

# absolute india

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## AS COUNTRY HEADS FOR POLLS, BUDGET MAY RAIN SOPS ON FARM SECTOR

*Mindful of the fact that the farmers community needs to be mollified after its year-long agitation against the three controversial farm laws, the government is likely to focus on boosting the agriculture sector in the Union budget for 2023-24, which would be presented by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1.*

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The agriculture sector has always been seen as a sector which has a potential of generating lots of revenue and according to a report by Deloitte India, quoted recently in various sections of the media, it can generate more than \$800 billion in revenue for the country with an investment of over \$270 billion by 2031. The report suggested that the government should introduce policies to support technology adoption for modernising operations in the agriculture space and give incentives to agri-tech startups for improving accessibility to small farmers. Industry body PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry in its pre-budget memorandum, which was released earlier this month, had said: "To enhance the employment creation in the economy, we suggest further reforms in the agricultural and food processing sector with a great infusion of public investments in the



agriculture infrastructure. Reforms in rural infrastructure logistics and cold chain are required as it would help in increasing the level of food processing industry and rural entrepreneurship." It had further said that this would

lead to increased participation in global agriculture and food exports. Exports of agriculture and food processing products should be increased to the level of \$100 billion in the next three years from the current level of around \$50 billion in 2021-22.

Even the central government is keen to mend its relations with the farmers, especially as the Lok Sabha elections are just a year away and as many as nine states are scheduled to go to the polls this year alone. In July 2022, the government had set up a panel to ensure a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP), which is headed by retired agriculture secretary Sanjay Agrawal. The committee had repealed the three controversial farm laws in November 2021, after a year-long agitation by farmers against them. At the time of repealing the three laws, the Centre had promised the agitating farmers that it would look into the matter of ensuring a legal guarantee on MSP. With farmers being a major vote bank in an agriculture-dominated country like India, the government may come up with sops for the farming community in the forthcoming budget.

## UGC proposes plan to let students access libraries, labs in other colleges

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Students studying in various universities and colleges affiliated to them will now be able to use the library and laboratory of a college or university other than their own.

Now students of different colleges can do research work or can also avail of the sports facilities in colleges other than those they are currently studying in. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has made an important plan to share the resources of different universities and colleges keeping in view the interests of the students. Giving information about this scheme, UGC Chairman M. Jagadesh Kumar said that universities, colleges or other higher educational institutions can provide such facilities to students with mutual consent. Under this initiative, the educational institutions can allow students studying in other colleges or universities to use their laboratory, science room, computer lab, research, library, e-library. Apart from academic studies, the higher educational institutions will also be able to share sports facilities under which students of other educational institutions will be allowed to use the playground, seminar hall and stadium, etc. Similarly, if a student of one college wants to use the research resources of another college, then he can do research in other colleges outside his own college for which the UGC has made a special guideline for planning this arrangement. According to the UGC, on the basis of



these special guidelines, the state universities will get an opportunity to make more use of the resources of the central universities and such higher educational institutions. The special thing about this initiative is that the cost of maintenance of these resources will be borne completely by the UGC. The UGC says that if, on the basis of the new guidelines, various higher educational institutions of a single city use their resources jointly, then it will surely benefit the students as well as these institutions. According to the UGC Chairman, an educational institution in a city can use the resources of any other resource-rich educational institution present there as a guest. With help of this scheme, students of guest institutions will also get an opportunity to study in the libraries of other universities or colleges. Students will also be able to do research by going to the laboratories there. But it is not necessarily the case that any university will be bound to make its resources available to other universities. This work will be possible on the basis of coordination and agreement between two colleges and/or universities.

## "Some people in India consider BBC above supreme court": Kiren Rijiju

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Sunday took on the "malicious campaigns" inside and outside India in connection to the UK's British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)'s documentary on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and said that some people "consider the BBC above the Supreme Court of India". The Union Minister alleged that they "lower" the country's dignity and image to any extent to "please their moral masters". Taking to Twitter, Rijiju said that minorities in the country are moving ahead positively. "Minorities, or for that matter every community in India is moving ahead positively. India's image cannot be disgraced by malicious campaigns launched inside or outside India. PM @narendramodi voice is the voice of 1.4 billion Indians," Rijiju tweeted. "Some people in India still haven't gotten over the colonial intoxication. They consider BBC above the Supreme Court of India and lower



the country's dignity and image to any extent to please their moral masters," the Minister added (roughly translated from Hindi). He said that there is no hope from these people whose "only aim is to weaken India". "Anyway, there is no better hope from these tukde tukde gang members whose only aim is to weaken the might of India," Rijiju tweeted. Earlier, former Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) chief Sanjeev Tripathi slammed UK's British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for its documentary on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling it "prejudiced, biased

and full of factual errors". He added that the documentary needs to be condemned by everyone. Speaking to reporters, Tripathi questioned the BBC's intent behind the documentary on PM Modi, which he said seems 'motivated'. He said the documentary features the 2002 Gujarat riots and the Godhra train burning incident, which preceded it, adding that the Supreme Court recently gave PM Modi a clean chit in the case. "This documentary of BBC, which claims to examine the so-called tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India, and in that context, talks about again the so-called controversial policies of Prime Minister Modi, is not only prejudiced but is also biased and full of factual errors," he said. In a strong response to the BBC documentary, more than 300 eminent Indians, including retired judges, bureaucrats, and armed forces veterans signed a statement slamming the British national broadcaster for showing "unrelenting prejudice" towards India and its leader.

## Reckitt's coffee table book launched during the Jaipur Literature Festival 2023

Jaipur | Agencies

The most fabulous literary fest, Jaipur Literature Festival 2023 witnessed a focus on agenda- hygiene and health are inseparable, with the launch of the coffee table book that focuses on India's journey to universal hygiene and seeks to advance thinking and action for following self-care practices such as washing hand for achieving a high level of quality of life. Curated by Outlook and Reckitt, the book is edited by Ravi Bhatnagar, Director, External Affairs and Partnerships, Reckitt as Guest Editor. The book written by top policymakers and leading practitioners from diverse backgrounds focusing on India's journey to universal hygiene to protect, heal, and nurture in the relentless pursuit of a cleaner and healthier world. The book is being launched during the Jaipur Literature Festival 2023 on January 22 in the presence of Amitabh Kant,



G20 Sherpa; Upma Chawdhry, IAS Retired. Former Secretary to Government of India and Director of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie & Board Member, Plan India; Gaurav Jain, Executive Vice President - South Asia, Reckitt;

Ravi Bhatnagar, Director, External Affairs and Partnerships, Reckitt; Sanjoy Roy - MD, Teamwork Arts and William Dalrymple - Festival Director. The event also saw a photo exhibition in a digital format showcasing Dettol Banega Swasth India program's

efforts throughout the years to nurture health and hygiene behaviors reaching out to 24 million school kids. Throwing light on the challenges India is facing, Ravi Bhatnagar, Director, External Affairs and Partnerships, South Asia - Reckitt, said, "Behavioral change not only needs continuous reinforcement but also the provision of infrastructure to enable it. We witnessed the power of collective action during the pandemic; continuous collective action by faith-based organizations, youth groups, and civil society will help spread the message fourfold. Also, increased advocacy by these groups will ensure that policymakers are aware of the health, social, and economic impacts of hand hygiene while building public support. We need to think out of the box by leveraging technology and introduce, promote and scale up innovative products and solutions to promote health and hygiene habits."

## 'Sun tourism' catching up fast in Himachal; a worrying sign too

Shimla/Manali | Agencies

It is the 'sun tourism' that is catching up fast in Himachal Pradesh as one gets more balmy days in the winter compared to the northern plains where the fog is screening out the sun, a worrying sign for climate scientists. But members of the hospitality industry are not complaining. They said that many holidaymakers have now been preferring rooms with sun rise in the balcony, especially in the winter. A breathtaking view of snow-clad peaks will be an added attraction. Old-timers recall the winter in Shimla and its nearby areas is not as harsh as it was till the late 1970s. "The smoke-belching chimneys, once city's landmark, are a thing of the past," remarked Ramesh Sud, who has been living in Shimla since 1960. Some residents have been wondering if the rise in minimum temperatures in recent years in winter is a result of global warming, though scientists have said the overall warming trend should not have any effect on local weather on such short-time scales, as per current models. "We are getting enquiries daily regard-



ing the possibility of the bright sunny days amidst snowy landscape," Prem Thakur, who runs The Byke Neelkanth hotel in Manali, said. "Now most of the tourists prefer not just snow but also the sun with chucking snow peaks in the horizon," he added. An official at the Shimla's meteorological office said that popular tourist destinations like Shimla, Kasauli, Narkanda, Dharamsala, Palampur, Manali, Chamba

and Dalhousie have been experiencing sunny days for the past two days with chances of widespread snow across the state on January 24, ahead of the Republic Day holiday on January 26. The local administration, before the onset of winter every year, holds a meeting to review measures and assign duties to handle any emergency in case of heavy snow. Officials admit that for the past several decades, this meeting -- called the

snow manual meeting -- had become a mere ritual. Speaking at a workshop on climate change organised last month by the Dr Yashwant Singh Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry based in Nauni, S.K. Bhardwaj, Department of Environmental Science head, said the average temperature of Himachal Pradesh has increased by 1.5 degrees Celsius in the past 120 years. "Presently, every country in the world is working to keep the temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius but still the results are not satisfactory and there are projections that by the end of this century temperature may increase beyond 2 degrees which indicates a climate emergency." Advocating a low-carbon style, Bhardwaj said under the climate change situation there is a need to create climate literacy so that "we at the individual level start living in harmony with nature to make a sustainable human society". This is an alarm bell for the Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh where the state's economy is highly dependent on tourism, besides hydroelectric power and horticulture.

## Shah Rukh Khan dials Assam CM, seeks support for his movie release

Guwahati | Agencies

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said that Shah Rukh Khan called him up late Saturday night. The actor expressed concern over his upcoming film 'Pathaan' poster being burnt by some members of Bajrang Dal in Guwahati. Sarma wrote on Twitter, "Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan called me and we talked today morning at 2 am. He expressed concern about an incident in Guwahati during screening of his film. I assured him that it's the duty of the state govt to maintain law & order. We'll enquire and ensure no such untoward incidents." Sources close to the Chief Minister said that Shah Rukh Khan first texted Sarma and then called him. Khan sought Assam CM's cooperation for the smooth release of his upcoming movie in the state. Sarma has assured the actor of maintaining law and order.



Notably, several members of the right-wing group created ruckus in the city's LG Towers on Friday and forcibly pulled down posters promoting Khan's next release 'Pathaan'. The Bajrang Dal has already threatened that they will not allow the release of the movie in Assam. Reacting to this incident, Sarma on Saturday told reports here, "Who is Shah Rukh Khan. In Assam, we have many people having that name. I also don't know anything about Pathaan. I don't have time to enquire about these things." He also said, "If someone has done anything wrong, let the victims file a case and we shall take action. Also, Shah Rukh Khan did not call me to seek help in this regard."



## BEFORE LAST PRE-GENERAL ELECTION BUDGET, PM MODI CONVENES COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called a meeting of his Council of Ministers on January 29 before the Parliament's budget session which is going to start from January 31.

In 2023, this will be the first meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Modi government. All Union Ministers, Ministers of State (Independent Charge) and Ministers of State will participate in this meeting to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The meeting of the Council of Ministers, called before the last full budget of the tenure of the Modi government, is being termed crucial. On February 1, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union budget.

According to sources, in the meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi can give special instructions to all the ministers regarding the



budget session. Since this will be the last full budget of the Modi government, the Prime Minister would want that after the presentation of the budget, all the ministers should work tirelessly to highlight its public welfare aspects to take them to the public. Because along with the assembly elections to be held in nine states of the country this year, the party would also like to take the advantage of this budget in the Lok Sabha elections to be held next year.

Programs related to the chairmanship of G-20 that India has got can also be discussed in the meeting. About

200 programs related to G-20 are to be held at more than 50 places across the country.

Apart from G-20 countries, 14 international organizations like IMF and World Bank will also participate in these programs, so the Indian government does not want to leave any stone unturned to make these programs grand. The government also wants to ensure maximum public participation in these programs.

In the meeting, many ministers can also give presentation regarding the functioning of their respective ministries. As there are reports of reshuffle and expansion in the Modi cabinet, this can also be discussed in the meeting. If sources are to be believed, the exercise of cabinet reshuffle can begin within a few days after this meeting to be held on January 29.

Overall, this first meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Modi government to be held in 2023 is going to be very important in many ways.

# Debt per Indian increased from Rs 43,124 to Rs 1,09,373 in 9 yrs: Cong

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress on Sunday alleged that debt per Indian has increased from Rs 43,124 to Rs 1,09,373 in the last nine years, and has become 2.53 times more than what it was in 2014.

Addressing a press conference here, Congress spokesperson Gaurav Vallabh alleged that the total outstanding debt of the Government of India, which was 55.87 lakh crore as on March 31, 2014, would be estimated to go up to Rs 155.31 lakh crore by March 31, 2023.

"By the end of the financial year 2023, each Indian will owe Rs 1,09,373/- a loan they have never taken. From 1947 till March 31, 2014, debt per Indian was 43,124/-. But in the last nine years, debt per Indian has become 2.53 times what it was in 2014. In absolute terms, debt per Indian increased by Rs 66,249 in the last nine years," he said.

Vallabh said, "As per IMF for 2022, our Debt to GDP was 83 per cent, far above our peers, emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs), which have average Debt of 64.5 per cent. "As per reports, the wealthiest 5 per cent in India now own more than 60 per cent of the country's total wealth, while the bottom half of the population (50 per cent) together share just 3 per cent of the wealth.



"On the other side, 64 per cent of the total Rs 14.83 lakh crore in Goods and Services Tax (GST) came from the bottom 50 per cent of the population, with only 3 per cent of GST coming from the top 10 per cent.

The Congress questioned, "Why has Debt per Indian increased from Rs 43,124 to Rs 1,09,373 in the last nine years, a jump of 2.53 times? From 1947 till March 31, 2014, the total debt of the Government of India increased to Rs 55.87 lakh crore; why, in the last nine years, it grew to Rs 155.31 lakh crore a jump of 2.77 times? "Why is the money borrowed just helping in a K-shaped recovery, with 50 per cent population owning 3 per cent of total wealth and ending up paying 64 per cent of the GST collected?" he added.

## CONGRESS TO HOIST NATIONAL FLAG ACROSS THE COUNTRY ON JAN 30

New Delhi: Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday asked all the district and state Congress offices to hoist the National Flag on January 30 the day party leader Rahul Gandhi is scheduled to end his Bharat Jodo Yatra in Srinagar. Congress General Secretary K.C. Venugopal said: "To mark the culmination of Yatra, Rahul Gandhi will host the National Flag at Pradesh Congress Committee Headquarters of Jammu and Kashmir in Srinagar at 10 a.m. on January 30."



"As desired by the Congress president, all Pradesh Congress Committees, District Congress Committees and Block Congress Committees will also hold flag hoisting functions at the same time on January 30 at their respective party offices or important sites, in solidarity with the Bharat Jodo Yatra," he said. The Bharat Jodo Yatra, which started in Kanyakumari on September 7, 2022, will conclude on January 30 in Srinagar after having covered 3,970 km and 12 states.

The party claimed that the Bharat Jodo Yatra has received an overwhelming response from millions of people and has spread Rahul Gandhi's message of love and unity among the citizens of the country. "The tremendous support from all sections of society and heartfelt involvement of the people has made this a historic Yatra and a game changer in Indian politics," the Congress said.

## 2015 Dalit youth murder

# MADRAS HC JUDGES INSPECT CRIME SPOT, RAIL TRACK

Chennai | Agencies

Madras High Court judges Justice M.S. Ramesh and Justice Anand Venkatesh inspected the Tiruchengode Arthanareeswar temple and the rail track in Tamil Nadu's Namakkal district where the body of Dalit youth Gokul Raj, abducted and murdered in 2015 for going around with an upper class girl, was found.

Gokul Raj was murdered by a gang headed by S. Yuvaraj, a self-proclaimed youth leader of a dominant caste outfit, for visiting the Tiruchengode temple along with a girl, Swathi, who belonged to an upper caste.

The Dalit youth was abducted by the members of the caste outfit and later his body was found with his head severed on the rail track near Pallipalayam in Namakkal.

Gokul Raj was in love with Swathi and had visited Tiruchendur temple along with her. Now, Swathi has



turned into a hostile witness in the case and is facing perjury. A special court for cases under the

Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in Madurai had sentenced Yuvaraj

and ten others to life imprisonment while acquitting five others.

Gokul Raj's mother Chithra, however, had moved the Madurai bench of the Madras High Court seeking capital punishment for Yuvaraj and others and against the acquittal of five others.

Justices Ramesh and Venkatesh decided to conduct an inspection of the crime scene to understand the topography of the area as also the exit and entrance gates as well as the CCTVs' location in the temple. The judges inspected the area on Sunday and inspected all eight CCTV cameras as well as all entrances and exits.

After the temple premises, the judges inspected the rail track at Pallipalayam where the body of Gokul Raj with his head severed was found.

Lawyers and family members of both Gokul Raj and Yuvaraj were present but they were not allowed to meet the judges.

# Heroin-carrying hexacopter drone shot down in Punjab

Chandigarh | Agencies

In a joint operation with the Border Security Force (BSF), Punjab Police shot down a sophisticated hexacopter drone, loaded with 5 kg heroin, during a search operation launched along the border with Pakistan in Amritsar district on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday.

Director General of Police, Punjab Gaurav Yadav said that this is the sixth drone recovered in less than two months. He said this hybrid six-winged drone, worth Rs 10 lakh, was assembled with parts manufactured in the US and China and was equipped with hi-tech features, including long-lasting battery back-up and infrared-based night vision camera and GPS sys-



tem. Yadav said after noticing the drone movement in Indo-Pak border, police teams from Amritsar Rural district immediately shared pinpointed inputs with the BSF and jointly conducted an intensive search operation in an area, just two km away from the India-Pakistan border. He said that the police teams had fired at least 12 bursts from an AK-47 to shoot down the drone.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Amritsar Rural, Swapan Sharma said the police have rounded up two persons from the spot when they were trying to escape. Investigations are on to ascertain the identity of the Pakistani smugglers, who sent the consignment via drone, and also their Indian associates, who were to receive this air-dropped consignment of heroin, he added.

## MCG Commissioner orders action against 4 engineers, contractor for shoddy work

Gurugram | Agencies

Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) Commissioner P.C. Meena has directed action against 4 engineers and a contractor for carrying out shoddy work on a road.

While charge sheets have been issued to three engineers, the services of an outsourced engineer have been terminated and the contractor black-listed.

The construction work of the road from Sarai Alwardi Chowk to Leg-2 was done by the civic body, and it had received a complaint about the shoddy work being done.

Based on the complaint, the MCG's Vigilance Wing started a probe and samples of road construction were taken and sent to the lab for examination. According to the lab report, the construction work was not satisfactory, based on parameters.

The said work was executed by Executive Engineer Mandeep Dhankhar, Assistant Engineer Deepak Kumar, and Junior Engineer Aandeep. The trio also recommends payment for the work.



A recommendation was made to charge sheet these three engineers under Rule 7 of the Haryana Civil Services Rules-2016, terminate the services of junior engineer Neeraj working on an outsourced basis, and to black-list contractor Surender Singh.

The vigilance wing in its investigation has also held all of them responsible for causing a loss of Rs 44,97,573 to the MCG.

"The MCG Commissioner has given instructions to Additional Municipal Commissioner Rohtash Bishnoi to take immediate action against the above four engineers and the contractor and recover the amount based on the vigilance investigation report," MCG spokesperson S.S. Rohilla said.

# J&K LAUNCHES RS 879CR FOOD PROCESSING PROJECT

Jammu | Agencies

The Jammu and Kashmir government has launched an ambitious project targeted to revolutionise the food processing sector and transform the lives of farmers in the UT.

The "UT Level Food Processing Programme for Development of Clusters for Specific Products of J&K" is a Rs 879.75 crore initiative that aims to maximise farmer income and minimise post-harvest losses, an official statement said on Sunday.

"This comprehensive project has been designed to increase the competitiveness of seven identified products across categories in terms of cost, quality, branding, and sustainability within five years. The government is investing in value addition, logistics, marketing and branding of various agricultural, horticultural and livestock products to achieve



this goal," it said.

The project will focus on developing 17 districts in J&K with establish-

ment of processing and marketing infrastructure, providing growth and development opportunities to stake-

holders, and facilitating suitable economies of scale in production and post-harvest activities.

The government has allocated a budget of Rs 879.75 crore for the project including a grant-in-aid of Rs 293.25 crore (33.33 per cent) and a debt-equity of Rs 586.50 crore to be raised by entrepreneurs.

The project shall create 7030 direct jobs and lead to establishment of 34 enterprises with expected revenue generation to the tune of Rs 1,436.04 crore every year.

"UT Level Food Processing Programme for Development of Clusters for Specific Products of J&K" is one among the 29 projects, which were approved by the Jammu and Kashmir administration after being recommended by the UT Level Apex Committee for holistic development of Agriculture and allied sectors in UT of J&K.

## MAN HACKED TO DEATH IN BROAD DAYLIGHT IN HYDERABAD

Hyderabad: A man was hacked to death by three unidentified persons in broad daylight in Hyderabad on Sunday, police said.

The assailants, armed with machetes and sickles, chased the victim and attacked him on Jiyaguda bypass road near Puranapul under Kulsumpura police station. The brutal killing was filmed by some passersby on their mobile phones. The video has gone viral on social media.

The victim is seen lying on the ground with the assailants indiscriminately attacking him. The killing sent panic in the area. While some ran away in fear, some people on the other side of the road captured it on their mobile phones.

After killing the victim, the assailants escaped by jumping into the adjacent Musi river. On receiving the information, police rushed to the scene and on the basis of Aadhaar card identified the victim as Jangam Sainath, 32, a resident of Esamia Bazar in Koti.

Rivalry between rowdy sheeters is suspected to have led to the murder. The police registered a case and took up the investigation.

# DELHI'S OVERALL AIR QUALITY SLIPS INTO 'VERY POOR' CATEGORY



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The air quality in Delhi dipped to the very poor category on Sunday with the overall air quality index (AQI) of the city at 373.

However, the air quality at the

city's Lodhi Road slipped into the severe category at AQI 429, as per the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research.

Both the major pollutants PM 2.5 and PM 10 were also recorded in the very poor category at 374

and 310 respectively in the city on Sunday.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

As per SAFAR data, the air quality index at Lodhi Road was reported as 351 in the very poor category, City's Pusa reported 368 AQI on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department has predicted light isolated rainfall very likely over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi and Uttar Pradesh on January 23 and increase thereafter with scattered to fairly widespread rainfall accompanied by thunderstorm activity during January 24 to 26.

"No significant change in minimum temperatures likely over most parts of northwest and central India during the next 5 days. Rise in minimum temperatures by 2-3 degree C over many parts of East India during next 3 days and no significant change thereafter," said the IMD.

The weather department has also predicted dense fog in isolated pockets during night and morning hours over Himachal Pradesh and Bihar during the next 24 hours and Odisha during the next 48 hours.

## NIA team visits blasts site in J&K's Jammu



Jammu | Agencies

National Investigation Team (NIA) team on Sunday visited the site of Saturday's blasts in J&K's Jammu city, officials said. Official sources said that the NIA sleuths spent more than one hour at the sites collecting samples.

As per the sources, the investigation of the blasts on Saturday in which at least 9

people were injured is likely to be handed over to the NIA.

Two blasts occurred in two vehicles in Narwal area of Jammu, as per Additional DGP, Jammu Zone, Mukesh Singh, leaving six people injured. Later on, one more blast was reported.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha has condemned the blasts. He also announced Rs 50,000 cash relief for each person injured in these blasts.



Set up for Bangla refugees in 1971

MP'S CHOPNA POLICE STATION TOP-RANKED BY HOME MINISTRY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

At the time when fingers are being raised on police personnel for the growing cyber and serious crimes in Madhya Pradesh, a police station has been ranked sixth among 10 across the country for making the best law and order situation and winning the faith of people living under its jurisdiction.

The Union Home Ministry has nominated 10 police stations as the best for the year 2022.

This police station is called 'Chopna Thana' under Betul district of Madhya Pradesh in central India, a bordering district with two neighbouring states - Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.

The announcement in this regard was made by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) under the Union Home Ministry, during the All India Director General of Police Conference in New Delhi on January 20.

"Madhya Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) Sudhir Kumar Saxena also joined the



Conference and was informed about the nomination of Chopna Thana by BPRD." Ashish Sharma, the public relations officer at the Madhya Pradesh Police HQ, Bhopal, said in an official communication.

The Union Home Ministry conducts an annual survey of all police stations across the country to select the best performing police station.

"The government selects best police stations on the basis of crime, atrocities against women and tribals, civil disputes, community policing and building amicable relations with trust between the police and the citi-

zens living under its jurisdiction," an official press note of the state police said. This time, the process of selection was made after a gap of two years due to Covid-19 pandemic. DGP Saxena has congratulated district Superintendent of Police Simala Prasad, a 2011 batch woman IPS officer, who had taken charge of Betul in 2020, and the then in-charge of Chopna Thana, Abdul Raouf Khan, and all policemen serving under this police station. What is more interesting about this 'Chopna Thana' is that, a large population of the villages located under its jurisdiction, are

those who had migrated from Dhanka after the end of India - Pakistan war in 1971, and they had taken shelter here in Madhya Pradesh's Betul district.

S.R. Kapse (75), a resident of neighbouring village under Betul district, who retired from Western Coalfield Ltd in Betul, and now is living in Bhopal, having come to know that a police station of home district has been nominated among the 10 best ranking police stations in the country, said: "What is more interesting of Chopna Thana that around a dozen of villages were first established as shelters for a large number of people from Dhanka, which has now turned into villages. A large portion of the forest area was cut to provide shelter for the Bangladeshi refugees. They were Hindu Bengali community."

Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra also congratulated Betul district police for their commitment for serving the people and making the entire police system proud for being recognised among the best police stations.

MP BJP focuses its energies on 103 seats party lost in 2018

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The BJP has geared up for the upcoming assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh as the party has started preparations to bring the government, organisation and all the leaders to the ground level.

The main focus of the Bharatiya Janata Party this time is on the 103 assembly seats where MLAs belonging to Congress and other parties are there. In the assembly elections held in the state in 2018, the BJP lagged behind the Congress and even lost power.

However, the party returned to power due to the defection of Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, and also won the bypolls, but the party is worried about the upcoming elections. This is the reason why all the big leaders are being made partners in the election campaign. According to the information received from BJP sources, a meeting of the State Working Committee is going to be held in the coming days, in which ministers of the state government, MLAs, MPs, besides central ministers are



being called. This meeting is very important for the upcoming polls as the road map for the elections can be finalized in this meeting. If party sources are to be believed, the BJP is eyeing most of the 103 assembly seats which are held by Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party, Samajwadi Party or independent candidates.

BJP has been engaged in ground preparation for a long time regarding how these seats can be won. Now all the big leaders of the party are sitting together trying to implement the feedback received from the grassroots level. on the 127 seats in the state where the BJP has sitting MLAs, the displeasure of the general public can be reduced by changing the face of the

candidate and by making other efforts it won't be very difficult to win the 103 seats where the opposition MLAs are there because resentment is there towards the MLAs of those areas and it is easy to cash in on that. BJP has been continuously gathering ground feedback for more than a year and on the basis of this, the party has made up its mind to work on the upcoming strategy.

In the meeting of the National Working Committee held in Delhi recently, some instructions have been given to the prominent leaders of the state and to take these instructions to the lower level, a gathering of big leaders is going to be held in Bhopal in the coming days.

BJP MLA blames good roads for rise in accidents

Team Absolute | Khandwa

Good roads lead to high-speed traffic movement, posing the risk of losing control over the vehicles, said a BJP lawmaker in Madhya Pradesh while explaining the rising road accidents in the state. Some drivers are also at fault as many of them drink and drive, said Narayan Patel, who represents the Mandhana assembly constituency in Khandwa district.

"Road accidents are rising in my constituency. The roads are good and vehicles run at high speed, posing the risk of losing control. I have experienced this. Some drivers, not all, also drink and drive, leading to accidents,"



Patel told reporters.

His remark came after journalists asked him if he believes bad roads lead to lesser road accidents. The question assumed significance in the wake of rising accidents and complaints over bad roads in the state. Khandwa district alone wit-

nessed over four major accidents so far this year.

However, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, during his US visit in 2017, had claimed the roads in Madhya Pradesh were better than those in the US. He had even repeated his claim at a public meeting in 2018.

CONVOCATION OF 250 CRISP TRAINEES TO BE HELD ON JANUARY 23

Bhopal: Following 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas' in letter and spirit, the Centre for Research and Industrial Staff Performance (CRISP), Bhopal, organised a free three-month skill development training program for 250 youths of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in various disciplines. The convocation ceremony for the trained youths of the programme will be held today in Samanvay Bhawan. The chief guest of the convocation ceremony will be Governor Mangubhai Patel. He will distribute certificates to students. CRISP organised a three-month residential training program to make the SC and ST youths self-reliant.

"Hisab Liya Jayega": row over Kamal Nath's message to cops

Team Absolute | Niwari

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath stoked a fresh controversy for allegedly threatening officers of the police administration ahead of the state assembly elections to be held this year.

The former MP Chief Minister was addressing a public rally, where he said "Acha Hisab Liya Jaega" within eight months as elections are approaching. "Elections will be held in eight months and I want to tell everyone not to be aggressive or fearful. All the police officers should listen with their ears open that everybody's account will be taken in the upcoming elections," said Kamal Nath.

Referring to Nath's "Acha Hisab Liya Jaega" remark, Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) Spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said that Kamal Nath has shown his undemocratic emergency



mindset.

"This is not the first time Kamal Nath has tried to intimidate the police officers and the administration. In August 2021, he made similar statements. We also remember the 'Aag Laga do' statement,"

said Shehzad Poonawalla.

Taking a jibe at Congress, Poonawalla said that the party has always believed in an emergency mindset, in intimidation, revenge, and vendetta politics. "This kind of mindset displays that it is not 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' but 'Dhamki Ki Dukaan'. Congress has always believed in an emergency mindset, in intimidation, revenge, and vendetta politics. This is what the party is exactly displaying in Madhya Pradesh as well, said Shehzad Poonawalla.

Citing the open threats given by former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath to police officers and administration, Poonawalla questioned if this is the situation when the Congress party is out of power what would the condition be when they by mistake come to power. "Congress leader Rahul Gandhi should further answer if the party supports such statements or condemns it," said Shehzad Poonawalla.

Khelo India Youth Games 2023 KHELO INDIA CYCLOTHON HELD IN BHOPAL

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Only eight days are left until the Khelo India Youth Game 2022, and the Department of Sports and Youth Welfare (DSYW) is determined to create a buzz and make every citizen of Madhya Pradesh aware of the upcoming event. Therefore, a cyclothon was organised in the city to spread awareness about fitness and the upcoming KIYG in Bhopal on Sunday morning. Madhya Pradesh is hosting the fifth edition of KIYG from January 31 to February 11. In order to spread awareness about the event, around 200 cyclists participated in the cyclothon. The AGM of the Indian Bank, P. Ramesh, flagged off this Cyclothon. During the cycle march, they covered a dis-



tance of 24 km from Tatya Tope Stadium in Bhopal to create an atmosphere of fitness and sports in the city. The Khelo India Cycle Rally started from Tatya Tope Stadium and ended at the stadium itself via Mata Mandir, MANIT, Chuna Bhatti, Kolar Road, Danish Nagar, Aura Mall, Vitthal Market, and Nutan College.

2 die after consuming liquor laced with pesticide: Cops

Team Absolute | Dhar

Two men have died after allegedly consuming liquor mixed with pesticide in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district, police on Sunday said adding they suspect it to be a case of suicide.

The incident took place on Friday at Satriyapada village under Badnawar tehsil, 70 km from the district headquarters, Superintendent of Police (SP) Aditya Pratap Singh said.

He said according to family members of the two men, identified as Rajaram Bheel, 40 and his relative Bhuralal, 38, both of them consumed the pesticide-mixed liquor following which they died. Prima facie, it seems to be a case of suicide, the SP said without elaborating.



A case has been registered and further investigation is underway, he said. According to police officials, Rajaram was consuming liquor at home when Bhuralal reached his place.

Rajaram told Bhuralal that he had mixed a pesticide in the liquor, but the relative insisted on

drinking it, they said.

When their condition deteriorated, the family members took them to Badnawar hospital from where they were referred to Ratlam district hospital, the officials said. Rajaram died on way to the hospital while Bhuralal died during treatment, they said.

'First covid hit, then bulldozer': tea-seller's death note on money crisis

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Kalu Rai, 55, sold tea on a cart at an intersection in Madhya Pradesh's Jaisinagar. Last night, he was found hanging from a tree at the same spot where he brewed tea daily.

A note in the pocket of his trousers recounted the crushing financial crisis that had driven him to the extreme step. In the note, Rai wrote that he ran a tea shop that shut down after the Covid pandemic struck, plunging him into a financial crisis. As restrictions were lifted, he opened the shop again, but before business could pick up, his shop was razed as part of an anti-encroachment exercise.

He tried to make ends meet by running a tea stall from a cart, but failed. Rai wrote that as the debt burden kept growing, he could not take it anymore. "Nobody is listening. What do I do? There is only one way: suicide," he wrote. The 55-year-old was father to a son and three daughters. The son helped him at the tea stall. The devas-



tating impact of the pandemic and related restrictions on low income groups has been illustrated in several studies.

A World Bank report released last year suggested that 71 million people globally may have been pushed into extreme poverty due to the pandemic in 2020. Out of these, nearly 79% were from India, the report titled "Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2022" found.

However, it highlighted that China, despite being the world's most populated country, did not contribute much to the global poverty increase. On the other hand, the report said, India witnessed a "pronounced economic contraction".

5,500 kms, 50 cities, 1 million+ people reached: Zindagi Express concludes journey in Bhopal

The 20-day campaign ended with a marathon that attracted participation by nearly 900 runners

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Tracing a heart on the map of India, Edelweiss Tokio Life Insurance's Zindagi Express today pulled into its final destination Bhopal after journeying 5,500 kms through 50 cities and reaching over 1 million people to spread awareness regarding the need for organ donation in India. Vishvas Sarang, Minister of Medical Education, and Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief & Rehabilitation, Madhya Pradesh Government represented Bhopal, the heart of India, in receiving the baton from Zindagi Express.

Over the last 20 days, the life insurer has been undertaking an awareness tour called #PassItOn to educate and mobilise people towards the organ donation cause. Today, the life insurer conducted the finale to this journey, wherein nearly 900 people participated in a marathon with the presence of Malti Rai, Mayor of Bhopal.

Sumit Rai, MD & CEO, Edelweiss Tokio Life Insurance said, "Today's conclusion is an important milestone in our Organ Donation journey. We



are heartened to see that people turned out in big numbers not only today in Bhopal, but also throughout the journey, wherever we made a pit-stop. This gives us immense confidence to expand our efforts towards this cause in the years to come." Dr Sunil Shroff, Managing Trustee & Co-Founder, MOHAN Foundation said "India has a long way to go for both creating awareness and

setting up processes to help make organ donation a usual everyday event rather than being an unusual one currently."

Dr. Fr. John P J, Principal, Bhopal School of Social Sciences said "We have a track record of supporting causes of social importance. As an educational institution, we believe it is pertinent for our students, alumni, and the larger community to educate themselves regarding the societal needs and contribute constructively to aide certain causes. Our partnership with Edelweiss Tokio Life is a continuation of that belief."

The life insurer embraced Organ Donation as its flagship social cause in 2019. In the first year alone, it was able to galvanize 1,13,000 organ donation pledges in a single month. In fact, it created a new GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS title for highest number of pledges collected by an organ donation campaign in a single day (54,626 pledges). Cumulatively, over the last 4 years, the life insurer has been able to reach 70 million+ people through a robust digital and media outreach.

ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL ADITYA BIRLA HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED. DEMAND NOTICE. SUBSTITUTED SERVICE OF NOTICE U/s 13(2) OF SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002.



EDITOR'S SPECS

## Downgrading Covid to flu will cause more infections

**D**owngrading the deadly Covid-19's legal status to seasonal flu will trigger more infections, putting millions at long Covid and death risk for people in Japan, the media reported on Saturday. Teachers, health experts and other citizens voiced anxieties over the downgrading of Covid as flu this spring, reports Japan. The country has downgraded Covid-19 from "equivalent to Class 2" to a Class 5 disease, the same level as seasonal influenza. "The government is set to review current rules on the wearing of face masks to prevent the spread of Covid-19," the report mentioned. A teacher at a public elementary school in Osaka Prefecture said several of his fellow teachers are doubtful of the government's policy to review the categorisation of COVID-19 as the number of coronavirus infections remains high. As there are still students developing a fever, the "government should make a decision when the infection status calms down", he said. Health experts also questioned the government's move to downgrade the status of Covid-19. "It is too hasty to judge that the coronavirus pandemic is coming to an end by looking at the current numbers. There are likely cases of underreporting and people who refrained from going to the doctor," said Yoshikazu Nakamura, a professor in public health at Jichi Medical University. On Friday, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced the country will consider revising the pandemic restrictions as early as this spring, downgrading Covid-19 to the same category as seasonal flu. "In order to further advance the efforts of 'living with Corona' and restore Japan to a state of normalcy, we will transition the various policies and measures to date in phases," Kishida told reporters. The decision came as Japan has seen a drop in Covid cases in recent weeks.

# The enigma of Bose and the 'mystery' of his 'disappearance'

Kavya Dubey

**S**ubhash Chandra Bose was persona of great mystification. As much as his life held the unwavering zeal and gusto to see a sovereign India, despite being at stark variance with the stalwarts who went on to be the founding fathers of this nation, his death, too, has been a subject of as much perplexity. On August 18, 1945, Netaji is said to have succumbed to third-degree burns when his plane crashed upon take off in Tiwan's Taipei, which was then under Japanese occupation. Bose had gone into a coma before he died between 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. The crash instantly claimed the pilot, copilot, and Lieutenant General Tsunamasa Shidei of the Imperial Japanese Army in World War II. Their aircraft crashed shortly after the official surrender of Japan. Shidei and Bose were on their way to Dairen, where Bose was to speak with negotiators from the USSR about political asylum and turning over control of the Indian National Army (INA) to the Soviets to continue the struggle for Indian Independence. Shidei was to serve as the main negotiator for Bose. There were no photographs taken of the injured or deceased Bose, nor was a death certificate issued. For these reasons, INA refused to believe that he passed away. While many of Bose's supporters refused to believe both the news and the circumstances of his demise, conspiracy theories emerged that the plane crash was no accident within hours of the deaths. These theories persist, keeping alive certain martial myths about Netaji. Col. Habib ur Rahman, Bose's chief-of-staff who was with him on that fateful flight, survived. He testified a decade later at an inquiry commission on Bose's death. Bose's ashes are said to be kept at the Renkoji Temple in Tokyo.

### Genesis of Netaji 'mystery'

Since 1940, when he escaped house arrest in Calcutta, rumours abounded regarding his whereabouts, whether he was even alive or not. When he appeared in Germany in 1941, there pervaded a sense of mystery about him and his engagements. In the 1950s, stories began surfacing that Bose had turned into an ascetic. As per what historian Leonard A. Gordon called a "myth", in the 1960s, some associates of Bose formed 'Subhasbadi Janata', an organisation to promote the narrative that Bose was heading a sanctuary in north Bengal's Shaulmari. However, certain reports categorically establish the death of Netaji when the Mitsubishi Ki-21 bomber that he was aboard crashed shortly after it took off in Taipei.

The Government of India, so far, commissioned three inquiries into Netaji's death/disappearance. Only the first two concluded that he died in a military hospital in Taihoku on August 18, 1945, after his plane crashed, and also that the mortal remains at Renkoji Temple in Tokyo are his. They are as follows:

### Figgess Report: 1946

In the light of the rumours that went rife following the plane crash, the Supreme Allied Command of South-East Asia, under Lord Mountbatten, tasked Colonel John Figgess, an intelligence officer, with investigating Bose's death. Submitted on July 5, 1946, Figgess's report was but confidential. In the 1980s, Figgess was interviewed by Leonard A. Gordon, where he confirmed writing the report. In 1997, the British Government made most of the IPI (Indian Political Intelligence) files available for public viewing in the British Library. However, the Figgess report was not among them. The Figgess report and Gordon's investigations confirm the following four things: a plane crashed near Taihoku airport on August 18, 1945, aboard which was Subhas Chandra Bose; Bose died in the nearby military hospital on the same day; he was cremated in Taihoku; and his ashes were sent to Tokyo.

### Shah Nawaz Committee: 1956

For the purpose of clamping down rumours about Bose and the incident of the plane crash, the sovereign Government of India in 1956 appointed a three-member committee headed by Shah Nawaz Khan, who was then a Member of Parliament. He was a former Lieutenant Colonel in the Indian National Army.

The other notable members of this committee were S. N. Maitra, a Civil Servant nominated by the Government of West Bengal, and Suresh Chandra Bose, Netaji's elder brother. This committee is also called the 'Netaji Inquiry Committee'.

Between April to July 1956, this committee interviewed 67 witnesses in India, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam, particularly those who survived that plane crash and bore scars of their injuries from the accident. The interviewees included Dr. Yoshimi, the surgeon at the Taihoku Military Hospital who treated Bose in his final hours, and Habibur Rahman who left India after the Partition.

Two-third of the committee, ie, Khan and Maitra, notwithstanding a few minor discrepancies, concluded that Bose died in the plane crash in Taihoku on August 18, 1945.

Suresh Chandra Bose declined signing on the final report, and wrote a note of dissent claiming that the other members and staff of the Shah Nawaz Committee had deliberately withheld some crucial evidence, and that the committee had been directed by Nehru to infer death by plane crash.

According to Gordon, out of the 181-page report, one main principle for dealing with the evidence was that if two or more stories by witnesses have any discrepancies between them, then the whole testimony of the witnesses involved is discredited and assumed to be false. Based on this, Bose concluded that there was no crash, and that his brother was still alive. During the early 1960s, rumours about Netaji being alive only increased.

### Khosla Commission: 1970

In 1970, the Government of India appointed a "one-man commission" to enquire into the "disappearance" of Bose. The single investigator was G.D. Khosla, a retired Chief Justice of Punjab High Court. His report was submitted in 1974. Justice Khosla concurred with the earlier reports of Figgess and the Shah Nawaz Committee on the main facts of Bose's death. He also evaluated the alternative explanations of Bose's disappearance and the motives of those promoting stories of sighting Netaji.

Gordon notes: "Justice Khosla suggests the motives of many of the story-purveyors are less than altruistic. Some, he says, have clearly been driven by political goals or simply wanted to call attention to themselves. His patience in listening to some tales is surely remarkable."

"What could he, or anyone, have thought as he listened to the testimony of P.M. Karapurkar, agent of the Central Bank of India at Sholapur, who claimed that he receives direct messages from Bose by tuning his body like a radio receiving apparatus."

### Mukherjee Commission: 2005

In 1999, following a court order, the Government of India appointed retired Supreme Court judge Manoj Kumar Mukherjee to once again probe the death of Bose.

The commission perused hundreds of files on Bose's death drawn from several countries and visited Japan, Russia and Taiwan.

Although oral accounts were in favour of the plane crash, it was concluded that those accounts could not be relied upon and that there was a secret plan to ensure Bose's safe passage to the USSR with

the knowledge of Japanese authorities and Habibur Rahman. Citing Netaji aide and co-passenger on the flight Habibur Rahman as a direct witness, Justice Mukherjee's report holds that the Japanese military aircraft carrying Netaji had nose-dived from 12,000 to 14,000 feet. Justice Mukherjee then argued that nobody could possibly survive such a catastrophic crash, and so concluded that there could not have been any such crash at all.

The fact is that neither Habibur Rahman nor any other survivor ever said so. What they did maintain was that the aircraft had barely taken off from Matsuyama Airport at Taihoku in Taiwan before suffering fatal engine failure.

The commission failed to make any headway about Bose's activities following the plane crash. Another questionable aspect of the report is that it concluded that the ashes at the Renkoji temple reported to be Bose's, were actually not his but of a Japanese soldier who died of cardiac arrest. Justice Mukherjee decided not to proceed with the DNA testing on account of the alleged "reticence" of the temple authorities. However, the commission also established 'Gunnami Baba' to be different from Subhas Bose based on a DNA profiling test. The Mukherjee Commission turned in its report on November 8, 2005 after 3 extensions and it was tabled in the Indian Parliament on May 17, 2006. The Central government did not accept the findings of this commission. A report by the Japanese government titled "Investigation on the cause of death and other matters of the late Subhas Chandra Bose" was declassified on September 1, 2016. It concluded that Bose died in a plane crash in Taiwan on August 18, 1945. The report was completed in January 1956 and was handed over to the Indian embassy in Tokyo, but was kept out of public domain for 60 years until it was declassified.

As per the report, just after take-off, a propeller blade on the plane which carried Bose broke off and the engine fell off the plane, which then crashed and burst into flames. When Bose exited he crashed plane, his clothes had caught fire and he was severely burned. He was admitted to hospital and was conscious enough to carry on a conversation for some time. He died several hours later.

**Conclusion:** Most have settled with the conclusion that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose died in a military hospital in Taiwan on August 18, 1945, after the Japanese military aircraft he was travelling in crashed. But a persistence for a different conclusion indicates that evidence to conclude the afore stated was not sufficient.

## international

# Chris Hipkins confirmed New Zealand's new PM, to focus on domestic issues

Wellington | Agencies

**T**he New Zealand Labor Party has confirmed Chris Hipkins as the party's new leader and New Zealand's 41st Prime Minister, said Chris Hipkins in a press conference on Sunday. The Labor Party caucus meeting voted the Caucus member, Minister for Education, Police and Public Service and Leader of the House Chris Hipkins as the new party leader. Hipkins was the only nominee to replace Jacinda Ardern, who announced her resignation on Thursday, Xinhua News Agency reported. Member of Parliament for Kelston and Cabinet minister Carmel Sepuloni was appointed deputy prime



minister. According to the New Zealand political system, the majority party of the Parliament forms the government and that party leader becomes the prime minister. Speaking at the press conference after the Caucus meeting,

Hipkins said that he will be officially sworn in as the Prime Minister on Wednesday. Cabinet reshuffle will be also arranged in the coming week. He vowed to focus on domestic issues, saying that high inflation, high housing prices and law and order issue will be the major policy focus for his government, while going to China would be high on the priority list but not locking in any international travel plans yet. Ardern announced on Thursday that she will step down as the prime minister and the leader of the Labor Party in February and she will not be seeking re-election this year. Meanwhile, New Zealand's 2023 general election will be held on October 14, Ardern said.

## FOUR KILLED IN APARTMENT FIRE IN JAPAN

**Tokyo:** Four people were killed while as many feared dead after a fire broke out early Sunday at an apartment in Japan's Kobe city, local media said. Firefighters received a call around 1.35 a.m. local time saying that black smoke was coming out of a window on the first floor of a three-story housing complex in Hyogo Ward of Kobe, Kyodo News reported. Four men were confirmed dead at the scene, the report said, citing police and other sources, adding that four other men who were taken to a hospital were all unconscious, Xinhua News Agency reported quoting Kyodo News. All the eight individuals were found on the first floor of the apartment, it said. The fire was mostly put out after about an hour. A total of 60 square meters of the first and second floors of the 300-square-meters building were burned, according to Kyodo News.

## Thousands of Israelis protest against judicial reforms

Jerusalem | Agencies

**T**ens of thousands of Israelis rallied in several cities on Saturday evening to voice their dissatisfaction over the government's plan to make sweeping reforms in the country's judicial system. Israeli media quoted police as saying that more than 100,000 protesters arrived at the main demonstration in Tel Aviv. Smaller demonstrations were also held in other cities. This is the second week in a row that massive protests are being staged against the government. The demonstrators said the reforms will weaken the courts and give the ruling coalition limitless power, Xinhua news agency reported. The government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said the changes are necessary in order to rein in the judicial system which has become "too powerful" in recent



decades. They also said the Supreme Court often intervenes in political issues that should be determined by the parliament. Netanyahu and his coalition partners have said they will continue to push for the reforms despite the widespread protests. The reforms include allowing the parliament to override Supreme Court rulings with a simple majority. In addition, politicians will have greater influence in appointing Supreme Court judges.

## 2 IS MILITANTS KILLED IN AIR STRIKE IN IRAQ

**Baghdad:** The Iraqi military said that it killed two IS militants in an airstrike in Salahudin province, north of Baghdad. According to a statement from the Joint Operations Command's media office on Saturday, the militants were spotted by Iraqi forces in a rocky area near the town of Tuz Khurmato, which is located in eastern Salahudin. They were killed when Iraqi airplanes attacked their position with an airstrike. Meanwhile, a roadside bomb explosion wounded two soldiers of the government forces in the eastern Diyala province on Saturday, Colonel Alaa al-Saadi from the Diyala police said, adding the soldiers were hunting down IS militants in orchards near the provincial capital Baquba, Xinhua news agency reported. The security situation in Iraq has been improving since the defeat of the IS in 2017. However, IS militants have since melted into urban centres, deserts, and rugged areas, carrying out frequent guerilla attacks against security forces and civilians.

## Explosion kills 2 govt soldiers in Yemen's oil-rich Shabwa

Aden (Yemen) | Agencies

**T**wo soldiers of Yemen's government forces were killed and four others injured in an explosion in the country's south-eastern oil-rich province of Shabwa, a military official said. A local military officer told Xinhua news agency on condition of anonymity on Saturday that an improvised explosive device on the roadside exploded when a motorcade of military vehicles that escorted trucks carrying diesel passed by in the Ar Rawdah district of Shabwa. The IED, which was planted and remotely detonated by terrorists, also destroyed a military vehicle, the source said. Security forces and a medical team were sent to the site and carried the wounded soldiers to a nearby hospital for treatment, he



noted. So far, no group has claimed the responsibility for the attack, Xinhua news agency reported. The Yemen-based al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula network has exploited years of deadly conflict between the Yemeni government and the Houthis militia to expand its presence in the war-ravaged Arab country. It frequently uses hit-and-run tactics against Yemeni government forces while hiding out in rocky terrains and mountainous areas of Abyan and other neighbouring provinces, including Shabwa.

## Sikh found guilty of murdering father of four in UK

London | Agencies

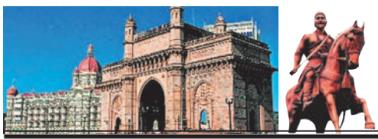
**T**wo men, including a 25-year-old Sikh, have been convicted of murdering a father of four children in a drive-by shooting in England last year, police said. Gurdeep Sandhu of Blowers Green Road and Hassan Tasleem of Richmond Road in Dudley shot taxi firm manager Mohammed Haroon Zeb, 39, in the head just after 12.30 a.m. on January, 31, 2021. Haroon had just pulled up outside his home and he sadly died in hospital from his injuries later that day, the West Midlands police said in a statement. Sandhu and Tasleem were convicted of murder, possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life and perverting the course of justice following a three-month trial at Loughborough Crown Court. A third man, Shamraz Ali of Tanfield Road, Dudley, was also found guilty of perverting the course of justice. All three have



been remanded into custody and will be sentenced at a later date, the statement read. The killing was part of an ongoing feud between families dating back to 2018. Haroon was not believed to have been actively involved in the feud, but a follower of what was going on. The reason he was specifically targeted remains unknown, the police statement read. Police said that the fatal blow

came from a lethal revolver -- and was one of a number of shots fired by a passenger of a Volkswagen Golf -- which then drove off. The weapon is yet to be recovered. "Our detectives carried out extensive enquiries in the pursuit of justice and our evidence was that the gun was in the hands of Tasleem while Sandhu was the driver of the car and involved in the plot," the West Midlands police said.

According to the police, the vehicle was on false plates and went off the radar until it was later recovered in Telford. Police said that they viewed "thousands of hours of CCTV, used forensics, scoured social media and phone records to connect Tasleem and Sandhu to the planned killing". "For nearly two years, we as a family have struggled to accept the loss of our Haroon. We thank the police for their tireless work," the victim's family members said after the court verdict. Detective Superintendent Jim Munro, who led the murder investigation, said: "This was a carefully planned killing, and children have lost their father forever. Nothing can ever take away that pain. "We can only hope these convictions will take some dangerous men off the streets and the ongoing police work will bring an end to such violence. We're grateful to the Dudley community who supported us during this investigation."



Bal Thackeray birth anniversary

UDDHAV TO ADDRESS SHIV SENA WORKERS, PAY HOMAGE AT STATUE NEAR THE GATEWAY OF INDIA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday said party president Uddhav Thackeray will address the party workers on Monday to mark the 97th birth anniversary of the Sena's founder Bal Thackeray. Talking to reporters here, Raut said Uddhav Thackeray will pay homage at the party founder's statue near the Gateway of India on Monday and address the party workers at Shammukhanand Hall later in the evening. "The significance and importance of the day is strong for all of us," the Sena leader said.



The two factions have been embroiled in a tussle over the poll symbol after a split in the party last year. Raut had on Saturday expressed confidence that pressure politics will have no impact on an independent institution like the ECI. On his visit to Jammu to participate in the Congress' Bharat Jodo Yatra, the Rajya Sabha leader said it is a non-

political movement which is getting support. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is afraid of the yatra and is hence criticising it, he claimed. To a question about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as the prime ministerial candidate, Raut said in a democracy, people's wish is supreme. "Anybody who has people's support can become the prime minister," he said.



ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL SAND DREDGING; EQUIPMENT WORTH RS 97 LAKH DESTROYED

Thane: Revenue department officials have destroyed equipment worth Rs 97 lakh used for illegally dredging sand in Maharashtra's Thane district, officials said on Sunday. The operation against illegal sand dredging was carried out on Saturday at the creek in Mumbai and between Kalher and Kon, a release from the district collectorate said.

Five barges and two suction pumps worth Rs 97 lakh were destroyed during the drive, it said.

Government positive about old pension scheme for government employees: Chief Minister

Team Absolute | Thane

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has said the state government is positive about the old pension scheme for teachers and government employees.

The state education department is studying the old pension scheme, Shinde said on Saturday while addressing a campaign rally for the upcoming Legislative Council polls.

Shinde also said the state government will by its work respond to allegations raised by the Opposition regarding investment proposals inked at the recently-held Davos summit. Under the old pension scheme, employees get a defined pension. Under this, an employee is entitled for a 50 per cent amount of the last salary drawn as pension.

However, the pension amount is contributory under the National Pension System, which is in effect from 2004.

"The government is positive about the old pension scheme for teachers and government employees, non-aided



schools, and also for 25 per cent reservation in English medium schools. The education department is studying the old pension scheme," Shinde said.

Speaking about the Davos meet, he said some foreign companies, instead of making a direct investment, prefer to go

in joint ventures. "Hence many industrialists at the Davos conference are from India. But it will be foreign investment," he added.

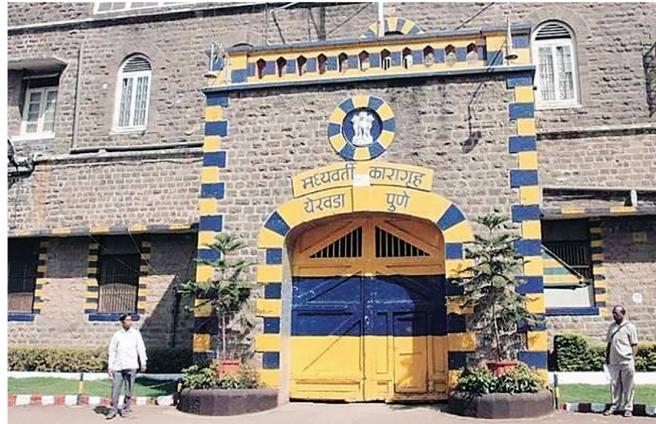
The chief minister questioned the status of MoUs signed by the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

Special remission: 189 jail inmates to be released on Republic Day

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A total of 189 convicts will be released from prisons across Maharashtra, including three from Thane Central Jail, on Republic Day as part of the Union government's special remission programme to mark 75 years of Independence, an official said on Sunday. The three inmates from Thane are undergoing jail terms for attempt to murder and other crimes, he added.

"The special remission program will see some prisoners being released on January 26, 2023 and August 15, 2023 for good conduct while serving their sentences. A total of 189 inmates from Maharashtra will be released," he said. The prisoners are selected on the basis of age, time



spent in jail, disabilities, health etc, he added.

Thane Central Jail has 4,569 inmates, including 132 women, while 52 are above the age of 70 and 386

below 20 years. The capacity of the jail is, however, just 1,105, officials here pointed out. The prisoner count includes 30

Bangladeshis and an equal number of Nigerians, they added.

The total number of jail inmates in Maharashtra stands at 43,090, as per official data.

TEENAGE GIRL RIDING TWO-WHEELER DIES IN COLLISION WITH BUS, FRIEND CRITICAL

Team Absolute | Nagpur

An 18-year-old girl riding a two-wheeler was killed and her friend who was riding pillion was seriously injured on Saturday when they were hit by a speeding bus on a bridge in Nagpur city of Maharashtra, police said. The girls and their male friend, all students of an engineering college, were returning home on separate two-wheelers after taking part in a walkathon in the morning. "When they were crossing the Mangalwari flyover, a bus came from the opposite direction and ramed into a two-wheeler. The girl rider fell on the road and came under the wheels of the bus.

Her friend who was riding pillion suffered serious injuries. Both the girls were rushed to a hospital where one of them died. The condition of the other girl is critical," police said.

Hospital Vandalised, Doctor Attacked Over Bill Dispute

Team Absolute | Palghar

A hospital head was grievously injured after a group of people allegedly attacked him and vandalised the medical facility in Maharashtra's Palghar district following a dispute over the bill of a patient, police said. The incident took place on Friday following which nine persons were arrested, they said.

Around 20 to 25 people barged into the hospital located in Boisar area, attacked the doctors and damaged the medical facility, district Superintendent of Police (rural) Balasaheb Patil told reporters. The issue of medical bill of a patient was the immediate provocation for the attack, he said.

The hospital's chief, Dr Swapnil Shinde, was grievously injured and admitted



to a hospital in Vapi town of neighbouring Gujarat, Patil said.

Dr Shinde while talking to reporters claimed that functionaries of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) have been seeking a reduction in the hospital bills of patients. "We oblige but they never pay the bills," he further claimed. Nine persons were arrested in connection with the incident and offences

were registered against them under provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Maharashtra Medicare Service, Persons and Medicare Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss of Property) Act, Patil said.

He said they have assured protection to the doctors after their delegation which met him on Saturday.

COLD WAVE TO SUBSIDE IN THREE DAYS

Team Absolute | Pune

For the past few days, the severity of the cold has increased significantly across Maharashtra. However, the weather department has predicted that this pressure will decrease in the next three days. The weather department has also predicted that the temperature in the state will drop by two to three degrees Celsius as the intensity of the wind coming from the north is decreasing.

The meteorological department said the duration of cold is less this year. However, Mumbai, along with Konkan, North Maharashtra, Nashik, Nagar, Pune, Satara, and Aurangabad, experienced severe cold. This cold is likely to subside after three days.



The effect of the northern cold was felt in the state. Due to this, the air was dewy.

Currently, Maharashtra is experiencing a cold front from the north due to high pressure and cyclonic winds. In some parts of the state, the

temperature is above 30 degrees during the day, but it suddenly gets cold at night. Along with this, due to fog and cold in the morning, health complaints like cold, cough and fever have increased.

Two held for stealing TV sets, medical equipment worth more than Rs 2cr

Team Absolute | Thane

Two persons have been arrested in connection with the theft of medical equipment and television sets, worth more than Rs 2 crore, from two godowns in Bhiwandi town of Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Sunday. The police have recovered stolen goods worth Rs. 1.51 crore from the accused, who were apprehended on Friday, deputy commissioner of police Zone II Bhiwandi Navnath Dhavle said.

The thefts had taken place between over the last two months, he said.

Woman duped of around Rs 7 lakh by fraudster posing as Police official

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A woman was allegedly duped of around Rs 7 lakh by a fraudster posing as a courier company executive on the pretext of rejecting an international parcel carrying narcotics, police said on Saturday. The victim, Prachi Dhoke, in her complaint said that she received a call from a person posing as a courier company's customer service executive. He told her that an international parcel, in her name, containing two passports, five ATM cards, 300g weed, and a laptop has been rejected, police said citing the complaint.

When Prachi Dhoke told the person that the parcel was not sent by her, the caller urged her to file a complaint with the police as her Aadhaar card has been misused, they said. Following this, the caller transferred



the call to a person posing as an official of Mumbai Police who told her that her ID is being misused for international smuggling and money laundering in Mumbai, Prachi Dhoke said in her complaint.

"They asked me to help them in the investigation saying that they will give me a certificate that I am not involved in the matter," she said. She transferred a total of Rs 6,93,437.50 in four transactions in the name of security deposit and investigation.

The fraudsters asked the woman to transfer Rs 95,499 on the pretext of investigation with the RBI, police said.

The victim transferred a total of Rs 6,93,437.50 in four transactions after the accused asked her for more money in the name of security deposit and investigation, they said citing Prachi Dhoke's complaint.

An FIR has been registered against unknown people under sections 419 (cheating by impersonation), 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code at cybercrime, east police station on Friday, said the investigating officer Inspector Surender Singh.

In village, land donation, crowd funding for government-run school

Team Absolute | Aurangabad

In a bid to ensure better future for their children, the residents of a village in Maharashtra's Beed district pooled resources, including money and land, on their own instead of banking on the government to upgrade a Zilla Parishad-run school that needed urgent repairs and lacked space to accommodate students.

The residents of Pokhari village, located around 160 kms from Aurangabad city, say they have so far raised Rs 39 lakh through crowd funding with four of them donating more than one acre land for the expansion of the school. Children from Class 1 to 7 study in this school.

The up gradation and construction work, which began in 2018, got hampered by the pandemic in 2020. But it is likely to be completed by the next academic year.

Around 1,300 people reside in this village and most of them are farmers and sugarcane workers.

One of the residents Ram Falke said, "There is a Zilla Parishad-run school in the village, where local children study. It has four classrooms and the condition of two of them had turned very bad and needed urgent repairs. Although the govern-



ment agencies gave some funds for the repair work, it was not enough. The school also faced a space crunch." Therefore, the villagers launched a movement of constructing a new building for the school so that the students don't have to face any problem, he said.

"Four villagers came forward and donated more than one acre of land in 2018 for this purpose," Falke said. He added that the villagers initially raised Rs 18lakh through crowd funding. But that amount was not enough.

"The soil in our village is black. Since there are certain challenges of construction on this type of soil, some extra money was required for the school expansion project," he said.

Like other places, the coronavirus pandemic and the resultant restrictions brought the construction activity to a standstill in 2020, he said. After the COVID-19-related curbs were lifted, more funds were collected. The total amount raised so far stood at Rs 39 lakh. This is meant for constructing six classrooms in the school. But some additional amount is still required for the flooring work, Falke added.

"Our children studied in fear. In the rainy season, they used to return home without attending classes. But there will be no such fear in the new school," she said. Additional CEO of Beed Zilla Parishad Dr Dnyanoba Mokate said the villagers are mainly farmers and sugarcane labourers.

"They say that no one from their village has become an officer.

They want to see their children become officers and hence they took this initiative," he said. In view of the efforts taken by the villagers, the Zilla Parishad has decided to help them in the school project, Mokate said. "We are planning to undertake the work of a playground, kitchen shed, compound wall around the school, and also of storm water drain to protect nearby fields under government schemes," he added.

Mock drill raises hackles over 'terrorists' shouting slogans of a particular community

Team Absolute | Chandrapur

A police mock drill in a temple in Chandrapur in Maharashtra landed in controversy after the personnel posing as terrorists were allegedly shouting slogans connected to a particular community. A group of lawyers has submitted a memorandum to the district police authorities on the issue, while Superintendent of Police Ravindra Singh Pardeshi on Sunday said all efforts would be taken to ensure such an error is not repeated. The mock drill, which was conducted on January 11 at the renowned Mahakali Temple here, enacted a scene in which a group of terrorists took over a place of worship and held devotees hostage before being apprehended by security forces. "Videos of the drill showing the personnel



who played the part of terrorists in the mock drill shouting particular slogans. This portrays one community in a negative light and makes one believe all terrorists are from this community," said Farat Baig, part of lawyers' group in Chandrapur. "We have submitted a memorandum to the office of the district SP against such sloganeering and portrayal. This act of the police amounts to defaming

a community. Obviously, the script of the mock drill must have been overseen by the SP and other senior officials," Baig said. When contacted, SP Ravindrash Pardeshi said his department will "take necessary steps to ensure such an error is not repeated". The mock drill was carried out by personnel from the local police, the Anti Terrorism Squad, the specialised combat unit C-60, among others, officials said.

# Kim Kardashian

## addresses students at Harvard Business School

Los Angeles | Agencies

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian spoke about her burgeoning business empire during a lecture at Harvard Business School. She spoke to students about her own experiences in the business world. One of the students, Liz, subsequently told NBC4 Boston: "I think a lot of people don't respect her as someone who is co-running a multi-billion dollar company," reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Kim was spotted leaving Harvard Business School and getting into a waiting SUV after the lecture. But before she left, Kim told waiting reporters that she loved the city of Boston and she also waved at some of the students.

Kim had previously claimed that she doesn't care what people think of her. She hit back at her critics, arguing

that her talent lies in "marketing and the business behind selling products."

Asked about her talents and the key to her success, Kim explained: "I'm like, 'Well, we have a TV show.' But just because we're not singing and dancing and acting on the show doesn't mean that the fame didn't come from that." "But then, I would write that as a hashtag, not bad for a girl with no talent, because people used to be like, 'Well, what do you do? What's your talent?' And I'm like, 'Didn't know I needed one.'"

"I mean, I can give you a million f\*\*\*\* talents. I can cook well, use my toes for anything. I could tell you the weirdest f\*\*\*\* s\*\*\* on the planet. But I think my talent is marketing and the business behind selling products and knowing what the customer wants and making it feel attainable, but also a bit unattainable at the same time." "I wouldn't say that's a talent. I think it's a bit of magic and business savvy."

Maybe it is talent, I don't know."



Helena Bonham Carter makes potential boyfriends take handwriting test

## 'I CHECK POTENTIAL PARTNERS WITH MY GRAPHOLOGIST'

London | Agencies

'Harry Potter' actress Helena Bonham Carter asks her handwriting expert to assess potential boyfriends. Bonham Carter, who played Bellatrix Lestrange in the Potter films and is Princess Margaret in *The Crown*, said: "I check potential partners with my graphologist, my aunt and the nannies. People who are in your home - they know. The writing was literally on the wall for one of them."

She began a five-year relationship with actor Kenneth Branagh in 1994. They met while filming Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, when he was still married to Emma Thompson, reports *mirror.co.uk*.

In 2001, Bonham Carter began dating director Tim Burton, who she met while making *Planet of the Apes*. She starred in other Burton films, such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Alice in Wonderland*. They have children Billy, 20, and Nell, 16, and split in 2014 - but live in connected houses in Belsize Park, North London.

Bonham Carter said of her eccentric image that it is important for teenage girls to "not give a f\*\* about these things," adding: "You cannot afford to put your self-esteem in the hands of strangers, which is what so many teenagers are doing with Instagram." In her latest role, the actress plays legendary *Crossroads* actress Noele Gordon in the drama *Nolly*, which streams on ITVX from February 2.



'I ATE 6,100 CALORIES A DAY FOR FOUR MONTHS'

## Jonathan Majors ate 6,100 calories a day for four months for 'Magazine Dreams'

Los Angeles | Agencies

To transform into a bodybuilder, Jonathan Majors ate 6,100 calories a day for four months for *'Magazine Dreams'*. The actor stunned everyone with his transformative performance as a toxic bodybuilding fanatic. Majors appear as a hulking beast in the film, with the camera often lingering on his muscles for minutes on end, reports *Variety*.

The actor revealed at the *Variety Studio* presented by Audible at Sundance that he spent four months eating over 6,000 calories in order to transform into the character. "I'm 6 feet tall. I'm 202 pounds," Majors said. "In order to sustain that and to grow that you have to eat as much protein that you weigh. I ate 6,100 calories a day for about four months. That included the pre-work and the post-work of *'Creed III'*."

"The normal bodybuilder works out two times a day," Majors continued. "What ended up happening is I would train two hours, two times a day for the movie and a third time after wrap. Meanwhile, you eat six times a day. Lots of chicken. Lots of elk. That's just for me. I like it."

After getting jacked for *'Creed III'* and *'Magazine Dreams'*, is Majors excited to slow down on the training? He'll be scaling back, but he won't exactly be slowing down.

"I played football in Texas. I got an appetite," Majors said. "I really like being physical. I like hiking and running. I've got dogs. I'm only 33 - I got to do something to stay with it. I don't work out three times a day anymore. Just once a day."

## Beyonce performs in Dubai, returning to the stage after four years

Dubai | Agencies

It's been four years since singer Beyonce's last headlining show, and her performance in Dubai was a fittingly grand return.

The star-studded show began on Saturday night like a theatrical production. Violinists crowned with metallic gold headpieces and voluminous red skirts hit the stage first, and Beyonce's dancers and more musicians followed in matching garb, standing still with their hands folded in front of the Egyptian-themed backdrop, reports *Variety*.

As guests at the invite-only, hour-long performance started screaming with excitement, Beyonce raised up on a platform wearing a yellow corseted dress, topped with a feathered skirt and a feathered back-piece.

Fireworks exploded above the venue as the iconic artist opened the show singing Etta James *'At Last'* into a gold microphone. Then, she announced to the crowd that her mom, Tina Knowles, father, Mathew Knowles, her

"beautiful husband" Jay-Z and their children, Blue Ivy, Rumi, and Sir Carter were all in the audience to support her.

While Jay-Z stayed in his seat when Beyonce performed *'Crazy in Love'* (she started it off with the '50 Shades of Grey' version and wrapped with the original), Blue Ivy hit the stage for a collab.

As Beyonce started performing *'Brown Skin Girl'*, Blue Ivy stood beside her and danced, nailing the choreography that the dancers were doing beside her. When the song ended, she hugged her mom, walked up the steps, and struck a pose, even blowing kisses to the crowd like a pro before she left the stage.

Beyonce had three different wardrobe changes during the evening. A red corseted jumpsuit topped with a skirt came next and then a sheer crystal-adorned mini-dress to end the show.

Each outfit ushered in a new vibe for the show, which leaned heavy on ballads - like *'Freedom'*, *'Spirit'* and *'Be Alive'*. But Beyonce spiced up the set with *'Beautiful Liar'* and *'Naughty Girl'*, for which she appeared in her final look of the night.

Curiously, Beyonce didn't perform any songs from her Grammy-nominated 2022 *'Renaissance'* album.



## Ryan Coogler, Questlove announce their next projects

Los Angeles | Agencies

At this year's Sundance Film Festival, content brand company Onyx Collective showcased its slate of programming, which includes two new projects, one from Ryan Coogler's Proximity Media, as well as the highly anticipated sophomore documentary feature from music artist and filmmaker Questlove.

The company has acquired an untitled Sly Stone feature documentary from Ahmir *'Questlove'* Thompson, marking the artist's second collaboration with the collective. According to *Variety*, the documentary promises to examine the life and legacy of Sly and the Family Stone, the groundbreaking band led by the famous Sly Stone.

The documentary aims to explore the rise, reign and fadeout of one of pop music's most influential artists and, in doing so, tell a human story about the cost of genius. Questlove will direct and executive producer, alongside Shawn Gee and Zarah Zohlmán for Two One Five Entertainment Inc. Lonnie Rashid Lynn, a.k.a. Common, will serve as an executive producer, with Derek Dudley, Shelby Stone and Ron Weisner. Brian Gersh and Paul Gertz will executive produce on behalf of Network Entertainment Inc.

Derik Murray will produce with Joseph Patel, who is also attached to write with Jeff Mao. Also announced during Saturday's panel, Onyx Collective has picked up the documentary film *'Anthem'* for Hulu from Proximity Media's overall deals with Onyx Collective in partnership with *This Machine*.

The company also revealed that it is developing scripted drama *'Sheba'*. *'Sheba'* details the first African queen's rise to power as she attempts to unite the nation now recognised as Ethiopia, transforming it into one of the richest, most formidable kingdoms in the world. Inspired by true events, the drama aims to take viewers on a journey with Makeda into a world of danger, deceit and political intrigue as she is forced to step into the role of Queen of Sheba.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Joy Corrigan



## HOCKEY WORLD CUP

# Spain overcome Malaysia 4-3 in sudden death to seal quarterfinal berth

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Spain limped into the quarterfinals of the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 after beating a fighting Malaysia 4-3 via sudden death shoot-out following a 2-2 draw in regulation time in their Crossover stage match at the Kalinga Stadium.

Spain fought back from a goal down and scored twice within a minute to take a 2-1 lead. However, Malaysia scored the equaliser (2-2) in the 48th minute and then survived waves of Spanish attacks and a barrage of penalty corners to take the match to the tie-break shoot-out.

Spain won the match 4-3 in sudden death but as their players and chief coach Max Caldas erupted in joy, they had all the reasons to feel lucky to escape with victory as they had failed to make the most of their chances and ball possession. They had to thank goalkeeper Garin, who was brought in as a substitute just for the shoot-out and did his job superbly by pulling off a couple of good saves.

Alvaro Iglesias's shot was saved by the Malaysian goalkeeper Othman Hafizuddin and after Faizal Saari and Marc Miralles converted their



respective attempts, Malaysian skipper Marhan Jalil fluffed his attempt and Jordi Bonastre converted to make it 2-2. Irfan Suhaimi Shahmie scored for Malaysia and then Xavier Gispert scored for Spain as the teams ended 3-3 in the shoot-out after Shello Silverius (MAS) hit the

post and Marc Reyne's slap shot from the top of the circle was saved by Hafizuddin. In the sudden death, Marc Miralles scored while Ashari failed as Spain sealed the victory and set up a quarterfinal clash with World No. 1 Australia. Spain dominated possession,

made more circle penetrations, had a higher number of shots at the goal than Malaysia and also failed to convert eight penalty corners. However, lady luck was on their side as they won the match in sudden death and sealed a berth in the quarterfinals.

## Women's T20I Tri-series

# India aim to continue winning momentum against West Indies

East London | Agencies

The Indian team will be aiming to continue the winning momentum when they take on the West Indies in the third match of the women's T20I tri-series at the Buffalo Park Stadium in East London on Monday night.

Despite missing the services of skipper Harmanpreet Kaur due to an illness apart from Pooja Vastrakar, Renuka Thakur and Shikha Pandey, India were able to get a 27-run win over hosts South Africa in the first match of the tri-series.

Though four out of the top five batters, including stand-in captain Smriti Mandhana, fell for single-digit scores, the 76-run partnership between Deepti Sharma and Amanjot Kaur helped India reach a respectable 147 after being 69/5 at one stage.

Amanjot was the star for India in her first international match against South Africa, making a fine 30-ball 41 not out after coming out to bat at number seven. Deepti, on the other hand, was at her



all-round best, making a 23-ball 33 and taking 3/30 with her off-spin, with other spinners coming good too.

The tri-series is significant from an Indian perspective as it is their last tournament before the Women's T20 World Cup begins in South Africa from February 10.

Shafali Verma and Richa Ghosh, despite missing out on the tri-series, stand to gain sufficient experience of playing in South African conditions through their participation in the ongoing inaugural edition of U19 Women's T20 World Cup.

## India Open 2023

# Kunlavut Vitidsarn, An Se Young upset top seeds Axelsen, Yamaguchi to clinch titles

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn and South Korea's An Se Young wore out their more fancied opponents -- Viktor Axelsen and Akane Yamaguchi -- to clinch the men's and women's singles titles respectively at India Open 2023.

Vitidsarn, who had lost all six men's singles matches against top seed Axelsen before Sunday, engaged the tall Dane in long rallies in the decider before prevailing 22-20, 10-21, 21-12 in an hour and four minutes before Young got the better of Japan's Akane Yamaguchi 15-21, 21-16, 21-12 in just over an hour at the BWF World Tour Super 750 event organised by the Badminton Association of India.

Yamaguchi was in complete control in the opening game but Young managed to turn the tables in the second to force the decider. The Japanese had the upper hand in the initial exchanges of the third and final game before the Koreans managed to win 8 of the nine points from 4-7 down.

The two players then engaged in a couple of 30-plus stroke rallies and one 51-stroke rally



and though Young lost those, Yamaguchi was the one who looked more tired after that and the Korean's superior stroke play helped her seal victory. In the day's other match, Chinese men's doubles champions Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang upset world champions Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia 14-21, 21-19, 21-18. The Japanese mixed doubles pairing of Yuta Watanabe and Anisa Higashino and the women's doubles combination of Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida grabbed the titles without hitting a shuttle as their respective opponents withdrew citing illness.

## Australian Open

# SANIA MIRZA-ANNA DANILINA BOW OUT IN WOMEN'S DOUBLES SECOND ROUND

Melbourne | Agencies

India's Sania Mirza and her Kazakh partner Anna Danilina ended their Australian Open campaign after suffering a 4-6, 6-4, 2-6

loss at the hands of the Ukrainian-Belgian duo of Alison Van Uytvanck and Anhelina Kalinina in the women's doubles second round.



Earlier, the Indo-Kazakh pair defeated the Hungarian-American duo of Dalma Galfi and Bernarda Pera in the

first round. The Indian ace, who is playing her last Grand Slam, is alive in the mixed doubles event, where she is partnering with countryman Rohan Bopanna.

# RYBAKINA OVERPOWERS NO.1 SWIATEK TO REACH QUARTERS

Melbourne | World No.1 Iga Swiatek's hopes of a second straight hard-court major are over following a crushing defeat to Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina in the Australian Open fourth round.

Round of 16 showdowns did not come any bigger than two reigning Grand Slam champions at this stage, reports AusOpen. After the Pole's benchmark-setting feats of 2022, the Rybakina served a reminder she is in the box seat to further shake up the top order this season with her 6-4 6-4 triumph. The two women shared the major spoils since Australian Open champion Ash Barty's retirement last year and on Sunday; they met for just the second time, following Swiatek's straight-sets victory indoors in Ostrava in 2021. The 22nd seed has now reached the quarterfinals at three of the four majors, having first done so at Roland Garros in 2021, where she defeated Serena Williams.



# JELENA OSTAPENKO SHOCKS COCO GAUFF TO REACH QUARTERS

Melbourne | No.17 seed Jelena Ostapenko shocked seventh seed American Coco Gauff 7-5, 6-3 to sail through to the quarterfinals of the Australian Open for the first time in her career.

Ostapenko, competing in her first Round 4 at the Australian Open, leveled her career head-to-head against Gauff to 1-1 with a 93-minute triumph in Margaret Court Arena, her first over a Top 10 player at a Grand Slam in three years, and the first Grand Slam quarterfinal appearance since 2018. The Latvian will next face reigning Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina for a spot in the semifinals, after the Kazakh scored an upset of her own against World No.1 Iga Swiatek in their fourth-round match. Ostapenko is 2-0 in her career against Rybakina, having only lost 11 games in two matches. Their last meeting came on grass last year in Eastbourne, a 6-4, 6-1 win for the Latvian before Rybakina went on to win at the All-England Club. Gauff let six break-point chances go by in the first set after being the first player to break serve.



# La Liga: Real Sociedad make it nine wins from nine to move joint second

Madrid | Agencies

Real Sociedad moved level on points with Real Madrid in La Liga, although with two extra games played, after a 2-0 win away to Rayo Vallecano.

The side from San Sebastian assured the points in an impressive first half, thanks to a 15th-minute strike from Alexander Sorloth and a second goal 21 minutes later from young winger Ander Barrenetxea, reports Xinhua news agency.

They were then able to effectively control the match after the break, extending their winning run to nine games in all competitions, ahead of next week's Copa del Rey quarterfinal away to FC Barcelona.



Atletico Madrid started with new signing Memphis Depay on the subs' bench for their game against Valladolid, but the Dutch international was hardly needed as they raced into a 3-0 lead against a rival that has lost their last five games.

Alvaro Morata opened the scoring in the 17th minute, with Antoine Griezmann adding a second five minutes later and Mario Hermoso making it 3-0 in the 27th minute.

Martin Braithwaite's 42nd-minute goal gave Espanyol their second league win in two matches to lift them clear of the bottom three while ending a poor week for Betis, who were knocked out of the Copa del Rey on penalties by Osasuna earlier in the week.

Finally, Ivan Rakitic netted an 88th-minute penalty to give Sevilla a nerve-racking 1-0 win at home to Cadiz. Sevilla coach Jorge Sampaoli was sent off in the second half as nerves got the better of him, but the win lifts Sevilla out of the bottom three while leaving Cadiz penultimate in the table.

## Serie A

### Napoli run away after comfortable win over Salernitana

Roma | Napoli temporarily leads the Serie A table with a 12-point advantage after they sailed away with a 2-0 victory over Salernitana.

The Partenopei headed into Saturday's fixture with nine points over second-placed AC Milan, but the Serie A hopefuls crashed out of the Coppa Italia midweek on a penalty shoot-out to 10-man Cremonese.

The away side dominated the game and found the net in the 34th minute, but Victor Osimhen's stunner from a tricky angle was ruled offside. Napoli eventually broke the deadlock on the stroke of halftime as Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa moved into the box after a give-and-go, before rolling across for Giovanni Di Lorenzo to drill home. Osimhen sealed the win minutes after the break when Eljif Elmas' missile out of the box smacked the woodwork; the Nigerian was alert to tap it in.



## Bundesliga

### WOLFSBURG SECURES THEIR FIFTH STRAIGHT VICTORY

Berlin | Agencies

Jonas Wind's first-half brace helped Wolfsburg to secure their fifth straight victory after stunning Freiburg 6-0 in the 16th round.

The Wolves opened scoring at home in the second minute when Yannick Gerhardt's through ball allowed Patrick Wimmer to slot it past Freiburg goalkeeper Mark Flekken from 13 meters.

Twenty-six minutes later, Wimmer's cross into the box found Wind, who nodded home from close range. Freiburg showed signs of life moments later but for all that Daniel-Kofi Kyereh missed the target narrowly wide.

Even after the restart, Freiburg couldn't put up resistance whereas Wolfsburg made it 4-0 on the



scoreboards after Gerhardt benefited from Felix Nmecha's good build-up work with 56 minutes played. The Wolves showed no mercy and weren't done with the scoring as Ridle Baku and Luca Waldschmidt rounded off the hammering 6-0 victory. Union Berlin came from behind as Danilho Doekhi's double strike edged Hoffenheim 3-1. Bochum reaped vital points in the relegation battle after seeing off Hertha Berlin 3-1.

# Joburg Super Kings win a last-ball thriller match

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The SA20 has once again delivered a thrilling climax with the Joburg Super Kings lifting themselves off the basement of the Betway SA20 table with a last ball victory over the Sunrisers Eastern Cape at a heaving St George's Park.

It was the home side that entered the contest on the back of three successive victories, but instead it was the Super Kings who finally found some form.

Sunrisers' seam bowler Sisanda Magala went from hero to villain within a matter of seconds. Magala was tasked with defending eight runs off the final over and was excellent with his first four deliveries by restricting the Super Kings to just three runs.

This left the Super Kings requiring five runs off the final two deliveries. Unfortunately for Magala, Leus du Plooy squeezed out his fifth delivery for a boundary to level the scores. But to add to the drama Magala had over-stepped and the delivery



was ruled a no-ball which took the Super Kings home with one ball to spare. Du Plooy finished unbeaten on 47 off 40 deliveries that helped the Super Kings pass the Sunrisers' 127 all out. The left-hander had precious little support besides Captain Faf du Plessis' 37. Left-arm spinner Aaron Phangiso, who is allowed to bowl after being reported for suspected illegal bowling action earlier in the week, delivered a Player of the Match performance of 4/20.

# Bravo, Najibullah led MI Emirates to thrilling victory over Abu Dhabi Knight Riders

Abu Dhabi | Agencies

The MI Emirates kept their winning run intact in the DP World International League T20 after pulling off a thrilling five-wicket over Abu Dhabi Knight Riders at the Zayed Cricket Stadium.

The Abu Dhabi Knight Riders put up a strong total of 170 for seven, riding on the brilliant innings of 65 runs from 40 balls by Dhananjaya de Silva. In reply, the MI Emirates were in a spot of bother when they needed 20 runs off the last over. However, Dwayne Bravo and Najibullah Zadran batted smartly and took their team over the line.

Pooran and Fletcher put up a crucial stand of 55 runs and kept the MI



Emirates' chase on track until Pooran fell to Russell in the eleventh over for

20 runs off 13 balls. The Abu Dhabi Knight Riders

seemed to have sealed the deal when Pollard departed for 31 runs off 23 balls in the 19th over; however, Dwayne Bravo and Najibullah Zadran had other ideas. They struck Russell for three sixes and a four in the final to take their team to a thrilling victory.

## Brief scores

Brief scores: India 574/8 dec in 129.2 overs (Ravindra Jadeja 175 not out, Rishabh Pant 96; Lasith Embuldeniya 2/188, Suranga Lakmal 2/90) lead Sri Lanka 108/4 in 43 overs (Dimuth Karunaratne 28, Pathum Nissanka 26 not out; Ravichandran Ashwin 2/21, Jasprit Bumrah 1/20) by 466 runs



*'It is an extremely special film for me'*

Rakul Preet Singh is happy with the response to her latest release

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Rakul Preet Singh is happy with the response her latest release 'Chhatriwali' is getting. She said that through the film, she got a chance to address issues that are usually not talked about.

Essaying the role of a quality control head that goes on a mission to change society and educate young minds, Rakul was praised for her sensitive depiction in the movie.

Rakul Preet said: "I am really overwhelmed with the amazing response 'Chhatriwali' has been receiving from the audience. It is an extremely special film for me and I believe for the audience too."

"With this film, I got the chance to address issues and throw light on aspects that we usually don't talk about. I loved the way the viewers are receiving the subject. I'm glad our message is well delivered to the audience." The film talks about the inhibitions around male contraceptives and safe sex. Produced by Ronnie Screwvala and directed by Tejas Prabha Vijay Deoskar, 'Chhatriwali' features Rakul and Sumeet Vyas.



AKSHAY KUMAR, TIGER SHROFF TO WORK TOGETHER FOR A MOVIE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood stars Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff have started shooting for their upcoming action-entertainer 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan'. Having shared his excitement about the Mahurat shot, producer Vashu Bhagnani posted pictures on Instagram and captioned it: "After 25 years, we gear up to return with our most successful franchise 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan'!" "It was special then and it is even more special now with two exceptional Super Stars leading the title akshaykumar and tigerjack-ieshroff- and now with therealprithvi also on board - directed by alia bbasazafar together we will recreate a brand new Avataar of BMCM! Need ur blessings and good wishes as we begin Shoot!"

Producer Jacky Bhagnani shared pictures from the Mahurat and captioned it: "After months of toiling, dreaming and strategising, we are ready to begin this massive ambitious journey. Truly humbled and honoured to stand alongside my 'Bade' and 'Chhote' with-out their nod my dream to achieve this wouldn't have come true. I'm overwhelmed and it's a moment of immense pride and joy for us at Pooja Entertainment. Love, adore and respect these two and I can't wait for the audiences to see what we have in store." "Wouldn't have been possible without our captain Ali Abbas Zafar! He is ready to now bestow his magic on 'Bade Miyan Chhote Miyan', our biggest and most ambitious project! So thankful to my Dad for believing and backing us and to my entire team and everybody associated with this film. Can't wait to roll on this one."

## Sonu Chandrapal explains how playing a comic character is challenging

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After being part of shows such as 'Tujh Sang Preet Lagai Sajna', 'Suhani Si Ek Ladki', and 'Shrimad Bhagwat', actress Sonu Chandrapal will now be seen in a comedy show called 'Professor Pandey Ke Paanch Pariwar'.

She will be playing Chandini, one of the main lead characters, in her first comedy show. The actress talked about her role and the challenges of playing a comic character. The actress said that both comedy and mythology are difficult. "From mythology to comedy, the roles are way too different. While playing mythological characters, you need to be very careful with the pauses in the dialogue delivery whereas for comedy characters, you have to be energetic and humorous all the time, so both are challenging."

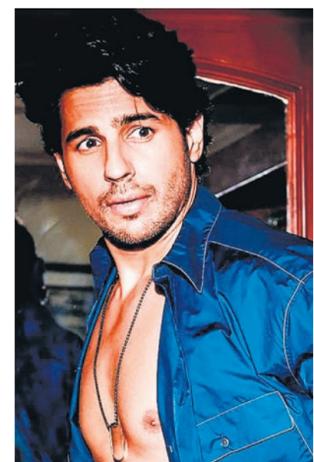
"Playing a comic character is challenging because no matter what you are feeling in your personal life, you have to perform with full enthusiasm and in an energetic way. The dialogue delivery in comic characters is high-pitched and your body language has a lot of movements and you can't play subtle. You have to be expressive. I love experimenting with different characters and this is the reason it took so much time to get something." "Usually it happens that after doing one show, you can't show offers related to that type of character, but I prefer waiting so that I get something different. I believe in performance and don't want to go into type cast," shared the 'Suhani Si Ek Ladki' actress.



## 'True stories have always piqued my interest'

Sidharth Malhotra had a 'wholesome experience' playing a spy from the 70s

Team Absolute | New Delhi



Bollywood actor Sidharth Malhotra got candid about his latest film 'Mission Majnu', preparing to play a spy from the first time, and what made him accept the project. He also revealed the most challenging part to act in the movie.

Sidharth shared: "True stories have always piqued my interest, and 'Mission Majnu', an espionage thriller drama, was something I couldn't pass up. Yes, I have been a part of action-packed dramas in the past, but this is my first assignment as a spy for the country. It is an excellent combination of real-life events and a compelling and thrilling story." The 'Student of the Year' actor added more about playing a RAW agent in the film and how he prepared for this role: "Preparing for 'Mission Majnu' involved many facets. Every role was on a different level, be it that of a tailor, plumber, or spy agent. It was challenging because we knew nothing about RAW agents, and

everything about secret services and intelligence was confidential. I got the opportunity to play many shades, which I thoroughly enjoyed. As the film is set in the 1970s, I also attended a week-long workshop where I learned how to use an old-fashioned sewing machine." The actor further spoke about the challenges he faced while playing a RAW agent in his current project: "The role promises a challenge, a dual life in a single film where I portray Aman and Tariq. Much effort went into the character's look, especially to make it convincing as a tailor. We also prepared for the different dialects and languages of Rawalpindi in the seventies."

"Every character demands that you have a distinct personality. However, technology does help and plays a different role now. I hope my portrayal after this thorough research does justice to the agents and how they live and operate. It was a wholesome experience, which I've particularly enjoyed in a decade-long career," shared the 38-year-old actor.

## SOUNDIOUS MOUFAKIR READY TO MAKE HER ACTING DEBUT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After 'Splitsvilla' and 'Roadies', Soundous Moufakir has been roped in to play Roma in the movie 'Continuity'. She spoke about making her debut as an actor through Deepak Singh's next project.

Soundous, who hails from Morocco, had participated in the reality show 'Roadies' and currently she is part of the dating-based reality show 'Splitsvilla X4'.

She said: "It was quite a pleasant surprise when sir offered me this film, and I didn't take a moment to say yes. I want to set a standard for myself in 'Continuity'."

"It was a dream come true to see me on the screen with my style and attire. I'm sure people will fall in love with this character. I'm playing a Punjabi girl, romancing and fighting for the love of her life," added Soundous.

She will be essaying the role of Roma in the movie which will be her first project as an actress.

Soundous also shared various photos from the sets of the festival film on her social media handle and captioned them: "Continuity, soon on your screens. ROMA, a character who's very different from who I am. Thank you Deepak Singh for this opportunity."



## Megha Chakraborty shares BTS scenes from her show

Team Absolute | Mumbai

'Imlie' actress Megha Chakraborty, who is seen playing the titular role in the show is enjoying shooting

for the fictional drama and keeps sharing reels and pictures from the sets.

Recently, she shared a reel in which she can be seen shooting for a sequence in the show and her co-actor Karan Vohra, who is playing her on-screen husband Atharva in the show can be seen walking carrying her in his arms. It seems as if both were shooting for some action sequence as they looked injured and Atharva saved Imlie from some danger. The caption reads: "Ek dil ek jaan hai". After she shared this romantic reel, many social media users liked it and recalled their chemistry from the 2018 show 'Krishna Chali London' in which they both played the lead roles.

One of the fans wrote: "Chahe Krishna Chali London ho ya ho Imlie, this jodi always rocks." (Be it Krishna Chali London or Imlie, this couple always rocks) Another social media user commented: "I was blown away by the scene. Great fit."

While the other fan mentioned: "Mesmerising couple. Krishveer Athlie will be remembered for a lifetime. This should be the cover page of Imlie book."

Meanwhile, the show is seeing a lot of ups and down in the life of the three lead characters, Imlie, Atharva and Cheeni, played by Seerat Kapoor.



## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Asha Negi