of the evening. The ball fell for him just outside the box, and he put



his foot through it for the first time to find the bottom corner. It was a stunning finish.

With the trophy in the bag, there was still time for just one more goal, which came in stoppage time. An excellent move down the right culminated with Jayed getting a tap-in, which he put away to make it 4-0.

With that, Minerva Academy snapped up the victory and indeed snapped up the 2022 Mina Cup trophy. Thiyam won the Man of the Tournament, as he was the top-scorer in the competition, scoring a whopping 12 goals in five matches. He was presented the award by Teddy Sheringham.

# DEEPAK CHAHAR'S AVAILABILITY FOR CSK IN DOUBT DUE TO BACK INJURY

New Delhi: India and Chennai Super Kings' fast bowler Deepak Chahar's potential return to IPL 2022 remains doubtful after he suffered a back injury during his rehab at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru.

The seriousness of the injury remains to be ascertained, as it has been learned that CSK are yet to get a formal report from BCCI.

Notably, the 29-year old had suffered a quadric tear during India's T20i series against West Indies in February and the pacer has been at the NCA for more than a month now, recovering from his injury. The initial assessment by the NCA physios projected that Chahar was set to miss a major chunk of the ongoing season of IPL as his quick recovery kept CSK hopeful of a return in late April.

However, the back injury is likely to further damage Chahar's chances of return to the IPL, considering the BCCI and the Indian team management would want him to be at his best fitness as India prepare for the T20 World Cup, scheduled to begin in October, an ESPNcricinfo report said.

Chahar, who is known for his effective swing with the new ball and is also an able lower-order hitter, has been a key player for CSK in the past couple of years. His presence has already hurt the balance of Ravindra Jadeja-led side in the ongoing IPL 2020.



# Andrew McDonald to be full-time Australia men's cricket coach

Sydney | Agencies

Cricket Australia (CA) has reportedly found a replacement for Justin Langer and is set to name Andrew McDonald as the new full-time head coach in the coming days, according to News Corp on Tuesday.

The report added that McDonald -- who had been made interim coach of the side after the 51-year-old Langer had stepped down following disagreement over the extension of his contract -- is poised to accept the role of the new men's head coach.

McDonald has recently returned with the side from the gruelling tour of Pakistan, which saw Australia win the three-Test series 1-0 and also take the honours in the one-off T20I. Pakistan won the three-match ODI series 2-1.

A report in sen.com.au quoting News Corp said that, "It's reported that the CA hierarchy identified McDonald as their man late last week and has since offered him the job. The final negotiations are ongoing, it's understood the former Australian all-rounder will take the job in the coming days."

McDonald had said in February before embarking on the tour of Pakistan that he was waiting for Cricket Australia to sort out the specifics of his assignment. "I look on with interest to see where they land on that," McDonald had said.



# 'Win in AFC Champions League is inspiration for Indian footballers'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian Super League franchise Mumbai City FC's defender Rahul Bheke created history after scoring the winning goal against Iraq's Air Force Club in their AFC Champions League Group B game at the King Fahd Stadium on Monday.

With this win, Mumbai City FC became the first-ever Indian club to win a match in the AFC Champions League and the star performer Rahul Bheke said that the win will work as an inspiration for all Indian footballers.

"This achievement is an inspiration for all Indian footballers. As our coach (Des Buckingham) said, this win will make players believe they belong at this level.



Watching the game in how the players played, all the Indian players should believe they do belong," he told reporter.

The 31-year-old defender said that ISL has helped Indian football and the players to grow.



## MRUNAL THAKUR: I'D LOVE TO PLAY A SPORTSWOMAN ON SCREEN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Mrunal Thakur, who was last seen in an extended cameo appearance in Kartik Aaryan's 'Dhamaka', says that she would love to play a sportsperson on the big screen. She says, "In India, we don't make as many films on female athletes as much as they deserve to be told and made. It is important because, through our films, aspiring athletes gets encouragement and a whole new world opens up for them. I would personally love to essay a sportsperson on screen. To ready for it, to train for it, it's inspiring and also extremely challenging. Because you're embodying a person so far off from whom you are. And it will be something for me that would give me a wholesome experience to prepare, play and to hopefully understand getting into the skin of a character that is so different from whom I'm as a person".

Mrunal will next be seen alongside Shahid Kapoor in the family sports drama 'Jersey'.

## Mandana in spat with Kaaranvir

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Mandana Karimi had an argument with fellow 'Lock Upp' contestant Kaaranvir Bohra in the reality show.

An argument sparks off between Kaaranvir and Mandana as Anjali and Zeeshan tell Kaaranvir that Mandana told them that she felt uncomfortable because Kaaranvir used to call her for script reading and she denied it a lot many times.

When Kaaranvir confronts Mandana, she says she hasn't said any such thing and the fight continues.

Kaaranvir also slams her by saying "Don't lie to me because Zeeshan wouldn't lie to me as he is keeping his roza (fast) as it's Ramzaan."

Mandana had earlier said that she had an abortion and also opened up about her relationship with a well-known director.

## Song video triggers fan wars on Twitter

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

The makers of the blockbuster epic 'RRR' had released the full video of the popular song 'Naatu Naatu' earlier. Even after garnering lakhs of views on YouTube, the release of 'Naatu Naatu' has triggered fan wars on Twitter.

A flurry of comparisons between the lead actors Ram Charan and NTR had resulted in arguments between their respective fans. Claiming that NTR has footed the steps better than Ram Charan, and vice-versa, the actors' fans began to argue, resulting in online fan wars. Leaving the comment section spoiled, some of the internet users have written cuss words as well. 'Naatu Naatu' fans have found differ-



ences between NTR's and Ram Charan's dance moves, pointing at many mistakes, which went unseen earlier. As the director S.S. Rajamouli claimed to have

shot many takes to ensure perfect synchronisation, fans began blasting him for missing many moves that were not the same.

## RANVEER SINGH: LIKE TO CONVINCING PEOPLE THAT I CAN TRANSFORM MYSELF INTO ANYONE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

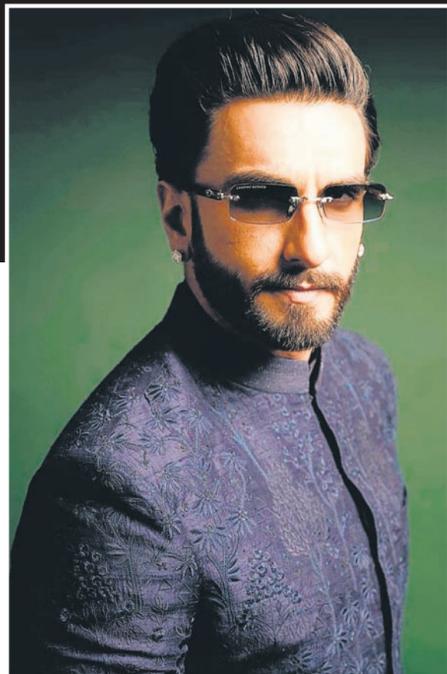
Bollywood's livewire star Ranveer Singh, who is gearing up for the release of his next 'Jayeshbhai Jordaar', says for him, the best thing about being an actor is that one can live many lives.

Ranveer says: "For me, the best thing about being an actor is that you can live so many lives and experience so much because each character that I choose to play are remarkably different from one another."

"When people saw 'Band Baaja Bazaar', they felt for the longest time that I was a boy who was born and brought up in Delhi."

"This has happened many times during the course of my 11-year career and that to me is the biggest compliment because I like to convince people that I can transform myself into anyone."

The actor is clear that he doesn't want to get typecast in the industry and among audiences. He, thus, picks his projects with care to wow audiences.



## Bhumi Pednekar: I've always relied on my instincts to choose projects

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Bhumi Pednekar, who has been a part of content-driven entertainers such as 'Dum Laga Ke Haisha', 'Toilet: Ek Prem Katha', 'Shubh Mangal Savdhan', 'Lust Stories' and 'Badhaai Do', says that as an artiste she has always relied on her instincts to choose projects. Courtesy her work, Bhumi is now the face of seven brands and is thrilled about her rise and rise in Bollywood. She says, "It's been a great start to my post-pandemic career as Badhaai Do became a rage amongst audiences. When films do well, they result in your equity to rise and I have been blessed to have found constant spike points like these in my career. I can only be thankful for these milestones in my life. They motivate me to constantly look out for cinema that defines our time and generation."

She adds, "I have always relied on my instincts as an artiste to choose projects." "I have tried to pick the best scripts that I felt will not only deliver wholesome entertainment to audiences but will also give them something supremely fresh as content. I'm glad these punts have worked for me so far and made me carve my niche in the Hindi film industry." Bhumi has a mighty slate of films that includes Anubhav Sinha's 'Bheed', Ajay Bahl's 'The Ladykiller', Shashank Khaitan's 'Govinda Aala Re', Akshay Kumar-starrer 'Raksha Bandhan', Sudhir Mishra's 'Afwa' and Gauri Khan produced 'Bhakshak'.



## WAMIQA BROKE DOWN WHILE SHOOTING AN INTENSE SCENE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Wamiqa Gabbi, who will next be seen in the Netflix original series called 'Mai', broke down on the sets while shooting for an intense scene. She spoke about how the scene took a toll on her and the director had to come and check on her.

The actor says, "I broke down on the sets yesterday while shooting for an intense scene. When the director said cut, he was surprised to see me crying and came running to check on me. I don't know whether it was exhaustion of the past many months or simply my emotions (getting the better of me), but I couldn't stop crying."

She added: "I feel that some films and scenes just leave an extremely deep impact on you and this was definitely one of them. But then again, such scripts are equally important for the audience as they show the hardcore reality, they help educate us of what we don't know and hopefully create a much larger impact in the long run as well."

'Mai' also stars Sakshi Tanwar, Seema Bhargava and Raima Sen. The crime thriller is all set for a release on April 15. Wamiqa's most recent release is the Punjabi film 'Galwaddi' starring Tarsem Singh Jassar, B.N. Sharma and Noreen Khan. She will next be seen in the web series 'Modern Love'.



## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Kangna Sharma