

# absolute india

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## 25CR PEOPLE BROUGHT OUT OF POVERTY IN 9 YRS: PM MODI

Solapur (Maharashtra) | Agencies

At least 25 crore people have been lifted out of poverty in India in the last nine years as a result of the "tapasya" and true dedication of the government towards the poor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here on Friday.

He said that earlier, poverty alleviation programmes in the country lacked results owing to the absence of proper intent and the pilferage by the middle-men.

"This is the outcome of the clean intentions and policies favouring the empowerment of the poor plus the commitment to the nation," the PM said, adding that 'Modi ki Guarantee' is about the commitment to take the benefit of the government schemes directly to the beneficiaries.

The PM said in the last 10 years, more than Rs 30 lakh-crore have been transferred directly to the accounts of farmers, women, youth and poor, while 10 crore fake beneficiaries were weeded out by using the 'JAM' mode -- Jan Dhan-Aadhar-Mobile.

PM Modi said this while speaking at an event to hand over 15,000 houses at RAY Nagar Housing Society in Solapur under the Prime Minister Awas Yojana-Urban, while another 15,000 shall come up in the 350 acres housing complex. This was a dream come true for the 15,000 family-beneficiaries like handloom and power-



loom workers, construction labourers, street vendors, 'beedi' makers, drivers, rickshaw-pullers, and others in the unorganised sectors, and PM Modi had laid the foundation stone for the complex in 2019. The project was conceived by the former Communist Party of India-Marxist state secretary and 3-time MLA Narsayya Adam, 79, who struggled for long to ensure a respectable dwelling for the people eking out a living in the unorganised sectors. Sharing the dais with PM Modi and other dignitaries, Adam termed it as "a dream come true" for all the people in the informal sector, and along with the homes all other amenities like electricity and water would also be provided. The RAY Nagar is sprawled across 350-acres of land and the project of 30,000

homes would also have seven water tanks, a sewage treatment plant, solid waste management facility, a government school and a hospital, good internal roads and other civic amenities. Though the erstwhile Congress-Nationalist Congress Party regime decided to build the colony, it hung and only after 2014, when Bharatiya Janata Party-Shiv Sena's CM Devendra Fadnavis took office, the project was fast-tracked and he even got it included under the PMAY.

The project suffered another major delay during the Covid-19 pandemic years, plus the change of government in 2019, but finally the scheme was completed and launched by the PM Modi on Friday.

The Prime Minister also went around a couple of sample homes in

the complex and expressed his satisfaction at the work, which will benefit thousands of beedi makers as Solapur is one of the beedi manufacturing hubs in the country.

On the occasion, the PM also distributed the first and second instalments of the PM-SVANIDHI scheme to 10,000 people, laid the foundation stone for 8 AMRUT Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation projects.

PM Modi was seen becoming emotional at one point as he distributed the new home keys to the beneficiaries with the event attended by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CMs Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar, and other elected leaders, and a large number of families who will move to their new dwellings.

## 75th Republic Day parade will be women-centric: Defence Secretary

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane on Friday said that the 75th Republic Day parade will be women-centric and the women marching contingents will form the major chunk of the parade.

He said that the French President Emmanuel Macron will be the Chief Guest and themes for the event will be 'Viksit Bharat' and 'Bharat - Loktantra ki Matruka'.

"For the first time, the parade will be heralded by 100 women artists playing Indian musical instruments. The parade will commence with the music of Sankh, Naadsaram, Nagada, etc. to be played by women artists," Defence Secretary said.

He said that the parade will also witness an all-women Tri-Service contingent marching down Kartavya Path for the first time. "The CAPF contingents will also consist of women personnel. Best representation of women will be seen in this year's Republic Day parade," the Defence Secretary said. He said that Sarpanches, women workers of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Central Vista Project, women Space Scientists of ISRO, Yoga teachers, win-



ners of international sports events and Paralympic medalists will be the special guests.

"The parade will start at 1030 hrs and run for a duration of approx. 90 minutes. The seating capacity at Kartavya Path is 77,000, of which 42,000 is reserved for the general public," Defence Secretary said.

He said that a 95-member marching contingent and 33-member band contingent from France will also take part in the parade.

"Along with the aircraft of

the Indian Air Force, one Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft and two Rafale aircraft of the French Air Force will participate in the Fly-past," Defence Secretary said.

He said that at least 13,000 special guests have also been invited to witness the parade this year.

The Defence Secretary said that special emphasis has been laid to include Vibrant Villages in the list of special guests to be part of the Republic Day celebrations.

## Seat sharing deal: SP agrees to give seven seats to RLD in UP for Lok Sabha polls

Lucknow | Agencies

The Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) have finalised seat sharing for the Lok Sabha elections.

According to RLD spokesman Anil Dubey, the RLD will get seven seats in western Uttar Pradesh.

"A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting held between SP president Akhilesh Yadav and RLD president Jayant Chaudhary at the former's residence on Friday," he said.

Akhilesh later tweeted a photograph of him shaking hands with RLD chief and wrote "Let us all get together for the victory."



## 1990 firing on 'kar sevaks': Mulayam Govt followed court order, says Shivpal

Etawah (UP) | Agencies

Samajwadi Party leader Shivpal Singh has justified the firing on 'kar sevaks' in 1990 during the Mulayam Singh Yadav Government regime, saying that the Constitution needed to be protected and the court order to maintain status quo had to be followed.

Responding to a question in Etawah on Thursday about the BJP's charge that Mulayam Singh Yadav opened fire on the 'Kar sevaks,' he said that the BJP had lied on this issue to mislead the people.

"There was a court order to maintain the status quo; it was the responsibility of the administration to ensure the status quo was not disturbed," he said. On the Prana Pratishtha cere-



mony on January 22, Yadav said that his entire family would go to Ayodhya for the darshan of Ram Lalla. "However, everyone knows the Prana Pratishtha ceremony is a political event of the BJP and the entire ceremony should have been handled by the seers," he added.

He also criticised Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak for commenting on the Yadav family, stating, "Everyone knows his status in the Yogi Government."

He said the SP was prepared to contest on all the 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh, but the party wholeheartedly supports the candidates of the INDIA bloc.

He also attacked the BSP and said the party got 10 Lok Sabha seats because of its alliance with the SP in 2019. The BSP could win just one Vidhan Sabha seat after it decided to break

## Money markets to remain shut on Jan 22: RBI



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday said that the money markets will remain closed on January 22.

RBI said that as the Maharashtra government has declared January 22 as a public holiday under Section 25 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881, there

will be no transactions and settlements in government securities (primary and secondary), foreign exchange, money markets and Rupee Interest Rate Derivatives on January 22.

It said that the settlement of all outstanding transactions will accordingly get postponed to the next working day i.e. January 23.

## Amit Shah pays homage to 'bravehearts' of Assam Rifles

Shillong | Agencies

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday visited the Headquarters Directorate General of the Assam Rifles in Shillong and paid tributes to the "bravehearts" for their sacrifices.

According to an official statement mentioned, Shah was given a windshield tour of the well laid out garrison located in the city's Laitkor area. He also laid a wreath at the War Memorial.

In a post on X, the Union Minister said: "The sacrifices made by the Bravehearts of Assam Rifles for the security of our nation are unparalleled. Laid a wreath at the War Memorial at Headquarters Directorate General Assam Rifles and paid homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives in the line of duty."

The Union Minister is visiting Shillong to attend the 71st plenary session of North East Council (NEC).

He also inaugurated the Cyber Security Operations Center at the Headquarters which will provide the Force



with a fighting edge to ward off cyber-attacks.

On Saturday, Shah will travel to Assam where he will

take part in various welfare programmes



## PM Modi inaugurates BIETC in B'luru

Bengaluru | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated the Boeing India Engineering and Technology Centre (BIETC) in Bhattara Marenahalli near Devanahalli in Bengaluru Rural district.

The BIETC is built with a capital of Rs 1,600 crore in 43-acre campus.

Boeing's new campus in Devanahalli, close to Bengaluru International Airport -- a high-tech aerospace park -- is said to be the largest Boeing facility outside of the U.S.

The officials said that Boeing's new campus in India will become a cornerstone for partnership with

the vibrant startup, private, and government ecosystem in India, helping develop next-generation products and services for the global aerospace and defense industry. PM Modi also launched the Boeing Sukanya Programme aimed at empowering women in aviation in India.

"The launch of the Boeing Sukanya programme will provide ample opportunities for young women to receive skill training in the aviation sector," the Leader of Opposition (LoP) R. Ashoka said. Sukanya programme aims to support the entry of more girls from across India into the country's growing aviation sector.



# India has three times more women pilots than world's average: PM Modi

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that India has three times more women pilots than the world's average. "Among the Indian pilots, 15 per cent are women. This is three times more than the world average," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said while speaking at the launch of the Boeing Sukanya Programme.

He also inaugurated the Boeing India Engineering and Technology Centre (BIETC), the largest facility outside the US.

"India is leading the world as far as women pilots are concerned," Modi said.

He said that it is the government's resolve to encourage the participation of women in every sector of the country.

"You have seen our conviction during the G20 summit. We have told the world that the time has come for women-led development. We are trying to create new opportunities for women in the aviation and aerospace sectors," Modi said.

He said that through the Boeing Sukanya programme, the partici-



tion of women in the aviation sector will improve further.

"The dreams of daughters who are poor and living in remote areas of becoming pilots will come true," Modi said.

He said that many government schools in the country will receive career coaching and development facilities.

"Few months ago, you witnessed how India's Chandrayaan reached where no country has reached. This success has boosted the scientific temper of Indian youth," Modi said.

He said that India is also a hub of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education.

He said that girls, in large numbers, are studying science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

"One of the global leaders asked me whether Indian girls study and like STEM subjects. I explained to him that in our country, female students in these streams are more than boys. It was a surprise for him," PM Modi recalled.

He said that in the last decade, India's aviation market has complete-

ly transformed and every stakeholder in the Indian aerospace industry is upbeat.

"From manufacturing to services, each stakeholder is exploring new avenues. India has become the third-largest domestic aviation market in the world," he said.

He said that in the last decade, the number of domestic travellers in aviation has more than doubled and schemes like Udaan have played an important role in this.

He said that India is becoming one of the well-connected markets in the world.

"In 2014, there were close to 70 airports in India. Today, there are about 150 operational airports in the country. We not only built new airports but also increased their efficiency by many folds," he said.

He said that due to the increase in India's market capacity, the air cargo sector has also received a boost.

"The products of India are reaching international markets easily. The rapidly growing aviation sector is contributing towards India's overall progress and employment generation," he said.

# ED ISSUES SUMMONS TO LALU, TEJASHWI IN LAND FOR JOB CASE

Team Absolute | Patna Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued fresh summons to former Bihar chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav and incumbent Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav in connection with land for job case.

The summons notice was physically handed over by ED at Rabri Devi residence on 10 Circular Road in Patna and asked both the RJD leaders to appear before it on January 29 and 30. On November 11, 2023, ED had arrested Amit Katyal in money laundering case and made some fresh leads, while questioning Katyal. Sources said that the fresh summons to RJD leaders have been issued on some information shared by Katyal during the investiga-



tion. Earlier, the ED had also issued summons to Lalu Prasad Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav to appear on December 22 and December 27 last year but they did not appear before the investiga-

tion team.

The central investigating agency has submitted one chargesheet in the case of land for the job case while CBI also filed three chargesheets

# SC proposes Justice P.S. Dinesh Kumar's name for Karnataka HC's Chief Justice



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court Collegium on Friday recommended the appointment of Justice P.S. Dinesh Kumar as the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court to succeed incumbent Chief Justice Prasanna B Varale, whose elevation to the top court it recommended. "The office of the Chief Justice of the High Court of Karnataka would be falling vacant consequent upon elevation of Mr Justice Prasanna B Varale to the Supreme

Court... Therefore, appointment to that office is required to be made," said a statement released by SC Collegium.

It said that Justice Dinesh Kumar, who was appointed as a Judge of the Karnataka High Court in January 2015, has acquired sufficient experience on the judicial and administrative side as a puisne judge of the High Court.

The Collegium said: "He is due to demit office on superannuation on February 24, 2024 and will have a tenure

as a Chief Justice of little over a month. He is endowed with a high level of integrity, honesty and competence. He has served the High Court of Karnataka with distinction since his appointment."

In terms of the Memorandum of Procedure, the Collegium resolved to recommend his appointment as the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court consequent upon the elevation of present Chief Justice Varale as a Judge of the Supreme Court.

# SC imposes Rs 1L cost on lawyer for filing PIL against Rahul's LS membership restoration

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday imposed an exemplary costs of Rs 1 lakh on a Lucknow-based lawyer for filing a "frivolous" PIL challenging restoration of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Lok Sabha membership.

A bench presided over by Justice B.R. Gavai said that filing of such frivolous petitions not only wastes precious time of the court but also that of the entire Supreme Court registry.

The bench, also comprising Justice Sandeep Mehta, noted that the matter has been adjourned twice in the past at the instance of petitioner Ashok Pandey.

In his plea, Pandey contended that once a member of Parliament or a state legislature loses his office by operation of law, he will continue to be disqualified till he is acquitted from the charges levelled against him.

He prayed the Constitution Bench to decide as to whether on the basis of a stay of conviction, a person who has suffered disqualification by operation of law, will become qualified to be chosen as or for being, a member of Parliament or state legislature.

In August last year, the Supreme Court stayed the conviction of Gandhi in the 'Modi surname' defamation case, which had cost him his Lok Sabha membership, saying that no reasons were given by the trial judge for imposing the maximum punishment of two years in the case.

Following the apex court's stay order, the Lok Sabha Secretariat restored his membership in Parliament on August 7, 2023.

Rahul Gandhi was disqualified as an MP in March 2023 after a Surat court convicted him and sentenced him to two years in prison for his "How



come all thieves have Modi as the common surname" remark made during an election rally in Karnataka in April 2019.

His remark was interpreted as an attempt to draw an implicit connection between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and fugitive businessmen Nirav Modi and Lalit Modi.

It may be recalled that Justice Gavai-led bench in October 2023 had imposed a cost of Rs 1 lakh on Pandey for filing a similar plea against restoration

of Lok Sabha membership of Lakshadweep MP Mohammed Faizal.

"You are an advocate and filing such frivolous petitions. You should think ten times before filing such petitions," Justice Gavai had remarked.

The same advocate was also reprimanded by a bench headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud with a cost of Rs 5 lakh for filing a petition against the Chief Justice of Bombay High Court for allegedly not using 'I' while being administered oath.

# Bilkis Bano case: SC dismisses convicts' pleas seeking more time to surrender



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed the applications filed by convicts in Bilkis Bano case seeking an extension of four to six weeks to surrender before the concerned jail authorities.

A bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan said that the applications filed by gang-rape and murder convicts seek-

ing permission to stretch the January 21 deadline to surrender have no merit.

The batch of applications filed by 10 of the 11 convicts cited reasons such as ill health, family responsibilities, care for aged and ailing parents and upcoming harvest season.

On Thursday, the top court agreed to urgently list these applications for hearing and ordered the registry

to obtain directions from the Chief Justice of India to constitute a special bench of Justice Nagarathna and Justice Bhuyan.

This special bench had earlier set aside the "stereotyped and cyclostyled" remission orders passed by the Gujarat government and asked 11 convicts to surrender before jail authorities within a period of two weeks.

# Rape convict Ram Rahim gets 50-day parole, ninth time in four years



Team Absolute | Chandigarh

Rape convict and Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim, who is undergoing a 20-year sentence in Haryana for raping two disciples, was granted a 50-day parole on Friday, ninth time in four years.

After the parole, he will be staying in his sect's Dera in Baghat in Uttar Pradesh.

His last release from the jail was in November 2023 for 21 days. He was granted parole thrice last year. Till date, he has been granted parole and furlough for 184 days.

He has been lodged in Sunaria jail since August

2017 after being convicted in rape and murder cases. He has a large number of followers in Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. As per the jail manual, a convict is entitled for a 70-day parole in a year. Ram Rahim was sentenced to 20 years in jail in August 2017 for raping two women.

A special CBI court in Panchkula in January 2019 also sentenced Ram Rahim and three others to life imprisonment for the murder of journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati, 16 years ago.

His conviction on August 25, 2017, had led to violence in Panchkula and Sirsa, leaving 41 people dead and over 260 injured.

# IMD issues red alert for north India, cold day & dense fog to continue for next five days



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday issued a red alert, saying that dense to very dense fog conditions are likely to continue to prevail over North India during the next five days while cold day to severe cold day conditions are likely to continue to prevail over North India during next three days.

The IMD said that "Jet Stream Winds" of the order of 130-140 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 weather forecast agency.

In its bulletin, the IMD said that minimum temperatures are in the range of 2-5 degree Celsius in isolated pockets of north Rajasthan, south Haryana and in the range of 6-10 degree Celsius over most parts of Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar

Pradesh, remaining parts of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. "These are below normal by 2-4 degree Celsius in isolated pockets of south Haryana, south Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan. Today, the lowest minimum temperature of 2.4 degree Celsius was reported at Bikaner (West Rajasthan) and Kanpur (East Uttar Pradesh)," said the IMD.

The IMD further predicted that dense to very dense fog conditions are very likely to prevail for a few hours in the night/morning over many parts of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh till Saturday morning and in some parts for subsequent four days.

"Dense to very dense fog conditions are also very likely to prevail in morning hours in isolated pockets over Uttarakhand till January 23," said the IMD.

"Cold day to severe cold day conditions are very likely to continue in many parts of Uttar Pradesh on Saturday and in isolated pockets for subsequent three days. Similar conditions are very likely to continue in some parts of Bihar till January 24 and in some parts of Punjab, Haryana and north Rajasthan till Sunday," said the IMD official.

The IMD official said that fall in minimum temperatures by 2-3 degree Celsius is very likely over many parts of East India during the next three days and no significant change thereafter.

The IMD also predicted no significant change in minimum temperatures likely over rest parts of north India during the next five days. "Cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are very likely to continue in isolated pockets of Punjab and Haryana on Saturday and Sunday and cold wave conditions till January 22," said the IMD, adding that ground frost conditions are very likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand till Sunday.



# 'SANTA' SHINDE BACK FROM DAVOS WITH BAGFUL OF PROJECTS WORTH RS 3.53 LAKH CR



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde returned home here early on Friday after attending the World Economic Forum (WEF) meet in Davos, Switzerland -- with whopping investment commitments of Rs 3.53 lakh crore across sectors for Maharashtra. During his four-day sojourn in the Swiss ski resort, Shinde signed MoUs worth around Rs 3.53 lakh crore with major investments coming in sectors like steel, information technology, green energy, agriculture, logistics, electronics, etc. The investments shall be in varied geographical locations ranging from the traditional hot favourites of Mumbai and Pune to the remote parts of Chandrapur and Gadchiroli regions, thus enabling all-round development of the state, said an official.

Of the total investment commitments notched, over Rs 100,000 crore would be from global multinationals, and the rest from Indian corporations and big business houses. "These agreements are poised to create a significant employment surge of over two lakh jobs in the state. The state's image as an investment-friendly destination has been highlighted owing to people-oriented policies with a strong emphasis on industrialisation, skilled manpower and quick decision making," remarked Shinde, in a brief media interaction around midnight. Shinde's first day (January 16) in Davos proved auspicious when six agreements were signed with major companies with an investment of over Rs 102,000 crore with an employment potential of 26K-plus jobs. Further capitalising on the next day, he signed MoUs worth over Rs 208,850 crore with eight big conglomerates with a job creation of

around 152,000 jobs. On the final day, agreements of around Rs 42,825 crore were inked with six industries on January 18, leading to an additional 13,000 jobs. This comes to total investment commitments of around Rs 3.53 lakh crore plus over two lakh new jobs creation -- proving to be more than 2.5 times of the Rs 1.37 lakh crore commitments he got in 2023, of which 72 per cent are fulfilled -- explained the official. The major agreements on January 16, are with: Inox Air Products: Rs 25,000 crore (5,000 jobs); B.C. Jindal Group: Rs 41,000 crore (5,000 jobs); JSW Steel: Rs 25,000 crore (15,000 jobs); AB InBev Rs 600 crore (150 jobs); Godrej Agrovet: Rs 1,000 crore (650 jobs); and a US-based data company Rs 10,000 crore (200 jobs). The next, MoUs were inked with: Adani Group Rs 50,000 crores (500 jobs); Swiss Indian Chamber of Commerce Rs 1,158 crores (500 jobs); India Jewellery Park Rs 50,000 crores (1 lakh jobs); Web Works Rs 5,000 crores (100 jobs); Indospace Rs 3,500 crores (15,000 jobs); and a global conglomerate in natural resources Rs 20,000 crore (4,000 jobs). MAHAPREIT Rs 56,000 crore for green power projects, and other companies. The final day saw agreements signed with: Surjagad Ispat Rs 10,000 crore (5,000 jobs); Kalika Steel Rs 900 crore (800 jobs); Million Steel 250 crore (300 jobs); Hyundai Motors Rs 7,000 crore (4,000 jobs), ALU Tech of Qatar Including Rs 2,075 crore (400 jobs); and CTRLS Rs 8600 crore (2500 jobs). Shinde said that other companies like Arcelor Nippon-Mittal, and groups from Oman and Saudi Arabia are interested in making investments of Rs 100,000 crore across sectors. Slamming the Davos trip, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) has questioned various aspects of the investments and achievements claimed by the government. Congress state General Secretary Sachin Sawant said on X that when majority of the big companies are based in India, "then what was the need to travel to Davos, the agreements could have been signed here in India". The Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Aditya Thackeray targeted what he termed as a 'Swiss holiday' at public expense, while Nationalist Congress Party (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar and others have sought a detailed statement on the achievements and expenditure incurred over the Davos trip. During his high-profile trip, Shinde hobnobbed with the top political leaders and global corporate honchos or top executives to discuss with them plans to develop Maharashtra's infrastructure and the potential investment opportunities available here.

## RAM MANDIR INAUGURATION: MAHARASHTRA DECLARES PUBLIC HOLIDAY ON JAN 22



Mumbai: The Maharashtra government has declared a public holiday on January 22 -- the day when 'Pran Pratishtha' of Ram Temple will take place in Ayodhya, an official here said on Friday. The Centre had earlier announced a half-day holiday for the Central government offices on Monday (January 22), to enable people view the historic ceremony in Ayodhya. Maharashtra has a lot of celebrations and events lined up all through the auspicious day at Ram Temples and other places in the state, with millions expected to join the festivities at home and outside.

## ED summons MVA leaders Kishori Pednekar, Rohit Pawar for questioning next week

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday issued summons to two opposition leaders of Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) next week in connection with the ongoing probes against them. They are Shiv Sena (UBT)'s ex-Mayor of Mumbai Kishori Pednekar, and Nationalist Congress Party (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar, the grand-nephew of party supremo Sharad Pawar. Rohit Pawar has been called for questioning on January 24 (Wednesday) while Pednekar has been asked to come on January 25 (Thursday) to the ED office. Pednekar (61) is facing charges in connection with the alleged Covid body bags scam case that took place during the pandemic years when she was the Mayor of Mumbai. The ED -- which launched investigation in money-laundering case in September 2023 -- had summoned and grilled her for over six hours in November. The ED has contended that there was massive inflation in the rates of body-bags to



carry dead Covid-19 victims, while the company supplied it for around Rs 2,000 apiece to its distributors, it was giving the same bags to the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for around Rs 6,800 per piece. The Mumbai Police's EOW and the ED have filed cases against Pednekar in the matter involving other civic officials of the BMC's Central Purchase Department for the alleged irregularities in the matter. Rohit Pawar, 38, will be quizzed on the alleged money-laundering case arising out of the ongoing investigations into the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank

(MSCB) scam. The ED summons to Rohit Pawar came almost a fortnight after the agency raided his company Baramati Agro, in Pune and other linked entities in Aurangabad plus other locations. The MSCB money-laundering case arose from a Mumbai Police EOW FIR filed in August 2019, and the NCP (SP) has slammed the moves as political vendetta of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Among other things, Rohit Pawar has been accused of 'diverting' funds in the purchase of a sick sugar cooperative factory with allegations of money-laundering in the process.

# GLOCAL: Finland, Netherlands to help MMRDA in rivers & waste management

**▶ GOING GLOBAL TO TACKLE LOCAL PROBLEMS, THE MUMBAI METROPOLITAN REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (MMRDA) WILL GET HELP FROM FINLAND TO SAVE THE RIVERS AND ASSISTANCE FROM THE NETHERLANDS TO CURB WASTE IN COUNTRY'S FINANCIAL CAPITAL AND ITS VICINITY, COLLECTIVELY KNOWN AS 'MUMBAI METROPOLITAN REGION', OFFICIALS SAID HERE ON FRIDAY.**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Finland's River Recycle Oy will guide the MMRDA to protect and improve the rivers in this urban centre housing more than 3 crore people, along with flood protection measures, environmental upgrading, climate resilience and climate change adaptation. The Netherlands' Ministry of Infrastructure & Water Management will collaborate with MMRDA for five years to handle waste-management and climate change for sustainable urban development. The MMR, comprising Mumbai and parts of Thane, Palghar and Raigad has around 13 west-flowing (into Arabian Sea) rivers, their 21 tributaries, more than 430 natural lakes/ponds, 22 reservoirs, plus over 14,000 tubewells, borewells and hand-pumps to extract groundwater. As per a 2015 MMRDA study, around 671.2 sq.km (15 per cent) of the MMR is covered with wetlands and water bodies of different kinds, bordering a 256-kms long coastline (of the state's 720 total coastline) supporting nearly 200,000 fisherfolk. Besides Finland and The Netherlands, the World Smart City Forum, United Kingdom, will help development of Smart City/Growth

Centre led by a tech-oriented system in the MMR, and South Korea's Samsung C&T will assist developing Smart City/Growth Centre by the Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the MMR. Director-General for Enterprise & Innovation in The Netherlands Ministry of Economic Affairs & Climate Policy Erwin Nijse expressed hope that its partnership with MMRDA would have a long-term impact on the MMR's environment by enforcing practices that complement climate resilience. Major Dutch companies like SusBDE, Harvest Waste BV, Technimex, Hydroloop, Afvalzorg, Multriwell, Hofstetter, Indaver, Endwell, Blue Phoenix Group, Royal HaskoningDHV, Rebel Group, BrEAD BV, Metasus, Paques, Nijhuis Industries, Econvert Water & Energy, Colsten and Colubris Cleantech are expected to participate in various aspects of water and waste management in the MMR. Finland's River Recycle Oy will assist MMRDA in aspects like river protection & improvement, flood protection, rainwater absorption, environmental upgrading, climate resilience, and climate change adaptation in the MMR. The partnership will also extend to the enhancement of the air

quality index (AQI) and the establishment of urban sponges in the surrounding regions. The Helsinki-based company's CFO (Miss) Tina Nyfors said that the protection and improvement of rivers across the world play a major role in preventing oceanic pollution and its partnership with MMRDA will be pivotal to help achieve this global mission. "This mutual cooperation will enable MMR to head towards environmental sustainability with strategic river protection and improvement directives, and effective waste management," said Nyfors. The facilitation of globally recognised practices in relation to the promotion of circular economy practices like waste-to-energy solutions, efficient waste management, development of Blue & Green infrastructure across the MMR would help enforce the improvement of air quality and rainwater absorption. The different agreements were signed this week in Davos during the World Economic Forum (WEF) in the presence of MMRDA Chairman and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, MMRDA Commissioner Sanjay Mukherjee, and top government and corporate officials of The Netherlands, Finland, United Kingdom and South Korea.

## Prakash Ambedkar accuses BJP of using 'God like EVMs' for political gains

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Just three days ahead of the Pran Pratishtha ceremony at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, president of the Vanchit Bajuhan Aghadi (VBA) Prakash Ambedkar on Friday accused the BJP of "using God like EVMs". The Dalit leader and grandson of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar also attacked the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on similar lines. "In the last 10 years, BJP-RSS has appropriated many Indian icons and their legacies -- Babasaheb Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Rabindranath Tagore, Sardar Bhagat Singh --because it doesn't have any within its ranks," the VBA chief said. "Now, BJP-RSS, without any morals and principles, is trying to appropriate God by using the Ram Mandir inauguration for its electoral gains. BJP-RSS is using God like EVM," he alleged in a social media post. The latest onslaught came two days after he declined an invitation to attend the mega-event on January 22. "I will not be attending the said event because the event has been appropriated by the



BJP-RSS; a religious event has become a political campaign for electoral gains. My grandfather Dr. B.R. Ambedkar warned that if the parties place creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost forever." He pointed out that the apprehensions of his grandfather had become a reality today and the BJP-RSS, which "place creed over country", have appropriated the religious event for its political gains.

## Changing City: Mumbai-Vashi lane on Thane Creek Bridge-3 set to open in April

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The ongoing construction of Thane Creek Bridge-3 is designed to accommodate the increasing vehicular traffic expected once the Navi Mumbai International Airport becomes operational. This project involves expanding the current Thane Creek Bridge-2 to add six more lanes. With significant progress achieved on the South Mumbai to Vashi carriage - comprising over 85 per cent of the project - the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) is hoping to open one side of the road, potentially by April 2024. **Alignment:** 1.8 km-long bridge built over Thane Creek, parallel to the existing Thane Creek Bridge 2, comprising 3 plus 3 lanes each (total six lanes) **Benefits:** Seamless travel between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, once fully opened. Serving the transportation needs of commercial vehicles traveling to and from Jawaharlal Nehru Port. Quick dispersal of traffic from the old bridge across Thane Creek with additional lanes. Useful for motorists travelling from central suburbs and from Mumbai Metropolitan Region. **Challenges:** Carrying out work without disturbing the marine biodiversity. Gaining the confidence of the fisher-



folk community, ensuring no loss of livelihood. Protection of the nearby mangrove areas, flamingoes and mudflats. Cost: Rs 775 crore. Progress: 68% of overall project work done. **What officials say:** "Our target is to finish the construction of Thane Creek Bridge 3 by the end of October, and following its comple-

tion, the bridge will be accessible to traffic. The one-side road from Mumbai to Vashi on TCB-3 is already prepared and is expected to be finished by April. Consequently, we intend to open this one-side road. To facilitate efficient traffic flow, toll lanes have been strategically implemented on this road," Nitin Borule, MSRDC executive engineer, said.

## At 16.9 degrees Celsius, Mumbai sees second coldest day this season

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai woke up to its second coldest day this season on Friday as the India Meteorological Department's (IMD's) Santacruz observatory recorded a minimum temperature of 16.9 degrees Celsius. As per the weather bureau, the city is slated to enjoy pleasant weather for the next 2-3 days, at least, before it gets warm again. Maximum temperatures also dipped two degrees below normal, with Santacruz and Colaba stations registering 29 and 28.6 degrees Celsius respectively. Earlier this week, bringing respite from hot and humid weather which Mumbai had been reeling under for a while, minimum temperatures had dropped to 16.2 degrees Celsius in the city, which was the coldest day of the season, so far. "There is a northerly component to the change because of which temperatures have been dipping. For the next two to three days, the city will experience very pleasant weather," Sushma Nair, a scientist from IMD Mumbai, told

However, Nair said Mumbai should brace itself for slightly higher temperatures next week. Owing to several factors, Mumbai is experiencing a warmer winter this season. On January 12, with maximum temperatures soaring to 35.7 degrees Celsius, the city recorded its warmest January day in the past seven years. For perspective, even the city's lowest temperature of the season, at 16.2 degrees Celsius on January 16, was much higher than last year's lowest temperature, which slid to 13.6 degrees Celsius around the same time (mid-January). Responding to questions on a further drop, Nair said, "Currently, there is no synopsis that indicates a further drop. The temperatures are comparatively higher than last year's lowest temperature as we are experiencing no western disturbances, which is responsible for bringing snowfall in the north. Besides this, even the winds are not entirely northerly. There is only a northerly component in the air, which is largely south easterly."



# INDONESIA ALLOWS BOEING 737 MAX 9 PLANES TO TO RESUME FLYING AFTER CHECKS



▶ THREE BOEING 737 MAX 9 PLANES THAT BELONG TO INDONESIA'S BUDGET AIRLINE LION AIR HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO RESUME FLYING AFTER A TEMPORARY GROUNDING FOLLOWING THE ALASKA AIRLINES INCIDENT EARLIER THIS MONTH.

Jakarta | Agencies

Transportation Ministry spokesperson Adita Irawati told reporters that following inspections, it was found that the three Boeing 737 Max 9 planes operating under Lion Air apparently had different configurations with the Alaska Airlines' Boeing 737 Max 9 aircraft, which suffered

an in-flight blowout earlier this month, reports Xinhua news agency. The door system is apparently different from the Alaska Airlines's. We have inspected it, communicated with Lion Air and Boeing. They are allowed to fly again," said the spokesperson. This latest development comes as Boeing is facing a number of

issues on its aircraft.

On January 5, the Alaska Airlines jet had a door plug blow out shortly after takeoff when the plane was at 16,000 feet, leaving a gaping hole in the side of the jet.

The mid-cabin door plugs the aircraft became dislodged following an abrupt depressurisation shortly after departure on January 5. As a result, a piece of the fuselage was expelled at an altitude of 16,000 feet. The plane, bound for Ontario, California, executed an emergency landing in Portland just 20 minutes after takeoff. Two airlines that operate Boeing 737 Max 9 in the US -- Alaska Airlines and United Airlines -- later found either loose hardware or bolts in the assembly of door plugs on their aircraft. The Boeing 737 Max has been described as "the most scrutinised transport aircraft in history" after a series of safety issues. In late 2018 and early 2019, two of its aircraft were lost in near identical incidents, off the coast of Indonesia and outside the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

A total of 346 people were killed in both the crashes which were caused by flawed flight control software, which ultimately forced the planes into catastrophic dives, despite the best efforts of the pilots.

# Guterres issues call for Pakistan, Iran to deal with security concerns through dialogue



United Nations | Agencies

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has issued a call to Pakistan and Iran to sort out their security concerns through dialogue and avoid escalating the military strikes, according to his spokesperson Stephane Dujarric. "The Secretary-General underlines that all security concerns between the two countries must be addressed by peaceful means, through dialogue and cooperation, in accordance with the principles of sovereignty, territorial

integrity, and good neighbourly relations," Dujarric said on Thursday. "Deeply concerned about the recent exchange of military strikes... He urges both countries to exercise maximum restraint to avoid a further escalation of tension." Iran and Pakistan carried out attacks inside each other's territories against what they said were terrorist bases. Iran struck two bases of the Sunni terror group Jaish al-Adl in Balochistan's Koh-e-Sabz, about 50 km inside Pakistan, with missiles and drones on Tuesday.

According to Islamabad, two children were killed and several people were injured. Pakistan, where an election is due next month, retaliated on Thursday with air strikes in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province. Its Foreign Ministry said that aircraft, rockets and missiles carried out the "specifically targeted precision military strikes". Iran said that nine "foreigners" -- three women, two men and four children -- were killed. An Islamabad spokesperson said they were of Pakistani origin.

# Huge Nepal connections to Ram Temple Pran Pratishtha event

Kathmandu | Agencies

As Ayodhya is gearing up for the highly-anticipated Pran Pratishtha ceremony at the Ram Temple on January 22, there are also a huge Nepal connections associated with the grand event.

First, more than 500 exquisitely decked gift baskets were sent to Ayodhya from Nepal's Janakpur city believed to be the birthplace of Sita.

Nepal has also asked its citizens to perform Aarti and a special puja on January 22, as well as to halt the sale of alcohol and non-vegetarian food on the day.

Nepali priest, Acharya Durga Prasad Gautam will lead the special religious function on January 22, according to a letter sent by Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Tirtha Trust general secretary Champat Rai.

Gautam will recite Vedic Mantras in front of hundreds of thousands of Hindu devotees, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The 25-year-old is the main priest of Ram Temple and has been associated with it since April 2020.

"Since the Bhumi Pujan in April 2020, I have been asso-



ciated with all religious functions. I am happy to serve Lord Ram," he said.

Meanwhile, Mahanta Ram Tapeshwor Das, who is the head priest of the Ram-Janaki temple in Janakpur, has also been invited to the event.

Mahanta Ram Tapeshwor Das and his successor Mahantha Ram Roshan Das, who will also attend the event, will be given special treatment because they belong to the birthplace of Sita. The chief priest of Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu, Rawal Ganesh Bhatta, who is also known as Muul Bhatta, is also invited, according to Bishaw Hindu Parishad Nepal Chapter.

The Janakpur Sub Metropolitan City has called on all residents to join the Pran Pratishtha celebration on January 22 by lighting diyas in every household and at the Ram-Janaki temple. Similarly, the Birgunj Metropolitan City has announced a ban on sales and consumption of non-vegetarian food and alcohol on January 22.

The city will witness a ceremony at Ghadiarwa Pokhari on the same day.

Earlier, two big Shaligrams, a fossilised stone or ammonite, were collected from the banks of the Kali Gandaki, a tributary of the Gandaki River in Nepal, and sent to Ayodhya.

# HOUTHIS CLAIM RESPONSIBILITY FOR NEW MISSILE ATTACK ON US SHIP

Sanaa | Agencies

Yemen's Houthi militia on Friday claimed responsibility for launching a fresh missile strike on a US ship in the Gulf of Aden amid escalating tensions over the rebel group's continued attacks in the Red Sea region.

"The naval forces of the Yemeni Armed Forces (Houthi) carried out an attack targeting US ship (Chem Ranger) in the Gulf of Aden with several appropriate naval missiles, and the hit was accurate," Xinhua news agency quoted Yahya Sarea, a Houthi military spokesman, as saying in a statement broadcast by the group's al-Masirah TV.

"The Yemeni Armed Forces (Houthi) confirm that a retaliation to the American and British attacks is inevitable and that any new aggression will not go unpunished," the spokesman said.

The attacks "will continue until a ceasefire in the Palestinian enclave of Gaza Strip is imposed, and the siege is lifted", Sarea said, adding that their escalation comes in support of the Palestinians.

Confirming the attack, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) on Friday said that at about 9 p.m. on Thursday night, "Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists launched two anti-ship ballistic missiles at M/V Chem Ranger, a Marshall Island-flagged, US-owned, Greek-operated tanker ship". "The crew observed the missiles impact the water near the ship. There were no reported injuries or damage to the ship. The ship has continued underway," the CENTCOM said in a post on X.

According to the Central Command, this was the third Houthi attack on a commercial shipping vessel in three days.

Earlier on Thursday, US President Joe Biden conceded that US strikes against the Houthis were not deterring the group's attacks in the Red



Sea.

He also said that his administration returned the Houthi armed group to the "terrorist" list, and the decision will take effect next month if the Houthis don't stop threatening the shipping lines.

Houthi have denounced the re-designation and said it was for "political purposes".

Meanwhile, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said the US has "been able to degrade and severely disrupt and destroy a signifi-

cant number" of Houthi capabilities.

"We never said that the Houthis would immediately stop," CNN quoted Singh as saying.

"That is something that they will have to make that decision and that calculation to do."

Thursday night's attack came after the US and UK bombed Houthi sites in northern Yemen at dawn.

The strikes hit Houthi targets in five provinces, including Hodeidah, the main port on the Red Sea coast controlled by the militia group.

The attack followed the Houthis claim of a missile strike on a US ship in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday night. The Houthis have escalated their attacks in the Red Sea since the Israel-Hamas war broke out on October 7, 2023, demanding an end to Israeli attacks and siege on Gaza.

The Houthis have controlled much of northern Yemen, including the capital Sanaa and the strategic Red Sea port city of Hodeidah, since ousting the internationally recognised Yemeni government in 2014.

# Trump's lawyers warn of 'chaos and bedlam' if states allowed to bar him from 2024 ballot

Washington | Agencies

The lawyers of former US President Donald Trump have warned of "chaos and bedlam" if states are allowed to bar him from the ballot for this year's presidential election.

Last month, the Colorado Supreme Court had said that Trump is constitutionally ineligible to run in 2024 because of the 14th Amendment's ban on insurrectionists holding office covers his conduct on January 6, 2021, the day of the Capitol riots, reports CNN.

"The Court should reverse the Colorado decision because President Trump is not even subject to section 3, as the President is not an 'officer of the United States' under the Constitution. And even if President Trump were subject to section 3 he did not 'engage in' anything that qualifies as 'insurrection'," Trump's



attorneys said in a brief submitted to the US Supreme Court on Thursday.

The efforts "promise to unleash chaos and bedlam if other state

courts and state officials follow Colorado's lead and exclude the likely Republican presidential nominee from their ballots", the lawyers further argued. Earlier this month, the US Supreme Court agreed to hear the case, accepting an appeal brought by Trump. The justices are separately involved in other matters that could impact the federal criminal case against the former President, CNN reported.

The Colorado ruling has been on pause pending the US Supreme Court's resolution of the case, and the state's top election official has certified the 2024 presidential primary ballots with Trump's name on the Republican ballot.

If the justices conclude Trump is ineligible for public office before Colorado's primary, then any votes cast for him would not be counted. Oral arguments in the Colorado case are scheduled for February 8.

# N.Korea tests underwater nuke weapons system in response to trilateral drills

Seoul | Agencies

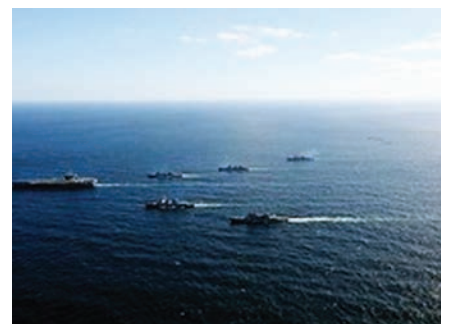
North Korea on Friday said it has tested an underwater nuclear weapons system under development in response to the latest maritime trilateral drills involving South Korea, the US and Japan.

According to Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), North Korean Defence Ministry said the country conducted an important test of the Haeil-5-23 in the East Sea, denouncing this week's naval drills involving a US nuclear aircraft carrier as "reckless confrontation hysteria".

The KCNA did not disclose details, including the weapons's specifications and the test date, reports Yonhap News Agency.

"Our army's underwater nuke-based countering posture is being further rounded off, and its various maritime and underwater responsive actions will continue to deter the hostile military maneuvers of the navies of the US and its allies," a spokesman of the Ministry said in a statement carried by the KCNA.

The official condemned the three nations for "seriously threatening the security" of North Korea and sternly warned of "cata-



strophic consequences" for their acts, the report said.

South Korea, the US and Japan jointly conducted naval drills involving the USS Carl Vinson nuclear-powered aircraft carrier from Monday to Wednesday, following Pyongyang's latest launch of a hypersonic missile. Pyongyang has long denounced joint military drills between Seoul and Washington as a rehearsal for an invasion.

In March last year, North Korea first made public a test of its underwater attack drone, the Haeil-1, claiming the "secret weapon" is capable of generating a "radioactive tsunami" and stealthily attacking enemies.



# AYODHYA-UJJAIN HAVE AGE-OLD CULTURAL RELIGIOUS CONNECTION: CHIEF MINISTER DR. MOHAN YADAV

## CM Dr. Mohan Yadav flags-off Prasad Rath for Ayodhya

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav flagged-off Prasad Rath carrying 5 lakh laddu for Ayodhya from Tulsi Manas Mandir, Bhopal. Speaking on the occasion the Chief Minister said that Ayodhya city was renovated years back during the rule of King Vikramaditya, who also built a majestic temple. Ujjain and Ayodhya have common cultural religious relationship. The glory of the past is reviving after five hundred years. It is a matter of joy for the present generation.

Book on Ayodhya released  
Chief Minister Dr. Yadav performed pooja of Lord Rama in Shri Siddh Raghunath Temple at Manas Pratishthan. He released a book on Ayodhya, authored by Shri Ramgopal Soni.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav, along with Minister for Sports and Youth Welfare and Cooperation Shri Vishwas Sarang, Minister of State for Scheduled Caste and Minority Welfare Srimati Krishna Gaur, Mayor of Bhopal Srimati Malati Rai, MLA Shri Rameshwar Sharma, Shri Bhagwan Das Sabnani, Vice-Chairman of Bhopal Development Authority Shri Lili Agrawal, and other dignitaries, flagged off four trucks as Prasad Rath for Ayodhya, each carrying about a lakh laddus. They also flagged off the trucks carrying the Prasad from Manas Pratishthan, Bhopal.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Prime Minister Shri Modi has counselled to visit Ayodhya in an organized manner. He said that a magnificent play centered on King Vikramaditya will be staged there. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi is enriching democracy. He appreciated the Ram Lala Prana Pratishtha ceremony. Sending laddus from Ujjain to Ayodhya is an auspicious occasion.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Lord Rama's life was full of struggles and composed of the principles of morality. Maharishi Valmiki made efforts to bring the life and divine deeds of Lord Rama to the masses. The idol of Lord Rama is being consecrated as the embodiment of love, faith, and devotion to Lord Rama. He underlined the importance of Ujjain, historical and mythological events display knowledge



of technology. Drivers of Prasad Rath honoured Chief Minister Dr. Yadav, by waving the Kesariya flag, dis-

patched four trucks of laddus for Ayodhya. It is noteworthy that laddus in special packets have been prepared by the Mahakaleshwar Temple Management Committee, Ujjain. The

priest of Mahakal Temple, Shri Pradeep Guru, was also honoured. The drivers of the trucks carrying the laddus Prasad were also honoured.

## MPPCB gets SKOCH Order of Merit award 2023 for excellence in environmental management

Environment Minister Shri Nagar Singh Chouhan extends greetings to team members

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The M.P. Pollution Control Board (MPPCB) has been honoured with the prestigious SKOCH Order of Merit award 2023 recognising its excellence in environmental management. Environment Minister Shri Nagar Singh Chouhan extended greetings to Principal Secretary Environment Shri Gulshan Bamra and team.

The SKOCH award acknowledges the outstanding contribution and technological advancement for salutary transformations in society and governance by displaying exemplary abilities.

The award was received by Shri Chandra Mohan Thakur, Member Secretary, Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board at an investiture ceremony the other day.

This award was given as an acknowledgement of merit for innovative tool developed by the Environment Surveillance Centre, MPPCB for the 'Automated Surveillance of Industrial Pollution using Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning'.

This innovative automated tool, using AI and ML technology, is first of its kind in the country. Owing to its significance and unique features in better governance,

this tool shall be shared with all the State Pollution Control Boards in the country for its wider benefits to all.

This tool helps in automated interpretation and analysis of voluminous pollution monitoring data, specially of industry stack emissions, waste water effluent, ambient air quality etc., received on server on real-time basis from all the target air and water polluting industries.

This AI driven tool also assist in quick detection of possible tampering and manipulation of data and thereby ensuring the quality and genuineness of environmental data for effective decision making.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav flagged off trucks carrying five lakh 'laddus' as 'prasad' for the auspicious occasion of Pran-Pratishtha on January 22 in Ayodhya.

Yadav had announced to send five lakh laddus from Ujjain's Mahakaleshwar temple to Ayodhya last week. After the announcement by the CM, the Mahakaleshwar Temple Management Committee prepared the laddus for prasad.

Trucks loaded with laddus arrived at Manas Bhawan in Bhopal early Friday and then CM Yadav flagged off them to Ayodhya later in the day. Laddus have been made from besan (gram flour), rava, ghee



and dry fruits. On this occasion, CM Yadav said, "The foundation of the city of Ayodhya, as we see it today, was laid around 2,000 years ago during the era of Emperor Vikramaditya." He claimed that the original temple was built by Emperor Vikramaditya.

"We are happy that those glory days are being restored. Lord Ram is returning to his birthplace and will be enthroned in the 'Sanctum Sanctorum' of the temple," while flagging off trucks, Yadav said.

He also said, "Baba Mahakal is sending five lakh laddus from here as a symbol of his love.

Today, after showing the saffron flag, we sent these prasad chariots filled with laddus to Ayodhya."

## MP govt declares half-day holiday on Jan 22

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After the Centre's order for its employees, Madhya Pradesh government also decided to close its offices for half a day on January 22 for the Pran Pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya.

A notice issued from the General Administration Department (GAD) stated that in view of the Pran Pratishtha in Ayodhya, the government offices and institutions in Madhya Pradesh will observe a half-day closure on January 22.

The state government released the notification on Thursday night, declaring the closure of offices until 2.30 p.m. on January 22.

Public sector banks, insurance companies, financial institutions, and regional rural banks (RRBs) across India will observe a half-day closure in honor of the Pran Pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya,



as per an order from the Department of Personnel and Training (DOPT) for the central government establishments.

Private sector banks, however, have not announced any holiday on January 22, and customers were advised to check with local branches for updates.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Friday flagged off five trucks carrying five lakh 'laddus', prepared at the Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain, to Ayodhya.

Five lakh laddus were sent to Ayodhya in five trucks. As per the information, the laddus weigh about 50 gm each, and the entire shipment is 250 quintals, and have been made from besan (gram flour), rava, ghee and dry fruits.

Notably, the neighbouring Chhattisgarh has sent 300 tonnes of the finest aromatic rice from the state to Ayodhya for the ceremony.

## Governor Shri Mangubhai Patel called on by CM Dr. Mohan Yadav



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav paid a courtesy visit to

Governor Shri Mangubhai Patel at Raj Bhavan today. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav greeted Governor Shri Patel by presenting him a bou-

quet. Subsequently CM Dr. Yadav had a discussion with Governor Shri Patel.

## CM Dr. Yadav congratulates MLA Shri Patwa on his birthday

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav congratulated Bhojpur Assembly constituency MLA Shri Surendra Patwa on his birthday. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav reached the residence of Shri Patwa in Swami Dayanand Nagar and presented him a bouquet and extended best wishes. Shri Surendra Patwa presented a replica of Ram Temple to Chief Minister Dr. Yadav as a souvenir. On this occasion, Chief Minister Dr. Yadav



also met Shri Patwa's mother and took her blessings.

## THREE-DAY PT. KUMAR GANDHARVA BIRTH CENTANARY AT DEWAS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The three-day birth centenary celebration of Padmavibhushan Pt. Kumar Gandharva began at Dewas today. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav inaugurated the programme by lighting ceremonial lamp. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Pt. Kumar Gandharva was a pole star of India's classical music and earned a global recognition. He said that the present generation is blessed to have the privilege of attending the birth centenary programme. He said that music of Pandit Kumar Gandharva showed people a glimpse of the Divine.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav inaugurated a photo exhibition of



Padmavibhushan Pt. Kumar Gandharva's life. The exhibition shows unique aspects of Pt. Kumar

Gandharva's life and art. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav released a table calendar based on the life of Pandit

Kumar Gandharva. Kalapini Komkali threw light on the outline of the birth centenary programme of Padmavibhushan Pt. Kumar Gandharva. On the first day of the birth centenary year programme, the saangeet saba started with the presentation of vocalist Bhuvnesh Komkali. The three-day programme will witness renowned artistes upto January 21.

MP Shri Mahendra Singh Solanki, MLA Smt. Gayatri Rajee Pawar, Shri Manoj Chaudhary, Shri Ashish Sharma, Shri Murali Bhanwara, Dr. Rajesh Sonkar, District Panchayat President Smt. Leela Atria, Dewas Development Authority Chairman Shri Rajesh Yadav and people's representatives, music lovers were present.



## Salma Hayek sets Instagram on fire with nude throwback snaps

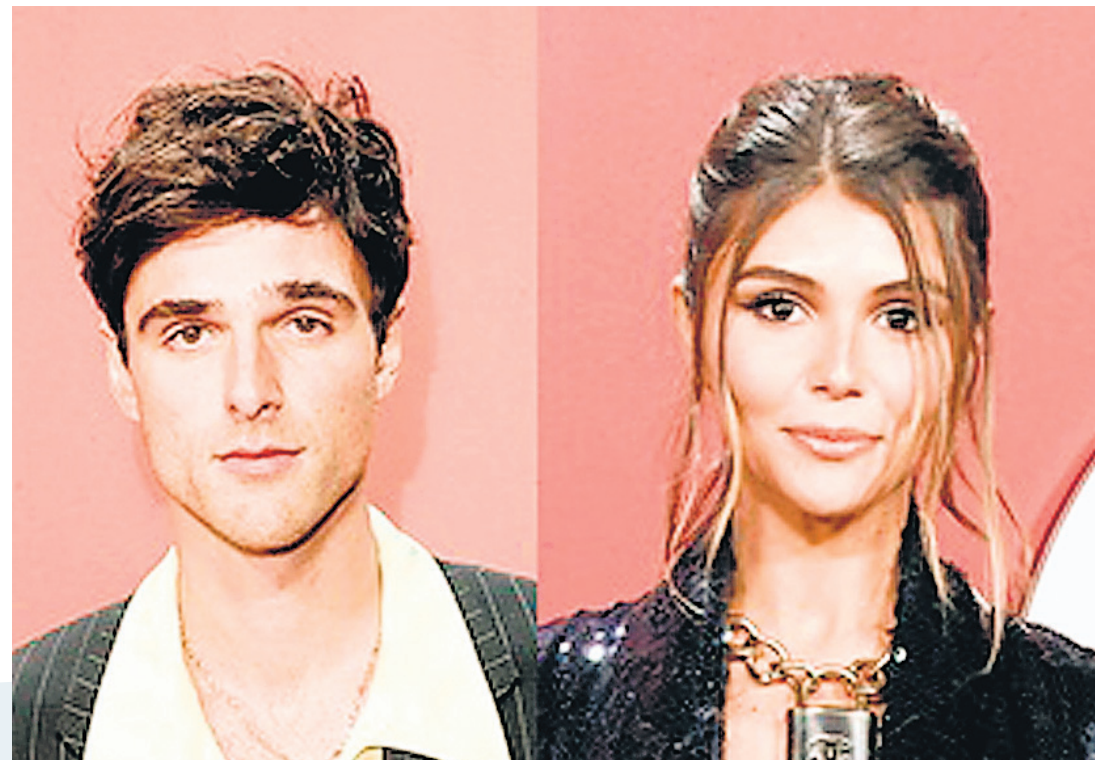


Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Salma Hayek sent fans wild after sharing a carousel of unearthed naked photographs on her social media. The 'From Dusk Till Dawn' and 'Frida' actress left little to the imagination as she uploaded the throwback snaps on her Instagram account, sharing the saucy collection with her 27.7million followers on the platform, sparking thousands of interactions, reports Mirror.co.uk.

one hour, generating thousands of comments. They look to be grabs from film print-outs, thought to have been taken several years ago, it's not yet clear when the photoshoot took place. Writing alongside the saucy snaps, Salma penned: "Some say never look back, but sometimes it's the best view #tbt" Fans and friends flocked to the post's comments section, with Kate Hudson leaving a flurry of fire emojis, saying nothing else. Blake Lively left the mouth-watering emoji, while Lauren Sanchez commented: "Pretty but even more beautiful now." Someone else said: "These were

taken yesterday right? Stunning then, stunning now. You're an ageless icon." While another follower asked: "I thought you were going to remake this shoot." Others praised Salma's current modelling skills, saying she's "still got it now." As per Mirror.co.uk, it comes after Salma Hayek stunned her fans as she posed in a skimpy bikini in another Instagram post shared last month, in December last year. The Hollywood star oozed sex appeal in the yellow tropical print attire against a stone wall as she showed off her toned physique for her followers on the social network.



## Jacob Elordi, Olivia Jade 'hang out' in New York City

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Jacob Elordi and Olivia Jade have shut down rumours of their relationship being on the rocks by hanging out together in New York City. The couple have been dogged by reports that their romance was over however they have now been spotted preparing for Jacob's Saturday Night Live gig together with Olivia by his side while he rehearses, reports Mirror.co.uk. Production sources have confirmed that she has been present at the filming location of 30 Rockefeller Plaza all week. There has already been footage and pictures shared of Jacob joining the Saturday Night Live team to give fans a sneak preview of what to expect. Olivia has reportedly been present for much of his preparations. According to TMZ the actress has been seen around his dressing room all week putting pay to the split reports. The assumption that the couple had broken up was based on Olivia allegedly unfollowing Jacob on Instagram. However, there was no confirmation that they had ever been following each other on the platform. The couple have been an item for several years having reportedly broken up once previously before rekindling their romance. As per Mirror.co.uk, Jacob has become hot property not just since his role in Euphoria by now thanks to the hype surrounding his latest movie 'Saltburn'. The movie, written by actress Emerald Fennell has sent shockwaves across the globe and set social media alight following its release. 'Saltburn' focuses on Oxford University scholarship holder Oliver Quick (Barry Keoghan) and his best friend Felix Catton (Elordi). Throughout the movie, Oliver struggles to fit in with his wealthy peers before becoming infatuated with Felix. However, Oliver's feelings for his university pal rapidly intensify throughout the movie.

## Chris Hemsworth looks ripped in shirtless beach day with wife and kids



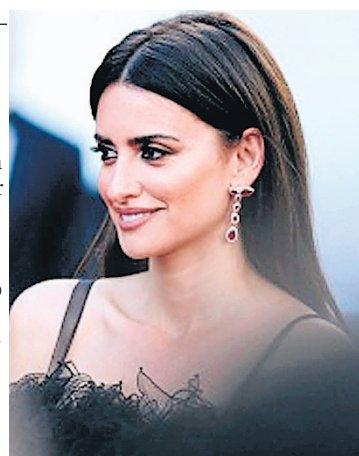
Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Chris Hemsworth and Elsa Pataky showed off their toned physiques as they enjoyed a relaxing beach day with their children. The pair appeared to further squash recent rumours that they were growing apart by enjoying a surfing session in Byron Bay joined by their twin sons Sasha and Tristan and daughter India, reports Mirror.co.uk. Elsa, 47, looked incredible in a skimpy pink bikini which showcased her toned abs and taut physique to perfection. The Spanish actress also layered gold chains and jewellery to accessorise her look and wore a baseball cap to complete her look as a cool mum. Meanwhile, Chris, 40, showed off his sculpted chest and biceps wearing just a pair of black swimming trunks as he enjoyed the family outing. As per Mirror.co.uk, Chris previously put rumours of problems in their marriage to rest posting to Instagram as the family enjoyed Christmas Day at their gorgeous Byron Bay compound, eating in the blazing Australian sun, and gazing over their infinity pool and out towards the sea. The couple's fans had voiced their concern that there might be problems at home after noticing that they had been holidaying apart and not posting many photos together. After Elsa posted a photo of her and one of their sons decorating a massive Christmas tree, one fan commented: "Haven't seen you and Chris together in a while. Hope all is good." Concerns had been growing for a while. In October last year they took their kids on separate trips with Elsa and the twins going to Japan, and Chris and India heading to Iceland. They both documented their respective trips, leaving their followers wondering why they didn't all go away together.

## PENELOPE CRUZ SAYS HER KIDS DON'T HAVE CELL PHONES: 'IT'S A CRUEL EXPERIMENT ON CHILDREN'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Penelope Cruz is very protective of her children. The 'Ferrari' actress, 49, opened up about her life as a mom to daughter Luna, 10, and son Leo, 12, both of whom she shares with her actor-husband Javier Bardem. The actress explained that she's always been dedicated to making sure that if her children ever want to step into the spotlight, it's in their own time and on their own terms, reports People magazine. Penelope Cruz, who appears on the cover of Elle's February 2024 issue, told the magazine: "It's for them to decide if they are going to have a job that is more exposed to the public or not. They can talk about that when they're ready." As per People, the mom of two also admitted that she doesn't allow her two kids to have phones, explaining: "It's so easy to be manipulated, especially if you have a brain that is still forming. And who pays the price? Not us, not our generation, who, maybe at 25, learned how a BlackBerry worked," she continued. "It's a cruel experiment on children, on teenagers." Elsewhere in the interview, Cruz talked about how she played roles where she portrayed a mother far before she was one and that motherhood still rings through many of the roles available to her. "At my age, 80 per cent of the characters that I play will be about motherhood or divorce or abandonment or characters who didn't want to have children or couldn't or who lost children. I've played mothers since I was very young," she said. Cruz credits Spanish filmmaker and frequent collaborator Pedro Almodóvar because he "always saw me as a mother." "We have known each other since I was 17. He would watch me going to talk to strangers just to see their babies. He always saw that strong, inevitable instinct in me, and I saw him see it," she added. "But also, ever since I was a little girl, I knew I wanted kids. But I knew I wanted them older. I wanted to wait until I felt I was ready. I was sure it would be the most important thing I would do in my life." During an interview with Rita Braver of CBS Sunday Morning in December 2021, Cruz suggested she might not be ready for her kids to join social media until they turn 16.



## Jim Carrey celebrates 62nd b'day with Adam Sandler, David Spade

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Jim Carrey celebrated another trip around the sun. Recently, actor-comedian offered a glimpse into Carrey's 62nd birthday celebrations in a photo shared on Instagram, which showed 'The Truman Show' star smiling alongside David Spade, 59, and Adam Sandler at a dinner. "Happy birthday to Jim Carrey who has made me laugh on and off the field so many times," the actor and comedian, 59, captioned the image, reports People magazine. He further mentioned, "Such a cool dude. I rarely bust out the cake emoji but I will today". "Too much talent for one room!" wrote actor Rob Lowe in the comments section. Meanwhile, fellow comedian Jeff Ross also shared a series of snaps from the festivities on Instagram and revealed that there were plenty more famous



faces there to celebrate Carrey. Along with Spade, Sandler and Ross, the bash included Jimmy Kimmel, Seth Green, Howie Mandel, Craig Robinson, Ben Schwartz, Cary Elwes and Paul Vincent. "The Laugh Supper. Happy birthday Jim Carrey. We love you", Ross, 58, captioned the carousel. As per People, in the first photo, the group could be seen pulling faces and laughing as they posed at a dinner table around Carrey, while the second photo showed the 'Sonic The Hedgehog' actor posing for a picture with a bagpipes player. "Insane group," noted DJ Diplo in the comments section.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Blanca Blanco



## Hockey Olympic Qualifiers: No answers why India failed to score a goal against Japan, says head coach Schopman

**Team Absolute | Ranchi**  
India coach Janneke Schopman on Friday said her team played its best, fought bravely and dominated the entire game but was unlucky not to score a goal as it went down 0-1 to Japan in the women's FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers and missed a chance to make it to the Paris Olympic Games to be held later this year.  
India conceded an early goal to Japan off a penalty corner and then could not score despite dominating the entire match, making nearly a dozen circle entries, taking 11 shots at the goal and earning nine penalty corners as compared to four by their opponents.  
Schopman said her team was ready physically and mentally for the match despite a heartbreaking 4-3 defeat to Germany in a sudden-death shoot-out in the semifinal on Thursday.  
Within 24 hours, they were back on



the turf and played another thriller.  
"I think they were ready. We didn't start well defensively and sometimes you know it can happen. But again, what I see is a team that fought back and look, we dominated the entire game. After such domination, we should have scored a goal and we didn't," said Schopman.

The result was that Schopman's Indian team failed to qualify for their successive Olympic Games while Japan made it to their sixth.  
Asked what was the reason for India's failure to score a goal against Japan, Schopman said she did not have any answer for that.  
"If I knew the answer for why we didn't (score), then I wouldn't be standing here. Probably because then I would have given them that answer during the game. And the only thing I can say is they were trying, they were fighting, they were trying.  
"If you look at the match, we probably haven't played this dominant against Japan in the last three games we played against them. But this time we didn't score and the other games we scored and they didn't," said the 46-year-old coach, a former Olympic Games medalist for the Netherlands.

## Hockey Olympic Qualifiers: Defensive Japan break Indian hearts with 1-0 win, claim Olympic berth

**Team Absolute | Ranchi**  
The Indian women's hockey team attacked in waves, applied full press and earned several penalty corners but the only thing could not do was score as Japan survived many anxious moments to emerge 1-0 winner in the Women's FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers and claimed a berth in the Paris Olympic Games later this year.  
The Japanese crowded their half, defended in numbers and absorbed all the pressure as they thwarted the Indians' every attempt to finish third at the Marang Gomme Jaipal Singh Astro-Turf Hockey Stadium here on Friday.  
It was just not India's day as they ended on the wrong end of the result despite trying their best, failing to make it to their third Olympic Games in a row. India had finished fourth in the Tokyo Olympic Games but were left heartbroken as they finished fourth in the qualifiers.  
India dominated possession, made 13 circle entries as compared to eight by the Japanese, had 11 shots at the goal and earned nine penalty corners as compared to four by their opponents, but in the end, Kana Urata's penalty corner goal in the sixth minute proved enough for Japan to win the match and book a  
India made a couple of circle entries in the first couple of minutes but could not get a look at the goal. In the end, Japan bagged the first penalty corner of the match but the shot was deemed dangerous.  
Neha and Sangita made a good run and passed it to Beauty Dung near the backline but she could not get away from the defender.  
Miyu Hasegawa was fouled inside the circle and Japan earned their second PC. Kana Urata stepped up and flicked through Savita's legs to give Japan the lead in the sixth minute.  
The Indians launched a couple of good attacks when Deepika set up Baljeet with an overhead pass just outside the circle on the right flank. Then Sonika sent a ball inside the circle and though Deepika attempted deflection sailed just over the crossbar.  
At the other end, Japan came close to doubling the lead with two good chances when Kana Urata's pass was deflected out by a defender and Miyu Hasegawa then sent the ball across the goalmouth as the Indian defence was caught napping.  
It was an open game with Japan coming out in attack regularly instead of failing back to defend their lead. The first quarter ended with Japan leading 1-0.  
Japan earned a penalty corner soon after the restart but the ball was not stopped properly and the Indian defenders cleared the ball.  
India earned their first penalty corner in the third minute of the second quarter when Baljeet was fouled near the goalline. But Deepika's flick was saved by goalkeeper Hazuki Nagai.  
A minute later, India won another penalty corner but this time Deepika's flick was deflected over by the goalkeeper.  
A hit into the circle by Salima Tete was deflected across the



goalmouth by Vaishnavi Phalke as the two teams went in for half-time with Japan still leading 1-0.  
After the two sides made a couple of attacks at the start of the third quarter, India earned their third penalty corner because of a foul on Salima. Deepika's flick was deflected onto the crossbar by the goalkeeper Nakamura.  
Japan bagged their fourth penalty corner in the eighth minute of the third quarter but Ishika deflected off Urata's flick. Japan referred for a foul but the decision was in India's favour.  
India earned their fourth penalty corner but Uditia's slap shot was blocked by the rusher. A couple of circle entries proved futile as the defenders did not allow the Indian attackers a look at the goal.  
India earned their fifth penalty corner but the ball was not stopped cleanly and the indirect attempt was thwarted by some strong defending by the Japanese as the clock ticked down to signal the end of the third quarter.  
On the restart, Japan referred after the umpire gave India a penalty corner and the decision was in their favour. India won their fifth penalty corner but goalkeeper Tanaka saved Deepika's drag flick.  
India came close again with just eight minutes remaining in the match when Lalremsiami could not latch onto a ball but it was cleared dangerously by a defender.  
The hosts earned another penalty corner but Deepika's shot went in vain. Off the rebound, Sangita took a shot but goalkeeper Akio Tanaka blocked it. India tried for a penalty corner asking for a dangerous play, and India earned their eighth penalty corner. But it was not a clean trap and the indirect variation was saved by the goalkeeper.  
Both the Japanese goalkeeper had a good match but Tanaka was exceptionally good in the fourth quarter as she pulled off four good saves.  
The Indians made attack after attack but in the end, they just ran into the Japanese wall as the clock wound down and the Japanese players erupted with joy as they won the match 1-0.

## Asia Olympic Shotgun Qualifiers: Two women, one man, in top six after day one of skeet qualification

**Team Absolute | New Delhi**  
With the Paris 2024 Olympics quota places on the line, at least two Indian women and one man, have ended day one of qualifications of the skeet competition at the Asia Olympic Qualification Shotgun in Kuwait City, Kuwait, within the top six. Ganemat Sekhon shot 71 for her three rounds to place second, while Maheshwari Chauhan shot 70 for third spot in women's skeet, even as Anant Jeet Singh Naruka (72) ended the day in fourth in the men's event.  
There are two Paris quota places available in each of the events and one country can only take one quota place. India are searching for their first Paris quota in Skeet. The Indian Shooting squad has so far bagged a record 17 Paris quota places thus far.  
India's number one Ganemat, a winner of four world cup medals in Olympic events, was the most successful Indian on the day after posting rounds of 24, 24 and 23. She was one behind Gao Jinmei of China and one ahead of Maheshwari, who had rounds of 23, 23 and 24, to stay in contention. Raiza Dhillon was only slightly behind in eighth with a score of 67, a point below the top-six mark.  
In men's skeet, another Indian number one Anant Jeet Singh Naruka, began with a perfect round of 25, before missing two and one in the next two to end fourth on countback. He was tied with two others including second placed Samer



Sarkis of Lebanon. China was leading here too, thanks to Ma Chenglong's 73, which included two perfect rounds.  
With two more rounds coming up on Saturday followed by the finals, the race to the top six will be the first challenge to overcome for the Indian shooters.

## Nabi was within his right to run, says R Ashwin on Mohammad Nabi-Rohit Sharma controversy

**Team Absolute | New Delhi**  
India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has weighed in on the Mohammed Nabi extra run controversy during the third T20I between India and Afghanistan. As the final ball of the first super over played out, Nabi, attempting a single, found himself amid a contentious situation. Sanju Samson's throw from behind the stumps struck Nabi's leg, deflecting towards long-on and enabling the batsmen to snatch two additional runs.  
Indian skipper Rohit Sharma, visibly perturbed, confronted Nabi, arguing that the extra runs went against the essence of the game. However, the on-field umpires deemed the runs legitimate, setting off a storm of opinions on sportsmanship.  
Former Indian cricketer Aakash Chopra and the head coach of the Indian team, Rahul Dravid, defended Nabi's decision, asserting that any player would have seized the opportunity in a high-stakes scenario. However, Indian off-spinner R Ashwin took a different stance, dismissing the talk about the 'spirit of cricket'.  
Ashwin emphasized a batter's right to take a run when a fielder attempts to get them run out, and the ball deflects off their body. "When a fielder throws to get me run out and the ball deflects off my body, I am within my right to run. Spirit of cricket, yet again, sorry," said Ashwin on his YouTube channel.  
Acknowledging the disappointment



within the Indian camp, Ashwin added that irritations naturally arise when a team feels affected on the field. He highlighted the subjective nature of such situations. "Virat Kohli stopped the ball with his leg and wondered what was happening. There are two sides to this story. If we are the affected party on the field, we'll get irritated with whatever happens. We might not have done this if we were on the field - that is our personal opinion and view," Ashwin added.  
Ashwin also heaped praise on Rinku Singh, acknowledging the youngster's composure under pressure. "He is somebody I'd call a left-handed Dhoni. I can't compare him to Dhoni just yet because Dhoni is too big. But, I am talking about the composure that he brings," said the off-spinner.

The story of Rinku's journey from the Kolkata Knight Riders' bench to the national team is one of dedication and perseverance. Ashwin shared an anecdote about Rinku's time with KKR, revealing how the young batter collected balls during practice, showcasing his commitment and hunger for improvement.  
"Since then, he has been with the franchise for so long, put in the hard work for UP and showed that he's always available to get the Indian team out of a tricky situation or finish an innings. The composure doesn't change whether the team is batting first or chasing. His composure towards the back end of the innings is a bonus," added Ashwin.  
Rinku, a product of his stellar performance in the 2023 Indian Premier League (IPL) season, had been drafted into the T20I squad. His immediate impact in the finisher's role was nothing short of spectacular. Scoring an unbeaten 69 off 39 balls, he orchestrated a remarkable partnership of 190 runs for the fifth wicket with skipper Rohit Sharma. The left-hander's resilience and ability to navigate pressure situations were the defining traits of his innings.  
Rinku Singh's T20I journey, which began against Ireland in August 2023, has been nothing short of remarkable. With 356 runs at an average of 89 and a strike rate of 176.23 in 11 T20Is, he has not only secured his place in the national squad but has also become a beacon of hope in challenging situations.

## I've accepted it's going to be hard, says Rehan Ahmed ahead of England's Test tour of India

**Abu Dhabi | Agencies**  
Ahead of England's Test tour of India starting on January 25 in Hyderabad, young leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed said he has accepted the fact that it will be challenging for him to excel in the sub-continental conditions of the upcoming series.  
Ahmed is one of the four spinners in England's Test squad alongside Jack Leach, Tom Hartley, and Shoaib Bashir. He played his only Test match against Pakistan in Karachi and took seven wickets, including a five-wicket haul in the second innings, on his debut in the format.  
"I still get shocked when I get picked. It's Test cricket, it's a big thing, I think about it every day. It is the hardest game ever. I've accepted it's going to be hard. I'll try my best. That's all I can control."  
"I'm just looking forward to playing Test cricket again. I will try and hold my speed a bit in India: with the wicket doing what it does, less time to react is the best way to go," said Ahmed to The Telegraph.



Ahmed had registered himself for the IPL auction, but withdrew later. Asked about it, he said, "The least I could do is make sure I'm fully ready for whatever I can be for England. There's a lot of time for IPL and stuff if I get the chance again, and if I don't get the chance to do it, I'm fine with that as well."  
"I spoke to a couple of people - if you want a long career, you don't want to burn out too soon. Just being ready for England is my main priority."

Ahmed is currently with the England Test team in Abu Dhabi for a pre-series preparatory camp. From Hyderabad, the series between India and England will happen at Visakhapatnam (February 2-6), Rajkot (February 15-19), Ranchi (February 23-27) and Dharamshala (March 7-11).  
Ahmed also spoke about the learnings he took from senior leg-spinner Adil Rashid during the white-ball tour of the West Indies last month. "I speak to Rash a lot about bowling. I don't like when I get told loads of technical things. I'm more tactical, so about field placings and plans."  
"I get more talking about that than talking about footwork and front arm. We both understand I'm not the bowler he is, he's not the bowler I am - completely different, which makes it more interesting."  
"Rash went through a lot, I think, when he was younger: he got picked and then he didn't play for England for six, seven years. And then he came back and became the best in the world. So he's made a pathway for us."

## India aim for winning start in Men's U19 WC with opener against Bangladesh

**Bloemfontein | Agencies**  
It is that time of the year when youngsters will be aiming to leave their mark in the Men's U19 World Cup. India, the defending champions, enter the 2024 edition of the competition to make a winning start against Bangladesh in their tournament opener at the Mangaung Oval on Saturday.  
India have been the most successful team in this showcase event, winning the World Cup in 2000, 2008, 2012, 2018 and 2022. Their preparation for the upcoming tournament included a semi-final appearance at the ACC U19 Asia Cup, and winning the tri-series featuring South Africa and Afghanistan.  
They will need to be careful of Bangladesh, who defeated them in the Asia Cup semi-final. Captain Uday Saharan top scored with 112 against the Proteas in the tri-series final, though it was a washed-out affair. Saharan was also the top-scorer in their official World Cup warm-up game against Australia (74).  
"Born in Rajasthan, Uday moved to Punjab and has played his cricket there. He has received a lot of support from his father and even the Punjab Cricket Association has invested heavily in him."  
"We'll see him play at No. 4 and 5. He played well in the tri-series featuring South Africa and Afghanistan recently and scored a century against South Africa. He is a good stroke-maker and is a proper batsman. He has good temperament and shows a lot of patience," said Aakash Chopra, former India cricketer, on '#AAKSHVANI' show on JioCinema.  
Arshin Kulkarni, the fast-bowling all-rounder, led the team in runs at the U19 Asia Cup, and even earned an IPL 2024 deal with Lucknow Super Giants at last year's auction. "He bats in the top six and is also a pace bowler. He's a rare commodity in that sense. Everyone I have spoken to has said he's a good player. He was picked by Lucknow Super Giants for the IPL."  
"Hopefully, we'll see him do well at the World Cup. He was

impressive in the Maharashtra Premier League and was successful with both bat and ball. He scored a 100, took four wickets and also defended six runs in the last over, all in the same match," added Chopra.  
Vice-captain Saamy Kumar Pandey led the team in wickets during the tri-series, also taking 6/29 against Afghanistan. "He faced many challenges in childhood. Many people don't know, he was born prematurely, so it took some time for his body to develop. He fought these circumstances and developed into a left-arm spinner."  
"He has the ability to keep bowling at the same spot. He's not a huge turner of the ball and varies the pace well. He is an accurate bowler and that should help him get wickets in South Africa," stated Chopra.  
Fast-bowler Raj Limbani raised eyebrows by taking 7/13 (9.1) against Nepal at the ACC U19 Asia Cup. "He took 7/13 against Nepal in the U-19 ACC Cup. He swings the ball very well. He tries to hit the pads regularly. Some of the balls straighten and he's capable of finding the outside edges. It will be interesting to see how he bowls on South African pitches," added Chopra.  
There's also Musheer Khan, the left-arm spin bowling all-rounder, who's the younger brother of prolific run-scorer Sarfaraz Khan, who himself played 2014 and 2016 U19 World Cups for India.  
"There are shades of Sarfaraz in him when it comes to scoring heavily. His style of batting is quite interesting. He looks slightly off-balance, looks a bit ungainly but he scores a lot of runs and scores at a good pace. He's someone who's actually a game-changer. I feel he'll grab his opportunities here as he knows well that you don't get too many opportunities to rise to the top," concluded Chopra. Total of 16 teams will be divided into groups of four each. The top three teams from each group will qualify for the Super Sixes stage, starting on January 30. At that stage, 12 teams will be divided into two groups of six each.

## Shoaib Bashir will be the find of series, he will surely trouble Virat Kohli: Monty Panesar

**Team Absolute | Bengaluru**  
While veteran Jack Leach will lead England's main spinner against India, Shoaib Bashir, a 20-year-old uncapped off-spinner will be the one to keep an eye on. So says Monty Panesar, who was part of the victorious 2012 England squad and backs England spinners to turn the tide in favour of the tourists.  
In the bustling city of Hyderabad, anticipation hung thick in the air as the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium prepared to host the commencement of a riveting five-match Test series between cricket giants India and England on January 25. The stakes are high, especially considering India's 3-1 triumph when the two teams clashed in 2021.  
Uncapped spinners Tom Hartley and Bashir have been named in England's 16-member squad for a five-match Test tour of India starting next month. The off-spin duo joined fast-bowler Gus Atkinson as the three uncapped players at the Test level, though he and Hartley have been capped in white-ball cricket.  
Bashir made his First-Class debut at 19 this year in June, facing a baptism of fire against Sir Alastair Cook at



Chelmsford. Though he was wicketless on Day One for Somerset, his control and temperament impressed onlookers, including the England scouts.  
Subsequent performances, like taking 10 wickets in six First-Class games, earned Bashir a call-up to England Lions' recent training camp in the UAE, where Hartley was included too. Bashir took 10 wickets in the County Championship last season, though the trouble he caused experienced batters has outweighed the impact he had in the wicket column.  
Monty Panesar, a key figure from the

victorious 2012 England squad, buzzing with excitement - Shoaib Bashir, a 20-year-old uncapped off-spinner. Panesar believes Bashir's young and diverse experience in county cricket would prove troublesome for Indian legends, especially Virat Kohli and Shubman Gill, who shared a penchant for driving the ball.  
"I believe he (Shoaib Bashir) is the one whom we should have an eye on, and he will surely be a trouble for the Indian batters. The Indian red-soil turning track will be a dream pitch for him. I have met him a few times in England and watched him closely believe me, he has some exceptional talents. With his high-arm action, he will drag the batsman forward or will force them to cut with a slip and gully," Monty Panesar told IANS.  
"He will be on the top against Virat Kohli and Shubman Gill who have the same nature of play. They love to play drive the ball and that is where he (Bashir) will be a problem to them. With the same pitch, he can bring the ball back to wicket from outside off and also with attacking slip he will force them to do the error."



## Hrithik-starrer 'Fighter' has been filmed at Air Force bases in Dindigul, Tezpur and Pune

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The upcoming Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone-starrer action film 'Fighter' has been filmed at real locations with the help of IAF personnel using combat jets and helicopters. The thrilling operational scenes have been filmed at the Air Force Station in

Tezpur, the Air Force Academy in Dindigul, Andhra Pradesh, and at the Air Force Station in Pune.

Shot extensively at the Air Force Station Tezpur, nestled in the lush green valley of Assam, it serves as the backdrop for some of the film's most intense fighter jet sequences.

The film is currently creating a huge buzz before its theatrical release. The songs

of the film have also received good response from the audience and why not after all, it's Hrithik grooving to the tracks.

Directed by Siddharth Anand and presented by Viacom18 Studios in association with Marflix Pictures, 'Fighter' epitomises cinematic brilliance, blending heart-thumping action and patriotic fervour. The film will release in theatres on January 25, 2024.

## 'Bade Miyan and Chote Miyan' teaser to be 100 seconds long

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The teaser of the upcoming action film 'Bade Miyan and Chote Miyan', which stars Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff, will have its teaser spanning reportedly 100 seconds.

The film has booked the release for Eid 2024 and promises an immersive experience, with the teaser said to be releasing on January 24, 2024.

A source said, "With Khiladi, Akshay Kumar at the forefront, headlining this much-anticipated project along with the youngest action superstar, Tiger Shroff, ensures that the 'Tiger Effect' of the young star will surely captivate the fans and audience across all ages."

"The teaser is said to span over 100 seconds, and will be a visual spectacle, blending high-octane action sequences with character build-up, setting the stage for a cinematic feast.



Scheduled to screen with 'Fighter' at select properties across India, this teaser is poised to be a powerful and captivating first look at what promises to be a massive Eid release," the source

added.

Meanwhile, Tiger Shroff also has 'Singham Again' with Rohit Shetty, 'Rambo' with Rohit Dhawan under Marflix Pictures in the pipeline.



## Shahid Kapoor, Kriti Sanon spotted on sets of 'Bigg Boss 17'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actors Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon were spotted on the sets of reality show 'Bigg Boss 17', as they appeared on the 'Weekend Ka Vaar' episode.

The special guests will be seen promoting their upcoming film 'Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya'.

In the video, Shahid can be seen donning a white full sleeves T-shirt, with polo neck, and matching trousers. He is sporting a short hairstyle and beard look and completed the outfit with black sunglasses.

While, Kriti looked gorgeous in a sleeveless white frill dress. She accessorised the look with golden bangles in one hand, and completed the outfit with white stilettos.

The actress opted for a minimal make-up look, with her hair tied in a low bun. The show currently has contestants -- Ankita Lokhande, Vicky Jain, Munawar Faruqui, Mannara Chopra, Isha Malviya, and Arun Mashetty.

## Dharmesh gets nostalgic as he returns to 'Dance + Pro' to bring 'Jhaama Challenge'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Dancer and choreographer Dharmesh Yelanda is set to appear on the seventh season of 'Dance + Pro', and will bring 'Jhaama Challenge' for the contestants of the dance reality show. The show is judged by Remo D'Souza and features captains like Shakti Mohan,

Punit Pathak, and Rahul Shetty.

The audience has been witnessing a varied range of talent and performances from the contestants this season.

Dharmesh, who was a part of the earlier seasons of the dance reality show as a captain, will now appear on the show as a special guest. He will set the stage

on fire and also groove along with Super Judge Remo and the captains.

Talking about the same, Dharmesh shared: "It feels amazing to be a part of the Dance Plus again. It is a new season with fresh talent showing pro moves. I had a dream of becoming a captain, and with Dance +, this dream was fulfilled." "It was a moment of nos-

algia for me. Every season of Dance + upgrades. The audience will witness contestants using props and ace the Jhaama Challenge that I have brought for them. Remo Sir is our original captain who has always been there to lead our path. I miss Dance + and am elated to be a part of it once again as a special guest," he added.



## AS HE SHOOTS FOR KANNAPPA BIOPIC, VISHNU MANCHU SAYS IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO KNOW HISTORY; OWN IT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actor-director Vishnu Manchu, who has finished the first schedule of his upcoming film 'Kannappa' in New Zealand, has shared that it's not enough to know the history, but one must own their history.

The film, directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh, delves into the awe-inspiring tale of 'Bhakta Kannappa', an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva.

The film stars Vishnu Manchu alongside Mohanlal, Mohan Babu and Prabhas amongst others.

The film's auspicious launch took place in Sri Kalahasti Temple in August 2023.

Sharing his opinion, Vishnu said, "It really got me thinking. Is the film mythological? No. It's our history. One can call it an action adventure but it's not mythology. When we read the Ramayana and tally it with facts, we realise that it's a retelling of truths. Ram Setu is a bridge whose remnants have been found between Rameshwaram and Sri Lanka. Similarly in Mahabharata, Dwarka exists for real."

He further mentioned, "I believe it's not enough to know your history, one must own their history. Kannappa is an attempt to do just that. The film is a part of my belief system that tells the story of the greatest devotee of Lord Shiva."

A 600 person crew completed the complex schedule and returned last month.



Niharika Gandhi