

# absolute india



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## Inflation fell to 3-month low of 5% in Sep

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's retail inflation eased to a 3-month low of 5.02 per cent in September bringing much-needed relief to consumers, according to official figures released on Thursday.

Food inflation, which accounts for close to half of the overall consumer price index (CPI), slowed to 6.56 per cent in September from 9.94 per cent in August. There was a sharp correction in the prices of vegetables, such as tomatoes and onions.

**"Domestic disruptions along with global uncertainties may keep inflation at elevated levels in the coming months."**

**Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance Minister**



Cooking oil prices came down drastically to record a fall of over 14. However, pulses and spices still remain areas of concern.

The data show that inflation in pulses was still at 16.38 per cent while spices clocked a price rise of 23.06 per cent during the month for cereals the price increase was 10.95 per cent.

The decline in the inflation rate is line with the expectation of the RBI, which had kept its key interest rate unchanged on October 6 for a fourth consecutive meeting in order to keep up the growth rate.

The consumer price inflation is now closer to the 4 per cent midpoint of the RBI's 2-6 per cent target range and will enable the central bank to keep interest rates on hold going ahead even as there is a downside risk due to the uncertainty in global crude oil prices which could push up inflation.

### INDIA'S INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT SURGED TO 14-MONTH HIGH OF 10.3% IN AUG

**New Delhi:** India's industrial output rose to a 14-month high of 10.3 per cent in August, the data released by the National Statistics Office on Thursday showed.

The NSO figures showed that the manufacturing sector's output increased by 9.3 per cent in August 2023, mining production registered a rise of 12.3 per cent during the month and the electricity output shot up by 15.3 per cent compared to August 2022. For the April-August 2023 period the index of industrial production (IIP) grew by 6.1 per cent, compared to 7.7 per cent in the same period last year.

## ISRAEL CARRIES OUT STRIKE NEAR DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Jerusalem | Agencies

Syrian media outlets are reporting an alleged Israeli airstrike near the Damascus International Airport.

The pro-government Sham FM radio said Syrian air defence is confronting the attack, Times of Israel reported. Syrian media reported that Israel also struck the Aleppo International Airport.

Sham FM radio said damage has been caused to the airport, but there were no injuries, Times of Israel reported. Meanwhile, Israel Defence Forces (IDF) spokesman Ref Aem. Daniel Hagari said the military's strikes in the Gaza Strip are crippling Hamas' ability to function.

"We are destroying Hamas' ability to function as a sovereign entity; it is no longer managing to administer Gaza. Hamas is in anarchy and chaos and we need to increase this," Hagari said while addressing a press conference, Times of Israel reported.

He said the military will strike



everyone involved in the murderous attacks on southern Israel on Saturday. Hagari also said that IDF has obtained intelligence from the

Hamas terrorists whom Israel has arrested in order to carry out new strikes against its assets in the Gaza Strip, Times of Israel reported.

### 'ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR IS A DARK CLOUD FOR WORLD ECONOMY': IMF CHIEF

**New Delhi:** International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva on Thursday said the Israel-Hamas conflict has darkened the horizon for the world economy that was already going through a phase of weak growth.

Georgieva said the International Monetary Fund was "very closely monitoring how the situation evolves" and how it is affecting the oil markets. "Very clearly, this is a new cloud on not the safest horizon for the world economy, a new cloud darkening this horizon, and of course, not needed," she told a news conference at the annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank in Marrakech, Morocco.

She said there had been some fluctuations in oil prices and reactions in markets but it was too early to predict the economic impact.

"The message that I bring to Israel is this -- you may be strong enough on your own to defend yourself, but as long as America exists, you will never, ever have to. We will always be there by your side."

**Antony Blinken, Secretary of State, US**

'Tribes of Jordan, sons of Jordan, brothers and sisters of Jordan... This is a moment of truth and the borders are close to you, you all know your responsibility. To all scholars who teach jihad... to all who teach and learn, this is a moment for the application (of theories).'

**Khaled Meshaal, Former chief, Hamas**

### Ensure neutrality of Meta & Alphabet's ops: INDIA bloc urges Zuckerberg, Pichai



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Alleging partisan by the Meta's WhatsApp and Alphabet's YouTube, the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) parties on Thursday wrote to Meta's Mark Zuckerberg and Google CEO Sundar Pichai saying they are culpable of abetting social disharmony and inciting communal hatred in India.

It also alleged algorithmic moderation and suppression of Opposition leaders content on their platforms while promoting ruling party (BJP) content. INDIA parties also

warned the two companies that in view of the upcoming national elections in 2024, it should consider these facts "seriously" and ensure immediately that Meta's and Alphabet's operations "in India remain neutral" and are not used wittingly or unwittingly to cause social unrest or distort India's much cherished democratic ideals.

In the letter to Facebook Chief and Alphabet CEO, INDIA parties said: "We are writing on behalf of the INDIA, an alliance of 28 political parties in India that represent the combined Opposition coalition."

### RBI FINES PAYTM PAYMENTS BANK FOR BREACH OF NORMS

Mumbai: The RBI has slapped a Rs 5.39 crore fine on Paytm Payments Bank for not complying RBI guidelines related to know your customer (KYC) norms and not reporting incidents of cyber security breaches in time.

The bank failed to identify beneficial owner in respect of entities onboarded by it for providing payout services. It did not monitor payout transactions and carry out risk profiling of entities availing payout services. The bank breached the regulatory ceiling of end of the day balance in certain customer advance accounts availing payout services. Reporting a cyber security incident with delay Failure to implement device binding control measure related to 'SMS delivery receipt check', and Paytm Bank's V-CIP infrastructure failed to prevent connections from IP addresses outside India.



### Farmers demand fair pricing, reliable market for their produce

Kochi | Agencies

Farmers from different parts of the country gathered here on Thursday to share their success stories and raise the issues pertaining to their field during the Farmer-Scientist Interface session held at the 16th Agricultural Science Congress.

Their primary demand was to ensure fair pricing and a reliable market for their produce.

The farmers who took part came from Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Lakshadweep Islands attended the meet. They emphasised the importance of considering the needs and challenges faced by small and medium-scale farmers when formulating agricultural development policies.

They stressed the need for these policies to address issues such as fair pricing, market access and financial support for the agricultural sector. Moreover, the farmers stressed the significance of social dignity, especially when dealing with financial institutions and government offices. They called for the development of local varieties of paddy and the provision of interest-free loans to farmer pro-

### SC reserves verdict on pleas filed against remission granted to convicts

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its verdict on a batch of petitions filed against the early release of convicts in the Bilkis Bano case by the Gujarat government.

A bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan reserved the judgment after hearing both the sides on the question of validity of the remission orders setting free convicts in the case of the gang-rape of Bano and murder of her family members committed during the 2002 post-Godhra riots.

The bench ordered the Centre and state government to file records along with translation pertaining to the convicts' remission by October 16. Senior advocate Indira Jaising, in her rejoinder arguments, submitted that the decision of the apex court in the case will reflect the "conscience of the Constitution."

Jaising reiterated that the remission orders are 'bad in law' emphasizing that principles dwelled by the top court should be applied in determining the application for early release. She said that the crime committed against Bano was a "motivated" one and the nation's conscience will be reflected in the verdict of the apex court.

In an earlier hearing, she had argued that the crime committed against Bano during the 2002 post-Godhra riots was a "crime against humanity" perpetrated on the basis of reli-



gion. After commencement of the final hearing, the convicts approached the trial court in Mumbai and deposited the fine imposed upon them to "reduce the controversy".

The petitioner had pointed out before the Supreme Court that the convicts did not pay the fines imposed on them and the non-payment of fine renders remission order illegal.

The Centre, Gujarat government, and convicts have opposed the PILs filed by CPI(M) leader Subhashini Ali, Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, the National Federation of Indian Women, Asma Shafique Shaikh and others against the remission orders, saying that once victim herself has approached the court, others may not be allowed to intervene in a criminal matter.

The 11 men convicted in the case were released on August 15 last year, after the Gujarat government allowed their release under its remission policy. The convicts had completed 15 years in jail.

### Establishing sexual relations in love affairs cannot come under rape: Patna Civil Court

Patna | Agencies

The Patna Civil Court on Thursday said that establishing sexual relations in a love affair cannot come under the category of rape.

Sangam Singh, the Additional District and Session Judge (First) of Patna Civil Court, said this during the hearing of a rape case that has been going on for the last eight years.

He acquitted the accused from rape charges due to lack of evidence.

In a judgment, Justice Singh said that the

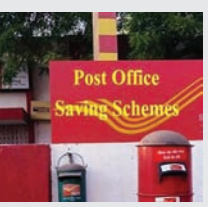
victim was a major and she was having a love affair with the accused Vipin Kumar alias Vipin Lal and it had been proven in court that they established a consensual physical relationship. It became apparent during the hearing of the case that the complainant had a financial dispute with the accused after which she lodged a rape complaint with the police. However, she failed to present proof in the court. The complainant had lodged an FIR in Athmal Gola police station in Patna district in 2015. The district police filed a charge sheet against Vipin Kumar before the Judicial Magistrate of the Patna Civil Court.

### MAN LOCKS POST OFFICE DUE TO NON-PAYMENT OF RENT

Patna: Angry over non-payment of rent, a man locked the post office in Bihar's Saran district on Thursday.

The house owner Laxmi Kant Prasad claimed that the post office has not paid the rent for the last six months. The rent per month of the post office is Rs 18,325.

The post office has been running in a private house since 1985 in Maraura block in Saran district. The house owner Laxmi Kant Prasad locked the main gate of the post office which led to huge problem for the employees and customers. "The post office has been paying the rent every month since 1985 but in the last six months, it has not paid any rent. I informed the senior officials several times but they refused to respond to my call. Finally, I locked the main door of the post office," Prasad said. Following the incident, the employees have informed the senior officials about the incident. "The department has not paid the rent to the house owner for the last six months. Hence, he locked the door. After he was assured by the senior officers to pay the rent in one week only then he opened the door after one and half hours," Sachchidanand Shah.





# GOVT BANS CIRCULATION OF RIOT VIDEOS, IMAGES THAT WORSEN SITUATION IN MANIPUR

Imphal | Agencies

The Manipur government has prohibited the circulation of photos and videos of the riots in the state as they might aggravate the law and order situation further, officials said on Thursday.

Commissioner (Home) T Ranjit Singh in an order said that anyone found violating the government's orders shall be booked and prosecuted under relevant provisions of the law, without any exception.

"...nobody shall be allowed to circulate/spread such videos/images/pictures through various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, X etc. on electronic equipment like tablet, computer, mobile phone etc. and sending bulk SMS," the order said.

The order said that in case, anybody was in possession of such videos/images/pictures, he/she may approach the nearest Superintendent of Police irrespective of jurisdiction and submit the same.

"Anyone misusing technology for



inciting violence/hatred shall also be dealt with appropriately under relevant provisions of the Information Technology Act and the Indian Penal Code," the order stated.

Apprehending violence, the state government on Wednesday extended

the ban on mobile internet services in ethnic violence-devastated Manipur for another five days till October 16. Further extending the ban on mobile internet services, Singh said in his order. "There is apprehension that some anti-social elements might use

social media extensively for transmission of images, hate speech and hate video messages inciting the passions of the public which might have serious repercussions for the law and order situation in the state of Manipur." Following massive students' agitations, the Manipur government had on September 26, two days after the ban was lifted after 143 days, had suspended mobile internet data services for five days and then extended it for five day spells. The restive state witnessed massive ethnic violence in the last week of September to protest the killings of 17-year-old girl student Hijam Linthoingambi and 20-year-old Phijam Hemjit, who hailed from Bishnupur district and had gone missing on July 6 during the peak of ethnic violence. The northeastern state witnessed massive ethnic violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities since May 3 resulting in the killing of over 180 people and injuring over a thousand people, besides displacing over 70,000 people from their homes. The ethnic violence had erupted after demands by Meiteis for tribe status.

# NIA raids on PFI sparks political controversy in poll-bound MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former chief minister and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh's remark on the raids against PFI by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in Bhopal has sparked political controversy in poll bound Madhya Pradesh.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday hit out at Digvijaya Singh accusing him of 'glorifying' the banned terror outfit. Chouhan, who was addressing a poll rally in Bhopal's Huzur assembly constituency, said, "Digvijaya Singh has always questioned action against terror organisations."

"Digvijaya Singh is crying for action against the banned terror outfit, which shows the real nature of the Congress. He (Digvijaya) is one who called Osama ji and wanted proof of surgical strike against Pakistan-based terrorists," the Chief Minister said while addressing the poll rally for his loyalist Rameshwar Sharma.

However, veteran Congress leader Digvijaya Singh clarified that he has not questioned the NIA's raid on PFI. He said,



"My answer to the question asked by some media organisations is being wrongly quoted which I have not said. I have never supported PFI, an organisation that incites communalism. I have stood against the person/organisation spreading communalism in the name of religion." Notably, NIA has raided multiple locations in Bhopal in connection with 2022 case. Responding to it on Wednesday, Digvijaya had said that he has no problem with raids against the PFI. "But it appears that raids in 97 per cent of cases have turned out to be false," he had said during an interaction with a media person in Ujjain on Wednesday.

# Ashok Gehlot violating code of conduct: BJP

Jaipur | Agencies

Rajasthan BJP on Thursday accused Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot of violating the code of conduct.

Former BJP state president Arun Chaturvedi said that the Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot is using government staff even in political meetings.

"Election Commission has given direct instructions that no minister can use government staff for political work," he said.

Chaturvedi said that on October 10, the Chief Minister along with his secretary Kuldeep Ranka went to hold a political meeting with Sonia Gandhi. "The presence of an administrative officer in a political meeting of a party can influence the elections," he said. Chaturvedi has also demanded that the photographs of the Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot should be removed from the electricity bills, guarantee cards and the land pattas currently being issued. "The way the government machinery is doing the work of publicity for



Congress and in such a situation, the photo of the Chief Minister should be removed from everywhere," he said. He said that with the announcement of election dates on October 9, the code of conduct was imposed in the state. "In the last 48 hours, more than 500 complaints of violation of code of conduct have been registered in the state. Out of these, the Returning Officer has found 134 correct whereas, 115 have been rejected. Maximum 79 complaints have come with reference to Jaipur district," he said.

# CASH, GOLD WORTH OVER RS 37CR SEIZED IN POLL-BOUND T'GANA

Hyderabad: Cash, gold, liquor and other items valued over Rs 37 crore were seized in Telangana since Monday when the model code of conduct came into force for the November 30 assembly election.



During the last four days, the enforcement agencies have seized Rs 20.43 crore cash and 31.979 kg of gold, 350 kg of silver and 42.203 carat diamond all worth Rs 14.65 crore.

During the checking across the state and on inter-state border, the agencies seized 3,1370 liters of liquor worth Rs 86.92 lakh, 310 kg ganja valued at Rs 89 lakh; 7,040 kg of rice, 440 sarees, 80 sewing machines, 87 cookers and one car all worth Rs 22.51 lakh. The authorities have also bound over 1,196 persons under various sections of the Criminal Procedure Code.

According to the Chief Electoral Officer, 89 inter-state and 169 intra-state nakas are operational. It also said 100 companies of Central Armed Police Force were deployed to Telangana and they will report by October 20.

# Delhi govt brings 'equal pay for equal work' for female workers at construction sites

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi government on Thursday introduced a slew of measures to improve the working conditions of women working at construction sites across Delhi.

The Labour Minister Raaj Kumar Anand convened a meeting at the Delhi Secretariat with the senior officials of the Delhi Building and Construction Workers Welfare Board (DBOCWWB) to introduce these measures.

It was decided in the meeting that female workers should get equal wages for equal work.

The Minister introduced separate toilet facilities for female workers at all the construction sites across Delhi. The government hopes to ensure better safety and security for all the female workers working at the sites through these changes.

Taking note of inequalities in wages for similar work among male and female laborers, the Labour Minister instructed that these disparities be rectified promptly, ensuring equal wages for equal work to female workers. Also, the main language for the information (forms) available on the Board's online portal will be Hindi. This will enable a larger



number of construction laborers to benefit from the services. CCTV cameras will be installed at help desks established in all districts to ensure transparency in labor card registration, renewal, and claims. Directions were also given to review the accidental insurance policy for construction workers, offered by the Labour Board for better implementation.

# AMBULANCE MUST AT ALL NAVRATRI CELEBRATIONS IN MAHA, ORDERS CM

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a significant initiative, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has ordered that providing basic emergency healthcare facilities and an ambulance will be mandatory at all major public venues celebrating the Navratri festival, starting October 14, here on Thursday.

Shinde's decision came after a delegation led by Mumbai Samachar Editor Nilesh Dave and some public Navratri organisers met him this afternoon on the issue.

They said that Garba and Dandiya are organised on a large scale for nine nights at major venues in Mumbai, Mumbai Metropolitan Region and other cities in the state during the festival of dance, Navratri.

However, though a few of the private and political organisers of these mega-events with huge sponsorships, make arrangements for primary healthcare facilities at the venues, many others ignore this critical aspect.

Dave and others pointed out that post-Coronavirus pandemic, there have been instances



of people collapsing due to the stress, heart attacks and other unfortunate tragedies at some venues.

Besides, there are people suffering from certain lifestyle related diseases like blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, etc, necessitating basic medicare at

the venues in case of any medical emergencies.

Taking cognisance of the plea, the CM ordered that it will be mandatory for all public Navratri organisers to deploy medicos, primary healthcare facilities and a fully equipped ambulance at each venue.

In Mumbai, there are over two dozen Navratri celebrations organised on a mass scale, with expensive daily tickets and seasonal passes for individuals, couples or families, plus big ones organised by huge housing complexes, private groups or even several political parties, especially in the Gujarati-dominated areas of south Mumbai, Juhu, Vile Parle, Malad, Kandivali, Borivali, Sion, Ghatkopar, Mulund, etc.

Thousands of Navratri revellers can be seen trooping at most such big venues with colourful lights, decorations, DJ music and top artistes performing live, with the daily presence of top film stars or TV and glam world personalities.

Dave said that they had submitted a similar memorandum even to the Gujarat government which has also taken note of the plea and issued similar directives.

# Impart education in mother tongue till Class 8: Dharmendra Pradhan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday emphasised on the importance of imparting education in the mother tongue and local language till class 8.

"On reading the brief prepared by IPE Global, I can proudly say that we are on the right track. Such discussions that bring together eminent policymakers and academicians are very important today. There has to be emphasis on the importance of imparting education in the mother tongue and local language till class 8," the Education Minister said while speaking at a program related to girls education, organised by IPE global in New Delhi.

He said that investing in girls and young women goes a long way in building girl capital. He said that while India has made substantial progress in girls' education, the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 needs to be strengthened to further ensure



girls reach their full potential and women benefitted across the country. He also shed light on the policies undertaken by the government to benefit the girl child.

# Gujarat HC issues notice to university over PM Modi's degree controversy, next hearing on Nov 3



Ahmedabad | Agencies

The Gujarat High Court on Thursday served a notice to Gujarat University (GU), addressing its Registrar, Piyush Patel.

The development followed the petitions filed by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MP Sanjay Singh. The dispute pertains to defamation complaint regarding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's academic credentials.

Kejriwal and Singh, entangled in this defamation case in Ahmedabad, received their first summons for a court appearance on April 15, with a subsequent summons on May 23. They approached the High Court on September 16, aiming to nullify the April

summons.

The AAP leaders are contesting the summons previously issued to them by an Ahmedabad magistrate court following a criminal defamation complaint from GU.

They are also pressing for the reversal of an Ahmedabad sessions court decision that supported the original summons from the magistrate court. However, the trial in the magistrate court concerning the criminal defamation is set to commence on October 14. Justice J.C Doshi denied the petitioner's requests for a trial delay or postponement while their appeal is under the high court's consideration.

The court scheduled the next hearing for November 3, by which the notice should be responded to.

# Woman stabbed multiple times with knife by jilted lover in south Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A 23-year-old woman was stabbed multiple times with a knife by a jilted lover in south Delhi, a source said on Thursday, adding that police have apprehended the accused.

The accused was identified as Gaurav Pal (27), a resident of Dundahera in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad.

As per sources, the woman was stabbed with a knife on forehead, head, face, thighs and fingers.

The official said that as per the doctor she is out of danger and minor surgery has been done to repair the artery which is cut below the jaw.

According to the police, on Thursday at 6:20 a.m, a call from the police control room was received at the Saket police station, reporting that a woman had been stabbed by a man on Lado Sarai Firni Road.

"A police team arrived at the scene where they found the victim, a resident of Lado Sarai. Upon inquiry, it was revealed that the victim and the alleged perpetrator had been in a relationship for the last over two years. Both were working in Lajpat Nagar in the same office during that time," said a senior police official.



However, in recent days, the girl had been ignoring him. On the morning in question, he met her in the Lado Sarai area while she was heading towards a cab that she had already booked. They were conversing as she sat in the cab.

"The man tried to talk to the girl but she refused and even slapped him four to five times. He tried to take her phone but she shouted 'Chor Chor'. Then when they both sat in the cab, again arguments started," said the official.

In the meantime, the accused attacked her with a knife but was subdued by the cab driver.

During the initial probe, it was revealed that he talked to the woman at about 8 p.m, a day before the incident, and she informed him that she was in her office.

"On enquiry, she informed police that she used to leave her house at about 6-6.30 a.m. She blocked his number last night. So he came at about 5.30 a.m to meet her," the official added.

"As per the accused, there has been a change in the behaviour of the woman since last one month. Though they met 10 to 12 days ago for the last time," said the official.

"The man brought the knife from home and kept it in his pant's pocket." "A case under Section 307 (attempt to murder) of the Indian Penal Code is being registered, and the alleged individual, Gaurav, who works in a private company in Gurugram, has been apprehended," the official said.

# Akhilesh to visit Deoria on October 16, Yadav's house to be bulldozed

Lucknow | Agencies

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav will visit Fatehpur Village in Deoria district on October 16 to attend a prayer meeting being organised in memory of the deceased former district panchayat member Prem Yadav, who was killed recently.

It may be recalled that six people were killed in a property dispute on October 2 in Deoria district.

Sheela, the widow of Prem Yadav, said on Thursday that due to police action, an atmosphere of fear had been created and her relatives were not being allowed to visit her because prohibitory orders had been imposed in the area.

She has sought permission for organising a 'Brahmbhoj' in memory of her husband who was killed in the massacre.

On the other hand, the Tehsildar has given his decision on the legality of the house owned by Prem Yadav.



The Tehsildar said that Yadav's house was built on government land. He has also issued an eviction order and imposed a fine on Prem Yadav's father for illegally occupying government land and building a house on it. The illegally-built house will now be bulldozed.

On the other hand Devesh, son of Satya Prakash Dubey - who was also killed in the property dispute along with four other members of his family - has said that he will not perform the 'shradh' rituals unless Yadav's house is bulldozed. "This is the least amount of justice that I am expecting," he said.



## Will BJP field Scindia in MP Assembly elections?

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Political circles in Madhya Pradesh are abuzz with speculation as to whether Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, who jumped ship to the BJP from the Congress in March 2020, will contest the Assembly elections scheduled on November 17. The buzz grew stronger after the BJP fielded several heavyweights in its second list for the Assembly polls, including three Union ministers -- Narendra Singh Tomar, Prahlad Patel and Faggan Singh Kulaste -- along with the party's national General Secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya. With this, the BJP has opened the race for the Chief Minister's post, if the party retains power in Madhya Pradesh. The possibility over Scindia's candidature for the Assembly elections gained further momentum after his aunt and state minister Yashodhara Raje Scindia announced that she would not contest the November 17 polls. Her decision gave rise to the buzz that she might have vacated the Shivpuri Assembly seat for her nephew. Importantly, the BJP has not declared its candidate for Shivpuri



yet. According to political observers, given that Scindia's supporters always wanted to project him as the next Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, there is a strong possibility that he would contest the elections. "If the BJP retains power, all the heavyweights who win the elections will push themselves for the CM's post. If Scindia doesn't contest the elections, he would be out of that race. Therefore, Scindia might contest the polls," a political observer said. The political observers also feel that the contest between the BJP and the Congress will be very close and the saffron party will try to win all its strong seats and therefore it would field the strongest candidates. "Tomar has already been

fielded despite having extra responsibility for the elections. So the BJP might not give special privilege to Scindia, who also hails from the same region. Secondly, with the combination of Scindia and Tomar, the BJP will try to win maximum seats in the Gwalior-Chambal region," a political observer said. Fielding Scindia as a candidate might also be BJP's plan to bring him in front to counter the strategy of the opposition led by two veteran Congress leaders - Kamal Nath and Digvijaya Singh.

More importantly, Scindia's candidature will also give rise to a political rivalry between 'Raja Saheb' (Digvijaya Singh) and 'Maharaja Saheb' (Scindia). Digvijaya Singh has already assigned his son Jaivardhan Singh to look after Gwalior-Chambal's strategy. He has also brought many Scindia loyalists back into the Congress.

The BJP has so far declared 136 candidates for the 230 Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh, which will go to the polls on November 17. The counting of votes will be taken up on December 3, along with Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Telangana and Mizoram.

## Tribal-dominated Mandla's development my priority: Kamal Nath

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Congress President Kamal Nath said on Thursday that the development of tribal-dominated Mandla would be his main priority after forming the government much like Chhindwara which is his home district and has become a model for development.

The Congress leader was addressing a rally in Mandla, which was also attended by Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

He alleged that the BJP government made several promises, but Mandla saw no development and youths were forced to leave their homes in search of livelihood.

"I have fond memories of Mandla as I have spent a lot of time here in my youth. But, when I see the present condition here, it hurts me a lot. Today, I promise you that Mandla's developments would be my first priority after



forming the government," he said. Kamal Nath would always present his home district Chhindwara as a model district of development in Madhya Pradesh. He said Chhindwara is his home district, but he has full faith in the people of Mandla that they would sup-

port the Congress.

He announced that the 'adivasi divas' programme would be re-started and bartan banks would be established in the tribal areas in Madhya Pradesh.

"My government had started a 'vishwa adivasi divas' programme, but the BJP stopped it. I promise that bartan banks would be established in tribal areas and all those schemes the BJP government has stopped would be restarted soon after the Congress comes back to power in Madhya Pradesh," he added.

Kamal Nath appealed to tribal people to support the Congress in the coming Assembly elections. He said, "The Assembly elections are not for any candidates or the party, it is for the future of Madhya Pradesh and future of youths. 32 days left for the elections, keep a picture of Madhya Pradesh in your mind when you go for voting. It is up to you to decide what kind of government you want," he added.

## CONG DEMANDS CASTE CENSUS TO PROVIDE JUSTICE FOR POOR, BJP RUNNING AWAY: PRIYANKA IN MANDLA

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Amid the growing heat of caste politics in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh, Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday said the Modi-led central government was running away from the 'caste census'. Addressing a poll rally in the tribal dominated Mandla, Priyanka Gandhi said the Congress has demanded caste census to provide justice to the people from backward and poor communities. "The BJP is running away from the caste census which shows they do not want to give rights to the people of Backward and ST/SC people. Whereas, the Congress is demanding the caste census to provide justice for the people," she added. She hit out at Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan over distributing slippers and umbrellas to the tribal people ahead of the Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh.

She said, "Can you imagine a person who was the CM of Madhya Pradesh for more than 18 years, distributing slippers



and umbrellas to the tribal people when the elections are very close. What has he been doing for the last 18 years?"

Pointing to corruption in Madhya Pradesh, the Congress leader said that in the last 225 weeks of the BJP, more than 250 scams were broken out. Priyanka Gandhi also mentioned about the atrocities on tribals and women, saying 1.5 lakh women are missing in Madhya

Pradesh, whereas 17 women are being raped per day in the state. She announced that if the Congress forms the government in Madhya Pradesh, it would give Rs 4000 per quintal for Tendu Patta like in Chhattisgarh. "I would appeal to all of you to change the corrupt BJP government and bring the Congress into power, which works for the poor people," she added.

## PRIME MINISTER MODI JI IS GOD'S GIFT TO INDIA: CM CHOUHAN

Modi ji takes action against terrorists, and Congress supports anti-national organization. Kamal Nath is defaming the state which made him the CM. He and Digvijay Singh are the face of corruption. Priyanka Gandhi should answer, why did Congress stop giving Rs 1,000 to my tribal sisters?

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday addressed a huge election rally in Bhopal's Huzur Assembly in support of BJP candidate Rameshwar Sharma. During this, Chouhan assured the gathering and said that I promise that in the Bharatiya Janata Party government, no poor will be left without land, everyone will have their own house. While he raised questions on the 1.25 years of Congress's Kamal Nath government, he accused Kamal Nath of defaming the state.

Appealed to form BJP government by making Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Rameshwar Sharma win with a huge



majority.

Attacking Congress and Kamal Nath, CM Chouhan said that he defames the same state which made Kamal Nath the Chief Minister and MP. It is said that this is a state of dishonest people, this is a corrupt state. It is said that this is a state of corrupt people. Earlier it was said that India is not great but infamous. Is this the thinking of Congress? They defame their country and Madhya Pradesh. He said, Kamal Nath, you should feel ashamed, you are committing the sin of defaming the state of Madhya Pradesh whose soil gave you everything.

Taking Congress on task, Chouhan said that if there is any face of corruption in Madhya Pradesh, then that face is that

of Kamal Nath. During his tenure of 1.25 years, he has made a record of corruption, whereas if there is any face of corruption in Madhya Pradesh, then that face is of Digvijay Singh. The people of Madhya Pradesh know this very well.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is God's gift to India, he created PM Awas Yojana to provide housing to the poor. But those whose names could not be included in the PM Awas Yojana due to some reason, then they should worry, for them we have made CM Ladli Brahmin Awas Yojana, through which every poor sister will be able to get a house to live. What did Congress give my sisters? Priyanka Gandhi had come today. I had given Rs 1000 per month to the Baiga-Bhariya sisters, Kamal Nath Dada had snatched it away and stopped it. Priyanka Gandhi should answer. My nephews, nieces, your maternal uncle, the Bharatiya Janata Party have decided that if they get good marks in 12th, they will give me a laptop. Uncle is paying the fees of poor talented engineering and medical students.

## Former Union Minister Sartaj Singh passes away, breathed his last in Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Union Minister and BJP leader Sartaj Singh, who was a minister in Madhya Pradesh government, died on Thursday at the age of 83. He breathed his last in Bhopal. Sartaj Singh has been a five-time MP and two-time MLA. He was also a Union Minister in the 13-day government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He was suffering from health related problems for a long time. People knew Sartaj Singh

as Babuji. He joined Congress after not getting a ticket from his traditional seat Seoni Malwa in the 2018 assembly elections. After this, he contested the elections from Narmadapuram seat on Congress ticket, but was defeated by his disciple and former Assembly Speaker Sitasaran Sharma.

Sartaj Singh has been MP 5 times and MLA 2 times. In the period from 1989 to 1996, he defeated Rameshwar Neekhara from Narmadapuram parliamen-

tary seat for three consecutive times, while in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections, he defeated the Congress candidate Arjun Singh, while in 2004 also he won the Lok Sabha elections. He was MLA twice.

In 2008, he contested elections from Seoni Malwa assembly constituency of Hoshangabad district and defeated Congress candidate Hazarilal Raghuvanshi. He again won the 2013 assembly elections and became a minister.



## Intentional delay, we will go to Election Commission: Vivek Tankha

Government should take decision on resignation and charge sheet of Deputy Collector Nisha Bangre within a week, Directs Madhya Pradesh High Court

Team Absolute | Jabalpur

Madhya Pradesh High Court (Jabalpur) has directed the state government to take a decision on the resignation and charge sheet of Deputy Collector Nisha Bangre within a week. When the resignation was not accepted, Nisha had approached the High Court. In the petition filed, he has said that as per the rules, the resignation should be accepted within a month, but the government has not done so till now. We have full faith in the judiciary.

Congress's Rajya Sabha MP and senior Supreme Court advocate Vivek Tankha advocated on Nisha's behalf.



He said that the government is deliberately delaying the matter. Election code of conduct continues. After all, on whose instructions is the government presenting the appeal? If a decision on resignation is not taken within two days, a complaint will be made to the Election Commission on Monday. On

Thursday, the case was heard in the division bench of Chief Justice Ravi Malimath and Vishal Mishra. The next hearing will take place next week. The High Court had also summoned the Principal Secretary of the General Administration Department.

On Thursday, the case was heard in the division bench of Chief Justice Ravi Malimath and Vishal Mishra. The next hearing will take place next week. The High Court had also summoned the Principal Secretary of the General Administration Department. She had resigned from the post of SDM in Lavkushanagar of Chhatrapur district three months ago, but the government has not accepted it. The department invalidated the resignation saying that he had disobeyed the instructions of the government, committed indiscipline and serious misconduct.

## CONGRESS DREAMING OF 'MAJBOOR' GOVT: NAQVI

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Senior BJP leader and former Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said on Wednesday that while the country is determined to repeat the 'mzboot government', the Congress is dreaming of 'majboor' (puppet) government.

Naqvi made this remark while addressing an election programme in Khandwa district in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh.

He said that for the first time after Independence, a non-Congress government is successfully completing its two consecutive terms ensuring national security, dignity, stability and good governance, and is moving towards the third term under the dynamic and decisive leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He claimed that before 2014, the country was engulfed with the terrified environment of terrorist attacks. "Every 15 days, one or the other



part of the country witnessed bomb blasts which claimed many innocent lives. PM Modi adopted a zero tolerance policy against terrorism which broke the backbone of militants and their masterminds," Naqvi said. The BJP leader alleged that 'lust for

power' has always been the mindset of the Congress, for which either a government should be of dynasty (family) or on deputation, which can be remote controlled by the 'feudal' family. "The Modi government's determi-

nation for development with delivery and commitment to national security has become a threat to the feudal monopoly of the family," he added.

Naqvi said that people of the country still remember how the Congress, during its last regime, had made the Prime Minister's post a "private property" by high-jacking the dignity of the Constitutional institutions to fulfil its self-interests.

The Cabinet decisions at the Centre and in the Congress-ruled states were subject to the approval of the 'family', he said.

Naqvi also claimed that the arithmetic of success of the Modi government, which is out of range of the Congress' remote control, has spoilt the "mathematics of the depressed and desolated dynasty".

He said the BJP will contest the Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh with its report card of good governance, inclusive empowerment and national security.

Team Absolute | Indore

A big statement of Kailash Vijayvargiya, National General Secretary of Bharatiya Janata Party and candidate from Indore Assembly Constituency No. 1, has come to light. He said that Shivraj Singh Chouhan and our team have trampled Madhya Pradesh. Veteran BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya was asked the question "PCC Chief Kamal Nath's statement that the people of Madhya Pradesh have understood that BJP will be uprooted". In response to this, the National General Secretary of BJP has fiercely targeted Kamal Nath. He said that after the age of 75, there is less sleep anyway. Kamal Nath keeps dreaming.



One has to work hard to make dreams come true. Dreams do not come true just by sitting in AC and making statements, Kamal Nath has never seen Madhya Pradesh. Have flown by helicopter, did not see the roads, did not see the villages and houses of the poor. How do they know the reality? Kailash

Vijayvargiya further said that Shivraj Singh and our team have trampled the entire Madhya Pradesh with their feet when Chhattisgarh was one. We know what the problems and pain of the poor are, that is why one by one we have developed Madhya Pradesh and removed the problems of the poor.



## EDITOR'S SPECS

### BJP PLANNING BIG CONVENTION WITH JD(S) TO BRING STATE LEADERS TOGETHER

The BJP high command is planning to organise a massive convention in Karnataka to bring together the leaders of the party and JD(S) on a single platform. The convention will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi or Union Home Minister Amit Shah, according to sources. Sources also said the convention will be held after the Assembly elections in five states. The high command wants to pass on the message to the grassroots-level workers in the alliance. The plan is to bring a top leader, PM Modi or Amit Shah from New Delhi, former CM B.S. Yediyurappa and former PM H.D. Deve Gowda and his son former CM H.D. Kumaraswamy together. All the leaders will proclaim the alliance and pledge to take on the Congress government in Karnataka. The BJP and Congress party workers have seen JD(S) as arch-rivals in the state for decades. Though JD(S) formed a coalition government with both parties, the bitterness and rivalry is still afresh among the party workers. In order to quell the bitterness and to stop Congress from taking advantage of the situation, the party is planning to convene a massive convention and sound the bugle for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The Congress is leaving no stone unturned to keep the goodwill intact among the Muslim vote bank which voted overwhelmingly for the Congress in the last Assembly elections. At the same time, the party is also wooing SC, ST and OBC votes by preparing to accept the controversial caste census report, which was prepared by the Siddaramaiah government during its previous tenure in 2016. The report undermines the influence of Vokkaliga and Lingayat vote banks and projects SC and Muslim as dominant vote banks in Karnataka.

# Israel horror a reminder of Oct 1947

## Pakistani tribal raid in Kashmir

Deepika Bhan

There can be nothing more horrifying than to see terrorists overrun parts of an independent nation. It has happened in Israel and the October 7 shock has been too unnerving for the rest of the saner world.

For many Indians, the situation is a reminder of the October 1947 invasion by raiders from Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir.

Hordes of tribals from Northwest Frontier Province backed by Pakistan army invaded the Kashmir valley on October 22, 1947 under the code-name 'Operation Gulmarg'.

An estimated 5,000-10,000 raiders armed with axes, swords and rifles supplied by the Pakistan army and also military lorries to capture Kashmir. The raiders plundered, looted, killed men, women and children. Hundreds of women were kidnapped and raped. The Sikhs and Hindus were particularly targeted.

The Maharaja of J&K, seeing the gravity of the situation, approached the Indian government for assistance on October 24. He agreed to accede to India and the Instrument of Accession was signed on October 26.

The first Indian troops were airlifted and landed in Srinagar on October 27. The raiders were punished and thrown out. But they left a huge trail of bloodshed and fear. Families were wiped out, women brutalised, and many were forcibly converted.

For J&K, October is a month of freedom from tyranny, and October 27 is annually observed as the Infantry Day to commemorate and pay tribute to the brave Indian infantry soldiers who lost their lives while defending the country against Pakistani invaders.

What India's J&K endured in October 1947, similar is being witnessed in Israel, only that Muslims in Kashmir stood against the raiders and helped the army defend Srinagar. The crimes unleashed by the Pakistani raiders against Kashmiris and minority Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs then were barbaric.

The crimes being committed in Israel by terrorist-raiders are no less than what was endured by Kashmiris seven decades ago.

India was quick to condemn the attack and expressed solidarity with Israel. Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted on X, "Deeply shocked by the news of terrorist attacks in Israel. Our thoughts and prayers are with the innocent victims and their families. We stand in solidarity with Israel at this difficult hour."



Videos emanating from Israel showed women being brutalised and forcibly taken in jeeps by armed terrorists. The terrorists seemed to be enjoying a free run. They were breaking into houses and apartments.

The terrorists were seen shooting civilians, kidnapping people, including women and children, and taking them away as trophies.

In one horrifying video, a woman soldier was seen naked being assaulted by terrorists. In another video, the lifeless body of a soldier taken out from a vehicle is trampled upon by the terrorists and their supporters' raising slogans. There are hundreds of similar shocking videos of Israelis being attacked savagely.

The calibrated attack took place during Simchat Torah and Shabbat, which are significant days of rest in the Jewish calendar.

The Hamas terrorists infiltrated Israel borders under the cover of missile attacks. They entered Israel by land, sea and air using paragliders, said the Israeli army. The people were caught unawares as the terrorists attacked from the air and ground.

In earlier times there was no social media, only the stories remained and were carried from generations to generations. But in Israel everything is happening real time and people all over the world are witnessing the barbarity.

The images that emanated from Israel are deeply disturbing and unnerving.

The unprecedented assault saw Hamas gunmen infiltrating several Israeli towns and over 5,000 rockets launched from the Gaza Strip. The infiltration came on the 50th anniversary

of the 1973 War, which saw Israel's Arab neighbours -- led by Egypt and Syria -- launch a surprise attack on October 6 and lasted for three weeks. The 1973 War started on the holiest day of the Jewish Calendar.

And 50 years later, again during its holy day celebrations, Israel was attacked. This time not by countries but by terrorists. The fact that terrorists could overrun a country like Israel, whose intelligence network is said to be the best in the world, should be a grim reminder to all those who believe in good and bad terrorists. India has long endured this and has been forewarning the world about the dangers of good and bad terrorists.

international

## NO ELECTRICITY, FUEL, WATER FOR GAZA UNTIL HOSTAGES FREED: ISRAEL MINISTER

Jerusalem | Agencies

Israel's Energy Minister Israel Katz on Thursday said that there will be no supply of electricity, fuel or water for the Gaza Strip until the Hamas militant group frees hostages.

In a post on X, the Minister said: "No electrical switch will be turned on, no water hydrant will be opened and no fuel truck will enter (Gaza) until the Israeli abductees are returned home.

"Humanitarian for humanitarian. And no one will preach us morals."

According to Israeli authorities, the militant group has taken up 150 people as hostages in Gaza following its attack on October 7.

In retaliation to the unprecedented assault, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant on Monday had ordered a "complete siege" of Gaza, saying he would halt the supply of electricity, food, water and fuel.

The Gaza Strip's only power station stopped working on Wednesday due to fuel shortages.



As a result, every facility in the Hamas-controlled enclave, including the hospitals, are relying on generators, which in turn need fresh supplies of fuel.

Gaza, one of the most densely pop-

ulated places where some 2 million people live in an area of 140 square miles, has been almost completely cut off from the rest of the world for nearly 17 years, when Hamas seized control.

This prompted Israel and Egypt to impose a strict siege on the territory, which is ongoing.

Israel also maintains an air and naval blockade on Gaza.

More than half of the enclave's population lives in poverty and is food insecure, with nearly 80 per cent relying on humanitarian assistance.

However, he death toll in the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict in the Gaza Strip has increased to more than 2,500, with more fatalities expected as the violence continued for a sixth day on Thursday.

In a report, Israel's state-owned Kan TV news said that at least 1,300 Israelis have died since the Hamas launched its brutal assault on October 7.

The Health Ministry said 3,268 people were injured, of which 443 were still in hospitals, reports Xinhua news agency.

Attempts to find bodies in southern towns and villages continued on Thursday, Israeli authorities said.

## Russia fully supports two-state solution in Palestinian-Israeli conflict: Putin

Moscow | Agencies

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that Moscow has always supported

a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Speaking at the plenary session of the Russian Energy Week, Putin said that Russia's position on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has remained the same over decades, and this stance is well known in both Israel and Palestine. "We have always advocated for the implementation of the decisions of the United Nations Security Council, which involve the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state," the Russian President said. He criticized Washington's policies in the Middle East, noting that the US "tried to focus on financial assistance, rather than finding solutions to existing fundamental political challenges".

The Russian leader said that such moves only escalate the situation, and it is necessary to find compromises. "It is unclear whether it

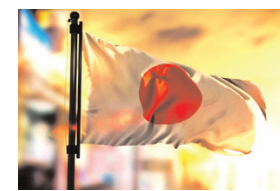


will be possible to somehow calm the situation in the near future, but we must strive for this because the expansion of the conflict zone can lead to dire consequences," Putin said. He further said it was crucial to minimize civilian casualties on both sides. Hamas on Saturday launched a surprise attack on Israeli towns adjacent to the Gaza Strip, prompting Israel to launch retaliatory strikes on Gaza. The Israel-Hamas conflict has so far caused heavy casualties on both sides.

## Japan govt to seek court order to disband controversial religious sect

Tokyo | Agencies

Japan's Education and Culture Ministry on Thursday announced its decision to seek a court order to disband the controversial religious sect, Unification Church. The move came after a months-long probe into the controversial religious group over alleged malicious practices including soliciting financially ruinous donations from members, reports Xinhua news agency. The Japanese government is gearing up to initiate dissolution proceedings, with a request expected to be filed as early as Friday, after collecting opinions at a meeting



of a religious organization council within the Cultural Affairs Agency, attended by Culture Minister Masahito Moriama, according to local media reports. Based on its survey, the culture ministry concluded the group's actions are illegal and significantly harmful to public welfare, public broadcaster NHK reported. The Tokyo District Court is likely to make a final

judgment based on the evidence submitted by the government about the group, formally known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, Kyodo News said. If the court order is granted, the group, established in South Korea in 1954, would lose its status as a religious corporation in Japan and be deprived of tax benefits, but would still be allowed to conduct religious activities. The Unification Church has long been criticized for encouraging its followers to make exorbitant donations in the form of "spiritual sales" in return for "karmic benefits".

## After Musk, EU warns Meta CEO Zuckerberg to remove pro-Hamas content

London | Agencies

After warning X owner Elon Musk, European Commissioner Thierry Breton has now written to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, telling him to remove pro-Hamas content across his platforms and "be very vigilant" else it could put the company in violation of new EU regulations. In a letter to Zuckerberg, Breton urged Meta to remove illegal terrorist content and hate speech amid the ongoing war in Israel. He said that the European Commission had seen "a surge of illegal content and disinformation being disseminated in the EU." "I urgently invite you to ensure that your systems are effective. Needless to say, I also expect you to be in contact with the relevant law enforcement authorities and Europol, and ensure that you respond promptly to any requests," he noted. Breton asked that Zuckerberg respond to



the European Union's (EU) concerns within the next 24 hours. "I would ask you to be very vigilant to ensure strict compliance with the digital services act (DSA) rules on terms of service, on the requirement of timely, diligent and objective action following notices of illegal content in the EU, and on the need for proportionate and effective mitigation measures." In a statement, a Meta

spokesperson said the company has created a "special operations center with experts, including fluent in Hebrew and Arabic speakers" after the Hamas attacks on Israel. "Our teams are working around the clock to keep our platforms safe, take action on content that violates our policies or local law, and coordinate with third-party fact checkers in the region to limit the spread of misin-

formation. We'll continue this work as this conflict unfolds," said the spokesperson. Earlier, the EU commissioner warned Tesla and SpaceX CEO, saying that his X platform "is being used to disseminate illegal content and disinformation in the EU" after the Hamas attacks in Israel.

In a letter addressed to Musk, Breton had said that following the "terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas against Israel", they have indications that "your platform is being used to disseminate illegal content and disinformation in the EU". Responding to Breton, Musk asked him to flag the violative content publicly on X, writing that the company takes its "actions in the open". Breton replied saying: "You are well aware of your users' - and authorities' - reports on fake content and glorification of violence." "I still don't know what they're talking about!" Musk said.

## Israel asks residents to take refuge after 'hostile aircraft' enter from Lebanon

Jerusalem | Agencies

A hostile aircraft entered northern Israel from Lebanon, the Israeli military said on Wednesday night, urging residents there to stay inside shelters. The Israeli military reported in a statement "a suspected infiltration from Lebanon into Israeli airspace", but did not specify which kind of aircraft, Xinhua news agency reported. Sirens warning of "hostile aircraft" were heard across the Galilee region and the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, it said. "All civilians in the areas where sirens were sounded are asked to enter shelters and stay in them until further notice," the statement added. Israel's state-owned Kan TV news reported that about a dozen drones had entered, and Israeli aircraft were chasing them in an attempt to intercept them. Video footage on social media showed a drone flying in the cloudy skies of northern Israel. Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service said that no casualties had been reported.



# Ajit Pawar's ambition to become CM will remain a dream: Sharad Pawar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar on Thursday said that his nephew Ajit Pawar's ambition to become the Chief Minister of Maharashtra will remain just a 'dream'.



made his ambitions clear on several occasions that after occupying the post of Deputy CM, he wants a 'promotion' and was very keen to become the state CM.

sible only if he measured up to the magical 'game of numbers' (supporting MLAs) for claiming the post of CM. However, Sharad Pawar's latest assertion could prove to be a huge dampener for his nephew's unabashed ambitions and also his die-hard supporters rooting for him as the future CM, if not the next.

## SC extends for 3 months interim bail to ex-Maha Minister Nawab Malik

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday extended for three months its earlier order granting interim bail on medical grounds to former Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik in connection with an alleged money laundering case.



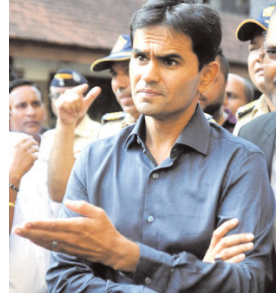
suffering from chronic kidney ailments and his medical condition has not improved. Learned ASG SV. Raju does not dispute the same position. In view of the above, the interim bail granted to the petitioner is extended for a further period of three months as prayed for," the top court ordered.

im relief to Malik solely on medical grounds for a term of two months on such terms and conditions as may be determined by the trial court. The ED had arrested Malik in February 2022 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in a money-laundering case arising out of an alleged undervalued property deal with underworld links.

## Mumbai Police probe alleged 'death threats' to Sameer Wankhede

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Goregaon Police here have launched a probe into the alleged death threats received by IRS officer Sameer Wankhede, the former Zonal Director of Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in Mumbai, officials said here.



Wankhede submitted the complaint to the Mumbai Police that he was receiving 'death threats' from an Instagram user, reportedly said to be in Bangladesh. Presently posted in Chennai, Wankhede has sent an email to Mumbai Police Commissioner Vivek Phansalkar on the direct messages of death threats received from the unidentified Instagram user.

Bollywood mega-star Shah Rukh Khan. It may be recalled that Wankhede had led a swoop to bust drugs on the luxury ship, Cordelia Cruise on October 2, 2021, off the Mumbai coast, and nabbed over 17 persons from the glamour world, including Aryan, the son of Shah Rukh Khan. Aryan Khan spent a month in jail, and post-release, a high-level NCB probe concluded that he was innocent and had been framed in the case which made global headlines.

## AYODHYA MOSQUE TO BE NAMED AFTER PROPHET AS 'MUHAMMAD BIN ABDULLAH MASJID'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a significant move, the All India Rabta-E-Masjid, an organisation of all mosques in the country, has decided to name the proposed mosque coming at Dhannipur in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya district after the Prophet, as 'Muhammad Bin Abdullah Masjid'. The decision was announced at the AIRM conference held here with the participation of all senior clerics of various Muslim sects, initiated by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Haji Arfat Shaikh.

was brought down on December 6, 1992 - in Ayodhya where the grand Lord Ram Temple is nearing completion. Shaikh said the new masjid coming at the site allotted by the Supreme Court after its verdict in November 2019 promises to be the biggest mosque in India. "It will be able to accommodate 9,000 faithfuls, including 5,000 men and 4,000 women simultaneously to offer Namaaz. The entire mosque complex, with additional land being procured through our resources, will have medical, educational and social facilities as well," he said. The apex court had given 5 acres of land for the new mosque,

and there is a plan to purchase 6 more acres for providing the additional facilities to make it a landmark project, other speakers said. The work on the grand 'Muhammad Bin Abdullah Masjid' complex, delayed owing to certain differences among various groups, is now slated to start shortly at the Dhannipur site, Shaikh added. A symbolic brick for the foundation ceremonies was also handed over to the officials representing the Sunni Waqf Board of India, the Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation of India, Salamati Peer Dargah Trust and other prominent organisations involved with the mega-project.

## 14 NBFCs surrender licences to RBI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday said that 14 non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) have surrendered their certificate of registration. These NBFCs include Shivam Hire Purchase & Finvest, Sun Finlease (Gujarat), Chitrakoot Motor Finance and Alkan Fiscal Services among others. As many as 10 of these NBFCs have surrendered their licence due to exit from the non-banking financial institution (NBFI) business.



These 10 NBFCs are TMF Business Services Limited (formerly Tata Motors Finance), Shivam Hire Purchase & Finvest, Shree Shanti Trades, Adroit Commercial, Sun Finlease (Gujarat), Chitrakoot Motor Finance, VIP Finstock,

Dhruvata Finance Services, Saija Finance and Microgram Marketplace. The other four NBFCs have surrendered their licence as they ceased to be legal entities due reasons such as amalgamation, dissolution or voluntary strike-off.

## Mumbai woman teacher becomes British High Commissioner for a day

Team Absolute | New Delhi

To mark the International Day of the Girl Child, 21-year-old Shreya Dharmarajan from Chennai was appointed the British High Commissioner to India for a day. The annual 'High Commissioner for a Day' competition provides an opportunity to Indian women, aged 18 to 23, to share their strengths with the world.



Shreya, who holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Lady Shri Ram College in Delhi, currently teaches in a government school in Mumbai as a Teach for India fellow.

As the UK's top diplomat in India, Shreya experienced a range of activities over the course of a fully-packed day as she led discussions at the UN office in New Delhi on advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She spoke to one of this year's Earthshot Prize finalists about their innovative initiatives to tackle global environmental challenges, and met Professor Ajay Sood, Principal Scientific Adviser to India, to review plans to bolster UK-India research collaboration following the G20 Summit.

enlightening, enriching, and fulfilling". "Spending a day as the British High Commissioner to India was an incredibly enlightening, enriching, and fulfilling experience. I had the opportunity to interact with and learn from inspiring exemplars of women's leadership in wide-ranging fields.

## Uddhav Thackeray gets to roar at Shivaji Park in Dussehra rally

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Shiv Sena (UBT) has been given permission to hold its traditional annual Dussehra rally on October 24 at the famed Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Park in central Mumbai, an official said here on Thursday. Accordingly, Shiv Sena (UBT) President and ex-Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will deliver the customary festival address from the same sprawling 28-acre venue, where the tradition was started in 1966 by the party's founder-patriarch the late Balasaheb Thackeray. Several senior Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders like Sachin Ahir, Sushma Andhare, and Kishore Tiwari have welcomed the development as "a triumph of morality", but said the clearance should have come much earlier. Tiwari said that the upcoming Dussehra 2023 rally "is extremely significant for the party" as it will be a "curtain-raiser" for the 2024 Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and civic elections due in the state.



The party's annual festival rally has been held at the venue for the past 57 years, barring a few rare occasions, like in October 2020, when the then CM Thackeray addressed it in a closed venue, the Swatantryaveer Savarkar Auditorium, in view of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

However, Dussehra 2022 witnessed a history of sorts when two rallies were held by the rival parties - one by the Thackeray-led party and the other of the Shiv Sena led by CM Eknath Shinde, which broke away in June 2022. This year, too, the two contender parties had applied to the BMC for holding the rally at the same venue, but at the last minute, the Shinde-led Shiv Sena withdrew its application, ostensibly to avoid any law-and-order issues. It's not clear where the Shinde's party will hold its rally, though a couple of venues in south Mumbai or the Bandra Kurla Complex grounds are likely to be considered. Meanwhile, the Shiv Sena (UBT) has started full-scale preparations for the October 24 gathering where Thackeray is expected to guide his "sainiks" and spell out the future course of the party for the election year.

## Sharad Pawar had quit as NCP chief after rebels clamoured to join BJP: Supriya Sule

Team Absolute | Pune

In a major revelation, NCP Working President and MP Supriya Sule said that her father, Sharad Pawar had quit as NCP President on May 2 as some people were clamouring to ally with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, here on Thursday. She also asserted that her father was kept 'in the dark' about the moves by her cousin, the rival NCP President Ajit Pawar to join hands with the BJP -- both in November 2019 and in July 2023. "Sharad Pawar never had any plan to resign as NCP chief, but he was compelled to do so after the rebel group led by Ajit Pawar were insistent on supporting the BJP. He was very pained by their decision," declared Sule, a 3-time MP from Baramati. In a dramatic turn, Sharad Pawar had quit as NCP President on May 2, and after the party's pressures, had taken it back on May 5, while Ajit Pawar and his supporters left the party on July 1 to ally with the ruling Shiv Sena of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and BJP. Responding to this in Akola, Sharad Pawar declared that con-



trary to speculation, he never had any intentions to go with the BJP, as claimed by some leaders of the breakaway NCP faction and BJP. Referring to NCP (AP) faction's Minister Chhagan Bhujbal's claims to a private TV channel, Sule said that it is now evident by Bhujbal's own statements that Sharad Pawar was unaware of either the dawn swearing-in ceremony of November 2019, or the July 2023 split. Now, in his recent remarks,

she said Bhujbal has admitted that both the oath-taking ceremonies (November 2019 and July 2023) were done without keeping Sharad Pawar in the loop, and he had even 'lied' on his own whereabouts during the July 2023 episode. Sule reiterated that Sharad Pawar has never jettisoned the Congress ideology and followed his mentor, the first CM of Maharashtra, Y. B. Chavan, and he made it clear to Bhujbal and other rebels that they are free to go to the BJP, and said he would not abandon his ideological stance. Sule even rubbished Bhujbal's claim that after Sharad Pawar's resignation, she was to be made the NCP President and then allying with the BJP, and said she would "never ever have compromised with her father's ideals, and so refused to be the NCP chief". She even attacked the BJP's hypocrisy for first dubbing the NCP as a 'nationally corrupt party', later claiming to hold secret talks with the same NCP, and then allying with it for political gains, and demanded that "the BJP must apologise for all their false allegations hurled against us for so long".

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Olympian El Moutawakel marks International Day of the Girl in Mumbai. Nawal El Moutawakel, Los Angeles 1984 Olympics gold medalist and Laureus Academy member, marked International Day of the Girl with a visit to the Magic Bus programme here. El Moutawakel visited along with former pole vaulter Sergey Bubka, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha, who completed with El Moutawakel in the 1984 Olympics and share a special bond off the track was also part of the event. Both Laureus Academy members, as well as PT Usha, are due to attend the IOC session in Mumbai later this week, with Wednesday's visit offering them an opportunity to spread the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect.



El Moutawakel won the first-ever 400m final for women in LA. In doing so, she made more history: her gold medal was the first for any Moroccan athlete and the first won by a Muslim woman. In her role as a founding member of the Laureus World Sports Academy, she visited Magic Bus, a project that since 1999 has provided education, opportunity and a

the incredible work done by Magic Bus. What they have achieved in opening up educational opportunities for young girls and boys is changing lives. The International Day of the Girl is all about empowerment and the strive for gender equality. A project like Magic Bus is helping to make that a reality within underserved communities," El Moutawakel said. "Today is the United Nations International Day of the Girl Child. It's important to encourage gender equality and empower girls through sport and I've had a great time. I'm here with Nawal El Moutawakel and Sergey Bubka ahead of the 141st IOC Session here in Mumbai. Thanks to Laureus for all that they do to achieve gender equity through sport," IOA President PT Usha said.



# Julia Fox shares '50 shades of Julia' while recalling her dominatrix past

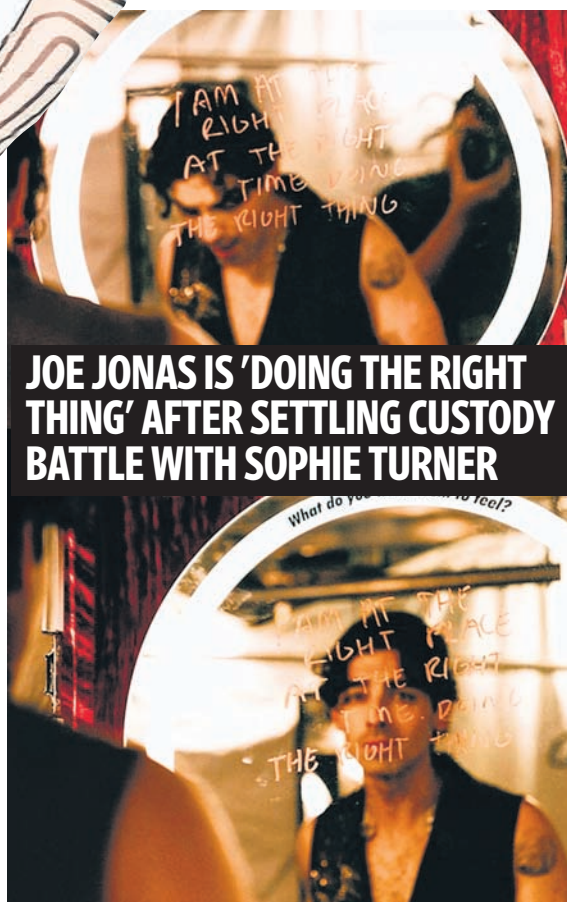
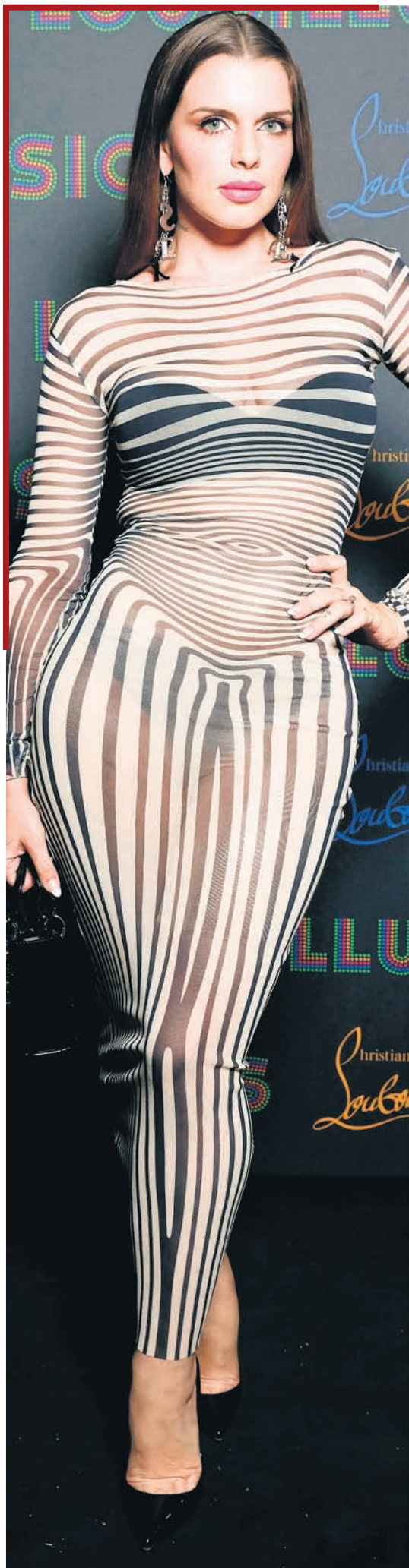
Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actress Julia Fox, who was there to promote her memoir 'Down the Drain',

recalled her past as a dominatrix. "I think prior to that, I just had really low self-esteem," the actress/model told the co-hosts. "You could tell me I was beautiful and this, but I would always think, 'They want something from me.' I was already very jaded, even as a young teenager."

She went on saying that she started seeing her worth when she could make money off her beauty, reports aceshowbiz.com. The mom of two also shared that the job was the one thing that inspired her to be an actor. "A lot of it is role play, a lot of it is cosplay. So really, that's where I learned to act," she said, not-

ing how she'd have "5 clients in a day and each one of them [would want] something different." "One wants the mean popular girl in school, one wants a nun, one wants a neglectful mother. I had all the costumes ready," the 33-year-old said, prompting Ana Navarro to joke, "That's 50 Shades of Julia!"



JOE JONAS IS 'DOING THE RIGHT THING' AFTER SETTLING CUSTODY BATTLE WITH SOPHIE TURNER

Los Angeles | Agencies

One day after it was reported that Joe Jonas and his estranged wife Sophie Turner have reached a temporary agreement regarding their two daughters, the singer-actor said that he's "doing the right thing."

The 34-year-old father of two sent a cryptic message via his Instagram Story on Wednesday, October 11. He posted a picture taken at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tennessee where the Jonas Brothers performed on Monday night, reports aceshowbiz.com.

The picture showed him standing in front of a mirror where the inspirational message that read, "I am at the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing," was written on it.

Above the message, a banner on the mirror read: "What do you want them to feel?"

Joe and Sophie reached a temporary agreement regarding their daughters, Delphine, 15 months, and Willa, three, after spending three days of mediation last week. "After a productive and successful mediation, we have agreed that the children will spend time equally in loving homes in both the US and the UK. We look forward to being great co-parents," they said in a statement on Tuesday.

The agreement states that the children will be with Sophie between October 9 and October 21. During that period, Sophie and her children are permitted to travel to England and throughout the U.S.

The kids will be returned to their dad by a nanny on October 21.

## JADA PINKETT SMITH REVEALS HOW SHE BATTLED SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actress Jada Pinkett Smith had considered taking her own life.

The 52-year-old actress revealed that upon turning 40, she was in "so much pain" despite living her dream in Hollywood and used to look for places where she could stage her death as an accident so she could hide the truth from her family, reports aceshowbiz.com.

She told People: "When I turned 40, I was in so much pain. I couldn't figure a way out besides death. So I made a plan. But, while I was really living the dream, I hit a huge wall - a massive amount of depression."

"I think that I looked at having outside sources to supplement for the voids that I was feeling inside. I started looking for places, cliffs where I could have an accident, because I didn't want my kids to think that their mother had committed suicide."

In the end, the 'Nutty Professor' star ended up finding help in the form of South American psychoactive brew ayahuasca, which is usually brewed into a tea to drink and is thought to help shift hallucinations, reports aceshowbiz.com.

She said: "Ayahuasca helped me, it gave me a new intimate relationship with myself that I had never had before. The suicidal thoughts completely went away."

Meanwhile, the 'Girls Trip' actress hit the headlines in 2020 over her "entanglement" with August Alsina, but has now admitted she and the 'King Richard' actor, Will, had been leading separate lives for six years before he sprung to her defense and hit Chris Rock at the 2022 Oscars.



## Cher not letting age stop her from loving as she relishes romance with her boyfriend

Los Angeles | Agencies

Pop star Cher, who is also called the 'Goddess of Pop', is not letting her age stop her from living her life or fall in love, as the 77-year old is still dating. Since the music legend and her boyfriend, music producer Alexander "A.E." Edwards, went public with their relationship last year, their romance has fueled headlines. So far, the singer is relishing her romance with her 37-year old hubby.

Talking about their romance, Cher said: "Alexander's got diamond teeth, tattoos, white hair, and he's way younger.

He's a beautiful man. Also, I think it's fun to be interested in somebody else's love life!" 'People' reported.

The pair met "for about 15 minutes" one year ago at a Paris Fashion Week event, she recalls, and a mutual friend gave him her number.

"It was really shocking, because people just don't give out my number," said Cher, who is about to release her first-ever holiday album, 'Christmas' on October 20.

Elaborating on this, she said: "I had been telling all my friends, 'We're too old to go out with really younger men, and I will never fall in love on text.' So I did what I said not to do!"

However, 'The Little Man' singer broke her rules for Alexander "because he's just so special." "I hate when people say people are special, but lots of people say I'm special, so I can say that he's special. No matter what happens, I love being with him. He makes me laugh, and we have fun. What I learned is that it's never too late. If you wrote out all the statistics, you would go, 'Well, this is doomed.' But we've been together a year, and if it was just a year, it would've been worth it. I've had the best time," she added.

Indeed, despite the internet's fascination with the pairing -- and their age difference -- Cher is choosing joy.

## Scarlett Johansson On Pam Anderson going makeup-free: 'It's powerful!'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actress Scarlett Johansson has praised 'Baywatch' star Pamela Anderson for going makeup-free at Paris Fashion Week and praised her for sending a "powerful message" to women.

The 56-year-old model decided to go au naturel for her appearances at the glitzy event earlier this week and now Hollywood star Scarlett, 38, has praised the "powerful" move for other women to see, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She told Popsugar: "I think it is definitely different to see somebody that's in the public eye, a woman in the public eye, go to a fashion show or big event with no makeup on. It's just very different from what we're used to. It's a powerful message for women to see that, whether they follow suit or whatever the effect is, in the zeitgeist. It's powerful for women to see other women rejecting standard beauty norms." The 'Black Widow' star recently revealed that she suffered with acne as a teenager and and suffered from "painful memories" when looking at old pictures of herself. She told Stylist: "I struggled with acne forever. My brother actually just showed me photos of myself at a family thing when I was probably 19 or 20, and my skin quality is completely different. When I saw that photo it just, you know, it brought everything back. All those painful memories. I just struggled with my skin for such a long time. I used to wear concealer to work in the morning, even though somebody was about to put make-up on my face."

"But that was when I was younger and the messaging around acne back then was that your skin was grimy and dirty, and you'd get rid of the blemishes by washing it. It was all so negative - and also incorrect. At that point, I was using every product I was prescribed and that I saw in the media."



## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Rita Ora



## Men's ODI World Cup

# AUSTRALIA SUFFER HUMILIATING 134-RUN DEFEAT AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

Lucknow | Agencies

Australia lost its second World Cup 2023 match as they suffered a humiliating 134-run debacle against South Africa at the Ekana Stadium, here on Thursday.

This was also Aussies biggest defeat by runs in ODI World Cups. It marked the first instance since 1992 where the five-time champion suffered consecutive losses at the start of a World Cup campaign, first against India in Chennai. Australia which has only lost 25 of its 96 World Cup matches went down to New Zealand and South Africa in successive matches during the 1992 World Cup. For the records, Australia had also lost its first two games in the 1983 World Cup (against India and West Indies) and the 1979 World Cup in England. However, the history of the game also suggests that at one point they were unbeaten for 34 consecutive matches between 1999 and 2011. In the last one month, Australia has also failed to chase down 300 plus total in ODI cricket, following the defeats on the South Africa tour earlier this year when they lost the series 2-3.



# IOC suspends Russia's Olympic Committee for breaching Ukraine's territorial integrity; to discuss cricket's inclusion in 2028 Games on Friday

Mumbai | Agencies

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has suspended with immediate effect the Russian Olympic Committee for breaching Ukraine's territorial integrity by including as its members regional sports organisations from places annexed by it.

The latest suspension will not impact the participation of sportspersons with Russian passports from participating in the Paris Olympic Games as neutral athletes. It will also not impact the Belarus Olympic Association which has currently been sanctioned by the IOC for supporting Russia in its war with Ukraine. The decision comes into effect immediately and will continue until further notice, informed Mark Adams, IOC's Director of Communication, at a press conference at the end of the inaugural day of the IOC's Executive Board in Mumbai on Thursday. "The unilateral decision taken by the Russian Olympic Committee on



October 5, 2023 to include, as its members, the regional sports organisations which are under the authority of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Ukraine (namely Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia) constitutes a breach of the Olympic Charter because it violates the territorial integrity of the NOC of Ukraine, as recognised by the IOC in accordance with the Olympic Charter," the IOC said in its statement on Thursday.

After this decision, the Russian Olympic Committee is no longer entitled to operate

as a National Olympic Committee, as defined in the Olympic Charter, and cannot receive any funding from the Olympic Movement.

Thus the Russian Olympic Committee will not receive any funding from IOC.

"As stated in the IOC's position and recommendations of 28 March 2023, which remain fully in place, the IOC reserves the right to decide about the participation of individual neutral athletes with a Russian passport in the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 at the

appropriate time," the IOC said in its statement.

"The IOC reserves the right to decide about the participation of individual neutral athletes with a Russian passport in the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 at the appropriate time.

Meanwhile, the EB will discuss on Friday the proposal by the organising committee of the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 2028 to take organisational competitions in five additional sports including cricket. The other sports that have been proposed for inclusion are baseball-softball, flag football (a limited-contact version of American football), lacrosse, and squash. The LA 2028 proposal has been reviewed by the IOC's Olympic Programme Commission, which has sent its recommendation to the IOC Executive Board. If accepted, the proposal will then be presented for approval to the IOC Session, which will be held in Mumbai from October 15 to 17.

# 'My job is to make sure we get a good start': Rohit Sharma after record century

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Following his remarkable achievement of scoring the fastest century by an Indian player at a Cricket World Cup, captain Rohit Sharma has said that it is his responsibility to ensure a strong start and maintain the mindset of applying pressure on the opposition without faltering.

With his scintillating batting display on Wednesday, the 36-year-old opener reached his century in just 63 balls, the fastest century by an India player at a Cricket World Cup, breaking a 40-year record set by the legendary Kapil Dev 40 years ago. "When I know I am batting at the top of the order, it is my duty, it is my job to make sure that we achieve that good start, especially in



the chase because it helps put the team into a comfortable position early on. And that is something I have done over the years and I love doing that. "And, when it works out, it looks really good, but sometimes it doesn't work out. But I want to back myself to keep doing that because that is important, not to lose the mindset of trying and putting that

pressure on the opposition," Rohit said on Disney+ Hotstar after the match.

Rohit's groundbreaking performances saw him create records as his century against Afghanistan made him the player with the most centuries in ODI World Cup history, breaking Sachin Tendulkar's long-standing world record. He created the record in just three ODI World Cup against Sachin Tendulkar's record of creating them across six editions of the tournament.

He also became the second Indian to score centuries in three consecutive World Cups after Sachin.

This was Rohit Sharma's 31st century in ODI cricket, which means he is the third-highest century-getter in ODI cricket history, upstaging Ricky Ponting (30).

# Advantage Malaysia, but we have few surprises up our sleeves: Igor Stimac

Kuala Lumpur | Agencies

Friday the 13th! It is a rare date that is considered ominous in many cultures. Superstition is something that most in the world of football brush aside before big matches, though the Indian Football Team will be looking to spring a few surprises against their hosts Malaysia in the opening game of the Festival of Independence, also known in the local language as the *PestaBola Merdeka*.

Indian head coach Igor Stimac said on the eve of the Malaysia game, "We know about the good runs Malaysia have had in the past few months. They have a good coach and some wonderful homegrown players, who are very well supported by the naturalised players, so there is a lot of stability in the team at the moment."

Malaysia have played nine international matches so far this year and boast an impressive record of six wins, two draws, and just one defeat.

"I believe it's advantage Malaysia in the first game. Obviously, they are on their home turf and have had a good run here, but we are here to spring a few surprises against them," said Stimac. "They have a very stable, competitive side with a clear idea about what they need to do on the pitch. We are also in a similar situation, but with the 90,000 supporters and with our record away from home, which has not been that great, it's advantage Malaysia."

India are well aware of the heritage and history behind the *PestaBola Merdeka*, having played the tournament 17 times. However, the Blue Tigers also have one eye on the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers against Kuwait and Qatar next

month.

"We know of the history and importance of this tournament, and we will do everything in our power to win the two matches and lift the trophy for the first time, but we also need to be mindful of our challenges coming ahead," said Stimac. "It is very important that we do not risk any injuries, as we have two very important World Cup Qualifiers coming up in November."

"Being in Pot 2 of the draw for the World Cup Qualifiers, we have a very good chance to make it to Round 3 for the first time, and that is very important to us," he said.

The India head coach also hailed his lads for the collective team spirit that the boys have shown in the last few months, over the course of the Tri-Nation Cup, the Intercontinental Cup, and the SAFF Championship, to win three back-to-back trophies.



# Osaka among tennis superstars hotly tipped to return at Australian Open 2024

Sydney | Agencies

Organizers of the Australian Open (AO) have announced that a plethora of superstars are set to make their comeback to Melbourne Park at the start of 2024, including former champion Naomi Osaka.

Following maternity leave, a trio of AO women's singles champions - Osaka, Angelique Kerber, and Caroline Wozniacki - are planning triumphant returns to the court and might potentially upset the newly established order, according to a statement released by AO on Thursday.

"We are delighted to welcome back these amazing women, Naomi, Angie, and Caroline, who've lit up the Australian Open and impressed fans with their athleticism, resilience, and their sportsmanship," commented Australian Open Tournament Director Craig Tiley.

"They will find the landscape has changed somewhat since they reigned supreme," he noted, as the 2023 season has borne witness to the rise of many female players.

The No.1 singles title changed hands from Iga Swiatek of Poland to reigning AO champ-



on Aryna Sabalenka, whose ascent ended Swiatek's 75-week dominance at the top spot since April 2022.

In the recently concluded U.S. Open, the 19-year-old American Coco Gauff overcame Sabalenka, clinching her first Grand Slam trophy before over 20,000 tennis fans.

"The combination of great champions of our game returning, combined with the emergence of exciting young talents, promises an Australian Open with unmatched unpredictability and excitement," remarked Tiley.

At Wednesday's AO launch event, the tournament director also told reporters that the organizers have been staying in touch with the 22-time major winner Rafael Nadal and Australia's home favorite Nick Kyrgios.

In response to Tiley's remark, the legendary Spaniard expressed his appreciation for "the vote of confidence" on social media.

"I am practicing every day and working hard to come back asap," Nadal wrote.

Meanwhile, in Kyrgios' case, Tiley voiced his personal belief in the 28-year-old Australian who was "motivated to come back and play in January."

# Heroic welcome for Bajrang Punia at IGI airport

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Despite failing to win a medal at the recently concluded Asian Games, Olympic bronze medalist wrestler Bajrang Punia received a heroic welcome at the Indra Gandhi International Airport, here.

Powerlifter Mahant Gaurav Sharma and several other people reached the airport to receive the Indian grappler.

Bajrang, who entered the Asian Games after escaping the selection trials, suffered defeat to make a medal-less exit from Hangzhou.

An under-prepared Bajrang, who spent a major part of this year protesting against WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, began with two easy wins but failed to beat Iranian Rahman Amouzadkhalili and Japan's Kaiki Yamaguchi. However, the Haryana wrestler was amazed by such a positive welcome.

Gaurav Sharma said: "Bajrang is our hero. He won medals for the nation. Winning and losing is a part of the game. I am sure he will come back stronger and win a medal at the Paris Olympics. Every Indian is with Bajrang."



# Prisha upsets top-seed Divya to enter semis of National Tennis Championship

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Maharashtra's Prisha Shinde caused a big upset in the quarter-finals of the ongoing National Tennis Championship 2023 when she defeated top-seed Divya Ramesh of Tamil Nadu, while Telangana's Hrushik Katakam also continued his winning run on Thursday at the DLTA Complex in New Delhi.

Playing in the girls' U-14 category, Prisha looked in complete control of the match right from the beginning and got the better of Divya 6-2, 6-4 in straight sets to move into the semi-finals of the tournament. Meanwhile, the No. 1 seed in the boys' U-14 category, Hrushik Katakam stamped his authority with another commanding victory by beat-



ing Karnataka's Diganth M 6-0, 6-0 in the last-eight.

The boys' U-16 category also saw some top-notch tennis action as Tamil Nadu's Thirumurugan V overcame the challenge of Kabir Chothani of Gujarat by 6-4, 7-5 in straight sets to reach the semis. Punjab's Armaan Wallia played a brilliant match using

# Asian Games Gold medalist Neeraj Chopra appointed Laureus Ambassador

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Asian Games Gold medalist and reigning Olympic, and World Champion in men's javelin, Neeraj Chopra was named Laureus Ambassador, pledging his support to Laureus Sport for Good, here on Wednesday.

His involvement with Laureus dates back to 2022 when he was shortlisted for the Breakthrough of the Year award at the Laureus World Sports Awards as a result of winning the first gold medal for an Indian track and field athlete at the Tokyo Olympics. Neeraj became interested in Laureus after learning more about the athlete-led organisation that honours sport's transformative power.

"It's a big honour for me to join Laureus as an Ambassador. To use my platform and the power of sport to help young people in India and



around the world is something I am looking forward to doing. To see the many legends that have been a part of this program and the difference they have made in the world is inspiring, and I share the same belief; that sport

has the power to change the world," said Neeraj Chopra, Laureus Brand Ambassador.

"I've heard about the many programmes that Laureus supports in India, and the stories remind me of the many ways in which we can help young people. Every athlete knows that sport can be a big part of that story. People are watching and following my sport now more than ever and I believe that, working with Laureus Sport for Good, I can use that platform to change lives," he added.

The global foundation supports over 300 programmes that use sports to eradicate inequality and discrimination for young people around the world.

Neeraj now joins a unique team of elite athletes from across the generations, including Academy Members and icons of Indian sport Kapil Dev, Rahul Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar.



# YAMI GAUTAM STATIONED IN NORTH INDIA FOR 50 DAYS FOR HER NEXT PROJECT



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Yami Gautam, who has been receiving a lot of positive response to her work in 'OMG 2', is stationed in a north Indian town for 50 days for the shoot of her upcoming film, the details of which are currently under the wraps.

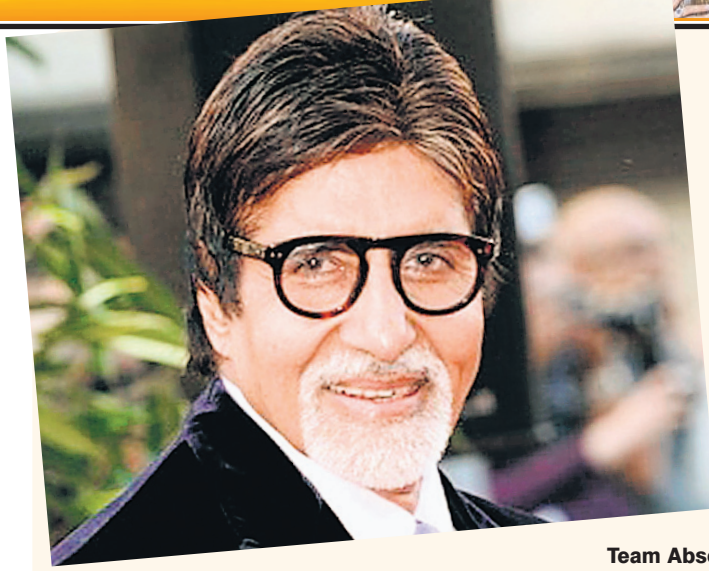
The actress is thrilled to be shooting in north India, as it's a place she has a deep fondness for due to its natural beauty and tranquility, providing her with an escape from the bustling city life in Mumbai.

A source revealed, "Yami Gautam is shooting for her upcoming film in north India and will be filming there for the next 50 days. The project promises to be one that continues to showcase Yami's prowess as a performer and a formal announcement will be made soon."

Yami has been having a terrific run as her projects including 'Lost', 'Chor Nikal Ke Bhaga', and most notably, her theatrical release, 'OMG 2', have received good response and the audience has appreciated her work in these projects.

'OMG 2' even managed to cross the Rs 100 crore benchmark, firmly establishing her as a box-office draw.

The actress has 'Dhoom Dham' in the pipeline along with this untitled project.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

## Amitabh Bachchan reveals his 'reason to survive and work'

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan, who turned 81 on Wednesday, thanked his fans for all the "blessings" and said that that is his reason to "survive and work".

Big B took to his blog, where he shared a string of pictures of him greeting his fans, whom he lovingly calls his extended family (EF), outside his home in Jalsa here. One image shows the cine icon wearing a garland.

Thanking his fans, he wrote: "When the overwhelm is overwhelming, it is the most difficult task to express those sentiments..."

Big B added: "The blessings from all are my reason to survive and work.. and may I ever be worthy of these blessings."

On the eve of his birthday, Amitabh surprised his fans at midnight as he came outside his home to meet them.

On the work front, Amitabh will be seen in 'Ganapath' starring Kriti Sanon and Tiger Shroff. He also has 'Kalki 2898 AD' and 'Thalaivar 170' with Rajanikanth.

## SHREYA GHOSHAL PERFORMS 'AMI JE TOMAR' WITH 'INDIAN IDOL 14' CONTESTANT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Acclaimed singer Shreya Ghoshal will be seen giving a mesmerising performance on the track 'Ami Je Tomar', along with the 'Indian Idol 14' contestant Subhadeep Das in the upcoming episode of the singing reality show.

This weekend, numerous contestants from across the length and breadth of the country will be seen performing on the platform in a bid to secure their position in the competition.

But it was the phenomenal Subhadeep Das from Mumbai, who is returning to 'Indian Idol' after three years to claim a spot on the show. As an ode to his Bengali background, he will be seen performing 'Ami Je Tomar' from the film 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2'.

The song is originally sung by Shreya and Arijit Singh. The lyrics are by Sameer. It is from the 2022 comedy horror drama 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2' starring Kartik Aaryan and Kiara Advani. The track was also in the soundtrack of 2007 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa' which stars Akshay Kumar and Vidya Balan in the lead roles. It was sung by Shreya and M. G. Sreekumar.

Listening to the performance, Shreya said: "I have heard 'Ami Je Tomar' in various genres and this song is meant for competitions, and many attempt it, but the finesse this song needs, has at times, been missed." "But you are an incredible singer; your base of classical singing is very strong. Your comeback on this platform today will be remembered by all those who have heard you today. You were fabulous," she added. Impressed by his soulful singing, Vishal said: "I remember hearing you three years back on Indian Idol; at the time, your singing was a little raw, but now, you have great control over low notes, and this is beautiful."



## TIGER, KRITI'S DANCE NUMBER SETS SOCIAL MEDIA ABLAZE



Team Absolute | Mumbai

In an electrifying social media frenzy, the fever surrounding Tiger Shroff's highly anticipated mass entertainer, 'Ganapath', has skyrocketed to unprecedented heights.

Adding to the excitement is the long-awaited reunion with Kriti Sanon, his debut movie co-star, after a nine-year hiatus. As the film's release date approaches, the duo has unleashed the first song, 'Hum Aaye Hain', sparking a viral sensation that has set the internet on fire.

This sensational dance number, featuring the melodious voices of Siddharth Basur and Prakriti Kakar and a riveting composition by White Noise Studios, has not just captured

hearts but also commandeered social media platforms. 'Hum Aaye Hain' has been relentlessly trending, dominating every corner of the streaming and digital landscape. The song has gone viral, igniting a fan frenzy that transcends generations.

What sets 'Hum Aaye Hain' apart is its infectious hook step, flawlessly executed by Tiger and Kriti, fueling the song's widespread appeal. Social media has been inundated with heart-warming videos of fans, spanning age groups, enthusiastically recreating the step.

Whether it's the younger generation inspired by their idols or longtime followers of Tiger Shroff and Kriti Sanon, the 'Hum Aaye Hain' hook step has united fans of all ages.



## SUSHMITA SEN IS A WOUNDED TIGRESS GOING FOR THE KILL IN SERIES' SEQUEL

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

The trailer of the third season of the hit streaming show 'Aarya', which stars actress Sushmita Sen in the titular role, was unveiled in Mumbai at a 5-star property in the city's Andheri area on Thursday.

The trailer event began with a live performance of Kalaripayattu after which the actress and the former Miss Universe, Sushmita made a stunning entry sitting on her throne.

Looking at the audience, she lowered her pitch and went on to say, "Kabhi kabhi baat sahi ya galat ki nahi, galat aur kam galat ki hoti hai. Panje nikaalne ka waqt aa gaya hai", as the hall echoed with cheers and their anticipation for the trailer.

The lights then dimmed to make way for the visuals on screen and the trailer began with Sushmita's titular character of Aarya being shot in front of her kids.

The following shots show the ruthlessness of Aarya, who once stepped into the business of opium unwillingly after the killing of her husband and to protect her children.

In the upcoming season, Aarya has bigger ambitions. Naturally, the bigger the ambitions in the world of crime, the bigger is the risk and the bigger is the price you pay to clinch the throne.

Aarya has now her eyes set on the supply and transportation of the narcotic drug but is intercepted by Ila Arun, who herself is the undisputed queen on the supply side.

Hot on Aarya's heels is ACP Khan, who after being preoccupied in the second season, is back with vengeance and will do anything in his capacity to put an end to Aarya's illegal drug empire.

## TAMANNAAH BHATIA'S 10TH GRADE VIDEO GOES VIRAL, FANS DOUBT HER AGE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

It was in 2005 when she made her acting debut with the film 'Chand Sa Roshan Chehra', and now after 18 years, a clip featuring actress Tamannaah Bhatia giving an interview for her first film is doing the rounds on social media.

A video shared on a fan account amithaspeaks posted an old video showing a young Tamannaah being interviewed about her debut film 18 years ago.

The actress is seen telling about signing her first ever film when she was only 13. In the clip, Tamannaah is seen in a blue and orange Indian wear.

She said: "Main abhi school mein hoon. Main abhi 10th standard ke exams dene wali hoon, 2005 mein. Toh abhi uski bhi tayareeyan chal rahi hai. Hala ki maine jab picture sign ki thi tab main 13-and-a-half years ki thi, aur abhi 10th standard complete karne wali hoon." Many could not believe what the actress was saying. A user commented: "Itna mature voice 15 age mai."

Another said: "She looks 20-21 years Old... She's doesn't look anything like a Teenager... Even otherwise most actresses lie about their age."

"She is looking 21 here," commented one more.

Tamannaah began her acting career with the Hindi film 'Chand Sa Roshan Chehra'. She then debuted in Telugu cinema with 'Sri' and Tamil cinema with 'Kedi'.

Over the years, she has worked in films such as 'Tadakha', 'Bahubali' franchise, 'Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy', 'Jailer'. She made her debut in Hindi cinema with 'Himmatwala' in 2013. The film was a remake of the 1983 film of the same name.



## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Neha Malik