

# absolute india



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## PM MODI RELEASES COMMEMORATIVE POSTAGE STAMPS ON RAM TEMPLE IN AYODHYA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday released commemorative postage stamps dedicated to the Ram Temple in Ayodhya and a book of stamps issued on Lord Ram by more than 20 countries.

The design of the postage stamp includes the Ram Temple, the chaupai 'Mangal Bhavan Amangal Hari', Sun, Saryu river, and sculptures in and around the temple.

The six commemorative postage stamps released by PM Modi include the Ram Temple, Lord Ganesh, Lord Hanuman, Jatayu, Kevatraj and Maa Shabari.

The gold leaf of the sun rays and 'chaupai' lend a majestic icon to this miniature sheet. The five physical elements known as 'Panchbhoot', representing sky, air, fire, earth, and water, are illustrated through various design elements, establishing a harmonious connection with the essential elements for all manifestations.

Along with this, PM Modi also released a book of tickets dedicated to Lord Ram worldwide. This stamp booklet is an effort to showcase Lord Ram's international appeal to various societies. The 48-page book includes postage



stamps issued by more than 20 countries, including the US, New Zealand, Singapore, Canada, Cambodia, and organisations like the United Nations.

## Assam has the country's most corrupt govt: Rahul

Guwahati | Agencies

As his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra entered Assam on Thursday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi launched a scathing attack on the state government, saying it was the most corrupt in the country.

To mark the start of the march in Assam, a flag-handover ceremony took place in Sivasagar district, giving the Yatra a ceremonial element.

"BJP-RSS are doing injustice in the country and every state. Whether it is political, social, or economic injustice. Manipur is experiencing a state of civil conflict, and Prime Minister Modi has not yet visited the region," Rahul Gandhi said.

"In Nagaland, the Prime Minister had made significant pledges. Nine years ago, he signed the framework agreement. Today, many in Nagaland are curious as to what became of that arrangement. "Assam is likewise experiencing similar circumstances. Assam has what is arguably the most corrupt government in India. In Nagaland, we received a great response, and I am hoping the same in Assam," he added. According to the senior Congress leader, revered Assamese saint Srimanta Sankardev had tried to bring every-



one together and Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is doing the same thing.

On his part, Assam Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi said that the people of the state have got a new hope because of the yatra and Rahul Gandhi's presence.

"Because of their troubles, the people of Assam are anxious to find out when Rahul Gandhi will visit this area. Our party upholds the Indian Constitution. The BJP believes that it is more learned now than the Shankaracharyas. They have a lot of ego," the MP added. Starting from Thursday, the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra will cover 17 districts of Assam over a period of eight days. Rahul Gandhi started the march from Manipur and the second stop was in Nagaland.

## Yasin Malik main shooter in firing on IAF personnel in 1990, says eyewitness

Jammu | Agencies

A vital prosecution witness on Thursday identified JKLF Chairman Yasin Malik as the main shooter in the IAF personnel killing in Srinagar city in 1990.

On January 25, 1990, four IAF personnel, including a Squadron Leader were killed, and 22 others injured in a firing incident in Rawalpura area of Srinagar city when they were waiting for the staff bus to report for the day's duties. Former IAF man Rajwar Umeshwar Singh, an eyewitness, on Thursday identified Malik as the main shooter in Rawalpura firing on IAF personnel. Malik was produced before the court through video conferencing



from Tihar Jail in Delhi where he has been lodged after he was sentenced for life in another terror crime. CBI counsel, Monika Kohli

told reporters that Malik's identification by an eye-witness as the main shooter in this firing incident is an important development.

## Raj govt postpones RAS Mains exam, announces review of Gehlot government's decisions in its last 6 months

Jaipur | Agencies

Many significant decisions were taken in the first cabinet meeting of the Bhajanlal government on Thursday which include the decision to extend the date of the main examination of the Rajasthan Administrative Service (RAS) and to review the decisions taken by the Gehlot government in its last six months.

The main examination of the RAS was to be held on January 27-28. The candidates are on strike outside Rajasthan University for a long time demanding extension of the date.

Recently, Education Minister Madan Dilwar and Agriculture Minister Dr. Kirori Lal Meena came to meet them. They promised to convey the demands of the candidates to the Chief Minister.

A committee has been formed to review the work of the Gehlot government, which will submit its report in three months. Meanwhile, minister Kirori Lal Meena said that there will be no public holiday on January 22 as there was no such discussion in the cabinet regarding a holiday on the day of Ram Lalla's Pran Pratishtha. Before the meeting which



lasted for about an hour, there were prayers and chants in the Chief Minister's Office. After this, tilak was applied to the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister and all the ministers.

In the matter of reviewing the policy decisions taken in the last 6 months of the Gehlot government, the report will be submitted after investigation in the next three months. The cabinet once again approved the pension for MISA prisoners. The Bhajanlal cabinet has also approved the 100-day action plan of all departments. Believing that

with this the departmental work can be completed on time. The Gehlot government had got its manifesto tabled in the first cabinet meeting and declared it a government document. Similarly, the Bhajanlal cabinet has also declared its resolution letter a policy document. It was also decided that one family will be given one subsidised gas cylinder every month. There have also been changes in the Annapurna Yojana from January 6. Instead of 450 grams of food, now 600 grams of food will be given which will include chapati, dal, vegetables and millets. Earlier a thali (plate of food) used to cost Rs 25, it has now been increased to Rs 30, out of which the government will pay Rs 22.

Also, a team has been formed to stop illegal mining which will be monitored by the district collector. In the matter of the statues of former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, former minister Shanti Dhariwal and architect Anoop Barataria being made in Kota, it was decided that they will be investigated. The date of the RAS Mains exam has been extended and along with it, it has been decided that on the lines of the UPSC, the RPSC will also release the exam calendar. The exam may probably be held in June-July.

## HARYANA CONSERVED 248,702 CRORE LITERS THROUGH WATER SAVING INITIATIVES

Chandigarh | Agencies

With Haryana taking significant steps towards water conservation and reducing the gap between availability and demand through its Biennial Water Action Plan, positive results have started showing.

The Biennial Water Action Plan 2023-2025 that set the goal to conserve 260,498 crore liters of water by December 2023, has successfully achieved 95 per cent of its target by saving 248,702 crore liters.

This information was shared at a meeting of the Haryana Water Resources Authority chaired by Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar here on Thursday.

At the meeting, the Chief Minister directed officers to prioritise the implementation of groundwater recharging plans in villages where the groundwater level is critically low and also in areas which saw waterlogging recently.

He emphasised the need for swift action to meet the targeted water savings by March this year.

Khattar said there are areas in the state facing waterlogging issues even though they have significantly low groundwater levels.



"Excessive use of chemical fertilisers is a major cause, leading to the compaction of soil layers and clay formation, hindering water infiltration into the ground. Scientific studies should be conducted to address groundwater recharging in these areas," he said. "Each district should map short-term plans

and ensure their effective implementation. Verification mechanisms should be established at the district and block levels, and senior officers should be assigned to ensure accurate data reporting," he said. The Chief Minister also directed the officers to identify around 200 villages where the groundwater level has fallen below 100 metres.

The Agriculture Department should encourage farmers in these villages to adopt micro-irrigation techniques, he said. Khattar directed that feeder should be marked in areas where the groundwater level has reached up to 30 metres, and 100 per cent solar energy-driven pumps should be installed for irrigation purposes.

At the meeting, Chairperson of the Haryana Water Resources Authority, Keshni Anand Arora, said they have developed in-house online software for granting no-objection certificates for extraction of groundwater to industry, mining, and infrastructure and commercial entities.

Till date it has granted permission to 3,022 applicants with the condition of ensuring water conservation and recharge of groundwater through rain-water harvesting and optimum use of treated wastewater for non-potable use.

## Central govt offices to remain closed for half-day on Jan 22 on the occasion of the Pran Pratishtha of Ram Lalla

Team Absolute | New Delhi

All central government offices will remain closed for half-day on January 22 on the occasion of the Pran Pratishtha of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions issued the order, which stated: "half day closing (till 2.30 p.m.) of Central Government Offices, Central Institutions and Central Industrial Establishments on 22nd January, 2024".

Ram Lalla Pran Pratishtha at Ayodhya will be held on January 22 and celebrations will be held

across India. "To enable employees to participate in the celebrations, it has been decided that all Central government offices, Central Institutions and Central Industrial Establishments throughout India will be closed for half day till 1430 hours on 22nd January, 2024," the official added. "All Ministries and Departments of Government of India may bring the above decision to the notice of all concerned," the officials said.

The government official said that responding to overwhelming sentiment and demands of employees to participate in the

celebrations associated with Pran Pratishtha of Ram Lalla, the Centre has declared half a day closing. Various activities have been planned by organisations and groups of people across India and abroad to coincide with the Pran Pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya. National broadcaster Doordarshan has made elaborate arrangements for live telecast of the entire event, which will also be shown live on several private TV channels. Arrangements have also been made for screening of the Ayodhya ceremony live on large screens at public places in India and abroad, officials added.

## DOMESTIC AIR TRAFFIC TO GO UP TO 300 MILLION BY 2030: SCINDIA

Hyderabad | Agencies

India's domestic air passenger traffic will grow to 300 million by 2030, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said here on Thursday.

Addressing Wings India 2024 at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad, he said the domestic passenger traffic, which was 60 million in 2014 grew to 145 million pre-Covid and it further went up to 153 million in 2023.

He said despite the projected growth of 300 million by 2030, India will be one of the most under penetrated markets across top 20 markets in the world.

"Our penetration today is roughly 3-4 per cent, which will go up to 10-15 per cent. We will still have 85 per cent penetration to go and we are preparing for this potential by creating capacities, removing bottlenecks and simplifying procedures so that by 2047 the aviation sector is able to support 20 trillion dollar economy," he said.

He noted that the daily passenger traffic pre-Covid was 4,00,425 and the same grew to 4,50,000 in April-May and further up to 4,67,000 passengers per day in November-December 2023. The domestic passenger traffic in last 10 years grew at CAGR of 15.3 per cent while international traffic grew at 6.1 per cent.

India is the third largest domestic civil aviation market and seventh largest



international civil aviation market. If both are combined, India is the fifth largest civil aviation market in the world. The minister said that India has become the largest purchaser of aircraft in the world after the United States and China. He expects that India's fleet will go up from 713 to more than 2,000 in the next decade. He noted that the country, which had 400 aircraft in 2013-14, has grown its fleet to 713 aircraft. Scindia said that during the last 10 years, India added 74 airports, waterdromes and heliports, taking the number to 149. He said this number would cross 200 by 2030.

Scindia added that while connecting tier II and tier III cities, the Ministry kept its eyes on metros. He noted that six metros had a throughput capability of 221 million passengers in 2021 and in the last two-and-half-years this grew to 261 million. In next four years, the throughput capability will reach close to 420 million with two new greenfield airports coming up - one at Navi Mumbai and another at Jewar near Delhi. The minister inaugurated four-day Wings India 2024, Asia's biggest civil aviation event, at Begumpet Airport. Accompanied by Minister of State for Civil Aviation V. K. Singh, he also inaugurated the exhibition.

Vumlungmang Vualnam, FICCI Civil Aviation Committee Chairman and President and Managing Director of Airbus (India & South Asia) Remi Maillard and Telangana minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy also addressed the inaugural session.



# CHANDIGARH MAYOR ELECTIONS: PRESIDING OFFICER FALLS SICK, POLLING POSTPONED TILL FEB 6

Chandigarh | Agencies

The Chandigarh Municipal Corporation mayoral election was postponed on Thursday as presiding officer Anil Masih was unwell. In the afternoon, the administration announced the election to the posts of Mayor, Senior Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor would be held on February 6.

"This decision follows a thorough assessment of the security and law and order situation by the Senior Superintendent of Police," it said in a statement.

Earlier on Thursday, a message received by councillors reads: "It is informed that a telephonic message has been received regarding the ill health of Anil Masih, who has been nominated as presiding authority for the meeting scheduled on January 18 for the post of Mayor u/60 (a) read with Regulation 6(1) of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation (Procedure and Conduct of Business) Regulation, 1996. In view of the above, it is requested not to reach MC office till further orders are received."

High drama was witnessed as Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Congress councillors registered their protest



over the postponement of the polls at the last minute.

Both the Congress and the AAP have lashed out at the BJP after the cancellation of polls.

Both are a coalition of the Opposition's INDIA bloc, months ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

"I have been informed that Congress workers and councillors are not being allowed to go inside the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation office because the presiding officer is

not well and he has been hospitalised. They (BJP) want to stop the election... we will move the High Court," Congress leader Pawan Bansal told the media.

All eyes were on the Chandigarh mayoral polls as this would be the first test the coming together of the AAP MP Raghav Chadha said: "It is clear that INDIA alliance is winning this election and the BJP is losing. The BJP has got scared of the INDIA alliance."

He said if a presiding officer has

fallen ill, then another presiding officer can be appointed to hold the polls. "We had valid passes for going to the MC office and then it was informed that entry was closed as the presiding officer had suddenly fallen sick." He's actually not sick. These are BJP's tactics and it shows that the BJP can stoop to any level to end democracy and free and fair elections," the Rajya Sabha member said.

As per the alliance, the AAP will fight for the mayor's seat while the Congress will contest the senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor posts.

The meeting for polling through secret ballot was to take place at 11 a.m. in the Assembly hall of the municipal corporation.

In the 35-member Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, the BJP has 14 councillors, the AAP has 13 councillors, and the Congress has seven.

The Shiromani Akali Dal has one councillor in the House.

Deputy Commissioner Vinay Pratap Singh had nominated councillor Masih as the presiding authority and he would preside over the February 6 meeting to elect the Mayor, adhering to the established regulations and procedures.

# PM Modi slept on the floor at Govt Guest House in Kochi

Kochi | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi slept on the floor when he stayed overnight at the Government Guest House here on Tuesday.

According to the guest house staff, even though they had prepared Kerala and north Indian dishes, Modi after reaching the guest house after his roadshow on Tuesday night, first had a tender coconut water drink.

For dinner he just had fruits. Since Modi is on a lent to take part in the Ram temple consecration at Ayodhya on Monday, he has restricted his food and his daily lifestyle.

Even though the guest house had set up a king sized bed for Modi to sleep on, he rolled out his yoga mat and slept on it on the floor. He got up at 4.30 a.m., had a glass of hot water and later engaged in his daily yoga.

Modi, when he left the guest house the next day, thanked the staff for the nice stay he had. Modi was in the



state on Tuesday and Wednesday and first conducted a roadshow here and the next day attended the wedding of the daughter of actor Suresh Gopi, and visit-

ed a Ram temple at Trissur. Then he dedicated Rs 4,000 crores worth projects. Before returning to Delhi, he addressed a meeting of his party workers.

# Six arrested for cyber fraud of Rs 6.69 crore in Gurugram

Gurugram | Agencies

Six people have been arrested for cyber fraud of Rs 6.69 crore on the pretext of providing jobs in Gurugram.

The arrested were identified as Hemant Kumar, Aditya Srivastava, Mohamed Anis, Lokesh Kumar, Aakash Parmar, Deepak and Ershad.

The police have recovered eight mobile phones and as many SIM cards from their possession. Of 108 cases registered against them across the country, six were lodged in Haryana, the police said.

After reviewing the data of the mobile phones and SIM cards recovered from the accused, it was found that



they were involved in the Rs 6.69 crore, the police said.

During investigation, the accused revealed that they

used to cheat people on the pretext of providing them jobs and OLX users, among others.

# 206-FT-TALL STATUE OF AMBEDKAR TO BE UNVEILED IN VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada | Agencies

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will unveil the 206-foot tall statue of Dr B.R. Ambedkar in Vijayawada on Friday.

The 125-foot tall sculpture, installed on an 81-foot pedestal at the Ambedkar Smriti Vanam, is the tallest Ambedkar statue in the world.

The statue has been installed in the historical Swaraj Maidan. The Chief Minister has made an emotional appeal to the people to voluntarily attend the unveiling of the statue.

He described the statue as the greatest sculpture of social justice that stands as a finest jewel in the crown of not only the state but also of the country.

Paying his tribute to the architect of the Indian Constitution, Jagan Mohan Reddy said the visionary's sky-high individuality and his reform-oriented ideas expressed hundred years ago would continue to influence and change the social, economic and political history of the country, especially that of women.

"The statue has been installed with great responsibility as the government has been implementing the Navaratnal welfare schemes with an unfet-



tered confidence in his ideology. Dr Ambedkar rebelled against untouchability and the dominant

ideology while taking education closer to the oppressed classes," he said, observing that the leader continues to remain a great power personifying social justice and equality.

His giant personality continues to work as an omnipotence safeguarding us through constitutional rights, the Chief Minister stated, adding that the presence of his statues in each and every hamlet serves as an abundant inspiration that bestows continuous confidence, support and courage to the weaker sections.

He further said that we are all honouring Dr Ambedkar as his ideology remains the source for the changes witnessed in the lives of Dalits and the poor irrespective of the caste, creed and religion in the last 77 years.

The unveiling of the Ambedkar statue in Vijayawada will not only be written with golden letters in the history of the state but it will also continue to inspire others for hundreds of years in the future, he further said.

"I strongly believe that it would help the poor have a permanent place in the political power besides guiding us to rebel against the feudalistic forces while reforming the society and turn us towards social equality for changing the course of the society," he said.

# 'Uninvited guest': Leopard enters Jaipur heritage hotel, inmates flee in panic

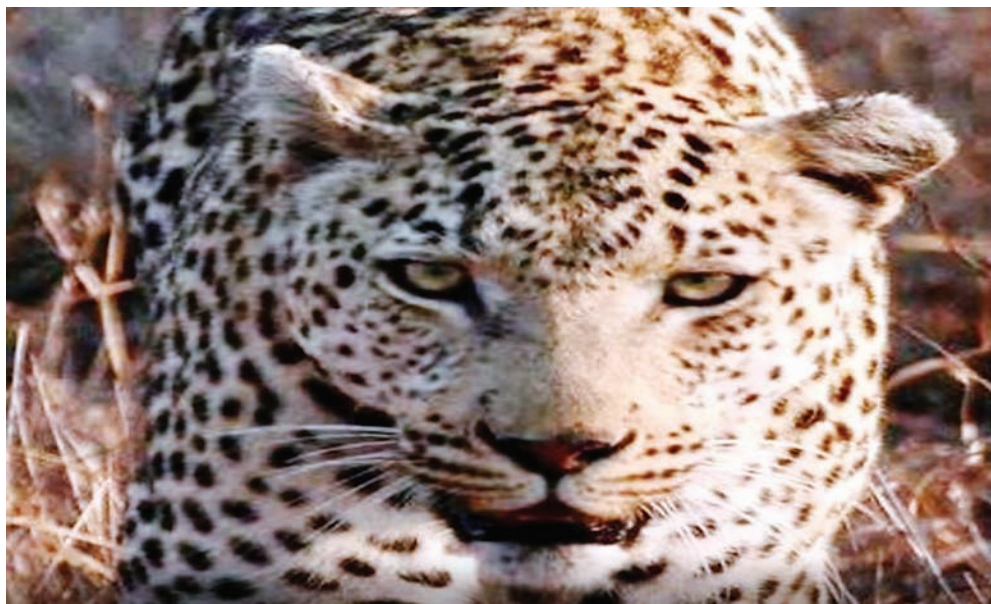
Jaipur | Agencies

A leopard entered a heritage hotel here on Thursday morning, creating panic among the inmates who rushed out in a frenzy. The incident was reported from the Kanota Castle at 9.40 a.m.

At that time, dogs present in the hotel suddenly started barking and did not stop despite the best efforts of the hotel staff to calm them down. A tourist there saw the leopard and informed the hotel staff and hotel owner Man Singh immediately informed the Forest Department.

During this entire incident, the tourists ran out of the hotel. The prowling leopard also entered the hotel staff room and created havoc there even as some people closed the door of the room from outside. A Forest Department team reached the spot and after one and a half hour of hard work, succeeded in tranquillising the big cat, leading to hotel staff and tourists heaving a sigh of relief.

Bassi Ranger Prithviraj Meena said acting on an information about the leopard entering the hotel, their team, along with one from Jaipur Zoo, reached the spot. There was no loss of life



or injury in this entire rescue operation. "At present, the leopard has been taken to

Nahargarh Rescue Centre, where after first aid, it will be released into the forest once again."

# Balakrishna, Jr NTR pay tributes to NTR on death anniversary

Hyderabad | Agencies

Popular actors N. Balakrishna, Jr NTR and Kalyan Ram paid tributes to former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao on his 27th death anniversary on Thursday.

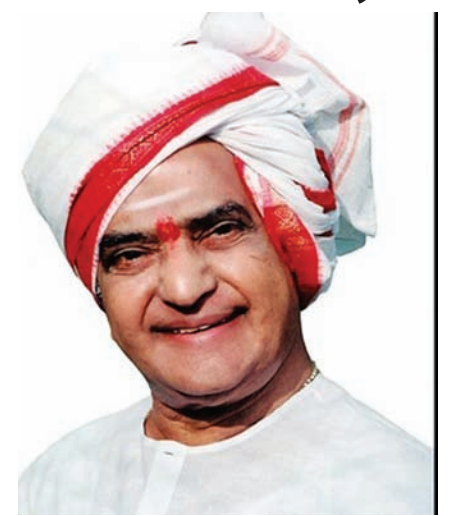
They paid floral tributes early in the morning at NTR Ghat on the banks of Hussain Sagar lake in Hyderabad.

Jr NTR accompanied by his brother Kalyan Ram were the first to lay wreaths at the samadhi. Large number of fans of Jr NTR gathered on the occasion and the security personnel had a tough time controlling them.

Balakrishna, who is also Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MLA in Andhra Pradesh, also paid tributes to his father. He was accompanied by his brother N. Ramakrishna and other family members. Balakrishna said NTR had dedicated himself to serve people, especially the poor and downtrodden. He said NTR will always live in the hearts of people.

The actor said it was NTR who fought for self-respect of Telugu people and brought recognition to them globally.

Balakrishna said NTR's contributions in both films and politics will always be remembered. Legendary actor NTR had launched



TDP in 1982 on the slogan of Telugu self-respect and created a record of sorts by coming to power within nine months, ending the single party rule of Congress in the undivided Andhra Pradesh.

He died on January 18, 1996, a few months after his son-in-law Chandrababu Naidu led a revolt and became the chief minister.

# BJP-JD(S) seat-sharing to be finalised after Pran Pratishtha event: Kumaraswamy

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy said here on Thursday that it has been decided to complete the procedures, including seat-sharing and other details, by involving BJP and JD(S) leaders after the 'Pran Pratishtha' programme in Ayodhya.

Addressing the media after a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP National President J.P. Nadda, he stated that Shah and Nadda have agreed to this. He said that there was total harmony between the two parties regarding seat-sharing. "I want to clarify that there are no confusions or questions in this regard," he said.

The meeting took place on Wednesday night.

Kumaraswamy said that JD(S) has joined the NDA alliance in the interest of the state. The BJP National President already has survey reports on the MP seats in the state. "We also have survey reports. Elaborate and open discussions were held on both survey reports," he explained.

"Amit Shah and Nadda do not perceive JD(S) as a small party and BJP as a larger one.



They discussed with utmost cordiality and confidentiality, showing immense respect for former PM H.D. Deve Gowda. The BJP leadership closely monitors our party's moves, and we aim to conduct ourselves in a manner that maintains their trust. I hope this alliance will continue for a long time based on mutual respect and trust," he added.

"My goal is to win all 28 MP seats in Karnataka. The BJP shares a similar objective, and both parties are working together in this regard," Kumaraswamy stated. He clarified that he was also puzzled over the rumour of him becoming a Union Minister and emphasized that he won't be part of the Union cabinet in the current circumstances, with elections around the corner and only two months left.

# Dense fog, cold day conditions to continue for two more days in north India: IMD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Dense to very dense fog and cold day to severe cold day conditions are likely to continue over North India during next two days and decrease in intensity thereafter, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday.

In its daily bulletin, the weather forecast agency said that minimum temperatures are in the range of 3-6 degree Celsius over many parts of Punjab and some parts of Haryana, Chandigarh, in the range of 7-10 degree Celsius over most parts of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, north Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

"These are below normal by 1 to 3 degree Celsius over many parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and West Uttar Pradesh and in isolated pockets of Rajasthan. Today, the lowest minimum temperature of 3.1



degree Celsius was reported at Ludhiana (Punjab)," said the IMD.

The IMD further said that jet stream winds of the order of 140-160 knots at 12.6 km above mean sea level are prevailing over the plains of North India. "It is leading to subsidence of cold air and enhancing cold wave/cold day conditions over North India. Similar intensity of jet stream is

likely to continue during next 3-4 days," said the IMD.

The IMD predicted that dense to very dense fog conditions are very likely to prevail for a few hours in the night/morning over some parts of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh during Thursday to Saturday and dense fog in isolated pockets during Sunday and January 23 morning.

"Dense to very dense fog conditions are very likely to prevail for a few hours in the night/morning in some parts of West Uttar Pradesh during Thursday late night to January 23 morning while dense to very dense fog conditions are also very likely to prevail in morning hours in isolated pockets over Uttarakhand and north Rajasthan on Friday and dense fog in isolated pockets of north Rajasthan on Saturday," said the IMD.

The IMD further predicted that cold day to severe cold day conditions are very likely to continue in some parts of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh on Friday and cold day in isolated pockets on Saturday and Sunday. "Cold day to severe cold day conditions are also very likely to continue in some parts of Bihar and West Uttar Pradesh during Thursday and January 22 and over West Rajasthan on Friday," said the IMD.



## Eknath Shinde leaves for WEF in Davos, says will bring more investments into Maharashtra



As he left for Davos in Switzerland to attend the World Economic Forum's annual meeting on Wednesday, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said the WEF will be a platform to showcase the state's potential as the most preferred destination for global investments.

Shinde is leading a ten-member team, including Industries Minister Uday Samant, to the 54th annual WEF meeting at Davos from January 15 to 19. "The summit is a great opportunity for Maharashtra to brand itself at an international forum..."

During my previous visit, in WEF 2023, MoUs worth Rs 1,37,000 crore were signed. There was a 76 per cent conversion, and execution took place. This time, we hope more MoUs will be signed and their execution will also be done on a large scale, he stated. The investments will boost the industrial growth in cities and make deeper inroads into rural Maharashtra, he added.

## Shiv Sena (UBT) slams ED arrest of Aditya Thackeray's aide in 'khichdi scam'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Shiv Sena (UBT) on Thursday slammed the arrest of Suraj Chavan -- a close associate of former Minister and MLA Aditya Thackeray -- in the alleged 'khichdi scam' in the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a strong reaction, Thackeray Jr. said he was proud of such patriots who don't bow down to shameless dictatorships and their servile agencies, and for always standing up to 'truth, democracy, free speech and the Constitution'.

Chief Spokesperson and MP Sanjay Raut termed the arrest as a vendetta and warned that the people of the state will give a fitting reply to the Bharatiya Janata Party for misusing central agencies against political opponents.

"Proud to be a colleague of such patriots... He (Chavan) refused to be bought out by the regime and thereby he is being harassed. We will fight these dark days for democracy and win. The world is watching the dictatorial regime in our state," said Aditya Thackeray, attacking the government.

BJP former MP Kirit Somaiya, who exposed the alleged scam last year, said that he welcomed Chavan's arrest in the 'khichdi scam' worth around Rs 6.7 crore, which was meant to be served to stranded migrants.

A Yuva Sena secretary, Chavan was arrested around midnight and will be produced before a Special PMLA Court later in the day.

Among other things, he is accused of influencing BMC officials to award contracts to certain contractors who were close to the then ruling Shiv Sena led by ex-Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. After the Mumbai Police's EOW filed a case in September 2023, the



ED entered the probe for a suspected money-laundering angle to the case.

The BMC had awarded contracts for 'khichdi' intended to be served to migrant workers who were stranded in Mumbai during the strict lockdown, and Chavan allegedly influenced civic officials to divert the lucrative contracts to caterers who did not fulfill the requisite criteria, giving only half the

quantity of specified 250 gms 'khichdi' packets, and other irregularities.

The case has other alleged players like Raut's close aide Sujit Parkar, Sunil Kadam alias Bala, Rajeev Salunkhe of Sahyadri Refreshments, Force One Multi-Services, Sneha Caterers, several known and unknown BMC officials who are linked in the scam.

## Maratha quotas: Govt trying to cheat us, claims Jarange-Patil; Mumbai march on

Team Absolute | Jalna (Maharashtra)

Toughening the stance on the Maratha reservation issue, Shivba Sanghatana leader Manoj Jarange-Patil on Thursday accused the Maharashtra government of trying to cheat the community with "last-minute promises" and reiterated that the Marathas will march to Mumbai from January 20. Addressing media persons here, Jarange-Patil said he will start on his protest march from Jalna to Mumbai, as the government has not yet taken any final decision on the Maratha quotas issue pending since August 2023.

"Every time before we intensify our agitation, the government approaches us with different proposals trying to fool and trap the community. Some ministers are trying to dislodge our campaign, but we shall not be deterred by such tactics. Our pre-decided protest procession to Mumbai will be as per schedule from Jan. 20," he said.

Jarange-Patil reiterated his old demand to issue the Kunbi caste certificates to 5.40 million Marathas within two days and also accept the demand to give reservation to some categories of blood relatives of these beneficiaries.



"If this is done, then we shall go to Mumbai, but to felicitate and congratulate the government with 'gula' and flowers," he said.

Justifying his stance, he said even for the latest protest march to Mumbai, government representatives have come to offer some purported solutions, but do not seem to do any-

thing about it, and the same story is repeated for the past over six months.

The Shivba Sanghatana leader also cautioned the government against using any force to stop the Marathas marching from all over the state from January 20 onwards, and he himself is expected to reach there on January 26.

He was referring to the September 1 violence in Antarvali-Sarati and the police baton charge during his first phase of hunger strike which soon spread into attacks on private and government properties besides elected representatives in several districts thereafter, creating a major political issue in the state.

This time, Jarange-Patil has threatened an all-India agitation if the Maratha quotas are not given as promised by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on several occasions, including in the Maharashtra legislature.

However, the government's assurances have led to strong objections from the OBC communities who will oppose any moves to carve out Maratha quotas from the existing OBC reservations, and some groups plan to take out a rival protest rally in Mumbai next week.

## Ambulances and luxury cars used to smuggle marijuana; Pune cops bust racket

THE Anti-Narcotics Cell of the Pimpri Chinchwad police has busted a racket involved in smuggling and distributing marijuana across many districts in Maharashtra, in which the racketeers were moving the contraband in ambulances and a luxury car to avoid being detected by the police. The teams from Anti-Narcotics Cell were working on inputs received from the informants about a suspected racket smuggling marijuana. Between January 12 and 16, the teams arrested a total of five suspects and

seized marijuana worth over Rs 75 lakh from them along with two ambulances and a luxury car which were being used to transport the drugs. In the first set of arrests starting January 12, the police arrested three suspects from Mhaske Vasti in the Ravet area and seized the luxury car and over 25 kilograms of marijuana. The three suspects have been identified as Krushna Maruti Shinde (27), Akshay Barku More (29) and Hanumant Bhausheb Kadam (35), all residents of different villages of Ahmednagar district.

## ACB raids SS-UBT MLA Rajan Salvi, family in alleged corruption case

Team Absolute | Ratnagiri (Maharashtra)

At least four teams of the Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday swooped on the home, office and a business premise here linked to opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Rajan Salvi in an alleged case pertaining to 'benami properties', officials said.

The teams led by Ratnagiri ACB officer Sushant Chavan swooped on Salvi's home where his brother Deepak Salvi and an aide were present.

The ACB team of nearly 17 sleuths, started the simultaneous search operations at three locations for an alleged case pertaining to wealth of over Rs 3 crore, purportedly at least 118 percent in excess of Rajan Salvi's known sources of income, as per an official.

Slamming the raids, Rajan Salvi told mediapersons that he was being hounded for not succumbing to political pressures and switching loyalties to the ruling Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

He said that even his wife Anuja and son Shubham were booked by the ACB besides raiding his brother Deepak's home, and warned that the government would have to face the consequences for its actions.



"You can book me in any case, arrest and jail me, but you cannot target my family members in this manner. We are being pressured, but whatever happens, even if they throw me

in jail, I will not succumb. The people of the state will teach you a lesson," the MLA vowed.

He said that party President and former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray called him up and expressed his full support in the latest crisis.

Earlier quizzed on at least five occasions by the ACB, Rajan Salvi on Wednesday declared that he was fed up with these repeated summons and interrogation by the police agency.

He said that henceforth he would not attend any ACB summonses or go to their offices for questioning, and dared them "to take whatever action, arrest me, throw me in jail".

The ACB action came after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested a close aide of SS-UBT former minister and MLA Aditya Thackeray earlier on Thursday in Mumbai.

Aditya Thackeray, Chief Spokesperson Sanjay Raut, MP, MLA Vaibhav Naik, former Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar and other leaders slammed the state government for actions selectively targeting their party leaders by misusing probe agencies.

Raut said that both Rajan Salvi and MP Rajan Vichare are being hounded by central agencies for their refusal to join the ruling Shiv Sena, but warned that the people of the state are watching everything and will give a befitting reply in the elections.

## Atal Setu is bad for Mumbai - its people and ecology

Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link bridge, the Atal Setu. Completed 60 years after its initial design, the bridge has been advertised as a symbol of the city and the country's development, its world-class status. This might have been true if the bridge was completed in the 1970s.

But today, urban planners around the world have learned from their mistakes of 50 years and moved on to a different mode of city-making - one that is firmly embedded in urban ecology, and which dissuades car transit. Seen from contemporary developments in urban and transport planning, the new bridge, like the coastal road, will be read not as a world-class development for the future, but as a dated and problematic mode of city-making from times past.

This mode of development not only produces traffic, research has shown, but is also key to the local production of the climate crisis.

## IndusInd Bank records 17% increase in Q3 net profit



Team Absolute | Mumbai

IndusInd Bank on Thursday reported a 17.3 per cent increase in its standalone net profit at Rs 2,297.8 crore for the October-December quarter of the current financial year on the back of a strong growth in loans.

The bank had clocked a net profit of Rs 1,959.2 crore in the same quarter last year. Loans grew by 20 per cent to Rs 3,27,057 crore over the same quarter of the previous year, while deposits recorded a 13 per cent growth. The net interest income for the quarter rose by 18 per cent to Rs 5,296 crore. The bank's

asset quality also improved with gross non-performing assets (NPAs) coming down to 1.92 per cent from 2.06 per cent recorded in the same quarter last year. On the other hand, net NPA for the quarter stood at 0.57 per cent, improving from 0.662 per cent on a year-on-year basis.

## Mumbai airport incident shameful, says Scindia

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Terming as shameful the recent incident of passengers of a diverted flight being fed while seated on the tarmac at Mumbai airport, Union Minister for Civil Aviation, Jyotiraditya Scindia on Thursday said the ministry has put in place Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to prevent such incidents in future.

He said a repeat of the Mumbai incident was unacceptable and therefore the ministry had imposed a fine on IndiGo and Mumbai airport. Stating that the SOPs put in place were substantial, he assured that the ministry would ensure safe and secure travel for everyone in the community. He cautioned that very strict action would be taken for violation of rules that have been put in place.

Scindia was addressing a Press conference during 'Wings India 2024', Asia's biggest civil aviation event that began here on Thursday. The ministry on Wednesday imposed a fine of Rs.1.20 crore on IndiGo and Rs.60 lakh on Mumbai airport. The IndiGo flight from Goa to Delhi was diverted to Mumbai on January 14 due to low visibility at Delhi airport. "A chain of events led to this aircraft coming into the airport and as opposed to it going into a parking stand for reasons that I cannot even imagine, it was sent off into a parking bay. I have repeatedly said safety and security of citizens is primary for us under civil aviation. Therefore, within hours of getting to know of that incident, a meeting was held with all officials within the ministry and the show-cause notice was immediately issued," he said.

"The fact that passengers were inconvenienced, the fact that they had to eat on the tarmac, the fact that security had been compromised, across all points, was unacceptable," he added. The minister said, within 24 hours of notices being issued necessary penalties were levied. The ministry also issued two separate civil aviation requirements. One of them is about the additional steps needed to be taken during a fog by airlines and airports separately. "In the event an aircraft is diverted there are SOPs in place that every airline and every airport operator needs to follow. The aircraft should be taken to the contact stand and not only the crew but also the passengers should be deboarded and all facilities should be made available to them. They should be looked after, meals should be arranged and when the new crew



comes the passengers should be moved from arrival to departure, make them go through security and board again," he said.

Scindia also said that flight delays of 6 to 8 hours will become a thing of the past as airlines have been instructed that if they are looking at a flight being delayed beyond three hours, they must treat that flight as cancelled.

He stated that the DGCA will be monitoring twice or thrice a day all SOPs in terms of cancellations and delays.

He said he had already asked every airline to set up a war room at every airport. In case of delay the passengers must be informed through SMS, email and WhatsApp.



# Heavy snowfall, freezing rain wreak havoc across Europe

Brussels

Extreme weather conditions involving heavy snowfall and freezing rain hit many countries across Europe, causing flight cancellations and delays and disrupting road traffic.

In Belgium, departures from Brussels Airport in Zaventem were temporarily halted at 3:20 p.m. on Wednesday as workers needed to clear the runways of snow, reports Xinhua news agency.

Most flights were delayed by about an hour, and some got canceled, including flights to Frankfurt and Munich, the airport authorities said.

Heavy snowfall in Brussels has caused traffic congestion on the Brussels Ring, especially in the Zaventem area towards Grand-Bigard.

Belgium's Transport En Commun (TEC) network was also disrupted by the extreme weather conditions.

In Liege and Charleroi, most buses were out of service on Wednesday.

The quarter-finals of the Belgian Cup, featuring Union Saint-Gilloise against Anderlecht and Oud-Heverlee Louvain against Antwerp, have been postponed by a week, the organisers of Pro League, the top league competition for association



football clubs in Belgium, have said.

Fortunately, no major disruptions were reported in Belgium's railway system, according to Frederic Sacre, spokesperson for the railway network operator Infrabel.

The weather in Belgium was characterised by a cold wave on Wednesday, with temperatures dropping below zero

degree Celsius. The forecasts from the Royal Meteorological Institute expect temperatures will plummet to minus 10 degrees Celsius or lower later this week.

The institute has issued a yellow alert for freezing rain and slippery road conditions in many parts of the country.

In the neighboring Netherlands, weather institute KNMI has also issued

code yellow for many parts of the country due to snowy and slippery conditions.

Heavy snow has fallen in Limburg, a province in the southeast of the country, causing long traffic jams on highways, and local authorities have issued urgent calls on motorists to avoid the highways.

Snowfall, up to 15 centimeters, is expected to continue in Limburg, said KNMI.

On Wednesday morning, Dutch traffic association ANWB reported 35 traffic jams covering 155 km of roads.

During the day, trains running on the route between Utrecht and Sittard were reduced by half due to snowy conditions.

Dozens of flights have been canceled or delayed at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam.

In Luxembourg, all schools remain closed following a red alert for freezing rain and heavy snowfall declared by the national crisis unit on Tuesday.

The government recommended that all residents should stay home "unless it is absolutely necessary to venture outdoors".

Extreme weather conditions have also affected large parts of Germany, causing massive disruptions to road, air and rail traffic, and prompting school closures.

# Pakistan strikes 'terrorist hideouts' in Iran

Islamabad | Agencies

Pakistan on Thursday struck "terrorist hideouts" in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province, in response to Tehran's attack two days ago.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad said that forces carried out "a series of highly coordinated and specifically targeted precision military strikes and killed a number of terrorists during the intelligence-based operation codenamed 'Marg Bar Sarmachar', Dawn news reported.

A security official told Xinhua news agency that "all targets were hit precisely". "We hit the confirmed terrorists. In our view all terrorists are our targets irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, or sect," the official added. On Tuesday, Iranian strikes in the border town of Panjgur in Balochistan led to the alleged deaths of two children. Tehran claimed the strikes were aimed at Jaish al-Adl terrorist group based in the town and denied that Pakistani civilians were killed. In response, Islamabad warned Tehran of "serious consequences" for the "illegal" action, banned Iran's ambassador from returning to the country and also withdrew its own

envoy from Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the Ministry statement also said that "over the last several years, in our engagements with Iran, Pakistan has consistently shared its serious concerns about the safe havens and sanctuaries enjoyed by Pakistani origin terrorists calling themselves Sarmachars on the ungoverned spaces inside Iran".

"Pakistan also shared multiple dossiers with concrete evidence of the presence and activities of these terrorists. However, because of lack of action on our serious concerns, these so-called Sarmachars continued to spill the blood of innocent Pakistanis with impunity." This morning's action was taken in light of credible intelligence of impending large-scale terrorist activities by these so called Sarmachars. This action is a manifestation of Pakistan's unflinching resolve to protect and defend its national security against all threats. "The successful execution of this highly complex operation is also a testimony to the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces. Pakistan will continue to take all necessary steps to preserve the safety and security of its people which is sacrosanct, inviolable and sacred," the statement added.

# Japanese Communist Party appoints first-ever female chairperson

Tokyo | Agency

The Japanese Communist Party (JCP) on Thursday decided to appoint incumbent policy chief Tomoko Tamura as the new chairperson, marking the first female head in the party's century-long history.

The decision was made during the JCP's four-day quadrennial party congress which concluded on Thursday, reports Xinhua news agency.

Key personnel changes within the party's leadership were made.

Kazuo Shii, 69, had served as the chairperson since 2006 and is expected to transition to the role of chairman of the party's Central Committee, filling a vacancy that has existed since the retirement of Tetsuzo Fuwa.

The 58-year-old Tamura, a native of Nagano prefecture, entered politics after working as a parliamentary secretary and secured her first election victory in the 2010 House of Councillors contest.

She is currently serving her third term in office as the JCP's Policy Commission chairperson and House of Councillors member.

The JCP leadership change was seen as part of the party's broader strategy to promote



gender diversity and facilitate a generational shift of its top leaders, according to local reports. The reports noted that the JCP aims to leverage these changes to expand its political influence and appeal to a wider demographic.

# UN SECURITY COUNCIL ADOPTED 50 RESOLUTIONS IN 2023

United Nations | Agency

The UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted 50 resolutions and failed to adopt 10 draft ones in 2023, the world body said.

According to the Highlights of Security Council Practice 2023, the Council also adopted one amendment and six presidential statements and issued 18 notes by the council president and 22 letters by the president, reports Xinhua news agency.

UNSC members also issued 34 press statements.

The council failed to adopt four sets of amendments.

In comparison, the Security Council adopted a total of 54 resolutions and failed to adopt seven draft resolutions in 2022.

The publication says that in 2023, 35 out of 50 resolutions, or 70 per cent were adopted unanimously compared to 66.7 per cent in 2022.

Five of the resolutions not adopted unanimously were related to sanctions, four to peacekeeping opera-



tions, and one to a special political mission. Meanwhile, the remaining five concerned, respectively, the renewal of authorizations to intercept vessels off the Libyan coast suspected of migrant smuggling and human trafficking, establishment of the Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti, and the situation in the Middle East.

According to the Highlights, in 2023, the UNSC failed to adopt 10 draft resolutions in connection with the situation in the Middle East, and specifically the cross-border mechanism for the provision of humanitarian aid into Syria, the situation in Mali, threats to international peace and security, and the situation in the Middle East.

Of the 10 draft resolutions and four amendments not adopted in 2023, there were a total of seven instances of a veto cast on five draft resolutions and one amendment in connection with the situation in the Middle East and specifically the cross-border mechanism for the provision of humanitarian aid into Syria, the situation in Mali and the situation in the Middle East.

In 2023, the Council held 290 meetings, 271 of which were public and the remainder private.

For the first time in a decade, it held private meetings under the agenda items "The situation in the Middle East" and "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question".

Also in 2023, the UNSC held 24 high-level meetings, in which two or more council members were represented at ministerial level or above; a similar trend was seen in 2022.

The topics of high-level meetings included both thematic and country-specific items.

# Not guilty, says ex-Indian origin Singapore Minister facing corruption charges

Singapore | Agency

Following his recent resignation as Singapore's Transport Minister, Indian-origin S. Iswaran on Thursday pleaded not guilty to all 27 charges, including corruption, obtaining a valuable thing as a public servant and obstructing justice.

Arriving at the State Courts at about 8 am on Thursday with his legal team, the 61-year-old former minister did not respond to questions from reporters, The Straits Times reported.

When the judge asked Iswaran how he intended to plead, he said: "Not guilty."

Iswaran's Senior Counsel Davinder Singh told the court that he was initially charged on January 15 with 36 charges and that cautioned statements were taken on these charges. He said the defence learnt on



Thursday morning that there were now 27 charges, and asked if the prosecution was proceeding on the remaining nine charges, to which the prosecution said it was not.

Iswaran's pre-trial conference is

scheduled for March 1, and he is presently out on S\$800,000 bail.

He was elected to Parliament in 1997 as an MP for West Coast Group Representation Constituency, where he served for the last 26 years.

He has held ministerial positions in the ministries of education, home affairs, and communications and information.

According to court documents, most of the offences Iswaran faces involve billionaire hotelier Ong Beng Seng, who brought Formula One to Singapore in 2008.

Ong was also arrested along with Iswaran on July 11, 2023 as part of the corruption probe.

The charge sheet states that Iswaran received "valuable things" worth more than S\$384,000 (US\$285,000) from Ong between 2015 and 2022.

These ranged from tickets to shows, private plane ride, hotel stays, football matches and various editions of the Singapore F1 Grand Prix.

Iswaran was arrested by CPIB on July 11, 2023, following its investigation into a separate matter after which he was released on bail.

# Much higher likelihood of war with Hezbollah: Israeli military chief

Jerusalem | Agency

Israel's military chief Herzi Halevi has warned against the escalation of the prospects of a "full-fledged war" with the Lebanon-based Hezbollah militant group and were now "much higher than before".

"I don't know when the war in the north will begin, but I can tell you that the likelihood of it taking place in the next few months is much higher than before," Xinhua news agency quoted Halevi as saying while he was visiting a reservists' exercise in northern Israel.

"When we will need to -- we will go forward at full strength," he added.

Halevi said that the drill aims to increase the preparedness of soldiers in the north in the wake of "many lessons learned from the



fighting in Gaza".

The Lebanon-Israel border has witnessed escalating tension since October 8, 2023 after Hezbollah fired dozens of rockets toward the Jewish nation in support of the Hamas the previous day.

This prompted Israel to respond by firing heavy artillery toward southeastern

Lebanon. According to official Israeli figures, nine Israeli troops and six civilians have been killed due to fire from Lebanon.

Meanwhile, 222 people have died on the Lebanese side, including 159 Hezbollah militants and 37 civilians, according to security sources.

# CALIFORNIA HAS 95% CHANCE OF DAMAGING EARTHQUAKE IN NEXT CENTURY

Los Angeles | Agencies

California has a more than 95 per cent chance or greater of enduring a damaging earthquake over the next 100 years, reveals a new US Geological Survey (USGS) map.

While California is particularly at risk, nearly 75 per cent of the Un could experience potentially damaging earthquakes and intense ground shaking, threatening the lives of hundreds of millions of people in the next century, Xinhua news agency reported citing the map.

The agency led a team of more than 50 scientists and engineers working on the latest USGS National Seismic Hazard Model.

The model created a color-coded map showing where damaging earthquakes are most likely to occur in the country based on insights from seismic studies, historical geologic data and the latest data-collection technologies.

The new model suggested California and Alaska, both having a history of seismic events, might face a greater degree of shaking.

On the East Coast, major cities such as Washington D.C.,



Philadelphia, New York and Boston might experience more severe earthquakes than previously thought.

The study revealed that 37 US states have experienced earthquakes exceeding magnitude 5 during the last 200 years, highlighting a long history of seismic activity across this country. The model represented the first assessment of seismic hazards for the entire country and an update to the previous version in 2018.

"The update includes more faults, better-characterized land surfaces, and computational advancements in modeling that provide the most detailed view ever of the earthquake risks we face," said Mark Petersen, USGS geophysicist and lead author of the study, in a press release.

He called the new model "a touchstone achievement for enhancing public safety", as the updated model will inform the future of building and structural design, offering critical insights for architects, engineers and policymakers on how structures are planned and constructed across the country.

Though earthquakes are challenging to forecast, by investigating faults and past quakes, scientists can better assess the likelihood of future earthquakes and how intense their shaking might be, according to the USGS.



## CM DR. YADAV REITERATES HIS COMMITMENT TO BRINGING ABOUT QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENT IN PEOPLES LIVES



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has reiterated his commitment to bringing about qualitative improvement in the lives of common people. He said that the new genera-

tion would be informed about the contributions of great men who enriched society. He said that the life and divine deeds Lord Shri Ram and Shri Krishna would be a part of curriculum. The Sanatan Dharma will be taught included in the curriculum fol-

lowing the new education policy. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said it has been decided to develop pilgrimage places where the foot-prints of Lord Krishna have fallen. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav participated in the felicitation cere-

mony organized by Shri Krishna Chetna Vichar Manch in Patna today. Dr. Yadav was welcomed by various organizations. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav, President of Shri Krishna Chetna Vichar Manch, Justice (retired) Shri Rajendra Prasad, General Secretary (former IAS) Dr. Gorelal Yadav, Mahamandaleswar Mahant Dr. Sukhdev Das, Bihar Pradesh Yadav Mahasabha, Shri Krishna Chetna Parishad, Shri Krishna Chetna Officials of Sangh, Shri Krishna Chetna Manch, Shri Gopikrishna Go Ashram, Jaipal Singh Yadav Foundation etc. greeted him. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Bihar is a sacred land. Madhya Pradesh and Bihar have a cultural bonds. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that the marriage of Lord Shri Krishna took place in the city of Baba Mahakal. Lord Shri Krishna's had his education in Ujjain. After receiving education, Lord Shri Krishna explained the essence of education and the importance of noble deeds through Geeta, which is the holiest scripture in the world. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said that coming from the banks of Holy Kshipra, I feel its vibration saluting to the people on the banks of Ganga. He said that India's glory is enhancing everyday in the world.

## Urban Development Minister Shri Vijayvargiya for giving Chitrakoot a global identity



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Urban Development Minister Shri Kailash Vijayvargiya has said that Chitrakoot in Satna district will be given global identity. He instructed the concerning officers to chalk out plans. He said that Chitrakoot has special religious significance needs to be paid special attention. Ghat beautification and cleanliness should be taken up with utmost priority. He also directed concerning officers to conduct a special campaign for cleaning of Mandakini river.

Minister Shri Vijayvargiya stressed the need for making the local bodies economically self-reliant. He said that arrangements should be made to provide training to the staff with the civic bodies. Identify sources of increasing income of the bodies. Citizens should not be deprived of basic facilities due to lack of budget in any body. If basic facilities like water, electricity and roads are not available in an urban body, it creates a bad image. He asked the officers to improve their working system. Urban Development Commissioner Shri Bharat Yadav apprised Minister Shri Vijayvargiya of the budget available in various schemes.

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## College student dies of heart attack in coaching class in Indore

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A 20-year-old college student died of heart attack while he was attending a coaching class in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city.



B.A. final year student Rajesh Lodhi, a resident of Sagar district, who was preparing for Madhya Pradesh Public Service Commission (MPPSC), died on Wednesday evening. The matter came to the fore on Thursday after CCTV footage went viral on social media in which Lodhi can be seen seated among the several MPPSC aspirants. In the video, Lodhi can be seen having discomfort after

which he puts his head on the table and later, collapses. Some fellow students try to help Lodhi and inform the coaching staff. Lodhi was immediately rushed to a nearby hospital where the doctors declared him brought dead. Rajkumar Yadav, in-charge

of Bhawarkuan police station in Indore, said after watching the video, an investigation has been launched. The exact cause of death would be known after the post-mortem report is received, the preliminary investigation suggested that the student suffered a heart attack.

## COP KILLED IN MADHYA PRADESH AS SPEEDING VEHICLE RUNS HIM OVER

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A policeman was killed on Thursday after a speeding vehicle hit him at a checkpoint in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district, an official said.



The deceased police personnel has been identified as Naresh Sharma (52). He was posted as Assistant Sub Inspector at Mahuljhir police station in Chhindwara. When a pick-up vehicle driver was signalled to stop at the checkpoint, instead of slowing down, he accelerated, hit Naresh Sharma and fled. Sharma was rushed to a nearby hospital, and he succumbed to his grievous injuries. "The driver of the pick-up vehicle increased the speed on noticing the police at the checkpoint near a petrol pump. He drove through the barricades placed on the road while fleeing. He was arrested later," Chhindwara Superintendent of

Police, Vinayak Varma said. The government is yet to announce compensation to the deceased's family. Meanwhile, the opposition Congress has criticised the ruling BJP in the state over the law and order situation.

Madhya Pradesh Congress' media in-charge K. K. Mishra said the driver had filled fuel from a petrol pump near the checkpoint and fled without paying. CM Dr. Yadav expresses profound

grief over demise of ASI Shri Sharma. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has expressed profound grief over the tragic demise of brave ASI Naresh Sharma of Madhya Pradesh Police who lost his life in a heart-rending incident in Chhindwara district while discharging his duties. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that the death of Shri Sharma is extremely painful. He conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family members. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that the brave policeman will be given the status of a martyr. The state government will give an amount of Rs 1 crore as Shradha Nidhi to his family. A member of late Shri Sharma's family will also be given a government job. It is noteworthy that the accused has been arrested. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that accused of such a crime will not be spared. Strict action will be taken against the accused.

### Transport Tax Revenue Should Exceed the Fixed Target

## Transport Minister Shri Singh conducts review in the state-level meeting in Mantralaya



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Transport and School Education Minister Shri Uday Pratap Singh has instructed the departmental officers to achieve more revenue than the target from transport tax in the state this year. Transport Minister

Shri Singh was addressing a state-level meeting at Mantralaya today. This year the department has been tasked with revenue target of Rs 4800 crore. The department has generated revenue of about Rs 3200 crore till December 31. Transport Minister Shri Singh

reviewed the computerization service of the department. It was informed in the meeting that digitization of licenses, registrations, permits and other important records is being done in the department. The system of maintaining e-records is being implemented in the department soon. Faceless

learning driving license system has been implemented in the entire state in the department. An online system has been developed for renewal and duplication of driving licenses. It was also informed in the meeting that 16 companies have been authorized to install vehicle location tracking devices in vehicles. The Transport Department has set-up 7 automated testing stations for fitness testing of vehicles to prevent road accidents. These stations are in Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior, Betul, Rewa, Jabalpur and Sagar. The Transport Minister asked to pace-up the process of recruitment on the vacant posts in the Transport department to strengthen the department staff. He said that the structure of the department should be prepared on the basis of excellence by studying other states of the country. Additional Chief Secretary Shri Rajesh Rajoura told to ensure transparency in the department and set time limits in the facilities provided to the citizens. In-charge Transport Commissioner Shri Arvind Saxena apprised about the departmental activities.

## Chief Minister Dr. Yadav visits ISKCON temple in Patna



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav visited ISKCON temple during his stay in Patna and offered prayers to Lord Shri Krishna and idols of Radhe-Krishna. It may be noted that Shri Krishna Chetna Vichar Manch Patna today felicitated Chief Minister Dr. Yadav in a huge gathering. Chief

Minister Dr. Yadav was welcomed by institutions of Orissa also along with Bihar. While taking part in various programmes, Chief Minister Dr. Yadav mentioned the struggles his father and family members have faced in life. He told that his father was a mill worker. He had to face many difficulties. Despite financial instability, the values inherited from the

family remain important. No matter how adverse the circumstances are, a person should not panic. You must always believe in God. One can achieve recognition and prestige through constant work. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav praised the leadership abilities of Prime Minister Shri Modi and highlighted that he too had to face several hardships in life.

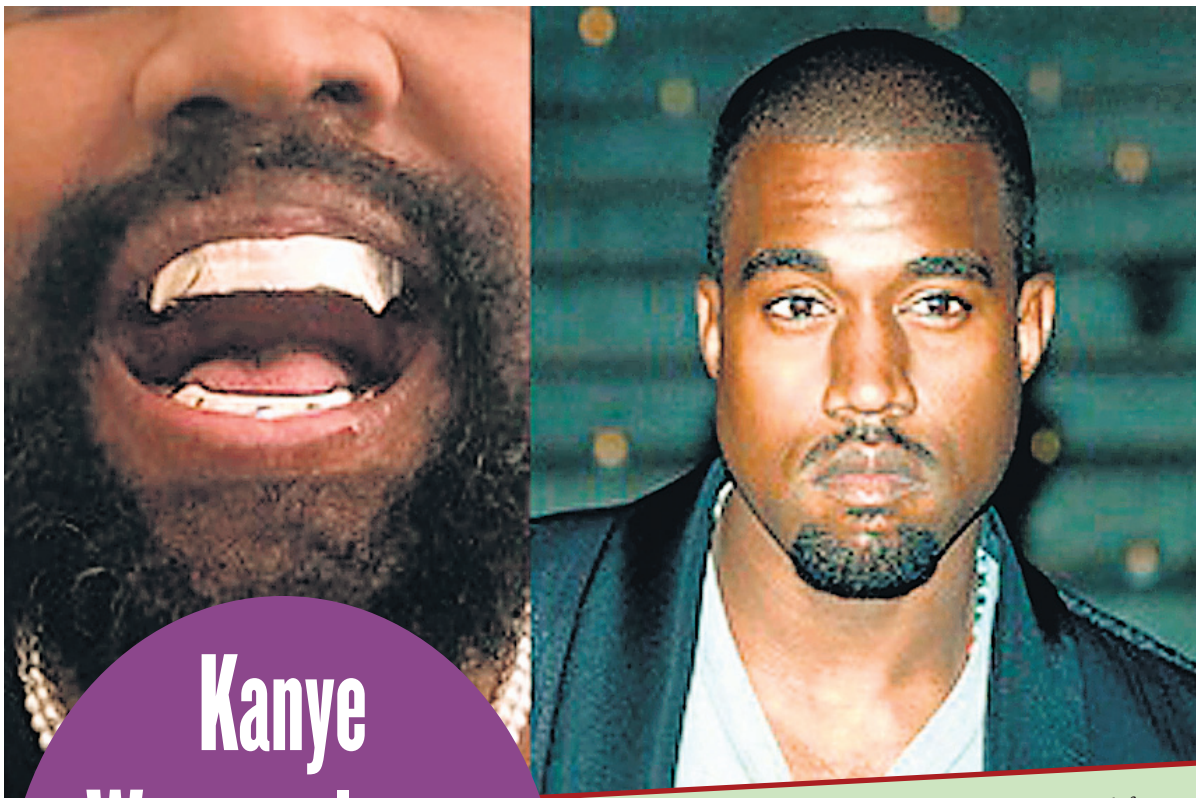
## EUPHORIA OVER 'PRAN-PRATISHTHA' HIGH IN MP, GIRL STUDENTS FORM HUMAN CHAIN TO CREATE FIGURE OF LORD RAM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

With four days left for the historic moment of the 'pran-pratishtha' of the idol of Lord Ram in Ayodhya on January 22, the euphoria over this auspicious occasion has become high across the country along with political heat. The excitement of the people has become very visible across Madhya Pradesh, which is also politically called the laboratory of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Madhya Pradesh is among those state governments who have declared a public holiday on January 22 to commemorate this significant ceremony. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has also announced a dry day in the state on January 22, issuing orders to keep all liquor and bhanga outlets closed. Apart from declaring a holiday, the state government has launched extensive cleanliness campaigns, decorative lights at government buildings, mass feasting, Ramcharit Leela and much more. The state's religious trusts and endowments department last week released a nine-point order to make preparations across the state. Ram Kirtan is being organised in every temple, with public cooperation and the members of the saffron party are going door-to-door to distribute 'akshat' and urging peo-



ple to celebrate the occasion as Diwali. The government has planned to decorate all the major temples in every part of the state and cultural events based on Lord Ram Janaki are being organised through public participation. CM Yadav last week announced that five lakh ladoos will be dispatched from Ujjain's Mahakal Temple to Ayodhya Ram Mandir. As per the information, as many as four lakh ladoos have already been packed and kept at Mahakaleshwar temple, and another one lakh are being put in packets to be sent to Ayodhya on Friday. The state police have also joined the cleanliness campaign. Director General of Police Sudhir Saxena along with some senior officials took brooms in their hands as part of the cleanliness drive. The home department has declared that the 'swachhta' campaign would be carried out at every police station in Madhya Pradesh. Meanwhile, cultural events being organised in schools are also grabbing eyeballs. As part of the programs before the pran-pratishtha of Lord Ram in Ayodhya, the girl students of Maharani Lakshmi Bai Kanya Higher Secondary School in Jabalpur formed a human chain and created the figure of Lord Ram on Thursday.



## Kanye West replaces teeth with titanium gnashers

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rapper Kanye West posted a photo of his new teeth on his social media. His new bling is a titanium set of dentures that is completely unique for the Stronger rapper's mouth and is rumoured to cost \$850,000.

The next photo was a screenshot of a Google search for 'Jaws', the famous James Bond villain, who appeared in 'The Spy Who Loved Me' and 'Moonraker', reports 'Mirror.co.uk'. This Instagram post is apparently Kanye's way of comparing himself to the famous baddie. Kanye's new mouthpiece was done by doctor Thomas Connelly in Beverly Hills alongside Naoki Hayashi, a Master Dental Technician. Connelly spoke to the Daily Mail about working with the controversial rapper.

"It was a pleasure to work with every step of the process," he said. "His vision for designing unique art transcends the dental progression. The marriage of his Vision with dental science has created a new look that is epic".

As per 'Mirror.co.uk', this isn't the first time that Kanye has tampered with his teeth. In 2010 the rapper went on 'The Ellen DeGeneres Show' and told the host that he replaced his entire bottom row of teeth.

"It's not a grill?" A surprised Ellen asked. Kanye replied: "It's really my real teeth. I replaced my bottom row of teeth." He added: "I guess there's just certain things that rock stars are supposed to do".



Los

Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Arnold Schwarzenegger couldn't believe that he ended up being detained at Munich airport upon his arrival to Germany. He had been held for three hours after failing to declare his luxury watch, and he was left baffled by the debacle.

"This is the problem that Germany is suffering from," the 76-year-old told German newspaper Bild.

"You can no longer see the forest for the trees."

The actor, who travelled from the US, was detained on January 17, after trying to take an "unregistered" watch from Swiss luxury brand Audemars Piguet through customs.

According to reports, he would auction the timepiece during a fundraising dinner at his World Climate Summit in Kitzbuhel, Austria, on Thursday, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Of the ordeal, Thomas Meister, a Munich Customs press officer, told CNN: "He did not declare a product. A product that was imported from non-EU countries in order to remain in the EU." Thomas added: "And this process applies to everyone."

While he was displeased by the detention, Arnold reportedly managed to be cooperative. "He cooperated at every step even though it was an incompetent shakedown, a total comedy of errors that would make a very funny cop movie," a source said.

The source went on to note that Arnold agreed to pre-pay potential taxes on the item, but the officers reportedly failed to use a credit card machine for an hour. Thus, they brought the actor to a bank and asked him to withdraw cash from an ATM.

Unfortunately, the ATM they brought Arnold to had a limit too low and the bank was closed. When he came back, a new officer brought a new credit card machine that worked.

## ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER HELD AT MUNICH AIRPORT OVER 'UNREGISTERED' LUXE WATCH

## PIERCE BROSNAN PLEADS NOT GUILTY TO CHARGES OF TRESPASSING ON DELICATE THERMAL AREA

Los Angeles | Agencies

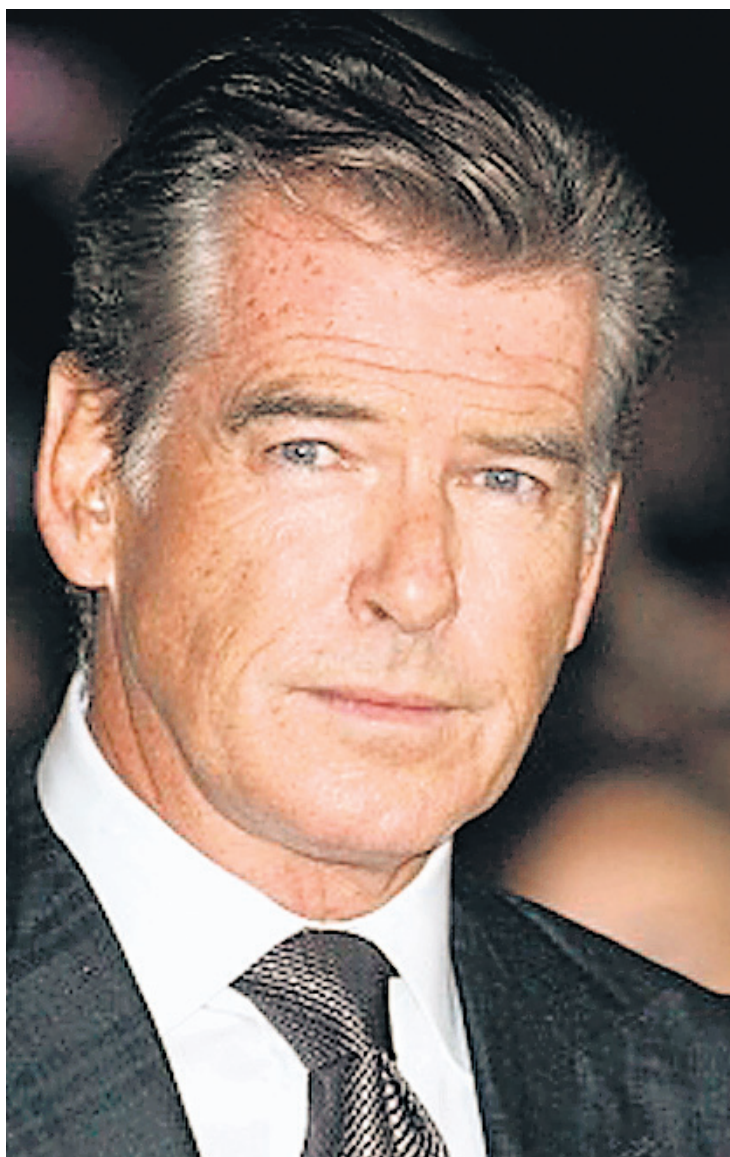
Actor Pierce Brosnan has maintained he did no wrong while hiking in Yellowstone's hot springs.

In December, the actor was cited in Wyoming after allegedly entering protected thermal areas of Yellowstone National Park.

A seemingly since-deleted photo of the actor standing on a white crust that resembles some of the park's thermal attractions surfaced last month, reports People magazine.

TMZ had shared the since deleted picture.

Earlier this month, Brosnan pleaded not guilty to the charges against him,

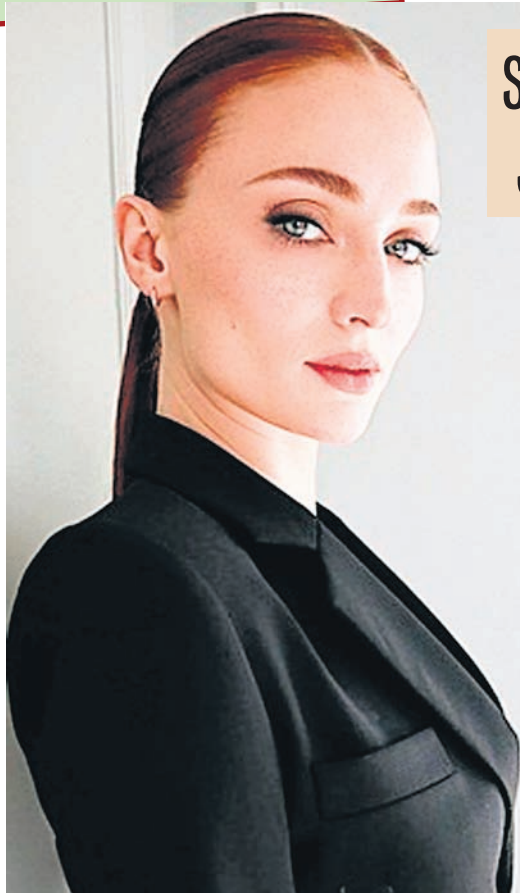


per an additional court document, accessed by People.

According to a criminal docket filed in the US District Court in Wyoming in December, the 'James Bond' actor received citations for travelling by foot "in all thermal areas and within Yellowstone Canyon confined to trails" and "violating closures and use limits" on November 1.

As per People, both citations are listed as petty offences. The thermal areas within the park include hot springs, geysers, mudpots, travertine terraces and fumaroles, per Yellowstone National Park's official site.

Yellowstone visitors must respect multiple safety rules around the thermal areas. The park warns that the ground below the thermal areas "may be only a thin crust above boiling hot springs," and there is no confirmation whether or not the area is safe. Additionally, park-goers must stay on the established walking pathways because the "pools are acidic enough to burn through boots".



## SOPHIE TURNER DROPS 'WRONGFUL RETENTION' CLAIM AGAINST JOE JONAS 3 MONTHS AFTER REACHING CUSTODY AGREEMENT

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Game of Thrones' star Sophie Turner has dropped the "wrongful retention" claims against her estranged husband, Joe Jonas, with regards to the custody of their two daughters.

According to court documents, a US judge approved to dismiss the filing after both stars signed a consent plan that was approved by a UK judge last week, reports 'People' magazine.

Last September, Turner, 27, sued Jonas for wrongful retention. She alleged that Jonas, 34, was withholding their daughters' passports and not allowing them to return to England. The former couple share Delphine, 18 months, and Willa, 3.

As per 'People', the complaint against the musician called for "the immediate return of children wrongfully removed or wrongfully retained", with Turner's legal team asserting the "wrongful retention" began on September 20. On Wednesday, Jonas and Turner agreed to have the filing dismissed "with prejudice, and without attorneys' fees, expenses, costs and/or disburse-

ments awarded to either party" after their parenting agreement in the UK was approved on January 11.

Prior to the dismissal and following Turner's September filing, Jonas released a statement disputing her claims the next day.

At the time, the singer said that he believed the two had reached an agreement to work on a co-parenting plan. On September 25, 2023, the two reached a temporary agreement to keep their two daughters in New York City, according to documents filed in New York, obtained by 'People'.

The interim consent order stated that Turner and Jonas were ordered to keep their kids in the Southern and Eastern districts of New York.

After the interim consent order, the former couple then reached a temporary custody agreement for their two daughters on October 10, 2023. The two then released a joint statement.

"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."

The statement concluded: "We look forward to being great co-parents."

## Jacob Elordi calls it quits with Olivia Jade for second time

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Jacob Elordi reportedly has ended his romantic relationship with Olivia Jade for the second time.

It was reported that the actor portraying Nate Jacobs on 'Euphoria' and the former 'Dancing with the Stars' season 30 contestant broke up following their alleged first split in 2022.

The news was revealed by Us Weekly. The media outlet confirmed that the 26-year-old actor and the 24-year-old daughter of fashion designer Mossimo Giannulli and actress Lori Loughlin have decided to go their separate ways. However, the former couple has not said anything about the alleged breakup.

The report came a few days after Jacob and Olivia sparked split rumours. Earlier in January, a number of social media users noticed that she had stopped following the "Priscilla" actor on Instagram.

Meanwhile, he notably does not follow anyone on the social media platform.

The 'Saltburn' actor and the YouTube content creator were romantically linked for the first time back in December 2021. They sparked dating rumours as they were caught on camera hanging out together in Los Angeles.

Following the day out, it was revealed that Jacob and Olivia had "sparks between them." A source spilled to Us Weekly at that time that they "have been on some dates" despite "keeping it casual" and "enjoying hanging out together."

The source added: "They both got out of relationships recently so they're not rushing into anything serious. So far it's going well and there are sparks between them."

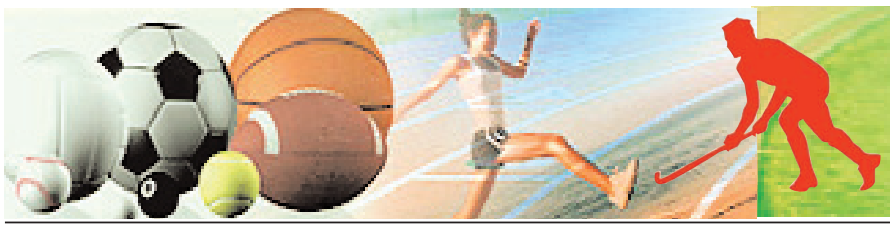
'The Kissing Booth' actor and the influencer were confirmed to be dating in May 2022. Although they did not publicly share their relationship status, the two were spotted having casual dates in Los Angeles several times. However, in August of that same year, it was said that they ended their romance to focus on their respective careers.



## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Hailey Bieber



# Hockey Olympic Qualifiers: USA beat Japan 2-1 to reach final, clinch berth in Paris Olympics

Team Absolute | Ranchi

The United States clinched a berth at the Paris Olympic Games as they defeated Japan 2-1 in the semifinal of the women's FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers, scoring two late goals off penalty corners to secure a place in the final here. The United States, who won a bronze at home in the 1984 edition, fought back brilliantly to return to the Olympics for the seventh time, the last appearance coming at the 2016 games in Rio de Janeiro.

The United States came to India as the least favourite among the contenders but were the first to clinch a berth in the Olympics as they rode on an undying spirit, defending stoutly as they remained unbeaten so far, conceding only one goal in four matches.

David Passmore's team chased the game throughout as Japan held the advantage. The for-

mer Asian Games gold medalist seemed to clinch the issue when Amiru Shimada scored in the 38th minute off a penalty corner on a cold and foggy evening at the Marang Gompke Jaipal Singh Astro-Turf Hockey Stadium here.

Ashley Hoffman pulled them level in the 52nd minute by converting a penalty corner and then Abigail Tamer slotted home the winner in the 55th minute off a rebound on their fourth penalty corner.

In the end, both teams shared equal possession but the United States made eight circle entries as compared to five by Japan. Both teams had eight circle entries as the US converted two of their five penalty corners while the Japanese could capitalise only on one of their six short corners.

It was Japan that earned the first penalty corner but Kelsey Bing and her defenders were spotted on in dealing with the threat.



Japan held the upper hand initially but the United States fought back and forced two penalty corners of their own. However, the Japan penalty corner set-up was up to the mark and the efforts did not result in goals as the two teams remained tied goalless at the end of the first quarter.

In all, Japan had three circle entries in the first quarter while the United States had two. For

Japan, skipper Yuri Nagai made a couple of good runs down the right flank while Madeleine Zimmer led their American forwards for a couple of strong counter-attacks. Ashley Hoffman led the United States defence superbly as they kept the Japanese at bay. In the second quarter, Huzuki Nagai was fouled by a US defender, which earned Japan a penalty corner but Shihori Oikawa's attempt was easily blocked. The score remained 0-0 at half-time. A swift counterattack led to a circle entry resulting in a penalty corner as USA players put the ball out deliberately. An indirect variation by Kana Urata was blocked but her hit off a rebound deflected in by Amiru Shimada. The Americans sought a video referral for the ball hitting a forward's foot but the images were inconclusive. The goal stood and for the first time in this tournament in Ranchi, the United States were chasing a game as goalkeeper Kelsey Bing's defence was breached.

With Japan leading 1-0, the pressure was on the United States in the fourth quarter, Japan continued to hold the advantage as they bagged a penalty corner as Ashley Hoffman made a blunder in the circle. But Kana Urata's effort was blocked and the rebound resulted in a re-take of the penalty which could not be stopped properly due to the wobbly pitch.

A foul on Amanda Golini earned the United States a penalty corner which was converted by Ashley Hoffman as she placed a superb flick past goalkeeper Akio Tanaka to make it 1-1.

A couple of minutes later, the USA surged ahead to a 2-1 lead as they earned another penalty corner after Madeline Zimmer made a fine run into the circle near the backline. This time though Ashley Hoffman's attempt was blocked and partially cleared by the goalkeeper Tanaka, Abigail Tamer slotted home the rebound to give the Americans the lead.

## BCCI announces release of Request for Proposals for staging IPL 2024 Opening Ceremony

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has invited bids from reputed entities for acquiring the rights and obligations to stage the Indian Premier League season 2024 Opening Ceremony.

The detailed terms and conditions governing the tender process including eligibility requirements, process for submissions of bids, rights and obligations, etc. are contained in the 'Request for Proposal' ("RFP") which will be made available on receipt of payment of a non-refundable fee of INR 1,00,000 (Indian Rupees One Lakh Only) plus any applicable Goods and Services Tax.

The procedure to procure the RFP documents is enlisted in Annexure A to this notice. The RFP will be available for purchase till February 2, 2024. Interested parties are requested to email the details of payment

made for the purchase of the RFP to rfp@bcci.tv, as per the procedure laid down in Annexure A.

It is clarified that the RFP documents shall be shared only upon the confirmation of payment of the non-refundable RFP fee. Any interested party wishing to submit a bid is required to purchase the RFP. However, only those satisfying the eligibility criteria set out in the RFP and subject to the other terms and conditions set out therein, shall be eligible to bid.

It is clarified that merely purchasing the RFP does not entitle any person to bid. BCCI reserves the right to cancel or amend the bidding process at any stage in any manner without providing any reason. IPL 2024 is likely to be played from third week of March, with the final schedule to come once the India general election dates are revealed by the Election Commissioner of India (ECI).

## India Open: Lee Cheuk Yiu beats defending champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu led the march of the underdogs in the second round of the India Open 2024 with a win over defending men's singles champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here on Thursday.

Lee came from a game down to beat reigning world champion Kunlavut 16-21, 22-20, 23-21 in an hour and 22 minutes in the Super 750 meet being organised by Badminton Association of India.

The morning session also saw former world champion Akane Yamaguchi of Japan and All England champion Li Shi Feng of China biting the dust.

Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrunphan defeated Yamaguchi 21-11, 21-19 while Japan's Koke Watanabe upset third seed Feng 14-21, 21-13, 21-9.

But the star of the morning session was undoubtedly Lee Cheuk Yiu for the way he fought back against Kunlavut. The Hong Kong shuttler looked down and out when



he trailed 6-12 in the second game after losing the first but he turned things around by winning six straight points to draw level at 12-12 and then went on to force a decider.

The third and final game followed a similar pattern with Kunlavut opening up a 16-9 lead. Lee then strung together 10 consecutive points and then earned two game points at 20-18.

The Thai managed to save a total of three match points before the Hong Kong shuttler wrapped things up.

In other women's singles matches, defending champion An-Se Young of South Korea had to fight hard for a 21-19, 14-21, 21-14 win over Beiweng Zhang of USA.

Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Tai Tzu-Ying of Chinese Taipei and two-time World Championships bronze medalist He Bing Jao of China also secured comfortable wins over their respective opponents.

Tai defeated Supanida Katethong 21-12, 21-11 while He Bing Jao packed off Pornpawee Chochuwong 21-6, 21-11.

## WPGT: Sneha flies on twin eagles to win title as Hitaashee falters at the end of 2nd leg



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sneha Singh played a superb closing round to grab her first win of the 2024 season in the 2nd Leg of the Women's Pro Golf Tour at the Bombay Presidency Golf Club, Mumbai. Sneha, winner of the Hero Order of Merit in 2023, opened and closed the final round with eagles on way to a card of 7-under 63. She rallied from four shots behind overnight leader Hitaashee Bakshi (68) to win by one. Sneha with 68-73-63 totalled 6-under 204 and Hitaashee Bakshi, who finished runner-up for the second time in as many weeks, finished at 5-under 205.

Ridhima Dilawari had a solid 2-under 68 and was third, while last week's winner, amateur Nishna Patel shot 71 and produced another good finish on the pro circuit. She was tied fourth with Khushi Khanijau (71) at 2-over 212.

Amandeep Drall (68-71-74) finished sixth and Vani Kapoor (76-69-70) was seventh.

Amateurs Mannat Brar (72) and Vidhatri Urs (73) emphasized the amateur strength in Indian women's golf by finishing tied eighth at 216. Rhea Jha (76) was tenth, Neha Tripathi (74) was 11th and Ananya Datar (70) ended 12th.

Sneha and Hitaashee played in different groups but were engaged in a close tussle. Sneha, who was four behind Hitaashee Bakshi got off to a super start with an eagle and added a birdie on the third. However, Hitaashee, playing in the lead group and behind Sneha's group, also birdied second and third and added a third birdie on the sixth.

As Sneha turned in 3-under 35, Hitaashee turned in 2-under 33 despite a bogey on ninth and stayed two shots ahead of Sneha. On the back nine, Sneha birdied the 11th and minutes later Hitaashee did the same. Sneha added another birdie on the 13th and moved within one shot of Hitaashee.

Sneha eagled the final hole and joined Hitaashee at 6-under for the tournament.

Hitaashee needed a birdie on the Par-5 18th and a par would mean a play-off. She ended up dropping a shot to hand Sneha the win. Sneha and Hitaashee were tied for second last week behind amateur Nishna who won. Ridhima was distant third at 2-under 208 and Khushi and Nishna were further behind at 2-over 212.

Sneha now takes the lead on the Hero Order of Merit after the first two legs of the Women's Pro Golf Tour, 2024.

## Thought that level of hitting was incredible, says Dravid on Rohit's unbeaten 121

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

India head coach Rahul Dravid was left in awe of captain Rohit Sharma's unbeaten 121 in the thrilling third T20I at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, saying the level of hitting he saw from the right-handed opener was incredible.

The series against Afghanistan, which India won 3-0, saw Rohit's return to T20Is alongside Virat Kohli. But Rohit had a less-than-an-ideal start, bagging two successive ducks. At the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on Wednesday evening, Rohit struck his fifth T20I century in India's double super over win.

"Honestly, I think he was brilliant today. He has just shown what a class player he can be. We were 22 for 4 at one stage and even when I went in (at drinks) in the 10th over, the talk was always about being positive. Obviously, you had to protect the game a little bit (at 22 for 4)."

"You always have the mindset of going out and set the pace of the game, but in games like this, sometimes you have to hold back a little bit. You can't hold back too much at this ground because you know you need a big score, towards the end, and I thought that level of hitting was incredible," said Dravid to broadcasters after the match ended.

During his 121 not out off 69 balls, Rohit also became the first man to hit five T20I centuries as India made 212/4, with 103 of those runs coming in the last five overs. Rohit took time till the 12th over, before accelerating in an unbelievable fashion by smashing 93 runs in the last 35 balls he faced.

thing with Rohit is the kind of range that he has, it's hard to bowl at him when he's set at the back end. You can't bowl short because he's really good



with the pull, (can't) bowl up and he's got a great range as well. It's really good to have him back, just his presence in the dressing room has been very helpful. Both Virat (Kohli) and him add a lot to this group," added Dravid.

In between of bringing out his vintage shots and carting bowlers all over the park, Rohit even

indulged in some reverse sweeps and a switch hit, which collectively came to five times. Dravid was in praise of Rohit trying unconventional shots to get valuable runs for the team.

"We've been chatting about it. We've been talking to a lot of our players about opening up square parts of the wicket, looking to use the sweeps and reverse sweeps, and practicing them. It was nice to see that Rohit is again leading from the front in that department as well."

"Sometimes you play good spin, and Qais Ahmad is one spinner who spun it early on. To counter him, to recognise that going straight [down the ground] to him would have been difficult and using the square part of the boundary was really clever thinking."

Dravid also lauded middle-order batter Rinku Singh, who was unbeaten on 69 off 39 balls and shared a 192-run stand with Rohit for the fifth wicket. Since his T20I debut in 2023, Rinku has amassed 356 runs in 11 innings at an average of 89 and a strike rate of 176.23.

"For someone who is just starting out in international cricket, just the maturity he's shown, the calmness is terrific. "We've seen him come in at the back end of an innings and finish games off, but it was great to see him come in at 22 for 4 in the sixth over and to just build that partnership and show what he can do at the back end, it was very good for us to see that."

"When we have these conversations with him, he's very clear about his skills, what he knows what his strengths are, what he needs to work on and how he's going to go about constructing his innings," concluded Dravid.

## Australian Open: Sumit Nagal bows out; Bopanna-Ebden make second round in doubles

Melbourne | Agencies

Sumit Nagal's fairytale run at the Australian Open ended after losing to China's Juncheng Shang in his men's singles second-round match at Melbourne Park on Thursday.

World No. 137 Nagal, who stunned Kazakhstan's world No. 27 Alexander Bublik in the opening round on Tuesday, took the first set against Shang, but went down by a 6-2, 3-6, 5-7, 4-6 in two hours and 50 minutes.

On Tuesday, Nagal roared in glory when the Indian tennis sensation won the first round of the Australian Open and became the first Indian male player since Ramesh Krishnan in 1989 to beat a seeded player at a Grand Slam. Meanwhile, in the men's doubles, Indian veteran Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden success-



fully navigated a tough match against Australian wildcard entrants James Duckworth and Marc Polmans, securing their spot in the second round. Bopanna and Ebden fell 0-5 behind in the first game but recovered to win their first-round match 7-6(7-5), 4-6, 7-6(10-2) in the super tie-breaker. The second seed Indo-Australian pair will next face ace another Australian wild card team of John Millman and Edward Winter.

## Suryakumar Yadav undergoes groin surgery in Germany

Munich | Agencies

India's top-ranked T20I batter Suryakumar Yadav underwent a successful groin surgery in Munich, Germany on January 17. Multiple reports have suggested that Suryakumar underwent operation for a sports hernia, a condition for which KL Rahul was also operated upon, co-incidentally in Germany in 2022. Suryakumar has been in Germany along with his wife Devisha for the surgical intervention. "Surgery done. I want to thank everyone for their concerns and well wishes for my health, and I am happy to tell you all that I will be back very soon," he said in a post on his social media accounts after the surgery. The 33-year-old batter has been out of action since sustaining a left ankle injury while fielding during the third T20I against South Africa at Johannesburg last month, shortly after making a 56-ball century. Later on, he was spotted walking with a moonboot, indicating that the injury was serious. Many reports have also suggested that Suryakumar underwent an operation on the injured ankle too. He even went through rehab at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru before traveling to Germany for the groin operation. It remains to be seen if Suryakumar is fit in time for the commencement of IPL 2024, set to begin probably from the third week of March. In the IPL, Suryakumar has been an integral part of five-time champions Mumbai Indians. His presence will be crucial for the Indian team ahead of the 2024 Men's T20 World Cup, happening from June 1-29 in the USA and the West Indies.





## Sonu Sood receives deep fake video of himself, impersonator asks distressed family for money

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Sonu Sood, who is known for 'Dabangg', 'Happy New Year', 'Aagadu' and others, recently received a deep fake video of him from one of his followers on social media. The actor took to his X on Thursday and uploaded the deep fake video to clear the air that the person featured in the video is not him. In the deep fake video call featuring Sood, the impersonator interacted with a family in need of funds for medical treatment, assuring them of financial assistance. He wrote in the caption: "My film FATEH is inspired by real life incidents involving Deep Fake and fake loan apps. This is the latest incident where someone tried to extract money from an unsuspecting family, by chatting with them through video call pretending to be Sonu Sood. Many innocent individuals fall into this trap. I request all of you to be vigilant if you receive such calls. #fateh." Interestingly, inspired from such events, the actor turned writer and director for his new thriller, 'Fateh'. He wrote the story after over a year of research and interviews with victims, cybercrime police officers, and ethical hackers. In the film, he essays the role of an investigation agent who is on a mission to protect the country from cybercrimes.

## ORRY REVEALS KAJOL ONCE DECLINED TO POSE WITH HIM FOR PICTURE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Social media sensation Orry, whose selfies with B-town stars are a rage on the Internet, appeared on the season finale of the streaming chat show 'Koffee With Karan'.

During the episode, Orry revealed that he was once declined a request for a picture by the security team of actress Kajol.

The incident happened when Orry was in a college in New York and was on his first job as an usher. Talking about the same, Orry told show host Karan Johar: "My first job, when I was in college in New York, was for the usher position, a highly sought-after position at the Children Should Wash Their Hands Conference. Not many people know this; I was Usher number 3 to Kajol, and she probably doesn't know this. This was in 2013 in New York, I think at The Pierre." He further mentioned, "She was giving this speech and I asked her security for a humble photo and I was declined." Karan then said, "The great irony! Because she wouldn't know that one day down the years, you would be in a million photos with her daughter (Nysa Devgan)." Orry said, "Yeah, life does come full circle. I love Nysa like she is my younger sister."



## Arbaaz's wishes for wife Shura: Saying 'Qubool Hai' to you were best words to come out of my mouth

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor-filmmaker Arbaaz Khan has shared a romantic birthday wish for his newly wedded wife Shura on Thursday.

Arbaaz took to Instagram, where he shared a photograph with a caption that read: "Happiest birthday my love Shura. Nobody makes me smile the way you do. You light up my life. I look

forward to growing old with you, oops older actually very, very old."

"When the universe brought us together it was the best thing that's ever happened to me. From the first date I knew I was going to spend the rest of my life with you."

Arbaaz added: "You continue to amaze me with your beauty and kindness."

Before concluding, he shared: "Every day I'm

reminded that saying 'Qubool Hai' to you were the best words to ever come out of my mouth. Love you to the moon and back."

In the comments section, Shura Khan wrote: "Arbaazzzzzzz" along with heart emojis.

It was in December when Arbaaz married Shura. He was previously married to Malaika Arora, they got divorced in 2017 after 19 years of marriage.

## Sonam Kapoor's striking postpartum transformation; sheds 20 kg

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Sonam Kapoor, who is currently enjoying her motherhood phase, on Wednesday shared a glimpse of her postpartum weight loss and it's simply 'wow'.

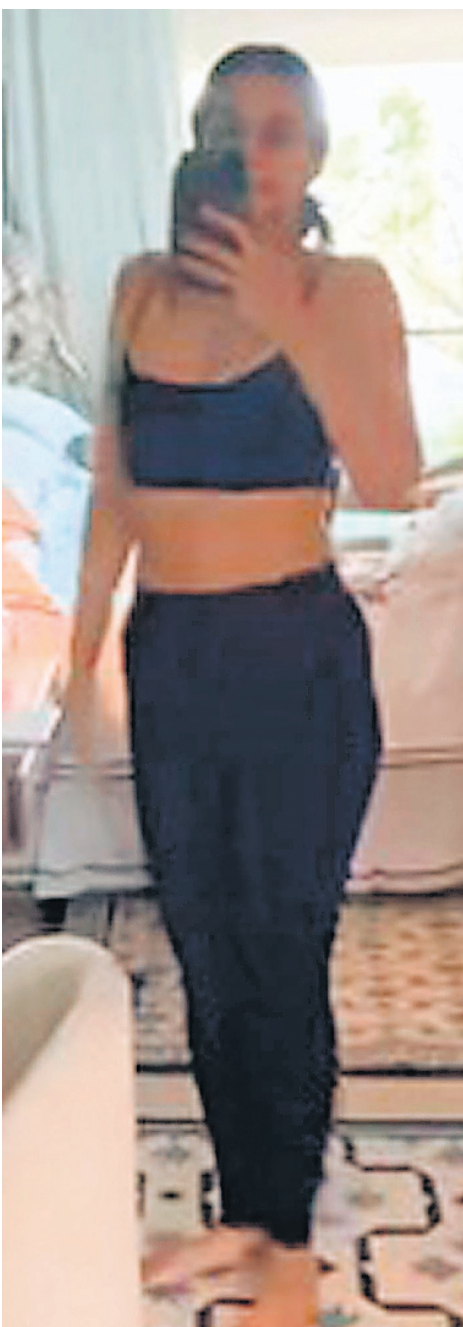
Sonam is married to businessman Anand Ahuja, and the couple was blessed with a baby boy Vayu in 2022.

Taking to Instagram, Sonam, who enjoys 35.3 million followers, shared a mirror selfie on the stories section, wearing a black crop tank top and matching leggings.

The actress captioned the post as: "What a wow... 20 kgs down... 6 more to go".

On January 4, the 'Saawariya' fame actress had dropped some pictures of herself in a lehenga, flaunting her physique, and shared how it took her 16 months to feel like herself again.

The caption read as: "It's taken me 16 months to feel like myself again. Slowly steadily without any crash diets and crazy workouts just consistent self care and baby care. I'm not there yet but almost where I want to be.. still very very grateful for my body and how incredible it has been. Being a woman is a wondrous thing. #babymomma #proudwoman #everydayphenomenal #vayuparents".



## AYUSHI KHURANA, ADITI RATHORE & NEETHA SHETTY REFLECT ON THEIR CLOSE-KNIT BOND

Mumbai | Agencies

Actresses Ayushi Khurana, Aditi Rathore and Neetha Shetty, who play sisters in the show 'Aangan Aapno Kaa' have opened up on their off-screen camaraderie, and revealed how they share their favourite meals and engage in endless conversations.

The show is a heartfelt tale of a daughter's unwavering love for her father. It features Ayushi as Pallavi, who has resolved to not get married as it would mean that she will have to leave her father alone as she has witnessed her sisters' priorities changing after their wedding.

Aditi and Neetha feature as the older Sharma sisters -- Tanvi, and Deepika each with extremely different personalities.

While Pallavi is a headstrong girl, who always speaks her mind, Tanvi is timid and reserved, whereas Deepika is career-oriented and resilient.

Their sisterly bond extends beyond the sets. From supporting each other to teasing one another, their life connection is like that of real sisters.

Ayushi also affectionately addresses Aditi and Neetha as their characters Tanu Di and Deepu Di even when they are not in their characters.

The trio engaged in a candid conversation, talking about the traits they share with their characters and shedding light on their close-knit relationship both on and off the screen.

Ayushi shared: "Whenever the three of us are shooting together, it is always chaos on the set. We have a typical sibling dynamic where we tease and pull each other's legs. The beautiful connection that I share with Deepu Di and Tanu Di onscreen is similar to the bond with my younger sister in real life."

Calling herself an introvert, Aditi said: "I usually take time to open up to people, but with Ayushi and Neetha, there was an instant connection from day one, and thankfully, it has remained the same since. Shooting together is so much fun because of our rapport."

Neetha added: "In Deepika's character, I see a reflection of myself -- career-oriented, dedicated to family, and navigating life's challenges with resilience. Off-screen, my bond with Ayushi and Aditi is similar to the camaraderie we share onscreen. When the cameras aren't rolling, we share endless laughs and discuss everything under the sun together. I'm extremely grateful for this warm bond with the two of them."



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