

absolute india



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39 INDIAN CITIES AMONG WORLD'S 50 MOST POLLUTED: REPORT

Chad, Iraq, Pakistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Kuwait, India, Egypt and Tajikistan were the top 10 most polluted countries while Australia, Estonia, Finland, Grenada, Iceland, and New Zealand met the World Health Organization (WHO) PM2.5 guideline (annual average of 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ or less). The data from 131 countries was taken from over 30,000 ground-based monitors, either government or non-government operated.

AS PER THE REPORT, AMONG THE SIX METRO CITIES, KOLKATA WAS RANKED THE MOST POLLUTED AFTER DELHI. HOWEVER, CHENNAI WAS STATED TO BE THE CLEANEST WITH POLLUTION 'JUST' 5X THE WHO'S SAFE LEVEL. THE METRO CITIES -- HYDERABAD AND BENGALURUA -- SAW POLLUTION LEVELS UPTICK OVER THE AVERAGE SINCE 2017.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Swiss firm IQAir in its 'World Air Quality Report' released on Tuesday ranked India the world's eighth most polluted country in 2022, dropping from fifth place the previous year. In the list of most polluted cities in the world, out of the 50 cities, 39 are in India.

As per the report, in India, the transportation sector causes 20-35 per cent of the PM2.5 pollution while

other sources of pollution are industrial units, coal-fired power plants and biomass burning. After the two top most-polluted cities, Lahore in Pakistan and Hotan in China, Rajasthan's Bhiwadi is in third place and Delhi ranked fourth. Delhi's PM2.5 level is almost 20 times the safe limit, the report stated.

Delhi has so far been the most polluted capital in the world and the report made a distinction between 'greater' Delhi and New Delhi the capital. Both are in the top 10 and the infamous distinction of being the world's most polluted capital goes to Chad's N'Djamena. National Capital's peripherals--

Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram and Faridabad have seen a decline in pollution levels. The report said that there is a 34 per cent decline in Gurugram to 21 per cent in Faridabad if compared to the average PM2.5 levels reported in previous years.

Delhi has seen a decline of eight per cent. The report said that worldwide, poor air quality accounts for 93 billion days lived with illness and over six million deaths each year.

"The total economic cost equates to over \$8 trillion dollars, surpassing 6.1 per cent of the global annual GDP. Exposure to air pollution causes and aggravates several health conditions which include, but are not limited to, asthma, cancer, lung illnesses, heart disease, and premature mortality," the report said. According to the report, 31 cities including 10 cities in Uttar Pradesh and seven in Haryana, have seen a steep percentage decline in pollution levels. "A total of 38 cities and towns have seen a rise in pollution compared to an average of previous years," stated the report.

Shinde govt rattled as 1.8 mn govt employees strike for Old Pension Scheme

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Around 1.8 million Maharashtra government employees in various departments, schools, colleges, hospitals and other sectors on Tuesday started an indefinite strike to press for a return of the Old Pension Scheme.

Facing its biggest challenge, the 9-month old government of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis has warned of action against the striking employees while offering an olive branch to discuss and consider their demand after taking into account the financial implications.

However, the striking unions are adamant and declared that they want an immediate announcement on OPS - which was discontinued in 2005.

"We are collecting the figures, but a majority of the state government employees across departments have joined the strike and will continue till we succeed," Government Employees Unions Steering Committee Convenor Vishwas Katkar told media persons. The OPS was replaced by a new pension scheme in which the pension amount was deducted from the employees' salaries, unlike the previous version.

Explaining the effect, Katkar said that in OPS, the employees use to get 50 per cent of the basic salary as pension, but in the new scheme, the amount is barely 25 per cent of the basic pay.

As the Class I and II employees are not part of the strike, there is only a partial impact on the normal working of various



departments. However, the strike has hit various government schools, colleges with teaching and non-teaching staff staying away, paramedics and nurses in hospitals, plus Class III and IV cadres remained off work. The working was also affected in government offices in urban and rural centres and districts as a majority of the civic employees are also joining the agitation for OPS.

Nevertheless, in certain major cities like Mumbai, where the civic employees are keeping off the strike, the impact would be minimal, though they have expressed solidarity with their striking fraternity. Chief Secretary M.K. Srivastava on Monday directed all Divisional Commissioners and Collectors to take appropriate measures to avoid any inconvenience to the common people.

Shinde said that the government will constitute an administrative committee of top officers to study the OPS demands and it would submit its report within a given time-frame, but the employees unions insist it should be accepted as a policy.

Denial of RTI to non-citizens would be against Indian Constitution: Delhi HC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court has held that both Indian citizens and non-citizens have access to the Right to Information (RTI), and to restrict that to non-citizens would be against both the RTI Act and the Indian Constitution.

AS RAWAT, a Public Information Officer (PIO) employed by the Central Tibetan Schools Administration (CTSA), was presenting a case in court contesting the Central Information Commission's (CIC) order slapping fine of Rs 2,500 on him.

Section 3 of the RTI Act, which states that "all citizens have the right to information," must be seen as a positive affirmation of the right in favour of citizens rather than as a restriction on non-citizens, a single-judge bench of Justice Prathiba M. Singh said.

She said: "Creating an absolute bar



(against non-citizens) would be contrary to the purpose and object of the RTI Act itself, and such an absolute bar cannot be read into the RTI Act." The court, nonetheless, made clear that the disclosure of information to non-citizens would depend on the kind of information sought and the recognition of the rights guaranteed to such class of persons under the Constitution of India.

The fine was imposed on Rawat because he withheld information from Dawa Tashi, a teacher who had asked for details on his confirmation letter and other advantages from the CTSA.

Because Tashi was a Tibetan national, the information was rejected to him by Rawat.

150 DOG BITE CASES IN BIHAR'S MUZAFFARPUR IN PAST 24 HRS

Patna: Panic gripped Bihar's Muzaffarpur district after 150 cases of dog bites were reported in the past 24 hours, sources said here on Tuesday.

On Monday, while 100 victims went to Sadar hospital to take anti-rabies vaccines, Sri Krishna Medical College and Hospital (SKMCH) received 50 patients.

A long queue was witnessed in both the hospitals. The victims claimed that stepping out from their houses has become very risky as the dogs attack in packs. Majority of the victims are women and children. Some people carry batons to save themselves.

According to an official of the district civil surgeon office, 4,000 doses of anti-rabies vaccines have been used in the last 13 days. He said that even those with no bites are also turning to the hospitals to take anti-rabies vaccine in advance. Meanwhile, the Municipal Corporation of Muzaffarpur has hired a team of experts to capture stray dogs in the district.

META CEO FIRES 10K MORE EMPLOYEES, SHUTS 5K ADDITIONAL OPEN ROLES

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Meta Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg on Tuesday announced to sack an additional 10,000 employees via several job cut rounds in the coming months. In a Facebook post, Zuckerberg said overall, "we expect to reduce our team size by around 10,000 people and to close around 5,000 additional open roles that we haven't yet hired" in the company's "year of efficiency". In a separate filing with the US SEC, Meta said the new job cuts will lower the high end of its expense guidance for the year by \$3 billion. Over the next couple of months, organisation leaders will announce restructuring plans focused on flattening the organisations, cancelling lower priority projects, and reducing hiring rates. "We will let recruiting team members know tomorrow whether



they're impacted. We expect to announce restructurings and layoffs in our tech groups in late April, and then our business groups in late May," the Meta CEO said. In a small number of cases, it may take through the end of the year to complete these changes, he added. "Our timelines for international teams will also look different, and local leaders will follow up with more details," said Zuckerberg.

The fresh cuts come just four months after he laid off 11,000 employees, or 13 per cent of the company, in November last year.

Zuckerberg said that after restructuring, Meta plans to lift hiring and transfer freezes in each group. "Other relevant efficiency timelines include targeting this summer to complete our analysis from our hybrid work year of learning so we can further refine our distributed work model. We also aim to have a steady stream of developer productivity enhancements and process improvements throughout the year," he added.

In its 'Year of Efficiency', Meta will make the organisation flatter by removing multiple layers of management. "As part of this, we will ask many managers to become individual contributors. We'll also have individual contributors report into almost every level -- not just the bottom -- so information flow between people doing the work and management will be faster," Zuckerberg noted.

AAP to contest polls in all 230 assembly seats in MP: Kejriwal

Bhopal: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday announced that his party will contest the upcoming assembly elections in all 230 seats in Madhya Pradesh.

Kejriwal made this announcement while addressing a large gathering of AAP workers in Bhopal. Kejriwal along with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann was on their maiden visit ahead of the assembly polls in Madhya Pradesh due later this year.

While addressing the gathering of party workers and people who came from different parts of Madhya Pradesh, especially from tribal areas, Kejriwal tried to convince them highlighting his 'Delhi model' freebies.

He promised that the people of Madhya Pradesh too will find better government schools for their children, health infrastructures will be developed in Delhi's model and also cheaper electricity, if AAP forms government.



ASIAN MARKETS FALL AMID SVB FALLOUT FEARS

Hong Kong | Agencies

Asian stocks fell broadly on Tuesday, dragged down by banking shares, as fears over the fall-out of Silicon Valley Bank's collapse gripped the market despite US government efforts to stabilize the financial system, media reports said.

Japan's Nikkei 225 tumbled 2.19 per cent to post its third straight day of declines. Hong Kong's Hang Seng briefly dropped 2.5 per cent, before trimming losses in the afternoon. Korea's KOSPI lost almost 3 per cent. China's Shanghai Composite shed 0.65 per cent, CNN reported.

Banks were the hardest hit sector across the region, CNN reported. HSBC Holdings plunged more than 5 per cent in Hong Kong after the banking giant pledged to inject 2 billion pounds (\$2.4 billion) of liquidity into SVB's UK unit,



which it had bought for 1 pound, Standard Chartered Bank sank nearly 7 per cent, CNN reported.

The sell-off happened despite extraordinary measures by US regulators over the weekend to avert a potential banking crisis following the collapse of SVB. The California-based lender fell with astounding speed on Friday, marking America's biggest bank shutdown since 2008.

Investors are now on edge over whether the demise of SVB could spark a broader banking sector meltdown. On Monday, US stocks were mixed, with banking shares taking a hit, CNN reported.

ONLY CLEAN-SHAVEN GROOMS CAN EXCHANGE VOWS: RAJ COMMUNITY'S PECULIAR DECISION

Archana Sharma | Jaipur

In what could be ascribed as a strange decision, a local committee organising mass marriage ceremonies in Rajasthan has taken a collective decision of allowing only clean-shaven grooms while those with long beard will be returned.

The decision was taken unanimously in the meeting called by Shri Kshatriya Kumawat Samuhik Vivah Samiti, which will be conducting a mass marriage ceremony on March 30. However, what makes news is the unique order issued by the committee members.

The officials of the committee have directed that only clean-shave grooms will be permitted to attend the marriage, and anyone with a beard will be sent back.

The meeting was held in Govindgarh where committee president Satyanarayan Mawar and secretary Chhoturam Mawal said that grooms are directed to come clean-shaven to promote Indian culture. Under western



influence, many grooms come for their wedding with long beards which look indecent. At times, their identity remains hidden and hence comes the order.

All committee members gave their consent to the order and accepted that

only clean-shaven grooms will be permitted to exchange vows in marriage ceremony while others shall be returned.

Till now, nine pairs have registered for marriage following the norms, said sources.

Poster war: Rajasthan Cong, BJP attack each other with 'Naatu rhyme'

Jaipur | Agencies

At a time when 'RRR' is garnering laurels from across the world for its 'Naatu'



song which won the Oscars, Rajasthan BJP and Congress are trying to garner eyeballs, cashing in on the popularity of the song by attacking each other on burning issues.

While Rajasthan BJP posted a poster showing two characters of the film as Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and attacked the ruling government over paper leaks, the Congress on the other side have attacked the saffron party by posting two heroes of film as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Adani.

While Congress captioned the poster with graphic characters showing 'Modi and Adani' and wrote 'Looto, Looto' rhyming them with 'Naatu Naatu' on Monday, BJP responded by posting same graphics showing Gehlot and Rahul as lead heroes and captioned it as 'Paper Leak Karke Nachoo Nachoo'.

Surprisingly, both parties have dressed the opposite party leaders in the similar dress as worn by lead actors of the film Ram Charan and Jr NTR in the film.



PARLIAMENT ADJOURNED TILL WED AMID PROTESTS BY TREASURY BENCHES, OPPN

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Both Houses of Parliament were adjourned for the day till Wednesday amid protests by both treasury benches and opposition members.

As soon as the lower House reconvened at 2 p.m., the ruling BJP members and opposition MPs began their noisy protests.

The BJP members sought Congress MP Rahul Gandhi's apology over his remarks on democracy during a speech which he delivered in London last week, while the opposition led by Congress, DMK, Left and TMC started shouting slogans, seeking IPC probe in the Adani issue.

The Congress MPs displayed placards showing some old remarks made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. They stormed the well of the House with placards.

Amid chaos, the lower House was adjourned for the day to meet on Wednesday (March 15).

This is the second consecutive day when no business could be transacted in Lok Sabha, ever since the Parliament reconvened on Monday (March 13) after a month-long break.



Rajya Sabha too was adjourned for the day. Amid noisy protests by both treasury benches and opposition members, leader of the House in

Rajya Sabha Piyush Goyal said that Gandhi's remarks had hurt the tenets of democracy and therefore he should apologise in Parliament for

his remarks. As protests continued, chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar adjourned the House for the day.

22 people detained over paper leak incident: Assam DGP G.P. Singh

Guwahati | Agencies

Assam's Director General of Police (DGP), G.P. Singh on Tuesday said that 22 people have been detained in connection to the paper leak incident for the General Science subject of the class 10 board examination.

In a tweet, the DGP said: "Reference paper leakage case of General Science (C3) of HSLC examination being conducted by Board of Secondary Education, Assam -- 22 persons have been detained at/from Guwahati, North Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sadiya, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia.

"Further lawful action as mandated by law is being taken against them. We remain committed to unearth the network of people involved in leakage of the question paper and the conspirators."

On Monday, the Assam Criminal Investigation Department (CID) had detained three people for their alleged involvement in the incident. The three people, teachers Jyotirekha Borgohain and Herambo Kumar Das, and driver Bindeshwar Tumung were



employees of the Bhauri Devi Sarawgi High School.

The Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA) announced the cancellation of Monday's examination late Sunday night after the paper leak came to light.

After the Class 10 Board examination started in the state, several allegations have surfaced over the paper leak in other subjects.

Himachal Governor aims to make state free from drugs

Shimla | Agencies

Himachal Pradesh Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla on Tuesday said it would be his priority to make the state free from drugs and appealed to the people to cooperate at every level so that "we can save the youth from falling prey to drug abuse".

Presiding over a meeting of senior officers of the Police Department held at Raj Bhavan here on drug abuse and illegal trafficking, he was categorically clear in saying that the Panchayati Raj and educational institutions, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, research institutes, experts and common man can immensely contribute and play an important role in making the society drug-free.

He said the police force along with other social



organisations has a great responsibility to spread awareness amongst the masses. Besides, the issue could be discussed in length and measures to be adopted to tackle drug menace to be taken up with the civil and police authorities of the bordering states that will help routing this evil thoroughly.

Shukla said the issue was also part of discussion when he called upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi after becoming the Governor of Himachal Pradesh.

A planned strategy has to be chalked out to fight this

social evil. He expressed contentment that the police department is doing its job well to capture illegal drugs in day-to-day checkpoints and is also spreading awareness in society about drug abuse and its consequences.

Shukla said Himachal Pradesh is also known for its tourism potential thereby adding to its economy but under the pretext of tourism "we won't allow free flow of drugs in the state".

"The illegal drug trade is now spreading like an organised crime and the police needs to be more vigilant to capture the kingpins of this organised crime and to conduct sudden checks at state barriers."

He lauded the efforts of State CID for starting a special campaign 'Pradhav'. He said such efforts could prove effective in creating awareness against drug abuse.

Delhi HC gives eight weeks deadline for toilets for transgenders in capital

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday gave a deadline of eight weeks for constructing public toilets for transgender people in the national capital, while warning that it would seek personal appearance of the top officials concerned of the Delhi government and the NDMC in case of non-compliance.

A bench of Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad was hearing a PIL filed by Jasmine Kaur Chhabra seeking direction to construct separate washrooms for the third gender on the ground that the absence of such public toilets makes them prone to sexual assault and harassment.

The court noted that the city government's status report stated that the process of construction was stated to be underway and no public toilets have been built for the transgender population.

The status report filed by the New Delhi Municipal Council also indicat-



ed the existence of paper work but the ground reality is that nothing has been done. The matter has been listed for hearing on July 14.

The court observed that the status report has been filed in which it has been stated that the state has taken appropriate action keeping in view

the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in the matter of construction of public toilets for transgender persons but the report also reveals that toilets have not been constructed at all.

"Feasibility report does not mean that toilet has been constructed and therefore eight weeks' time is granted by way of last indulgence to the NDMC," the court said, while directing to ensure that toilet are in place before the next date of hearing.

"It is also made clear that if the toilets are not constructed within the aforesaid period, the court shall be directing the appearance of Secretary, PWD on the next date of hearing," the bench said.

Counsel appearing for the city government assured the process of construction will begin soon.

Meanwhile, the bench asked the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and other local bodies to file a detailed status report in respect of the total number of toilets for transgender persons.

KARNATAKA DGP 'NALAYAK', SHOULD BE ARRESTED, SAYS SHIVAKUMAR

Bengaluru | Agencies

Congress' Karnataka unit President D.K. Shivakumar on Tuesday demanded arrest of the state DGP Praveen Sood for allowing erection of an entrance in the name of Nanje Gowda and Uri Gowda, two historical figures who, as per Hindu activists, had killed erstwhile Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan.

During the visit of PM Narendra Modi to Karnataka to dedicate Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway, Praveen Sood has allowed distortion of history by allowing an entrance to be named after Nanje Gowda and Uri Gowda. A case should be lodged against him and he has to be arrested," Shivakumar said.

"This DGP is a nalayak (useless). He had heeded the demands of the government. Immediately, a case should be registered against him. The Election Commission should transfer him to a different place. He was there in the post for three years. Why is he still there?" he asked.



Addressing reporters before attending the Convention of Tigala community members, Shivakumar stated he thought the DGP was impartial and a good man. "But he is working as a stooge of the BJP party. How can he allow such an entrance?"

he said. "BJP is always trying to distort history from the beginning. They have not spared Kuvempu, Basavanna, Narayana Guru, Ambedkar, Balagandhanatha swamiji and Shivakumar swamiji. Now, they have

taken up the names of Uri Gowda and Nanje Gowda. Where is their history? Their names have been created and BJP is hatching a conspiracy to betray the Vokkaliga community," he added.

"Their (Uri Gowda and Nanje Gowda) names have been created and the Vokkaliga community has been insulted. I don't want to discuss now about Srirangapatna and Sringeri, where there is a different history," he said, accusing the BJP of "sowing seeds of poison between communities before election".

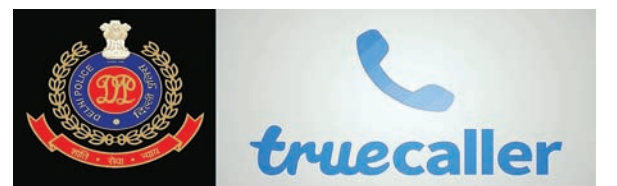
"Who asked them to erect the entrance gate in the name of Nanje Gowda and Uri Gowda? Are there any documents to prove their existence?"

"If the Congress takes up an agitation, they will lodge 25 cases against us. Why isn't the case lodged against those who erected the entrance in their name? Let our government come to power. The legal action will be initiated against whoever worked as the puppets in the hands of BJP in the legal framework," he warned.

Delhi Police signs MoU with Truecaller to curbs cyber frauds

New Delhi: Delhi Police on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Truecaller, an ID calling app, to curb cyber frauds in the national Capital, said an official.

The ceremony was presided over by the Special Commissioner of Police, Sanjay Singh and Pragna Misra from Truecaller India at Police Headquarters. The MoU was signed and exchanged among the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Suman Nalwa and Misra. As per the MoU, the Truecaller will display official numbers of Delhi Police representatives on their Delhi Police Directory Services and all verified numbers will have a green badge and a blue tick mark, with a government



services tag highlighting it. "The partnership with Truecaller will help the public in identifying verified numbers and protect them from cyber fraud and impersonation scams in the name of government officials," said Nalwa.

"Delhi Police shall also be regularly sharing a list of phone numbers against which they have received complaints about harassment, scam or issues registered against them with Truecaller to mark them as spam or fraud on the platform to protect citizens and

alert them in case these numbers continue to remain active. To thwart cyber threats, Truecaller, in association with Delhi Police, will generate cyber safety awareness by training citizens in Delhi," said Nalwa.

During the function, the Special CP, Singh recalled how the quick response by Delhi Police helped in curbing increasing cyber crimes. He further said that it has become imperative to spread cyber awareness as more and more people are adopting digital means these days.

TERRORIST ARRESTED IN J&K'S SOPORE

Srinagar: Security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Sopore have arrested an active terrorist, an official said on Tuesday, adding arms and ammunition were also recovered from his possession.

The terrorist has been identified as Owais Ahmad Mir. A police officer said that based on specific input regarding the presence of a terrorist in Madina Bagh Moh at Dangerpura area, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by Sopore Police and the Army (22RR).

"As the initial cordon was being laid, a terrorist was spotted trying to run away and attempting to break the cordon, taking cover of narrow by-lanes and congested area. The movement was passed to all the troops and depending on information, the mission leader re-organised the inner cordon," he said.

The police said that "assessing the situation, the vigilant troops displayed situational awareness, extreme restraint and exceptional fire control in not opening the fire. The alert troops of the joint team managed to nab the terrorist alive, thereby displaying great synergy".

Later, during searches, incriminating materials, arms



AAP seeks CBI probe into multi-crore parking scam in Chandigarh

Chandigarh | Agencies

Hitting out at Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Mayor Anoop Gupta for "rampant corruption" in the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday sought a CBI inquiry into the multi-crore parking scam "to unearth the involvement of senior BJP leaders and top officials".

AAP's Punjab chief spokesperson Malvinder Singh Kang, along with party leaders Pardeep Chhabra and Damanpreet Singh, lashed out at Chandigarh Administrator Banwarilal Purohit and BJP leaders for ignoring the irregularities and corruption in the BJP-ruled civic body.

Accusing Purohit of dancing at the tunes of the BJP, Kang asked why he has turned a blind eye towards rampant corruption in the municipal corporation and is patronising BJP leaders in



Chandigarh.

Contrary to this, he interfered in the day-to-day affairs of the Punjab government to hamper the progress of the state, he added.

Raising questions over the municipal corporation and police for not disclosing arrest of Sanjay Sharma, Director, Pashchatya Entertainment Pvt Ltd, for three days in connection with submitting fake bank guarantees of Rs 1.65 crore for running 57 paid parking lots in Chandigarh, Chhabra said something is fishy in this entire case and alleged that

the BJP is trying to save their leaders and officials involved in this scam. He said Chandigarh parking is worth Rs 4-5 crore. He said it was not the first case of corruption but earlier, firm Arya toll and Savel Company had cheated the corporation of several millions in collusion with the officials but no action was taken against them as well.

Leader of Opposition in Chandigarh corporation, Damanpreet Singh, said all AAP councilors have also submitted a memorandum to the Mayor to seek a special house session for a thorough discussion on the issue of corruption.

He said the municipal corporation is mired in controversy of corruption and fraud is committed by the paid parking contractors, while there is audio of water meter readers claiming giving bribes to SDEs and JEs, fake issue of employment letters, irregularities by Lions Company and complaints against the outsourcing contractors, etc.

UP health officials on alert as H3N2 cases rise

Lucknow | Agencies

The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has put all medical facilities on alert in view of rising cases of H3N2 virus in the state.

The health department has issued an alert in the state and a separate nodal officer will soon be nominated for this in every district.

The state government has also issued guidelines, asking officials to be vigilant about influenza-like illness. According to the official spokesman, a 10-bed isolation ward will be set up in every district hospital while OPD will also have a separate room for patients suspected of influenza, so that they can be prevented from coming in contact with other patients.



Special vigilance will be in place for children, the elderly and those with serious illness.

The spokesman said that though the situation in UP was not alarming, care was being taken because the number of people infected with the virus is increasing in the state.

In the past 24 hours, eight children suffering from pneumonia have been admitted to the hospital in Kanpur. Children have been admitted to the PICU built in the maternity block of Hallet Hospital.



"GOVERNMENTS BOUGHT AND SOLD HERE": ARVIND KEJRIWAL

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann were in Madhya Pradesh, campaigning to add yet another state to the Aam Aadmi Party's bag. AAP has announced that would contest all 200 assembly seats in Rajasthan and 230 seats in Madhya Pradesh.

At a public meeting in Bhopal, Kejriwal hit out at the ruling BJP and its predecessor Congress over the defection of Jyotiraditya Scindia which pulled down the Kamal Nath government.

"In Madhya Pradesh, governments are bought and sold. After every election, one party hits the road with a pushcart, crying 'MLAs for sale'. Another party is sitting ready to buy. They have made a market of the system and democracy itself," he said, without naming anyone. "The people in Madhya Pradesh are frustrated. No matter who they vote for, the government of



'mama' will come," he added in a dig at Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Both Delhi and Punjab were ruled by the Congress before AAP wrested power from it. The

party is expecting to break into two more -- Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh -- this year. Chhattisgarh also goes to polls this year along with Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. In 2018, all

three states were won by the Congress, but the party lost control of Madhya Pradesh in 2020 with the walkout by Jyotiraditya Scindia along with 20-odd MLAs supporting him.

AAP's high-profile campaign in BJP-ruled Gujarat in the last round of assembly elections, though, fell short of expectation. The party, which contested 180 of the state's 182 seats, won only five. Around 120 candidates lost their deposit. The party, however, gained national party status by scooping up nearly 13 per cent of votes.

This time, besides Madhya Pradesh, AAP is also contesting in the other BJP-ruled state, Karnataka.

In Madhya Pradesh, the party, which had around 5 lakh members, is buoyed by its performance in the urban local body polls in July-August last year, where it claimed it had garnered 6.3 per cent of the vote share. It had fielded 1,500 candidates for local body polls and managed to win the mayor's post in Singrauli.

Madhya Pradesh bags award for excellent work in irrigation sector

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Central Irrigation and Energy Bureau has selected the state of Madhya Pradesh as excellent state for the work done in the irrigation sector. Nomination was filed on the basis of successful implementation of Mohanpura and Kundalia project of Madhya Pradesh for Bureau 'CBIP Award'. Madhya Pradesh has earned first position in the efficient use of water resources.

Madhya Pradesh was given this award on March 3 in New Delhi by Union Minister R.K. Singh. For this achievement, Chief Minister Chouhan congratulated Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silavat and the departmental staff before the meeting of the Council of Ministers began in the Assembly Committee Room today.

Chief Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan took continuous decisions for the expansion of irrigation area and approved and imple-



mented many irrigation schemes. With the vision and special efforts of Chief Minister Chouhan, the irrigated area of the state has increased from 8 lakh hectare to 45 lakh hectare in the last 15 years. Due to the strong will power of Chief Minister Chouhan, water has been supplied to the fields

through the pressure pipe system in Madhya Pradesh using new technology in the last 3 years. Madhya Pradesh has been recognized as the first state to have irrigated more than double the area with the same water as compared to the canal system by irrigating through pipe system.

For next 10 days, MP BJP to focus on 'booth' strengthening campaign

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The ruling BJP in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday launched the second phase of 'booth vistarak' campaign in the run-up to state Assembly elections this year.

According to sources, for the next 10 days, all senior party leaders, including Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and cabinet ministers, will be participating in the programme across the state.

For this purpose, the state leadership has assigned as many as 22 tasks to over 12,000 'booth vistaraks', which includes meeting the 'panna pramukh' and reviewing their preparation at booth level.



Meanwhile, the party workers will reach out to the people to find out beneficiaries of state and Centre's schemes and urge them to support the BJP in the elec-

tions. Further, the party has planned to form a WhatsApp group for each booth and voters of that particular booth will be added. It will also help them to remain connected with voters directly and send messages during the poll campaign.

According to state BJP president V.D. Sharma, during the campaign, the party will also nominate youth and women at various political posts. "For the next 10 days, all party leaders and workers will be at the booths. There are over 64,000 booths in the state and the party cadre will reach to them with a vision to win 2023 Assembly polls," Sharma said.



Bhopal's famous ghazal and song artist Anupama, Devendra and Shrey Pandey honored at International ICCI USA New York Global Film Award held in Mumbai

7-yr-old boy falls into borewell in MP, rescue operation on

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In yet another incident of negligence in Madhya Pradesh, a 7-year-old boy fell into a borewell on Tuesday. The efforts are being made to rescue the child safely.

The incident occurred in Vidisha district, around 60 km from state capital Bhopal. The boy, who fell into the borewell, has been identified as Lokesh Ahrwar. As per the reports, the incident occurred when the boy was playing at Kherkhedi Pathar village and all of a sudden he fell into the borewell, which was uncovered.

After being alerted by the villagers, a rescue team reached the spot and began an operation to safely extricate the child, said Lateri sub-divi-



sional magistrate Harshal Choudhary.

Efforts are on to rescue the child safely by deploying a JCB machine (an earthmover) and a camera was also lowered into the borewell to track the boy's condition better, he added.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said he has directed Vidisha district administration to rescue the child safely. A rescue team was also sent from Bhopal to Vidisha.

Till the story was filed, the rescue operation was underway.

YOUTH MAHAPANCHAYAT TO BE HELD IN BHOPAL ON MARCH 23

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the department should make necessary preparations to make Youth Mahapanchayat an important medium for providing benefits of various schemes related to youth. The new youth policy of the state will come out on March 23. The policy will prove to be important from the perspective for the welfare of the youth. Chief Minister Chouhan was discussing with senior officials in connection with the Youth Mahapanchayat to be held on March 23 in Bhopal in the Vidhan Sabha committee room on Tuesday.

CM Chouhan said that the youth policy of Madhya Pradesh is an important step in the interest of the youth. The features of this policy should reach the whole country and this initiative should be discussed at the national level. CM Chouhan said that it is necessary to encourage the youth. Youth sarpanch and parshad's should also be invited in the youth mahapanchayat. He said that the youth should be informed about other schemes including Mukhya Mantri Yuva Udyami, Mukhya Mantri Medhavi Vidyarthi, Mukhya Mantri Apprenticeship Yojana. Some beneficiaries of these



schemes should also be given benefits symbolically. The concerned departments should try their best for maximum participation of the youth.

It was informed that young participants in the age group of 17 to 35 years will gather in the Youth Mahapanchayat to be held at Motilal Nehru Stadium in Bhopal on March 23 from 1 pm to 2.30 pm. There will be participation of youth from each district. Along with direct participation, lakhs of youth will also participate virtually. The Youth

Mahapanchayat will be broadcast live in the colleges and universities of the state. Gram Panchayat and urban bodies will also broadcast it. Higher Education Department will play a major role in this. Associate departments include technical education and skills, rural development, urban administration, medical education, MSME, farmers' welfare and agriculture development, public relations, public works, water resources and environment. Major partner organizations include Madhya Pradesh Jan Abhiyan Parishad and Nehru Yuva Kendra. Youth associated with CM Young Professionals for Development Programme, CM Young Internship Professional Development and CM Community Leadership Development Program will also participate in the Youth Mahapanchayat.

Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains discussed the role of the concerned departments. It was told that in the Youth Mahapanchayat, Madhya Pradesh Madhyam will showcase a short film focusing on Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, a film focusing on popular departmental schemes for the youth and experiences of youth achievers will also be presented. Along with the launching of the youth portal, the youth who received the State Youth Award will also be felicitated.

Man chained to tree and thrashed, found dead later, cops suspect suicide

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Police are investigating the death of a man in Madhya Pradesh's Chatarpur days after he was chained to a tree and allegedly thrashed because his son married a woman from the same village.

Udha Ahirwar's wife Savitri has alleged that her daughter-in-law's relatives forcibly entered their home and killed him. Police, however, have said the man was upset over the humiliation of the public assault and died by suicide on March 4.

Six accused have been charged with abetment to suicide and wrongful restraint, and police are looking for them. Police said Udha Ahirwar's son Shankar and a woman from the same village work as labourers in Rajasthan. The two reportedly married there. Both families are from the same caste. But the woman's father was infuriated when he heard of the wedding. It is alleged that he and five others took Udha Ahirwar to another village Panchampur, chained him to a tree there and thrashed him.

A video shows Ahirwar sitting near the



tree, his hands and feet chained. He was eventually freed and returned home. Two days later, he was found hanging in his room.

His wife has alleged that the assailants barged into their home when Ahirwar was alone, killed him and hanged his body. Police, however, have denied this charge and said the man appears to have died by suicide. Further probe into the horrifying incident is on.

Congress MLAs stage walkout against BBC censure motion in MP Assembly

Congress MLAs on March 14 walked out opposing a censure motion that the Madhya Pradesh Assembly passed against the BBC for allegedly showing Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a bad light in its documentary on the 2002 Gujarat riots.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The House on March 13 passed the censure motion against the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) after it was introduced as a private member resolution. It came days after the Gujarat Assembly passed a resolution requesting the Centre to take strict action against BBC for "tarnishing the image and popularity of PM Modi".

As the house convened on March 14, Leader of Opposition Dr. Govind Singh quoted news articles saying it was reported that the censure motion was approved "unanimously" by the House, though the Congress had not supported it.

It is incorrect to say that the motion was approved unanimously as it was brought during "Zero Hour" without prior notice, Singh said. Also, the motion was not brought before the House business committee for discussion, which he said was against democratic norms.

The Opposition leader said that the Congress legislature party was opposing this censure motion. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Narottam Mishra, however, countered the charge saying most of the Congress MLAs, except for the party's State chief Kamal Nath, were present when the motion against BBC was passed in the House. "But

the Leader of Opposition didn't speak then," he said.

Dr. Singh claimed that he had opposed the censure motion at the time but it was not recorded. Some Congress MLAs, including Sajjan Singh Verma, also started speaking about the resolution related to the BBC documentary.

With several members speaking together, the Leader of the Opposition announced that the Congress legislature party was staging a walkout against the motion. As the Congress members walked out, Speaker Girish Gautam clarified that the censure motion against BBC was passed with a voice vote and not "unanimously".

"BETRAYAL, AGAIN": BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY SURVIVORS ON SUPREME COURT ORDER

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Hours after the Supreme Court turned down the centre's plea for more compensation in the Bhopal Gas Tragedy case, those who lost their own in the disaster termed the verdict a "betrayal".

Over a lakh people were affected by the poisonous gas leak at the Union Carbide plant on December 2, 1984, widely considered the worst industrial disaster ever. Estimates of death range from 5,000 to as high as 25,000.

Rashida Bi lost seven members of her family in the tragedy. Speaking to NDTV at her Bhopal home, she said they continue to face health effects caused due to the gas leak. "The health problems continue. My brother was hospitalised today. The court's verdict is injustice," she said.

The Bhopal victims, she alleged, were denied their day in court because of the "pro-corporate bias" of the bench. "The counsel for Union Carbide was given ample time to speak, but the lawyer for the survivors' organisations was heard for just 45 minutes," she added.

The centre had sought an additional compensation of Rs 7,844 crore from successor firms of Union



Carbide. A compensation of Rs 715 crore was paid back in 1989. The centre had argued that the scale of damage to human lives and the environment could not be assessed properly at the time of the settlement.

The court, however, said the centre

had not provided any rationale for raking up the issue now. The successor firms of Union Carbide, represented by senior advocate Harish Salve, had told the court that depreciation of the rupee since 1989 cannot be a ground to seek a "top-up" of

compensation now. Shehzadi, another survivor of the tragedy, said, "There was a betrayal in 1989. This is again a betrayal."

Balkrishna Namdeo, president of an organisation voicing the demands of the survivors, questioned how the court can "draw the curtain" when those affected in the gas leak disaster continue to die and suffer.

"How can you impose finality when the corporation's crimes continue to victimise people? When people continue to die untimely deaths from cancers and other chronic diseases induced by their exposure to the poisonous gas?" he asked.

"When the criminal remains absconding and the suffering of the victims, including that of their children, continues, how can a Supreme Court bench draw the curtain over the injustice in Bhopal?" Namdeo asked. The then Union Carbide chairman Warren Anderson was prime accused in the case, but did not appear for the trial. A Bhopal court declared him an absconder in 1992. Two non-bailable warrants were issued before his death in 2014.

On June 7, 2010, a Bhopal court sentenced seven executives of Union Carbide India Limited to two years in jail.



EDITOR'S SPECS

PM's pic with rowdy-sheeter in K'taka, BJP high command seeks report

In a major embarrassment to the ruling BJP party in Karnataka, a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a rowdy-sheeter Fighter Ravi greeting each other with folded hands during his recent visit to the state, is doing rounds on social media. The opposition parties have made it a big issue and are attacking not only the BJP but also the Prime Minister. Karnataka Congress unit continued its attack on ruling BJP on Tuesday for "allowing" a rowdy-sheeter to welcome the Prime Minister during the inauguration of Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway. According to sources in BJP, the party top brass is upset over the development and sought a report on the issue. The high command has expressed its displeasure over allowing a controversial personality to welcome PM Modi and creating embarrassment for him. Taking to social media, the Congress said, "how come 'Sarva Jnani' (one who knows everything) who knows everything about the world, does not have information about fighter Ravi?" PM Modi gets the list of those who welcome him beforehand. Right? Congress taunted the BJP. While welcoming PM Modi to Mandya, rowdy-sheeter Fighter Ravi was allowed. The PM had folded his hands and greeted him back at the time of his reception. Pictures of PM Modi folding both the hands before Fighter Ravi is going viral on social media. Congress questioned PM Modi respectfully joining hands before a rowdy-sheeter. Defending the BJP, Union Minister for State from Karnataka Shobha Karandlaje has maintained that PM Modi does not even know who the Fighter Ravi is. Ruling BJP was alleged of allowing rowdy elements to join the party earlier. Congress alleged that BJP leaders had close connections with Santro Ravi, another rowdy-sheeter. As the issue became controversial, he was arrested and sent to prison. The present development has also embarrassed the ruling BJP.

BJP SEES THE BULLDOZER AS ITS TICKET TO A 2024 CLEAN SWEEP IN UP

Amita Verma

The bulldozer politics that originated in Uttar Pradesh in 2020 has now become the mainstay of the Yogi Adityanath government.

The bulldozer - usually seen as a tool of destruction and upheaval - has become a symbol of good governance not only in Uttar Pradesh but outside the state too.

Most governments in the country, mainly the BJP-led ones, are now betting on the bulldozer that is apparently bringing in more bouquets than brickbats.

The bulldozer first gained prominence in the Yogi Adityanath government in July 2020 when this mean machine was used to pull down the house of gangster Vikas Dubey in Bikru village in Kanpur.

Dubey was the main accused in the massacre of eight police personnel and bulldozing his palatial house seemed like speedy justice in the terror-stricken area.

Muslim voices protesting Nupur Sharma's statement on the Prophet, then became the target of the bulldozer in Prayagraj and this gave a Hindu approval to the action.

Thereafter, the bulldozer was used to demolish the ill-gotten properties of mafia dons like Mukhtar Ansari and Atiq Ahmad, both of whom were behind bars.

The state government happily released photographs and videos of the houses, shopping complexes, hotels and buildings of the mafia crumbling under the power of the bulldozer.

A social activist says, "All these recent bulldozer politics of the BJP government is nothing but to create a narrative that anything illegal is associated with Muslims and it is becoming an increasingly threatening gimmick. It is probably a warning message for those who rage against the government."

The bulldozer gradually emerged as a symbol of justice



against wrong-doers and Yogi supporters, mainly Hindus, cheered the initiative.

In the midst of the assembly election, a local daily named Yogi Adityanath as 'Bulldozer Baba' and this took the BJP campaign to the next level.

Leader after leader spoke about the might of the bulldozer in the elections and how Yogi Adityanath had brought criminals to their knees with his bulldozer.

The results of the UP assembly elections where the BJP staged a return to power, put the seal of approval on bulldozer politics and the opposition that had tried to project the bulldozer as a symbol of tyranny, was put on the back-foot.

The popularity of the bulldozer politics was evident from the fact that Holi sprinklers now come in the shape of a bulldozer and even the rakhi comes with a miniature

bulldozer. A whole range of bulldozer toys are now being sold on e-commerce sites like Amazon and Flipkart.

Some young men in Agra have even tattooed the images of the bulldozer and Bulldozer Baba on their bodies after Yogi Adityanath's victory.

While the results made other states like Madhya Pradesh and Delhi adopt the bulldozer formula with open arms, it also gave Yogi Adityanath the opportunity to pursue this brand of politics even more aggressively in his second term.

The UP police are now targeting those linked to mafia dons on an almost daily basis and people are lapping it up.

Bulldozer Baba's politics is getting increasingly popular and so is his image as a stern administrator who will spare no wrong doer. Though there are allegations of

the bulldozer politics being 'selective' but the voices of approval are far louder.

Yogi Adityanath is being felicitated with miniature bulldozers at various functions and the chief minister is not complaining.

Legal experts, in hushed tones, question the legality of the bulldozer action but when the Supreme Court, last year, declined to stay the demolition of properties using bulldozers throughout the country, noting that an "omnibus" order by the top court could restrain municipal authorities from acting against all unauthorised constructions, the debate died a hurried death.

"There is a legal process that must be adopted before a house or property is demolished but the judiciary apparently does not have the courage to go against the people's mood. You need to

get the court's nod before pulling down a building. But here, the building is razed and the papers are then prepared and approved in back date. No one can dare to question the process," said a senior high court lawyer who did not wish to be named.

Every building that has been demolished in Yogi Raj is said to be illegally constructed on land that belongs to another.

The bulldozer now noisily dawdles across Uttar Pradesh and for the BJP, it is a case of the more the merrier.

BJP leaders claim that it is the bulldozer that will again yield rich dividends in the 2024 general elections.

And no one is questioning the claim.

international

CLASHES ERUPT AS HEAVY POLICE CONTINGENT SURROUNDS IMRAN'S RESIDENCE IN LAHORE

Lahore | Agencies

A team of the Islamabad police has surrounded Zaman Park along with a heavy contingent of the Lahore police to arrest Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, whose arrest warrant is out in the Toshakhana case, a media outlet reported.

A team of Islamabad police has been in Lahore since Monday to comply with the court orders to arrest the PTI chairman, who faces a number of cases in different cities.

The police, although observing restraint, are using water cannons to disperse the party's workers as they move ahead in their quest to arrest Khan, and they are around 90 metres away from his residence, The News reported.

The law enforcers are in Lahore's Zaman Park after a



district and sessions court in Islamabad on Monday restored the former Prime Minister's non-bailable arrest warrant in the Toshakhana case.

Last week, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) suspended the non-bailable arrest warrant for Khan issued by the local court issued due to the PTI chief's continuous absence and directed him to appear before the lower court

on March 13 and he failed to comply with the orders yet again. This is the second time in less than 10 days that the police have arrived at Zaman Park to apprehend the deposed Prime Minister.

As the party's workers resorted to stone-pelting, a policeman suffered injuries on his face. Meanwhile, the law enforcers have also arrested the PTI workers, the media outlet reported.

GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE IS BECOMING NEW FACE OF GENDER INEQUALITY: UN CHIEF

United Nations | Agencies

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned that the gender digital divide is fast becoming the new face of gender inequality.

Women and girls now face a new source of discrimination and bias: digital technology. Today's digital technology often uses algorithms designed by a male-dominated tech industry, based on male-dominated data, he said on Monday.

Rather than presenting facts and addressing bias, technology based on incomplete data and badly designed algorithms is digitising and amplifying sexism -- with deadly consequences, he warned.

Medical decisions based on data essentially from men can damage women's health. Safety features based on men's bodies can put women's lives at risk. And policies



based on men's data will leave women and girls even farther behind, he told a townhall meeting with civil society at the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Xinhua news agency reported.

Artificial intelligence will be shaping the world of the future. Without

women's equal input, it will continue to be a man's world, he added. "The gender digital divide is fast becoming the new face of gender inequality."

Rather than uplifting women and girls by providing access to education, healthcare and financial services, technology is often used to harm and control them through surveillance and trafficking, Guterres said.

Online spaces are not safe for women and girls. Gender-based violence online has increased exponentially. Organised campaigns target women politicians, journalists and activists -- a direct attack on women's representation and on democracy itself. So-called influencers denigrate women and feed misogyny and toxic forms of masculinity to millions of young men and boys. Groups that campaign against women's rights find a warm welcome on digital platforms, he noted.

Centuries of patriarchy and damaging stereotypes prevent women innovators from getting the recognition they deserve. Those same stereotypes push girls away from studying science, engineering, and math, and strangle the careers of women scientists. Women are credited less for their achievements, win far fewer prizes, and receive less research funding than men, even when they have the same conditions. Just two per cent of venture capital investment goes to start-ups founded by women, he said. "This must change."

The male chauvinist domination of new technologies is undoing decades of progress on women's rights. Gender equality is a question of power. For more than 100 years, that power was gradually becoming more inclusive. Technology is now reversing that trend. It is concentrating power again more in the hands of men -- to the detriment of all, said Guterres.

REPORTED HATE CRIME INCIDENTS INCREASE IN US: FBI

Washington: The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) said in its updated data that 10,840 hate crime incidents and 12,411 related offences were reported in in the US 2021, up 11.6 per cent.

Nearly two-thirds of the victims were targeted because of the offenders' race, ethnicity, or ancestry bias, Xinhua news agency reported citing the data.

While 15.9 per cent were targeted because of the offenders' sexual-orientation bias, 14.1 per cent were targeted because of the offenders' religious bias.

And there were 310 multiple-bias hate crime incidents that involved 411 victims, the data showed.

Of the 8,327 hate crime offences classified as crimes against persons in the updated 2021 dataset, 43.2 per cent were intimidation, 35.5 per cent were simple assault, and 20.1 per cent were aggravated assault.

Japan approves bill to raise age of consent

Tokyo | Agencies

Japan's Cabinet on Tuesday approved a bill to amend the country's Penal Code regarding the age of sexual consent and a range of sexual offence charges.

According to the bill aimed to be passed during the current parliamentary session, the age of sexual consent in Japan will be raised from 13 to 16, reports Xinhua news agency.

Sex with children under the age of 16 will be criminalised by raising the legal age of consent, with Japan having long been under pressure from child consultation centres here which deal with abuse, as well as international human rights organisations, for the legal age of consent to be raised.

The age of sexual consent in Japan has not been legally raised from 13 since its enactment in 1907.

The age of consent in this country has been one of the



lowest in the industrialised world for many decades.

The amendment to the current law will make having sex with a child under 16 illegal, regardless of whether the act was consensual.

In 2017, Japan, inexplicably, according to welfare and counselling centres dealing with the issue, as well as a host of

lawyers and legal institutions, renamed the crime of "rape" to "forcible sexual intercourse".

The new amendments, however, will see this redressed, and criminal recognition will be given to an act of sexual violation, even when coercion or physical violence is not used.

The sexual offences charges being renamed in the amend-

ments will better clarify non-consensual sex as being illegal.

In addition, the statute of limitations for prosecution for non-consensual intercourse will be extended to 15 years from 10 years under the amendment, and extended from 15 years to 20 for cases of indecent assault that result in injury.

Under the amendments, the statute of limitations will not begin for a victim under the age of 18 when assaulted, until they turn 18.

Other sexually deviant acts will also be criminalised, such as taking sexually explicit photographs without consent and producing illicit images without permission, as part of reforms to the country's Penal Code.

Under the revisions to prevent sexual grooming, payment or the promise of financial reward to children under the age of 16 will also be criminalised.

Cyclone Freddy kills 99 in Malawi, rescue mission underway

Lilongwe | Agencies

At least 99 people have been killed in Malawi after tropical cyclone Freddy lashed the east African nation, authorities said on Tuesday, adding that a rescue mission is currently underway.

Confirming the toll to reporters late Monday, Commissioner for the Department of Disaster and Management Affairs (DoDMA) Charles Kalembe said that 85 fatalities were recorded in the commercial city of Blantyre alone, reports Xinhua news agency.

Kalembe said Blantyre has recorded 134 serious injuries while several other injuries and loss of property have been recorded across the 10 districts that have been heavily affected by the cyclone.

The deaths were caused due to the collapse of residential houses, flash floods, and landslides in the affected districts including Blantyre where one of the mountains, Soche, broke loose releasing a huge flow of water, heavy rocks, and mud that swept a number of homes and buried residents in the process.

The cyclone has also destroyed power generation infrastructure, leaving almost the entire country in blackout since Monday morning.

Malawian President Lazarus Chakwera has declared a state of emergency in the 10 districts that have been heavily affected in the southern region.

Freddy is the strongest tropical cyclone on record and could also be the long-lasting one, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

On Sunday, it struck Mozambique as a cyclone -- for the second time in a less than a month after battering the island nation of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean, causing severe destruction.

It has been difficult to determine the extent of the damage caused in Mozambique and the number of deaths as power supply and phone signals were cut off in some parts of the affected areas.

Freddy also broke records for the strength it has accumulated over the 8,000-km path it travelled across the Indian Ocean from north-western Australia.



MAHA SCOUTS FOR MORE INFRA-PROJECTS FUNDING FROM JAPAN AGENCY



The Maharashtra government is keen to secure financial assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for major infra-structure projects coming up in the state, an official said here on Tuesday.

The team from JICA -- which has given massive loans for the upcoming Ahmedabad-Mumbai Bullet Train and Mumbai Trans Harbour Link and other big-ticket projects being executed in the state -- has assured Japan's full support for the state government for its planned ventures.

Masanori Sakamoto and others, while Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority Commissioner S.V.R. Srinivas, Director-General in the War Room Radhesham Mopalwar, Additional Chief Secretary (Planning) Rajkumar Deora and others assisted the CM.

CBI ARRESTS RPF INSPECTOR IN BRIBE CASE

Mumbai: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday arrested an Inspector of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) for demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs one lakh from a man for helping him in his father's case.



A senior CBI official said that a case was registered against Mukesh Kumar Meena, an Inspector posted at the RPF Police Station, Akola (Maharashtra) and others on a complaint alleging the demand of bribe of Rs three lakh to release the complainant's father from the cases registered against him and also granting bail at the Police Station itself.

Now, 'drinking' in heritage forts' precincts may land you in jail

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a major warning for revellers, any person found drinking in the precincts of heritage forts in Maharashtra may be slapped with a fine or a jail term, or both, soon, a state minister indicated here.



The ruling Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party government plans to introduce provisions to penalise people on the wrong side of the law as far as maintaining the sanctity of forts is concerned. "We shall bring in a law that would provide for three months in jail and a fine of Rs 10,000, or both," Cultural Affairs Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar said in the legislature on Monday.

Maharashtra has around 450 recorded forts around the state comprising imposing hillforts, awesome sea-forts, in urban or rural centres, river-sides or forests, etc. dotting almost every district.

and outside through several of the popular forts that fall in the regular tourism circuits of Mumbai, Pune, Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar, Nashik, Thane, Raigad, Rajnagar, Sindhudurg, Satara, Kolhapur, Nagpur, etc.

Rs. 55.48 crore SME IPO of Bright Outdoor Media Ltd's open for subscription Company to issue 38 lakh Equity shares of Rs. 10 face value at a price and list on BSE-SME Exchange

- Public issue opens for subscription from March 14 and closes on March 17. Minimum lot size for application is 1,000 shares; Minimum IPO application amount Rs. 1.46 lakh. Funds raised through the issue will be used for prepayment/repayment of certain borrowings, purchase of LED hoardings, funding working capital requirements and general corporate purposes. For H1FY23 ended Sep 2022, company reported revenues of Rs. 45.2 crore, Net Profit of Rs. 4.2 crore.



application is 1,000 shares which translate into Rs. 1.46 lakh per application. Sharing more details, Yogesh Lakhani, Chairman and Managing Director, Bright Media Outdoor Ltd said, "We are committed to bring excellence to Out-of-Home advertising through product innovation, unparalleled services and strategic locations. Our company's striking advertising portfolio includes Billboards, Street furniture, Transit Media, and Ambient. We are hopeful that after the proposed public issue, we will be able to execute our growth strategy in a manner that creates exponential value for all stakeholders while consistently delivering quality services."

Public issue of Bright Outdoor Media Ltd - engaged in the business of providing advertising media services consisting Out of Home (OOH) media services is scheduled to open for subscription on March 14. Company is planning to raise Rs. 55.48 crore for prepayment/repayment of certain borrowings, purchase of LED hoardings, funding working capital requirements and general corporate purposes. Last date for subscribing for the public issue is March 17. Shreni Shares Pvt Ltd is the lead manager of the issue. Company's shares will be listed on the BSE SME Exchange Platform. The initial public offering will comprise a fresh issue of 38 lakh equity shares of face value Rs. 10 each at a price of Rs. 146 per share (including a premium of Rs. 136 per equity share) aggregating upto Rs. 55.48 crore. Minimum lot size for the

Out of the issue proceeds, company will utilize Rs. 12.41 crore for repayment/prepayment of certain borrowings, Rs. 13.10 crore for the purchase of LED hoardings, Rs. 18.26 crore for working capital, and Rs. 11.10 cr. for general corporate purposes. Post Issue the share capital of the company will increase to Rs. 13.93 crore from Rs. 10.13 crore before the public issue. Promoters and Promoters Group holds 99.99% stake in the company. Post-IPO promoter group holding will be 72.72%. For the FY21-22 company reported revenues of Rs. 50.90 crore and Net Profit of Rs. 2.59 crore. For 6 months ended, 30 September 2022, company reported revenue of Rs. 45.18 crore and Net Profit of Rs. 4.20 crore.

NOW, 'DRINKING' IN HERITAGE FORTS' PRECINCTS MAY LAND YOU IN JAIL

Mumbai: In a major warning for revellers, any person found drinking in the precincts of heritage forts in Maharashtra may be slapped with a fine or a jail term, or both, soon, a state minister indicated here. The ruling Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party government plans to introduce provisions to penalise people on the wrong side of the law as far as maintaining the sanctity of forts is concerned.

Advertisement for Bright Outdoor Media Limited IPO. Includes company logo, prospectus details, ASBA application information, UPI details, and contact information for Shreni Shares Pvt. Ltd. and Bright Outdoor Media Limited.



SELENA GOMEZ

shares de-glam selfies

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress-singer Selena Gomez appears to be a fan of Miley Cyrus' new album. The 'Only Murders in the Building' star, 30, tagged the fellow Disney alum, 30, in an Instagram post recently, sharing two makeup-free selfies alongside the caption "Violet chemistry."

The caption is a nod to a track on Cyrus' eighth studio album, 'Endless Summer Vacation', which is described as "a love letter to", reports 'People'.

Cyrus sings alongside a melodic beat in the song with a chorus that includes the lyrics: "Stay awhile, stay awhile with me / Stay awhile, don't deny the violet chemistry / Stay awhile, stay awhile with me / Stay awhile, put your arms around me / Put them around me."

As per 'People', Gomez matched the confidence in the song's lyrics by showing her natural beauty as she looked straight into the camera in one photo and smirked in the other. While Cyrus has yet to respond to the post, many fans went to the post's comments section to note her reference. "MILEY COLLAB WHEN?????" one wrote, while another simply said: "The Miley reference".

The pair reunited for the first time "since we spent all that time on Disney together" in April 2020 when the Wizards of Waverly Place alum appeared on Cyrus' Instagram show, 'Bright Minded', to discuss mental health.

On the show, Cyrus revealed that the two reconnected thanks to a simple - but poignant - emoji: the butterfly. "I'm just really happy that we did this new DM. It was very sweet because you just sent a butterfly emoji," Cyrus told Gomez on the show. "And that's enough. Connecting with people and letting them know that you're there. A butterfly emoji totally enough."



Los Angeles | Agencies

There were quite a few Will Smith jokes made at the 95th Academy Awards, but there were certainly more. An executive producer of the event has explained why there weren't more.

Jimmy Kimmel, 55, hosted the ceremony, one year after Smith slapped Chris Rock onstage when Rock, 58, made a joke about Smith's wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, reports 'People' magazine.

Though jokes about the moment were very present, Molly McNearney, an executive producer of this year's show and Kimmel's wife, explained why her husband did not go "harder."

A lot of Jimmy Kimmel's Will Smith jokes were removed from Oscars evening

"We didn't want to make this year all about last year," McNearney, 45, told 'Variety'. "I cannot tell you how many Will Smith jokes we had that we got rid of. We think that only the best for that room made it. Here were certainly some that went harder, but we didn't think that was our place to do that. That should be Chris Rock, not us."

Still, they didn't want to ignore the incident altogether. "We really liked the idea of making fun of the reaction to it last year," said McNearney. "I think we're all still in a bit of shock of how that went down and how after

watching that violence everyone had to then sit through an acceptance speech."

As per 'People', last year, the moment was followed by Smith, 54, winning Best Actor for his role in King Richard; he took the stage but decided not to apologise specifically to Rock during his emotional acceptance speech.

Kimmel joked during his opening monologue, "We know this is a special night for you. We want you to have fun. We want you to feel safe. And most importantly, we want me to feel safe. So we have strict policies in place. If anyone in this theatre commits an act of violence at any point during the show, you will be awarded the Oscar for Best Actor and permitted to give a 19-minute-long speech".



KHLOE KARDASHIAN

CAUGHT IN PHOTOSHOP FAIL AGAIN

Los Angeles | Agencies

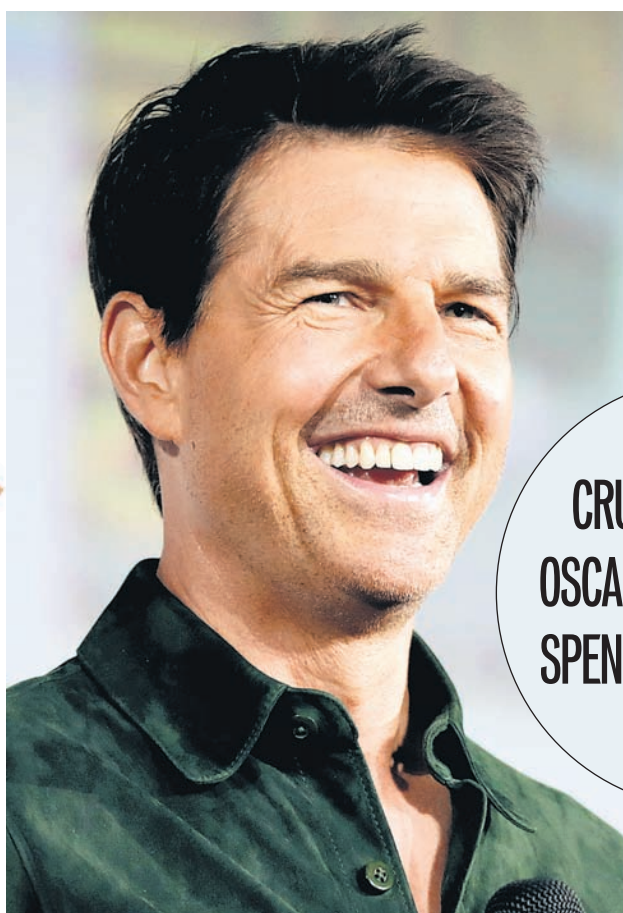
Khloe Kardashian was caught in yet another photoshop fail on Monday when fans called her out for trying to slim down her thighs and waistline.

The 38-year-old reality star - who was also blasted this week for calling serial cheater Tristan Thompson the 'best father' - posted sultry photos of her rocking a silver minidress that appeared to have some shabby editing, reports dailymail.co.uk.

In one since-deleted image, Khloe's upper thigh has a concave bent that looks like a blatant attempt to suck in her legs, while another pic shows her waist pulled in with a disproportionate backside.

Khloe was posing in front of a foil background, which was noticeably warped as she tried to shrink her mid-section.

'Show us the unedited ones,' demanded one of her 297 million followers, while another fan specifically roasted her leg pic, which was the third snap in her slideshow: 'Just delete the third and we will forget about it.'



Los Angeles | Agencies

TOM CRUISE 'SNUBBED OSCARS IN FAVOUR OF SPENDING EVENING IN AN IGLOO'

Hollywood superstar Tom Cruise decided to skip the 95th Academy Awards and instead spent the evening in an igloo.

The actor's hit film 'Top Gun: Maverick' had been nominated for a Best Picture award at the ceremony, but Tom was nowhere to be seen at the star-studded event, reports 'Mirror.co.uk'. Tom is said to have "known" the film would miss out on the Oscar and so decided to "get on with doing what he does best". An insider has said the 60-year-old Hollywood icon flew out to Svalbard, 500 miles south of the North Pole, to film scenes for 8th instalment of 'Mission Impossible'.

As per 'Mirror.co.uk', Tom is thought to have been joined by director Chris McQuarrie after turning down the chance to take a private jet to Hollywood in order to attend the Oscars.

The insider told The Sun, "Tom just knows how these things play out - he'd rather get on with doing what he does best and making amazing movies that millions want to go and see than sit in an audience clapping and smiling for the cameras. He's seen it all before".

'Top Gun: Maverick' had received six nominations at the Academy Awards, but went home with just one accolade for Best Sound.

Adam Levine reacts to Blake Shelton's exit from 'The Voice'

Los Angeles | Agencies



Maroon 5 frontman Adam Levine is speaking out about singer Blake Shelton's departure from the reality competition television series 'The Voice'.

The musicians were part of the NBC reality singing competition's original coaching panel, alongside Christina Aguilera and CeeLo Green, until Levine's exit after season 16, reports 'People' magazine.

After Levine's 2019 departure from the show, various stars have appeared as coaches, including Miley Cyrus, Shakira, Usher, Nick Jonas, and more, leaving Shelton, 46, as the only original star on the panel.

As per 'People', after Shelton announced his own departure from the series in October, making the current season his last, Levine, 43, spoke out for the first time since the announcement outside of Vanity Fair Oscar Party, telling Entertainment Tonight, "It's about time!"

Since the show debuted in 2011, Shelton has appeared for 23 consecutive seasons and scored nine wins in total. His longevity on the hit NBC show is something he touched on while announcing his departure through a lengthy Instagram post.

"I've been wrestling with this for a while and I've decided that it's time for me to step away from The Voice after season 23," penned Shelton in a statement shared in October, quoted by 'People'. "This show has changed my life in every way for the better and it will always feel like home to me."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Amber Turner



IOC: MAJORITY IN FRANCE WELCOME RUSSIAN, BELARUSIAN OLYMPIANS TO PARIS 2024 AS NEUTRAL ATHLETES

Lausanne | Agencies

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) said that an online survey shows the majority of the French people are in support of the Olympians with a Russian or Belarusian passport to compete as neutral athletes at Paris 2024.

Conducted by research company Odoxa, the survey included responses from 1,005 French people aged 18 and over, reports Xinhua.

"The poll found that 72 percent of the French people are in support of the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport, with 44 percent suggesting they should be at the Games under a neutral banner, without the use of flags, anthem, colors or any kind of identification of their country," IOC wrote on its website on Monday.

According to IOC, Russian and Belarusian athletes have been competing in a number of international sports over the past weeks and months as neutral athletes, but no discussions or decisions around the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games have been taken yet. Meanwhile, as the 500-day countdown to the opening ceremony



of Paris 2024 is around the corner, a total of 3.25 million tickets were sold in just the first three weeks of ticket

sales, with the second phase starting on March 15. The Paris 2024 Olympic Games will

take place from July 26 to August 11, and the Paralympic Games will run from August 28 to September 8.

India became the capital of women's boxing: IBA president Kremlev

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The International Boxing Association (IBA) president Umar Kremlev on Tuesday termed India as the capital of women's boxing as the country is all set for the biggest boxing event with the IBA Women's World Boxing Championships 2023, kick-starting on Wednesday at Indira Gandhi Sports Complex, here.

Hosted by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI), the prestigious tournament is taking place in India for the third time—the most for any country in the history of the championship. The previous two editions took place in 2006 and 2018 in New Delhi.

"India became the capital of women's boxing and now we are witnessing historical moments together. Generally, 250 to 260 boxers compete in such championships but this year it's a huge championship," Kremlev said while addressing the media during the press conference which was also attended by the BFI president Ajay Singh along with the Rio Olympics champion Estelle Mossely of



France and the reigning African champion Sara Haghghat-joo from Sierra Leone.

The upcoming 13th edition of the tournament will witness participation of more than 300 boxers from 65 countries competing for the title as well as the massive prize pool of INR 20 crore across 12 weight categories.

"I think the fact that India is hosting the championship for the third time is testimony to the fact that India is a real

power in boxing and as the IBA President said it is indeed a capital of women's boxing in the world. What gives us even greater pleasure is the fact that the sport has enabled us to empower women in our country. And we look upon boxing as one of the paths by which women from backgrounds, which are not often the best, rise up and become champions of the world," said BFI President Ajay Singh.

Salernitana hold Milan in Serie A

Rome | Agencies

AC Milan were rusty at San Siro as they managed 24 attempts but had to settle for a 1-1 draw with Salernitana in Serie A.

After having eliminated Tottenham Hotspur in the UEFA Champions League last week, the Rossoneri entered Monday's game without any Italian players in their starting line-up.

The home side were aggressive from the beginning and strung together a run of plays, but couldn't break the deadlock until the 45th minute, when Olivier Giroud headed home from Ismael Bennacer's corner.

Salernitana got back on level terms on the hour mark



when Domagoj Bradaric rolled across from the left, with Antonio Candreva's smart run drawing out defender Pierre Kalulu to allow an unmarked Boulaye Dia to drill home from close range. Bennacer thought he had won a penalty for Milan

afterwards, but it was overruled by VAR.

Milan still had chances to restore their lead, but Guillermo Ochoa denied Divock Origi and Zlatan Ibrahimovic. Milan now sit fourth with 48 points, with Salernitana 16th on 26 points.

Steve Smith to lead Australia in ODIs against India as Cummins remains at home

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Steve Smith will captain Australia in the upcoming three-match ODI series against India as Pat Cummins remains at home following the demise of his mother.

Cummins left the India tour after the second Test in Delhi to be at the side of his mother Maria, who died from breast cancer last week while the final match in Ahmedabad was being played. Smith led the Australian side in the last two Tests in his absence. "Pat won't be coming back, he's still taking care of what's happened back home. Our thoughts are with Pat and his family as they go through that grieving process," head coach Andrew McDonald was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au.

Cummins has not been replaced in the 15-man squad, but Nathan Ellis was recently recalled after Jhye Richardson, who suffered a recur-



rence of a left hamstring injury while playing club cricket, was ruled out of

the India ODIs. McDonald also confirmed David

Warner is set to return to the side after missing the last two Tests due to a fractured elbow. Ashton Agar has also returned to India after being sent home midway through the Test series.

The ODI series also marks the return of Glenn Maxwell from the badly-broken leg he suffered last November while Mitchell Marsh also got back in the mix after the ankle surgery which disrupted his home season following the T20 World Cup.

The first ODI of the three-match series is slated to take place on March 17 at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.

Australia squad: Steve Smith (C), Sean Abbott, Ashton Agar, Alex Carey, Nathan Ellis, Cameron Green, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Marnus Labuschagne, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, David Warner, Adam Zampa

Indian Wells

Swiatek holds off Andreescu, to face Raducanu in Round of 16

Indian Wells (USA) | Agencies

World No 1 Iga Swiatek narrowly escaped Bianca Andreescu 6-3, 7-6 (1) to reach the Round of 16 at Indian Wells Masters in breezy, heavy conditions, here.

After playing a terrific match, Andreescu couldn't contain Swiatek in the tiebreak, losing seven of eight points on Monday night.

Swiatek is the only player yet to play a three-set match this year (minimum 15 played) and has ripped off a tour-leading 14 straight-set victories. Moreover, since the beginning of 2022, she's won the most matches in straight sets (25) -- eight more than the next player, Jessica Pegula.

The difference, as usual, could be seen in the crucible of break points. Swiatek converted five of eight, while Andreescu converted one fewer. Swiatek, now 2-0 against Andreescu, is still on track to become the first woman to defend the title



here at Indian Wells since Martina Navratilova in 1991.

This is already Swiatek's 13th trip to the Round of 16 at a WTA Tour 1000. Since 2009, only three other players -- Caroline Wozniacki (23), Victoria Azarenka (15) and Agnieszka Radwanska (14) -- accomplished that before turning 22 years old.

In a flurry, Andreescu won that 2019 title here, then the Toronto 1000 and the US Open. She was 19 years old. Since then, dogged by a variety of injuries, it has been a slog. She's 6-6 for the year and looking for a spark. This match, despite the result, might have been the thing she was looking for.

The 21-year-old Swiatek now meets 2021 US Open champion Emma Raducanu in a Wednesday matchup between two more Grand Slam singles champions. The unseeded Brit knocked off No.13 seed Beatriz Hadda Maia of Brazil in a 6-1, 2-6, 6-4 third-round match.

WPL 2023

Jonassen and Kapp have nerves of steel: Shikha Pandey

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Delhi Capitals pacer Shikha Pandey feels that all-rounders Jess Jonassen and Marizanne Kapp, who played crucial role in team's six-wicket victory over Royal Challengers Bangalore in a Women's Premier League 2023 game, have nerves of steel and they stayed calm to take them over the line.

Shikha Pandey picked up figures of 3/23 to help the Capitals restrict RCB to 150/4 before the Delhi franchise pulled off a thrilling chase in 19.4 overs at the Dr DY Patil Sports Academy on Monday night to continue their terrific form.

Speaking about her performance, Pandey said, "I knew that RCB would come hard at us and I wanted to embrace the occasion. I was proud of the catch I took to dismiss Heather Knight."

"At the halfway mark, I was very confident that we would win with two overs to spare. It got really tense towards the end as RCB bowled really well. There were a few nerves in the dressing room but we also had faith in our



batters," she added.

The Delhi Capitals were in a spot of bother when they lost their fourth wicket for 109 runs in the 15th over, but Kapp and Jonassen strung a fantastic partnership of 45 runs to take their team home.

Indian challenge ends with Manika's loss in both women's and mixed doubles

Kallang (Singapore) | Agencies

India's campaign at the Singapore Smash ended after star paddler Manika Batra lost both women's doubles and mixed doubles matches, with her respective partners here at the Singapore Sports Hub on Tuesday.

Manika and her partner Sathiyani Gnanasekaran fell 2-3 (9-11 9-11 11-8 11-5 7-11) to world championships silver medallists Tomokazu Harimoto and Hina Hayata of Japan in the mixed doubles quarterfinals.

The Indians had a poor start as they conceded the first two games by identical (9-11) margins. Manika and Sathiyani fought back by winning seven consecutive points as they took the third game 11-8 and took the equation to 2-1. They carried the momentum into the fourth game and clinched it 11-5 to force a decider.

However, the Indians faltered in the final game as the Japanese pair sealed the contest with an 11-7 margin in the decider. Earlier, in the women's doubles, Batra partnering with Archana Kamath, suffered a 2-3 (2-11 6-11 15-



13 12-10 6-11) loss at the hands of the Chinese combination of Chen Meng and Wang Yidi in a hard-fought round-of-16 battle that lasted 43 minutes.

India's challenge in the singles discipline had earlier ended after Manika, Sathiyani and Sharath Kamal lost their respective first-round matches. In the men's doubles, the Indian pair of Harmeet Desai and Manav Thakkar were bowled out in the round-of-32.

DGC, the home of Indian golf, ready for strongest-ever field at The DGC open

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Golf Club is all set for the second edition of The DGC Open with the defending champion Nitithorn Thippong back in the fray for a repeat performance.

The field, which is a blend of youth and promise playing alongside the experienced, has 138 players from around 35 countries and includes almost 50 Indians, many of whom have won on the Asian Tour as well as on home soil.

The prize purse goes up from USD 500,000 to USD 750,000 this year, a 50 per cent enhancement.

Shiv Kapur who is a product of the Delhi Golf Club, a relationship he proudly wears on his sleeve, said, "The DGC is home in more ways than one for me. My parents used to leave me here and I used to spend a lot of time playing here and having fun with friends. There's a comfort factor in playing here over the years and



while I'm now a 'senior' on the circuit, there is so much to learn from playing alongside the younger players as we have to constantly find ways to keep up with them. I congratulate Mastercard on associating with this unique, club-owned event on the Asian Tour and in fact taking it to another level."

He added there are any number of Indians who

can pull off a win any week and this could well be one such week. KK Bajoria, President, Delhi Golf Club, said, "DGC extends a warm welcome to all the golfers who have come to participate in the second edition of The DGC Open. The feedback that we have received from the players is that the course is in excellent condition and can be compared favourably with the best in this region. We have an excellent field with 40 of the top 60 professionals from the Asian Tour playing this week so we can definitely expect a high standard of golf." He added, "I would like to thank Mastercard for supporting this event with the enhanced prize money." Defending champion Nitithorn, recalling his last year's win, said, "I'm very excited to be back at Delhi Golf Club to defend my title. Last year the key was just to hit the ball in the fairway because the course is quite narrow. So for me, it's like a two iron into the fairway, and then you get like a wedge or short iron to the green. So just hit it in the fairway.



'Shaakuntalam', A magical world: Samantha

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

After her impressive performance in 'Yashoda', Samantha Ruth Prabhu is all set for 'Shaakuntalam'. The actress just watched her upcoming film and had a lot to say about it. Sharing a picture of herself standing along with the movie team, she writes: "And I finally watched the movie today! Gunasekar garu ... you have my heart. What a beautiful film! One of our greatest epics brought to life so endearingly!"

"I can't wait for our family audiences to be swept away by the powerful emotions! And all you kids out there ... you're going to love our magical world! Dil Raju garu and Neelima ... thank you for this wonderful journey. #Shaakuntalam will forever be close to me!"

Multiple award-winning Telugu director and screenwriter Gunasekar has helmed 'Shaakuntalam' and Neelima is his wife and the film's producer.

Apart from the mythological drama scheduled to release on April 14, Samantha is gearing up for the highly anticipated Indian version of 'Citadel'. The actress is working hard for the action sequences and recently shot in Nanital for the series. She has also resumed shooting for her upcoming film 'Kushi' opposite Vijay Devarakonda.



Speechless 'Naatu Naatu' singers have their fanboy moment with Rihanna

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Kaala Bhairava and Rahul Sipligunj, singers of the Oscar-winning 'Naatu Naatu', were on cloud nine after meeting Rihanna on the sidelines of the 95th Academy Awards.

Kaala Bhairava shared a picture taken with the nine-time Grammy Award winner. Rahul Sipligunj and choreographer Prem Rakhshith are also seen posing with the superstar singer.

"I was short of words when this happened. An artiste I always looked up to and admired deeply! My inspiration, the queen Rihanna," he tweeted. "Wanted to tell her how much I love 'Stay' and that I must've listened to it a million times. This memory is going to 'stay' in my heart forever," he wrote.

Kaala Bhairava further wrote that the 'Naatu Naatu' team were literally spell-



bound when Rihanna performed last night.

The Barbadian singer performed her Oscar-nominated song 'Lift Me Up' from 'Black Panther: Wakanda Forever' at the awards gala.

Rihanna, who is expecting her second child, showed off her baby bump through a black sheer cut-out gown.

Meanwhile, Rahul Sipligunj also shared a pic-

ture taken separately with Rihanna. "Wow! Met the most amazing lady with a very beautiful heart. Still in shock of seeing your humility, Rihanna, and how down to earth you are! Thank you so much for calling and appreciating our performance and Oscar win. It's an emotional moment for me!" Rahul tweeted with the hashtag #mydreamcometrue.



AYUSHMANN IS A SELENOPHILE, LOVES BURNING MIDNIGHT OIL

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Ayushmann Khurrana, who is currently in a hectic night schedule for 'Dream Girl 2', has shared that he is enjoying every bit of working into the wee hours of the day as he is a selenophile and a nocturnal person.

The actor recently posted a picture on social media at 3.40 a.m. from his shooting.

Talking about the same, Ayushmann shared, "I am a night person. I have always found the calm and peace of the night soothing. I feel most alive when I am on sets at night. While some in the team find it tough to do night shoots, I am usually chatting everyone up, raising their spirits and keeping the night alive. I enjoy the nocturnal shoots."

The actor also confessed his love for the moon and that during night shoots he usually goofs around on the sets, "I love the moon, I am a selenophile and the moon inspires me deeply. On set, I am usually goofing around, thoroughly enjoying myself. Often, I write my songs and poems late at night. When the whole world slows down, my mind races and I find myself being very productive".

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt talked about her live performance during an award ceremony after four years, and shared that though she was a bit nervous, love and energy of crowd made it little easier for her.

Alia, who is known for her films like 'Student of the Year', 'Highway', 'Gangubai Kathiawadi', 'Brahmastra: Part One - Shiva', recently performed on the songs such as 'Kesariya', 'Nacho Nacho' and 'Dholida'.

Alia, who made the entry to the award ceremony dancing on the top of a truck, mesmerised everyone with her dance moves.

She said: "I am performing almost after four plus years actually. And coincidentally, the last time I performed was at the Zee Cine Awards itself, so it's like coming back home. I was quite nervous as I was doing a stage act after a very long time, but the love and energy from the crowd made it a little easier for me."

Alia married Ranbir Kapoor on April 14, 2022, and in November the couple was blessed with a baby girl whom they named Raha.

Apart from Alia, Rashmika Mandanna also performed during Zee Cine Awards 2023 on popular tracks like 'Srivalli', 'Mind Block', 'Ranjithame', and 'Saami Saami'.

Zee Cine Awards will air on Zee TV on March 18.



**ALIA TALKS
ABOUT
PERFORMING
LIVE AFTER 4
YEARS FOR
AWARDS
EVENT**

PEECE SHARES THOUGHT ON SRK REMARK OF NOT WORKING IN HOLLYWOOD

Mumbai: Priyanka Chopra went to the United States about eight years ago. Her work allowed her to make an impression; she subsequently made her big screen debut in 2017 with Dwayne Johnson in Baywatch, and has since gone on to portray a number of notable parts. She is now anticipating the debut of the highly anticipated Citadel series by the Russo Brothers. Recently, the actor discussed relocating to the West, as well as Shah Rukh Khan's remark on why he would never do a Hollywood film.

During promotions, an interviewer asked PeeCee about her views on SRK's statement to which Priyanka replied, "Comfortable is boring to me. I am not arrogant, I am self-assured. I know what I am doing when I walk onto a set. I don't need the validation of executives. I am willing to take auditions, I am willing to work. I do not carry the baggage of my success in one country when I walk into another country." Priyanka went on to say that her ego is not larger than her profession. She stated, "I am very professional and if you ask people around me, I am known for my professionalism. I take pride in it.

MRS CHATTERJEE VS NORWAY

A mother's battle against the legal system



BY AAKRUTI BAGLA

Directed by- Ashima Chibber
Cast- Rani Mukerji, Jim Sarbh, Anirban Bhattacharya, Neena Gupta, Balaji Gauri
Duration- 144 minutes
Ratings: 3/5

The film is the true story of an Indian couple, an adaptation based on the mother's - Sagarika Chakraborty's autobiography titled 'THE JOURNEY OF A MOTHER'; whose children were taken away from them by the Norwegian Childcare system (Barnevernet) in 2011.

Story

The film revolves around an Indian couple Debika and Anirudh Chatterjee who reside in Norway with their kids Shubh and Suchi. The family was under scrutiny for months by the child welfare service after which the authorities took away the couple's children under the pretext of bad parenting which leads to a legal battle. How do Debika fights against all odds for three years relentlessly to get her children back? This idea forms the crux of the story.

Review

The story of the film is undoubtedly



ly compelling, hard-hitting, and tear-jerking raising many questions about how the system can be so inhuman. This gut-wrenching story by Ashima Chibber takes you on a roller-coaster of emotions. It is well researched and gripping.

Her direction is simply brilliant as she understands the material she has in his hand and it's sensitive nature. She has also handled some scenes deftly and her brilliance is palpable in sequences of vulnerable moments and courtroom sequences.

There are certain things that are off-putting in the movie. First is definitely the pace of the film. It seems a

bit stretched. The movie picks the pace a bit in the second part where we get to see the court drama. To give the narrative authentic touch, a lot of dialogues in the movie are in Bengali and Norwegian language. That might prove to be a hurdle for the film. The focus of the narrative is Mrs. Chatterjee's struggle, yet there are other unresolved parallel threads. For instance, the backstory of divorce and domestic violence case. Rani Mukerji is the queen of her craft and she once again blows our minds with her stellar act in this one. She acers her role as a strong-headed mother who goes beyond

her limits and gets her kids back. While Jim Sarbh as lawyer and Anirban Bhattacharya as Anirudh Chatterjee are effective in their parts. Neena Gupta has a prominent part, yet ceases to leave an impact. While it's Balaji Gauri's mind-blowing stint that uplifts the movie.

Amit Trivedi has composed some soothing songs that complement the narrative. The cinematography perfectly gel with the film's theme. However, the flick could have been a bit shorter. On the whole, Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway leaves you emotionally charged as it has its heart at the right place

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Shanaya Kapoor