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'They have lost their masala', says Kohli on critics questioning...



India-China Border Situation Needs To Be Addressed Urgently: PM Modi

MATTER OF CONCERN...!



A stable India-China relations are important for the entire world, PM Modi said in an interview with US's Newsweek magazine. PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have previously denied that China had captured any Indian territory. India's main opposition Congress party, however, says that the government makes it harder for India to deal with China's "illegal encroachments" each time it "gives a clean chit" to its neighbour. The two countries share an ill-defined, 3,440km (2,100-mile)-long border in the Himalayas, which has been a source of tension for decades.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The India-China border situation needs to be addressed urgently to resolve the "abnormality" in the bilateral interactions, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asserting that the two countries share an important relationship.

"For India, the relationship with China is important and significant. It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us," said the Prime Minister.

He also hoped that the two neighbours will be able to restore peace at its borders through positive engagement.

"Stable and peaceful relations between India and China are important for not just our two countries but the entire region and world. I hope and believe that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, we will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquility in our borders," he said while speaking to the New York-based magazine. China said it has taken note of the PM's remarks and that "sound and stable ties" serve the common interests of both countries. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing that the boundary question "does not represent the entirety of the India-China relations" and it should be placed "appropriately in the bilateral

relations and managed properly." Stating that the two sides are in close communication through diplomatic and military channels, she said, "We hope India will work in the same direction with China, handle the bilateral relations from the strategic heights and long-term perspective, enhance mutual trust, stick to dialogue and cooperation, handle differences properly, and put the bilateral relations forward on sound and stable track." India-China ties deteriorated steeply in 2020 after clashes between their troops in the high-altitude Galwan Valley in the Ladakh region. As many as 20 Indian soldiers were killed in the clashes while China took an unspecified number of casualties, prompting top-level diplomatic and military talks.

FEEBLE AND INEFFECTIVE: CONGRESS

New Delhi: The Congress party, reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Newsweek interview, described his remarks on China as "feeble and ineffective" and said that this will only encourage the dragon to assert claim on Indian territory.

Congress party's communications in-charge Jairam Ramesh, taking to X said: "Prime Minister had a chance to send a powerful message to China," but unfortunately, he failed to do so.

PM Modi told Newsweek that the ties between India and China were crucial and that there was an "urgent need to address the prolonged situation" on borders to put the "abnormality in bilateral interaction behind us."

Congress General Secretary, taking a searing jibe, described the Newsweek interview as the one where the Prime Minister was "at his cowardly worst." He said: "Prime Minister's reaction is not only disgraceful but also disrespectful to our martyrs, who made supreme sacrifice in defending our borders."

Goons and miscreants won't be spared, their place is in jail: CM Dr. Mohan Yadav

Team Absolute | Mandla/Shahdol/Sidhi

Along with the country, the state is also continuously developing. Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi is guaranteeing that there should be prosperity in the country as well as in the state, every citizen here should be happy. No person in the state will face any problem and this is Modi's guarantee, which the BJP government of the state will fulfill under any circumstances. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said these things while addressing public meetings organized in support of Lok Sabha candidate Faggan Singh Kulaste in Mandla and Sidhi Lok Sabha candidate Dr. Rajesh Mishra in Beohari and Churhat.

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said that the Bharatiya Janata Party government is a government that will eliminate goons and miscreants. The place for goons and miscreants is in jail and we have also made a rule for this. Earlier, a goon used to commit crimes repeatedly and would be released on bail, but now the rules have been changed such that his



life will be spent in jail. Dr. Mohan Yadav said that Mandla is the land of courage, bravery and effort of Rani Durgavati, King Shankar Shah and Raghunath Shah. It is a matter of great fortune for all of us that the Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah, who has eliminated Naxalism and terrorism from the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has visited the land of Mandla. Dr. Yadav said that BJP has done what it said. The resolution letter issued by BJP in Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections will be fulfilled because it is the guarantee of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

ADB ups India's growth forecast for 2024-25 to 7 pc, expects inflation to dip

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday raised India's GDP growth forecast for 2024-25 to 7 per cent as it expects public and private sector investment along with a gradual improvement in consumer demand to drive up the growth rate. The ADB had in December projected India's economic growth rate at 6.7 per cent for the 2024-25 financial year. The ADB also



expects India's inflation rate to come down going ahead. "The Indian economy grew robustly in fiscal 2023 with strong momentum in manufacturing and services. It will continue to grow rapidly over the forecast horizon. Growth will be driven primarily by

robust investment and improving consumption demand. Inflation will continue its downward trend in tandem with global trends," the April edition of the Asian Development Outlook says. For the 2025-26 fiscal, the ADB has forecast India's growth at 7.2 per cent. The multilateral institution said exports are likely to be relatively muted this fiscal as growth in major advanced economies slows down but will improve in FY2025.

Modi will go to jail if INDIA bloc wins polls, says Lulu's eldest daughter Misa Bharti

Patna | Agencies

RJD leader Misa Bharti's statement that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will go to jail if the INDIA bloc won the Lok Sabha election has caused a flutter in Bihar.

While campaigning in the Maner block on Sunday, Bharti, the eldest daughter of Lulu Prasad Yadav and the Pataliputra candidate, had said, "Who will answer on electoral bonds? Whenever he (PM Modi) comes to Bihar, he makes allegations of corruption against our family. If the INDIA bloc is voted to power, all the BJP leaders including the Prime Minister



will go to jail." Slamming Bharti, BJP leader and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha said after the polls people would get to know who would be in jail. "They are afraid of getting caught. The Lulu family used to stay in a peon's quarter and now owns a farmhouse and a shopping mall. They must clarify how they made such a huge property," he said.

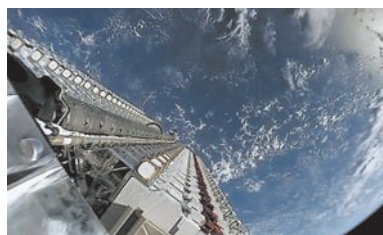
Will Musk announce affordable Starlink internet service during India visit?

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Starlink, an affordable satellite-based internet service offered by Elon Musk-run aerospace company SpaceX, has transformed the way people access the web in remote and inaccessible parts of the world. Will Musk announce its arrival in India when he visits the country later this month?

After several failed attempts, Starlink is geared up to launch satellite broadband services in India, which has close to 92 crore broadband subscribers, according to the latest data by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

Reliance Jio Infocomm and Bharti Airtel currently lead the broadband market, followed by Vodafone Idea and



BSNL. Starlink is set to soon get a license after clearing regulatory hurdles. The government in December last year passed The Telecommunications Bill 2023 which allows spectrum allocation for satellite-based services without the need to participate in auctions. The move favours companies such as OneWeb, Musk's Starlink and Amazon's Kuiper. According to experts, India's digi-

tal economy is experiencing a period of significant growth momentum. Increased digital access would empower citizens in 'aspirational India', fostering a wave of entrepreneurship, enhanced access to education and healthcare, and increased participation in the digital workforce. All Starlink subscription plans include unlimited high-speed data on land with no long-term contracts or commitments. Starlink users can get download speeds up to 220 Mbps, with most of them receiving speeds of over 100 Mbps. The cost of Starlink services in India is not known as of now. In the US, the basic Starlink Wi-Fi for homes in rural areas is \$120 per month for unlimited internet sans contract. There are other data plans as well.

Cops at Kashi Vishwanath Dham to wear dhotis

Varanasi | Agencies

The policemen deployed at the Kashi Vishwanath Dham complex in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi will now wear dhoti-kurta to present a devotee-friendly image.

An experiment in this regard was held in 2018 also. According to temple officials, the male officers will wear dhoti and a dupatta (shawl) to resemble priests, while female officers will wear salwar kurta. Before deployment, these officers will undergo a three-day training programme to hone their soft-skill communication with devotees. The move is designed to



improve the devotee experience and avoid negative perceptions associated with police uniforms. In addition to the new attire, a "no touch" policy will be implemented for crowd control. Commissioner of Police, Mohit Agrawal, said that devotees often felt disrespected by the way the police handled crowds. He noted that devotees were more accepting of similar actions from temple priests.

DELHI'S VIGILANCE DEPARTMENT TERMINATES CM KEJRIWAL'S PRIVATE SECRETARY



New Delhi: The Directorate of Vigilance of Government of Delhi has issued an order for termination of Bibhav Kumar, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's Private Secretary. The Vigilance Department has pointed out that since the individuals appointed on a coterminal basis are governed by the CCS (Conduct) Rules, it is important to consider Bibhav Kumar's character and antecedents verification that was carried out at the time of his previous appointment as Private Secretary to the Chief Minister. This is because, during his subsequent period of working in the government with the Chief Minister, there were no negative reports against him.

LET TERRORIST KILLED IN PULWAMA ENCOUNTER

Srinagar | Agencies

A Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist was killed in an encounter with the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama on Thursday, police said.

The terrorist, killed during the encounter with the security forces in Frassipora village of Pulwama, has been identified as LeT's Danish Aijaz Sheikh, hailing from Ellahibagh locality in the Buchpora area of Srinagar.

Police said Sheikh had joined the LeT ranks two weeks back.



Army and the police had surrounded Frassipora village, 2 km from Pulwama town, early on Thursday following intelligence inputs about the presence of terrorists there. As the security forces closed on the hiding terrorist, he opened fire, triggering an encounter during which Sheikh was killed. Firing has stopped, but a search operation is still on in the area.

SEVEN STUDENTS KILLED IN HARYANA BUS ACCIDENT

Chandigarh | Agencies

Seven school students were killed and at least 15 sustained injuries after their bus with 40 children onboard lost control and overturned in Haryana's Mahendragarh district on Thursday.

The cause of the accident was negligence and rash driving, said Superintendent of Police Arsh Verma. He said prima facie it appeared the driver lost control of the bus and rammied it into a tree. He might have been drunk, he added.

As per the police investigation, the bus fitness certificate expired six years ago in 2018. The school was functioning despite a



holiday for Eid-ul-Fitr. Class IV to Class X students were from G.L. Public School in Kanina. The students were on the way to the school when the bus overturned while overtaking another vehicle, police said. The injured students were rushed to a nearby hospital. Five children died on the spot, while two succumbed to injuries on the way to the hospital. "Twenty children were brought here, out of which four were brought dead," Ravi Kaushik of Nihal hospital, Mahendragarh, told the media. According to the local administration, 12 injured have been moved to a local hospital, while two were admitted to a Rohtak hospital in critical condition.

CLOUD ENGINEERING A PAINKILLER, NOT SOLUTION AGAINST GLOBAL WARMING: STUDY

Marine cloud engineering, also known as marine cloud brightening (MCB), works primarily by increasing the amount of cloud cover, accounting for 60-90 per cent of the cooling effect, explained researchers at the University of Birmingham in the UK. To investigate the phenomenon, the researchers used aerosol injection from the effusive eruption of Kilauea volcano in Hawaii and created a "natural experiment".

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid increased interest in cloud engineering, a new study on Thursday showed that the method, while effective in cooling the climate, can work only as a painkiller, not a solution. "Our findings show that marine cloud brightening could be more effective as a climate intervention than climate models have suggested previously," said the study's lead author Ying Chen from the University. However, Ying noted that "MCB does not address the underlying causes of global warming from greenhouse gases produced by human activity". "It should therefore be regarded as a 'painkiller', rather than a solution, and we must continue to improve fundamental understanding of aerosols'



impacts on clouds, further research on global impacts and risks of MCB, and search for ways to decarbonise human activities." They aimed to study the interactions between these natural aerosols, clouds, and climate. Further, using machine learning, historic satellite and meteorological data, the team created a predictor to show how the cloud would behave during periods when the volcano was inactive. This predictor enabled them to identify the impacts on the clouds that had been directly caused by the volcanic aerosols. The findings published in the Journal Nature Geoscience showed that the cloud cover relatively increased by up to 50 per cent during volcanic activity, producing a cooling effect of up to -10 watts per square metre (W/m2) regionally.



'SOIL OF MARTYRS' VILLAGES REVEALS KASHMIR CONNECTION': PM MODI

Jaipur | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday sternly criticised Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge over his remarks in which he questioned the relevance of PM Modi raising the issue of Kashmir and Article 370 abrogation during his speeches, saying "many heroes from Rajasthan sacrificed their lives in Kashmir".

Addressing the Vijay Shanknaad Rally in Karauli, PM Modi said: "Congress leaders should understand how Rajasthan is connected with Kashmir. They should go to the families of martyrs in Rajasthan. The soil of martyrs' villages will speak the story of the Rajasthan and Kashmir connection."

"When I talk about Kashmir in Rajasthan, they ask if Article 370 is removed from Kashmir, then what is the concern of Rajasthan? I just want to tell the Congress... listen with open ears and send my video to your leaders also. Go to the homes of the brave martyrs of Rajasthan. The soil of their villages will speak the story of its connection with Kashmir. Many heroes from Rajasthan have



sacrificed their lives on the soil of Kashmir," PM Modi said. PM Modi said that the Congress has become narrow-minded after being away from power. "After being away from power, they have started thinking lowly. Now they are also asking questions about the land of Maharana Pratap," he said, while accusing the Congress of playing the "dirty game of appeasement" for the

sake of its vote bank.

In an oblique reference to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, PM Modi, criticising the Wayanad MP, said: "The Congress prince in foreign countries says that India is not a nation. When the army carries out a surgical strike, they ask for proof. Congress was the first to stand with the 'Tukde Tukde' gang."

Taking note of the massive crowd

at the Karauli rally, PM Modi said: "Karauli is showing the results (of elections) that will be announced on June 4, which is 'Abki Baar 400 Paar'."

PM Modi said that each house in Rajasthan will get water and "this is Modi's Guarantee".

Speaking on the paper leak matter, he said: "The Congress government has been searching for looting instances. They had arranged for a paper leak factory here in Rajasthan. However, I had given the guarantee that tough action will be taken against the accused when the BJP government is formed and we have fulfilled this guarantee."

PM Modi also criticised the Congress for its delayed stand on Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) and said that the Central government launched the 'Jal Jeevan Mission' with the aim of resolving the water crisis. Still, the then Rajasthan government made embezzlements in this project too. "ERCP which was being awaited for years was implemented in just one and a half months by the Bhajan Lal Sharma-led government in Rajasthan," he added.

From caste census to Agnipath revocation, Rahul reiterates Cong's five guarantees

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, on a campaign trail in Rajasthan on Thursday, launched a fierce attack on the Centre for its "pro-rich focus" and said that if party is voted to power, it will put an end to "discriminatory" governance besides bringing in a system, where people of all castes and community get adequate representation.

Rahul, addressing a huge public gathering in Bikaner, reiterated the Congress party's five big guarantees including caste census, Mahalaxmi Yojana, apprenticeship scheme, MSP for crops and repealing of Agnipath scheme.

Pitching for caste census as the party's first task, he said that this will be a great step towards social justice as this would end the dominance of a "minuscule" population on the country's vast resources.

The Congress leader further said that Mahalaxmi Yojana will empower the women as Rs 1 lakh will be



credited into their account every year while the apprenticeship scheme will open the doors for employment for youth, besides giving them financial assistance during the training period.

He claimed that the Agnipath Yojana has been brought by the Modi government against the will of armed forces, and if Congress is voted to power, the party will first repeal this law.

Reiterating his charge that 90 bureaucrats run the country, out of which just three hail from backward castes, the Congress leader called for "correcting the errors of past and mark a fresh beginning".

"Though there exists no actual data, 50 per cent of the country's population comprises of backward castes and their representation in government machinery remains

abysmally low," Rahul said at the poll rally.

Rahul accused Modi government of extending favours to a few select 20-25 billionaires of the country and also said that the government has written off the loans of rich and powerful but poor people continue to remain burdened. "PM Modi didn't fulfill his poll promises of providing two crore jobs to unemployed youth, Rs 15 lakh in bank accounts of commoners but went to write off loans to the tune of Rs 16 lakh crore of industrialists," Rahul said, amid cheers from the crowd.

Claiming that the 2024 poll is a fight between nation's 20-25 billionaires in the country and a billion-plus population, he urged the people to vote for an equitable democracy, where all castes and communities have equal representation and country's resources don't remain a preserve of few select ones.

On April 5, the Congress, while launching its manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections, promised five Nyay and 25 guarantees.

K. Kavitha arrested by CBI, to be produced in Delhi court on Friday

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) MLC, K. Kavitha, will be produced before Rouse Avenue Court in Delhi on Friday, said sources, adding that she was arrested by the CBI on Thursday in the alleged excise policy scam.

According to sources, she was arrested from Jail no-6 in Tihar at 12:50 p.m. on Thursday.

"She will be produced in court on Friday at 10:30 a.m.," the sources added.

The CBI informed a Delhi court on Wednesday that Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) MLC, K Kavitha was examined on April 6 in Tihar Jail in connection with the money laundering case related to the alleged excise policy scam.

On Tuesday, Special Judge



Kaveri Baweja of Rouse Avenue Court extended Kavitha's judicial custody till April 23 in the same case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

The ED, while demanding

the judicial custody of Kavitha in the court, in its application, said that she is highly influential, and there is every likelihood, she will influence the witnesses and tamper with the evidence if released.

FIVE FEARED DROWNED IN UP CANAL, RESCUE OPERATIONS ON

Kasganj (UP): Five persons went missing in the Nadrai canal in Uttar Pradesh's Kasganj district on Thursday afternoon and are feared drowned, officials said.

According to reports, eight friends had come for a picnic to the Nadrai canal for Eid celebrations and waded into the waters for a bath.

However, they started drowning and called for help and another youth jumped in to save them. He also started drowning and hearing the commotion, some local people came to their rescue.

The police were informed and divers were pressed into service.

Four persons were rescued and efforts are on to rescue the remaining five.

No turning back, will fight party candidate in Shivamogga: Rebel K'taka BJP leader Eshwarappa

Shivamogga | Agencies

The fight for the high-profile Shivamogga Lok Sabha seat has intensified with senior BJP rebel leader, KS Eshwarappa announcing on Thursday that he will file nomination as an Independent candidate for the seat on Friday.

Speaking to reporters on Thursday in Shivamogga, Eshwarappa who has vowed to defeat BJP candidate, BY Raghavendra, son of former Chief Minister, BS Yediyurappa stated that withdrawing from the contest was out of the question.

Eshwarappa and Yediyurappa were part of the core team that built the BJP in the state from scratch.

"There is no scope for negotiation now. I have entered the battlefield of



election. There is no question of going back now. If I withdraw it will be an injustice to my workers and sup-

porters who have already started work," Eshwarappa stated.

Eshwarappa asserted that

he would use the photos and videos of Prime Minister Narendra Modi while campaigning.

Eshwarappa addressed the press conference sporting a saffron shawl bearing the picture of the PM with the tagline, 'Rashtra Bhaktara Balaga (group of patriots).'

While answering a question about objections from some quarters on him using the PM's photos, Eshwarappa stated, "I challenge BJP candidate Raghavendra, his father Yediyurappa and his brother state President BY Vijayendra to campaign without the picture of Prime Minister Modi."

"Let father and sons go to the voters of Shivamogga without taking the name of Prime Minister Modi," he challenged.

Akali leader's daughter-in-law joins BJP, likely to contest against Harsimrat Kaur Badal

Chandigarh | Agencies

In a big jolt to the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), its senior leader Sikandar Singh Maluka's daughter-in-law and former bureaucrat Parampal Sidhu on Thursday joined the BJP in Delhi.

Sources said she is likely to be fielded against Akali leader and former Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal. Last week the 2011 batch officer of the Punjab cadre took voluntary retirement from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). There is speculation that she may get the ticket to contest from the Bathinda parliamentary seat, currently represented by SAD leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal, wife of Akali Dal chief Sukhbir



Badal. Maluka's son Gurpreet Singh also joined the saffron party in the presence of the party's general secretary Vinod Tawde, Union Minister

Hardeep Puri and other leaders. Senior Akali leader Maluka was the education minister of the Akali government till 2017.

FIVE KILLED AS BIKES COLLIDE AND DUMPER RUNS OVER THEM IN UP'S PILIBHIT

Pilibhit : In a shocking incident on Wednesday morning, five people died after being trampled by a dumper in Pilibhit district.

The accident took place when two bikes collided near Nisra in Jehanabad police station area on Bareilly-Haridwar Highway.

A dumper coming from behind ran over them, killing them on the spot. The driver fled after the accident. The deceased include Aaqib (21), Saheb (25), and Arbaaz (26). The three youths were on their way to offer prayers on Eid.

Owais (33) and his wife Sakra Begum (30), who were riding on the second bike and were going to celebrate Eid with their relatives, also died in the accident.

Lindy Cameron appointed as British High Commissioner

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Lindy Cameron, who has been appointed British High Commissioner to India in succession to Alex Ellis, has said she is immensely proud of the new role and cannot wait to get started.

Cameron will take up her appointment this month, the UK government said on Thursday. Alex Ellis will be transferring to another diplomatic service appointment.

Responding to her new assignment, she said she is immensely proud to be appointed the next British High Commissioner to India. "Huge thanks to @AlexWellis for leaving such a great legacy. So looking forward to working with the amazing @UKinIndia team. I can't wait to get started!" she wrote on X.

From 2020 to 2024, she was Chief Executive of the National Cyber Security Centre.

She has also served as Director General of the Northern Ireland Office in the UK.



Rohan Gupta, Another Ex-Spokesperson, With Congress For 15 Years, Joins BJP



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Congress spokesperson Rohan Gupta joined the BJP today, marking the defection of yet another visible opposition face to the ruling party in the election season.

Rohan Gupta, along with some other leaders, joined the BJP in the presence of Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri and its national general secretary Vinod Tawde. Slamming the Congress, a party he had been associated with for

nearly 15 years, Rohan Gupta said it has become directionless and full of contradictions, leading to loss of credibility.

He cited the Congress's stand on a host of issues, including its decision to not attend the Ram temple consecration ceremony, opposition to the CAA and aligning with parties like AAP, to make his point. Rohan Gupta expressed his support to the BJP leadership's agenda of a "viksit Bharat" by 2047 and lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision.

Son of Beant Singh who assassinated PM Indira Gandhi, contesting Lok Sabha election

Chandigarh | Agencies

A relative of one of the assassins of late Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, is contesting the parliamentary elections in Punjab from the Faridkot (Reserved) constituency as an Independent.

A Class XII dropout, Sarabjit Singh Khalsa (45) is the son of Beant Singh, one of the two killers of the late Prime Minister.

In 2014 and 2009, Sarabjit Singh Khalsa unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha polls from the Fatehgarh Sahib (Reserved) and Bathinda seats, respectively.

In 2019, he was the Bahujan Samaj Party candidate. Beant Singh and Satwant Singh, bodyguards of then PM Indira Gandhi, had riddled her with bullets on October 31, 1984 at her residence.

In 2014, Sarabjit Singh Khalsa had declared assets to the tune of Rs 3.5 crore in the election affidavit.

His mother, Bimal Kaur, and his grandfather, Sucha Singh, became MPs from Ropar and Bathinda, respectively, in 1989.



Either Rahul or Priyanka will contest from UP: AK Antony

Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies

Veteran Congress leader and CWC member A.K. Antony has said there will be one person from the Gandhi family who will contest either Rae Bareilly or Amethi in Uttar Pradesh.

Antony said this while speaking to a TV channel here on Thursday. When asked if one member of the Gandhi family would be contesting from the traditional seat of the Gandhi family, Antony said, "Yes, there will be one", and when further probed if that would be Robert Vadra, he shot back and said, "it would be either Rahul or Priyanka."

Elaborating further, Antony said with every passing day, the confidence of the INDIA Bloc was increasing, while that of the BJP-led NDA was coming down.

"Just look at the body language of Prime Minister and it tells the tale..." added Antony.

The country's longest-serving Defence Minister and three-time former Chief Minister of Kerala, is now



leading a retired life but continues to visit the state party headquarters here every day.

He said due to his health, he has not yet decided if he will hit the campaign trail for the Congress-led UDF candidates. His son Anil Antony is the BJP candidate in the Pathanamthitta Lok Sabha constituency.



PEOPLE HAVE REJECTED CONGRESS, IT CAN NEVER RETURN TO POWER: AMIT SHAH

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said the Congress can't return to power again, claiming that the people of India have rejected it. He was addressing a public rally in Madhya Pradesh's Mandla.

Speaking at a mammoth gathering of BJP workers and supporters in the tribal-dominated Mandla Lok Sabha seat, the minister said that the Congress ruled the country for over 55 years, however, the tribals were treated as a vote bank only.

Citing the example of the first tribal President of India, Droupadi Murmu, the Union Home Minister questioned: "A tribal woman became the President of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I want to ask Rahul Baba (Congress leader Rahul Gandhi) if the Congress had ever made a tribal President of India during their regime?" He blasted the Opposition bloc, calling the alliance 'ghamandi gathbandhan' and accused them of indulging in corruption.

"One side is the BJP under the leadership of PM Modi working for the growth of the people of this country, on the other side Opposition parties are busy launching their new family members," he added, taunting the Opposition for dynastic politics.

Hitting further at the Opposition for 'parivarvaad', Shah said: "Opposition leaders like Sharad Pawar, Mamata Banerjee, Lalu Yadav want to make their children and relatives Chief



'DON'T EVER DARE TO CHANGE ARTICLE 370'

Bhopal: Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while addressing a public rally in Madhya Pradesh on Thursday, warned Congress, saying "don't ever dare to change Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir".

The Home Minister said the decision to abrogate Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir is of the BJP workers and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Although the Congress can't return to power again, if it happens by chance, I would warn Congress to not dare to change Article 370. Kashmir is part of India. Your (Congress) politics of appeasement is over now," Amit Shah said. Addressing a public rally in Mandla, one of the five Lok Sabha seats reserved for the Schedule Tribe (ST) in Madhya Pradesh, Amit Shah said the BJP government has introduced several schemes to uplift tribals in the country.

Ministers, and Sonia Gandhi wants to make her son Prime Minister. This is why they are contesting the election. They have nothing to do with the people and the country."

Asserting that the flagship schemes have changed the lives of the poor people in the last decade, he highlighted the public benefit schemes of the Modi government, along with the surgical strike, the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

India will become the world's superpower in the coming years: Rajnath Singh

Team Absolute | Rewa

BJP veteran and Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, while addressing a rally in Madhya Pradesh on Thursday said that the Congress has become like 'rusted iron.'

The senior star campaigner of the ruling BJP, who addressed back-to-back election rallies in Vindhya region of Madhya Pradesh on Thursday, said the Congress got enough time, but it failed to take the country forward.

Addressing a public rally in Rewa, Rajnath Singh said, "Fifty years were enough to take the country on the path of inclusive growth, but the Congress failed completely. Now the Congress has become like a piece of rusted iron." The Defence Minister added that when the BJP under the leadership of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, came to power in 2014, India's economy was at 11th position globally.

"The PM Modi-led BJP government has brought India's economy at fifth position and in the next five



years, India will be among the top three. But, it will happen with the support of the people of this country," Rajnath Singh added.

Speaking specifically about the growth of Madhya Pradesh, Defence Minister Singh said that it had transitioned from a 'Bimaru' state to the growth engine of the nation.

Regarding 'One Nation, One Election', he said, "I advocate it. I had talked to the PM about the matter.

There should not be more than two elections in the country in five years."

Raking up Ram in politics, Rajnath Singh refused any discrimination on the basis of religion by the BJP.

"Ram Rajya prevails when we focus on our responsibilities rather than our rights. While some accuse the BJP of religious bias, we treat Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians as equals," he added.

After a long time local candidates will compete election in Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

This is the second time in four decades that BJP and Congress have together given ticket to a local resident of Bhopal on the Bhopal-Sehore Lok Sabha seat of the state. BJP has fielded Alok Sharma after canceling the ticket of sitting MP Sadhvi Pragya Thakur, whereas Arun Srivastava from Congress is in the election season. This time the candidates of both the parties are from Bhopal, so there is a lot of discussion about it in the city.

Alok Sharma's grandfather Pandit Nandkishore Sharma had a musical gharana. Alok has also been the mayor. Arun Srivastava's mother Vimala Srivastava has been the District Panchayat President. People say that since both the candidates are local, the contest is tough.

Congress candidate Arun Srivastava has handled many responsibilities of the party. His father was also a Congressman. Mother Mrs. Vimala Srivastava was famous as Mumtaz. She was the Bhopal district and district president. He has had special influence in rural areas. Arun Srivastava handled the entire command from the beginning, hence he has a good rural network. He also



has good influence in Kayastha community.

Who can forget the Bhopal gas tragedy that happened in 1984? Due to this horrific tragedy, the Lok Sabha elections in Bhopal were postponed. Lok Sabha elections were held in Bhopal in January 1985. In this election, Lakshminarayan Sharma from BJP and KN Pradhan from Congress were in the fray. The special thing is that both of them were residents of Bhopal. However, KN Pradhan won. The total number of voters in Bhopal-Sehore Lok Sabha seat is 23 lakh. Politicians who started politics from the streets of Bhopal have even become President. The people of Bhopal are happy in this election that both the candidates are Bhopali. In such a situation, the electoral contest will be tough here.

JITU PATWARI LASHED OUT AT PM MODI IN MAHAKAUSHAL AND VINDHYA

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Congress President Jitu Patwari was on a tour of Mahakaushal and Vindhya region on Wednesday (April 10). During this, amid the strong storm, PCC Chief Jitu Patwari lashed out at the BJP government at the Center and the state. During the general meeting, Jitu Patwari also made five promises to the tribals. During this he also targeted Shivraj Singh Chauhan. He asked the women of the tribal community that Shivraj Singh Chauhan had promised Rs 3000 to the beloved sisters, are they getting it, to which the women present in the pandal replied that they are not getting it.

PCC Chief Jitu Patwari told the crowd present in the pandal during the public meeting that on one side, Phundelal Marco of Congress is contesting elections from here. He is also the MLA from here, who is always among you. On the other side is BJP MP Himadri, who won from here and did not come for the second time. He asked whether she had come to sit at someone's funeral or to attend a wedding, people said no on this. Patwari asked that Rs. 50 crore is given in five years from MP fund, work worth Rs. 4-5 lakhs must have been done in your village, but people said that it has not been done.

Jitu Patwari asked, then you made her an MP, when she did not come to the village, did not come to the happiness and sorrow, then she should get



votes. State Congress President Jitu Patwari, while addressing the public meeting, said that in the 2014 elections, Narendra Modi had said that 'Enough of inflation, this time Modi government', Narendra Modi had claimed that the price of petrol should be Rs 30 per litre. PM Modi had promised to provide two crore jobs, did your children get jobs? Jitu Patwari promised that if the coalition government comes to power at the Centre, then Rs

8,500 will be given every month to the child who has completed graduation. Along with this, Rs 8 thousand 500 will also be given in the accounts of women. Jeetu Patwari said to make my video and keep it.

Jitu Patwari further said that 30 lakh jobs will be provided in a year. Jitu Patwari took a jibe at Shivraj Singh Chauhan and said that Shivraj had bluffed, whereas Rahul Gandhi speaks the truth.

BHEL's sweets worth Rs 5 crore in discussion

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A Maharatna company like BHEL, which claims not to work without tender, does not even issue a tender for distributing sweets worth Rs 1.5 crore to its employees, that too under the pressure of a union. The interesting thing is that some of the representative unions opposing it were fortunate that they stopped speaking on this issue. Some officers, victims of dirty politics and making compromises within the unions, are not only earning good profits for themselves but are also flouting the rules of a company like Maharatna.

Instead of saving the company which is going through a financial crisis, many employee leaders are wasting their votes in sweets and snacks. He is also the leader who



has retired and has become the judge of the representative union, who is less concerned about the company and the employees and is more concerned about his own auspicious benefits. Under the pressure of some retired leaders, the management is purchasing sweets worth Rs. 1.5 crore without tender, whereas if it had been anyone else's case, a vigilance investigation would have been initiated.

Before this, sweets worth Rs 2.5 crore were in the news in Bhopal Municipal Corporation. When the council did not exist in Bhopal Municipal Corporation, officials ate sweets worth Rs 2.5 crore in a year. And the interesting thing is that at that time the Corona period was going on. All these sweets were purchased from one shop. This matter came up, but at present it is buried in the files.

Government with hailstorm affected farmers: Mohan Yadav

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the last few days, there has been hailstorm and rain at many places in Madhya Pradesh. Due to this the produce kept in the open has been damaged. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has assured the farmers that the government is with them and they will also get compensation.

He said that instructions have been issued to the administration regarding hailstorm. If there is loss of life, loss of animals or any kind of damage in any district, the government will be serious about it. Compensation will be given to compensate him, the state government is committed to this.

The Chief Minister said that instructions have been issued to keep wheat in covered premises. 80 percent of the grains are already in covered premises, but instructions have been issued to protect those which are in the open as well. The shine of the wheat crop coming in was weak. For some reason there



was difficulty in purchasing them. The Government of India has issued instructions, in which it has been said that farmers should not be allowed to face any kind of trouble. The government stands with the farmers.

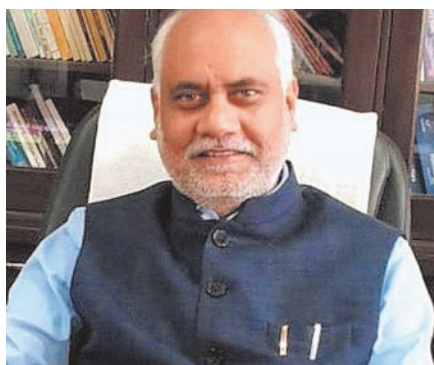
RGPV Scam: Accused Prof. Sunil Kumar arrested in Raipur

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Abducting former Vice Chancellor accused of scam worth crores in Bhopal's Rajiv Gandhi Technological University, Sunil Kumar has been arrested by the police from Raipur. Two accused are still absconding in this case.

It is noteworthy that in this case, former registrar RS Rajput and retired finance controller Hrishikesh Verma are absconding. The police have placed a reward on all three and have issued a lookout notice. Besides, the police is also preparing to confiscate the property of the accused.

According to the case, the accused had deposited Rs 19.48 crore of the university in personal accounts. This was confirmed in the investigation. After this, an FIR was lodged with the police in the matter. Police have already arrested two bank employees and a



Dalit association official in the case. The anticipatory bail plea of former registrar RS Rajput was also rejected by the court after objection from the police. Police are now looking for RS Rajput and retired finance controller Hrishikesh Verma.

From remote villages to jobs with MNCs, these women are breaking barriers

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Nisha Dahiya from Bhaishwahi, a remote village in Katni district of Madhya Pradesh, was forced to discontinue studies after the intermediate level because of financial constraints. But she did not lose hope.

In June 2023, she came to know about the Adani Skill Development Centre in Kymore and enrolled herself. After completing a course in the warehouse packers' domain, where she learnt new skills, she bagged a job at multinational company Amazon India in September last year. Nisha, now 22, is a warehouse executive with a monthly salary of Rs 18,000. While supporting her family, she wants to save some money to be able to renovate the family home.

Like Nisha, Swati Patel, from Dithwara in Katni, also took up the same course at the Saksham cen-



tre in Kymore. Recently, she also landed a job with Amazon India, with a starting salary of Rs 13,500.

Swati's sister Priyanka is a beauty therapist and runs her own parlour. Priyanka had completed a beautician's course from the same Saksham centre. "My sister and I are grateful to the Adani Foundation for training us to become financially independent and self-reliant," Swati says.

Last year, 13 women from the warehouse packers' batch, which had 16 women and 4 men trainees, got placed in Amazon India at Sanand, Gujarat.

Nisha, Swati, and Priyanka are setting a shining example for the multitude of women from remote villages who have limited opportunities. The time they spent at the skill development centre prepared them to secure their future and create a better life for their families.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Modi heading, Opposition lagging

Determined to return to power for a third straight term with a huge majority, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken an unsurpassable lead over the opposition in campaigning for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Displaying massive zeal and an exceptional level of energy, PM Modi has so far covered the length and breadth of the country, sharing with the voters his clear vision about how his government aims to achieve the goal of 'Viksit Bharat'. Political watchers feel that "it seems PM Modi is exhibiting a significant campaign intensity leading up to the 2024 general elections". In what shows his deep dedication to work and duty, PM Modi remains engaged in sending his views across to the people down to the grassroots levels. Another method to reach out to people from various strata of society is through interviews with regional and national media. By giving interviews to regional media outlets like *Thanthi* in Tamil Nadu, the *Assam Tribune*, and *Amar Ujala* in Uttarakhand, PM Modi aims to resonate with the voters on local issues and concerns. In global outreach, he also engaged with international publications like *Newsweek* and interacted with influential figures like Bill Gates. This reflects PM Modi's broader vision for India's future and an attempt to project leadership on the global stage. His recent interaction with online gamers was a significant engagement. It was an engagement with the first-time voters through interactions with gamers which showed an innovative approach to connect with a younger demographic. Meanwhile, the opposition appears to be lagging in terms of campaigning intensity that keeps PM Modi going, with little or no significant efforts by the INDIA bloc being reported. Political observers say that their complaints about a lack of a 'level playing field' suggest frustration and possibly a sense of being overwhelmed by the BJP's campaign blitz.

Golden-voiced maestro whom classical musicians esteemed, playback singers emulated

Vikas Datta

Soon after he revolutionised Indian film music with 'Babul mora naihar', top classical musicians, meeting in Calcutta, decided that Ustad Faiyyaz Khan, who had sung the thumri earlier, should tie a ritual thread to K. L. Saigal to signify discipleship. The Ustad wanted to meet the singer alone first, and after an hour, someone checked to find that both, in high spirits, were insisting on calling each other their Ustad. This was revealed by santoor maestro Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, who heard it from music director S. D. Burman, a disciple of top ustadhs then and an eyewitness, but a more attested incident is of the Ustad, doyen of the Agra Gharana, telling Saigal that he had nothing to teach him that would make him a greater singer.

Then, Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, of the Kirana Gharana, visited a cinema hall for the first time only to hear Saigal's rendition of a song in 'Devdas' (1935) and was moved to tears. That was the prowess of Kundan Lal Saigal, born on this day (April 11) in Jammu in 1904, and went on to become Hindi cinema's first - and sole - male singing superstar, and a significant cultural icon. In the film industry, all major singers who followed him - Mukesh, Mohd Rafi, Talat Mehmood, and Kishore Kumar - wanted to emulate him, and Rafi counted it a major achievement to sing in the chorus of one of his songs.

On the other hand, Lata Mangeshkar, who was five when she saw him on screen, solemnly declared that she wanted to marry him when she grew up! But Saigal's path was not easy or straight as he tackled the challenges of his changing voice in adolescence, his father's opposition to his musical passion, and a variety of jobs - from railway timekeeper to typewriter salesman to hotel manager - before his tryst with films.

He was twice rejected by HMV, then India's biggest music recording company, for "lack of training". Yet, he was so proficient in pitch that musicians used to tune their instruments by asking him to sing a note. He also became the first non-Bengali allowed to render 'Rabindrasangeet' with Rabindranath Tagore himself giving him permission.

HMV's loss was Hindusthan Records' gain and he became a top-selling artiste for them. One 1933 record, containing just the bandish 'Jhulana Jhulao Re' and bhajan 'Hori O Brajraj Dulare' on the flip side, sold a whopping half a million pieces in the days when gramophones were rare.

Then to him, goes the credit for giving a new life to the ghazal and enabling all of India to hear his renditions of Mirza Ghalib, right from 'Nuktacheen hai gham-e-dil' from 'Yahudi Ki Ladki' (1933) - his first hit.

However, succeeding ages have not been very fair to Saigal. If not forgotten, he is mocked, or at



best, parodied as an exponent of "old-fashioned" sorrow and pathos-imbued songs, especially his swan song 'Jab dil hi toot gaya' from 'Shahjehan' (1946) - where he did not play the title role!

But then, Saigal is never for the superficial listener. As all accounts of him and his singing agree, he requires a measured and mellow outlook to appreciate, and his baritone/tenor mix, with just the slightest hit of a twang, slowly entrances you with his intensity and intricate art.

In a career lasting just a decade and a half, spanning Calcutta and Bombay, and comprising 36 films - 28 Hindi, 7 Bengali, and one Tamil - he sang 185 songs, including non-film, in Hindustani, Bengali, Punjabi, Tamil, as well as Persian and Pashto.

These include rare gems like 'Dukh ke ab din

beatat nahi' ('Devdas', 1935), 'Ek banla bane nyara' ('President', 1937), 'Karoon kya aas niras bhayi' ('Dushman', 1939), 'Ae qatib-e-taqdeer' ('My Sister', 1943), among others.

Then there was 'Mai kya janoon kya jadoo hai' ('Zindagi', 1940), with the various shades he imbued in the second 'kya' - which is not easy to sing, or 'Diya Jalao' ('Tansen', 1943), where he emotes perfectly - especially where he seems a bit unsure of the raga's potency and closes his eyes mid-note.

Then there is the breezy 'Mere Sapnon ki Rani' (Shahjehan) - where Rafi debuted as a chorus singer, and 'Hum apna unhein bana na sake' from 'Bhanwara' (1944) where he laughs mid-song.

And while he rendered many Ghalib ghazals, his version of Zauq's 'Lai hayat aaye.' is matchless. However, his liquor habit - though he was not a heavy drinker - led to his health deteriorating in December 1946, and he returned to his hometown Jalandhar, where he passed away on January 18, 1947, aged just 42.

Naushad, his composer for 'Shahjehan', penned the perfect epitaph: "Aisa koi fankar-e-mukammal nahi aaya/ Naghmon ka barasta badal nahi aaya/ Mausiqi ke maahir bahut aae lekin/ Duniya mein koi doosra Saigal nahi aaya."

international

S.Korea's Opposition bloc wins landslide Parliamentary vote

Seoul | Agencies

The main opposition Democratic Party (DP) retained a majority in the National Assembly in Wednesday's general elections in another major setback for the ruling People Power Party (PPP) and President Yoon Suk Yeol.

With almost all votes counted, the DP won 161 out of 254 directly contested seats, while the PPP won only 90 seats. Including proportional seats, the DP and its satellite party were expected to win 176 seats and the PPP and its satellite party 109 seats in the 300-member National Assembly, Yonhap news agency reported.

The wider opposition bloc, including the Rebuilding Korea Party led by scandal-tainted former Justice Minister Cho Kuk, is expected to win more than 180 seats combined, as Cho's party is expected to secure 12-14 proportional seats.

The New Future Party (Saemira), formed by former Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon, and the New Reform Party led by ousted former PPP leader Lee Jun-seok are expected to secure one and three seats, respectively.



The results illustrated the seriously soured public sentiment toward the Yoon administration just two years after he came into office, with the PPP barely managing to prevent the broader opposition bloc from taking a two-thirds majority.

In the previous elections four year ago, the then ruling DP also clinched a landslide victory by securing a combined 180 seats with its satellite party while the United Future Party, the PPP's former name, and its sister party got 103 seats.

Of the votes cast for the 46 proportional seats, more than 93 per cent have been counted.

In the proportional race, the PPP's sister

People Future Party was leading with 37 per cent, followed by the DP's sister Democratic United Party with 27 per cent and Cho's Rebuilding Korea Party with 24 per cent.

This year's vote carried extra weight for the PPP as a failure to regain a majority could potentially render the Yoon administration a lame duck for the remaining three years of his single five-year term, ending in 2027.

The PPP has pleaded for voter support, imploring that the Yoon administration has been unable to push its reform agenda properly forward for the past two years due to the uncooperative Parliament under Opposition control.

The DP, on the other hand, has urged voters to pass stern judgment on what it calls the "incompetent" Yoon administration, accusing it of causing the economy and the livelihoods of the people to worsen seriously and mishandling a series of controversial issues for the past two years.

Following the release of exit poll results on Wednesday, PPP leader Han Dong-hoon expressed disappointment.

N.Korea's Kim Jong-un vows to deal 'death-blow' to enemy in event of confrontation

Seoul | Agencies

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has vowed to mobilise all means to deal a "death-blow" to the country's enemy without hesitation should it opt for military confrontation with North Korea, state media said on Thursday. Kim made the remark during his visit to the Kim Jong-il University of Military and Politics on Wednesday, according to the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said as quoted by Yonhap news agency report.

"He said that now is the time to be more thoroughly prepared for a war than ever before and that North Korea should be



more firmly and perfectly prepared for a war, which should be won without fail, not just for a possible war," the KCNA

added. Kim was also quoted as instructing the university to nurture new military talents who are absolutely loyal to the

party central committee and are capable of overwhelming the enemy with "ideological, mental, militant, moral and tactical superiority," it said.

North Korea has been ramping up weapons tests this year, including launches of cruise missiles from both sea and land and firing drills involving super-large multiple rocket launchers.

Last week, it claimed to have successfully test-fired a new intermediate-range ballistic missile tipped with a hypersonic warhead, saying that all missiles the country has developed are solid-fuel, nuclear capable with warhead control capability.

Australian PM welcomes US Prez's consideration of dropping prosecution of WikiLeaks founder

Canberra | Agencies

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Thursday welcomed news that US President Joe Biden is considering a request to drop the prosecution of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

Albanese expressed encouragement after Biden's remark in Washington that the US is mulling over Australia's request to drop the charges against Assange for the release of confidential records in 2010, Xinhua news agency reported.

"I believe this must be brought to a conclusion and that Mr. Assange has already paid a significant price and enough is enough," Albanese told state media Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) television.

"There's nothing to be gained by Mr. Assange's continued incarceration, in my very strong view."



An Australian citizen who founded WikiLeaks in Australia in 2006, Assange is currently trying to appeal his extradition from the UK to the US to face trial for the 2010 leaks.

The UK High Court in March asked the US for assurances that Assange would have a fair trial and not face the death penalty if convicted before making a final decision in May on whether he can appeal the extradition order.

Albanese in February supported a motion raised in the federal parliament by independent MP Andrew Wilkie calling for Assange's return to Australia.

Wilkie was among a delegation of MPs who in September traveled to Washington where they urged politicians and officials to abandon extradition efforts for Assange.

On Thursday, Wilkie told ABC radio that Biden's comment was very encouraging.

17 killed as truck plunges into ravine in Pakistan



Islamabad | Agencies

At least 17 people were killed and 40 others injured after a truck plunged into a ravine in Pakistan's Balochistan province, local media reported. The incident occurred on Wednesday night when the truck, carrying 50 people, was proceeding towards Shah Noorani shrine, Dawn reported quoting a police official as saying.

The rescue operation concluded on Thursday morning, as per Manan Baloch, the Edhi Foundation's Hub in-charge.

In the morning, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti expressed grief over the loss of lives in the accident.

He directed the authorities to provide the best medical facilities to the injured.

Frequent accidents with high fatalities are common in the country due to the lack of adequate safety measures, insufficient driver training, and outdated transport infrastructure.

Pakistan recorded over 27,000 deaths in road accidents in 2018, as per WHO estimates.

China tried to interfere but Canadians decided the polls in 2019, 2021: Justin Trudeau



Ottawa | Agencies

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said China tried to meddle in the election process in his country twice -- 2019 and 2021, but asserted that it was fair.

The elections were decided by Canadians, Trudeau said on Wednesday in his testimony before a commission probing alleged foreign interference in the polls. The commission was set up last year after media reports about China's interference in the polls. However, the Chinese Embassy in Canada denied any interference in Canadian affairs.

The commission is set to complete its initial report by May 3 and final report by 2024 end, The Guardian reported.

Earlier, India was accused of meddling in the polls and later the allegation was ruled out by Canada.

Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) on Monday said that China has "clandestinely and deceptively" interfered in the Canadian elections.

"We know that the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) clandestinely and deceptively interfered in both the 2019 and 2021 elections," CSIS said during a briefing to the commission.

Trudeau's Liberal Party had won both the elections.

The Conservatives lead campaigner, during the 2021 election, Erin O'Toole, estimated Chinese "interference" cost his party up to nine seats.



Wardha BJP MP's estranged daughter-in-law in fray as independent, slams family

Team Absolute | Wardha (Maharashtra)

In a huge embarrassment to Wardha's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Ramdas Tadas, his estranged daughter-in-law on Thursday accused his family of harassment, assault, and torture, and is challenging him in the Lok Sabha elections as an Independent. Pooja Pankaj Shendre-Tadas, along with her 17-month-old son, flanked by Shiv Sena-UBT Deputy Leader Sushma Andhare, narrated her plight with the Tadas family for over three years at a media meet this afternoon. She contended that she was forced into marriage allegedly to save her husband Pankaj R. Tadas from a rape charge nearly three years ago, but after that, she "was tortured, beaten with an iron rod, thrown out of a flat where she lived, and even denied food on several occasions". "Prime Minister Narendra Modi is coming to Wardha on April 20 for election campaign. I plan to meet and appeal to him for justice as a daughter of the country," Pooja Tadas said.



but after the son was born, her husband disowned him and he, along with her father-in-law Ramdas Tadas, asked her to conduct a DNA test to prove the child's paternity. "I have been undergoing such abuses, humiliation in the name of a DNA test for our baby, and other forms of harassment... If Ramdas Tadas, as an MP, cannot give justice to his own daughter-in-law, then what will he do for the people of society? I want PM's intervention to help me," she demanded. Pooja Tadas claimed that when she had visited Ramdas Tadas' home once, she was abused and assaulted with an iron rod, and after she was thrown out of the flat which the Tadas family sold off, she had no place to live. On his part, Tadas, who is contesting the LS polls for a hat-trick win,

denied all the allegations and said: "I have no relation with my son (Pankaj) or his wife (Pooja), they don't live with me", adding they got married without informing him. Pooja Tadas countered this by asking that if he had disowned his son (Pankaj), then why is he still living in Tadas' house while kicking her out along with her toddler son? Intervening, Andhare said that the BJP talks of things like women's reservation and empowerment, the Modi Parivar, etc, then why is the daughter and child of a family member of the BJP Parivar being denied justice? Tadas said that the issue of his son's marriage was very old, but "it is being raked up now by the Opposition parties to make political capital" in the LS elections. His son Pankaj Tadas claimed that he was "honey-trapped" into the whole mat-



ter and there are half a dozen police and court cases pending on different aspects, including a divorce case in which his estranged wife is not cooperating. The issue erupted in the public domain over two years ago when the Maharashtra State Commission for Women Chairperson Rupali Chakankar tweeted a video, and the police provided security to Pooja Tadas. Pankaj Tadas alleged that two politicians were involved in defaming his father just before the elections, such attempts were made even before the 2019 LS polls, and even the latest episode is a conspiracy of the Opposition parties to mar his father (Ramdas Tadas)'s prospects. Pooja Tadas has decided to contest the Wardha LS seat as an independent against her father-in-law, and Andhare said she will support her as a distressed woman crying for justice.

Praful Patel is lying on Sharad Pawar's stance regarding BJP, says NCP(SP)

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On Thursday rejected as "blatant lies" the claims by rival NCP leader Praful Patel on Sharad Pawar's stand regarding the BJP in Maharashtra. Praful Patel told a private channel that in July 2023, NCP(SP) President Sharad Pawar had made up his mind "50 per cent" to extend support to the BJP after his nephew Ajit Pawar split the party to join the ruling Mahayuti government. However, Sharad Pawar dithered at the last minute and it did not materialise, contended Patel. He added that while Ajit Pawar took oath as Deputy CM on July 2, 2023, a fortnight later, the breakaway faction leaders met Sharad Pawar in Mumbai and Pune, but the latter hesitated at the last minute. Dismissing Patel's statements as "blatant lies", NCP Chief Spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said this was a deliberate attempt by the NCP leader to sow confusion in the minds of the people ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.



"Sharad Pawar has firmly rejected any notion of supporting the BJP, both in principle and action, not once but on multiple occasions in public and private. This unequivocal dismissal stands as a testament to Sharad Pawar's unwavering commitment to his political convictions," Tapase pointed out. Hitting back, Tapase said that Sharad Pawar's rejection of their purported proposal "is a clear source of frustration" for rival NCP leaders like Ajit Pawar, Patel and others and "they recognise their total dependence on Sharad Pawar's leadership to remain relevant in Maharashtra politics." Taking a potshot, Tapase pointed out how the recent closure of certain serious

cases against Ajit Pawar have exposed the real motives behind his group's allegiance to the BJP, against the proclaimed notions of "genuine developmental intent." The NCP(SP) Chief Spokesperson said that adding to the woes of the rival group is the fact that Ajit Pawar lacks the moral authority to control the NCP name and 'Clock' symbol which he grabbed by backstabbing his uncle Sharad Pawar's leadership. Tapase warned that the people of Maharashtra were observing these things very closely and as the polls approach, the NCP(SP) remains committed to public welfare under Sharad Pawar's leadership and "the voters will choose wisely."

Delhi murder convict nabbed in Mumbai after three-year run

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

A life convict in a murder case, who jumped parole and was on the run for the last three years, was arrested from Mumbai, a Delhi Police official said on Thursday. To evade arrest, the accused, identified as Mohd. Mustaq, had changed his identity by shaving his beard and moustache. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Amit Goel said that Mustaq, along with his two friends, had an altercation at a tea shop and the complainant's son informed the shop owner due to which accused persons got angry and threatened him. On the next day, the accused persons called complainant's son and after some time, the complainant heard loud noise. When the complainant came out of his house, he found his son in a pool of blood. The complainant's son died



during treatment. The complainant further alleged that out of grudge, all three accused persons had thrown his son from the fifth floor. "After completion of the trial, Mustaq was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released from jail on emergency parole for 90 days during COVID-19 pandemic on May 15, 2021 but he did not surrender and has been absconding since then," said the DCP.

However, on April 6, specific input was received that he is presently living in Mumbai. "Acting upon the inputs, the team traced the convict/parole jumper from the densely populated slum area Govandi, Mumbai. As there was no specific address, the team acted as Election Officers and went to more than 500 houses to make voter cards for the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections. The untiring efforts of the team resulted in the apprehending of the convict," said the DCP. On interrogation, Mustaq disclosed that after he was released on emergency parole, he went to his village and got married. "He did not have any source of income there and police were also looking for him so he went to Mumbai and started working there in embroidery godown," the DCP added.

Tata ropes in Shell to set up EV charging stations across India

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Tata Passenger Electric Mobility Ltd (TPEM) said on Thursday that it has signed a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding with Shell India Markets Private Limited (SIMPL) to collaborate in setting up public charging stations across India. "The collaboration will leverage Shell's fuel station network and TPEM's insights from over 1.4 lakh Tata EVs on Indian roads to set up chargers at locations frequently visited by Tata EV owners. Additionally, both companies will work towards delivering superior charging



experiences," according to a TPEM statement. The two companies are also exploring introducing convenience payment systems and loyalty programmes to facilitate charging for electric

vehicles. Commenting on the partnership, Balaje Rajan, Chief Strategy Officer, Tata Passenger Electric Mobility Ltd and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd, said: "Through this partnership, we aim to grow the existing charging infrastructure, which is crucial for mainstream adoption of EVs in the country, particularly as the customer base continues to expand. This strategic alliance will help in driving up the EV adoption in the country." Sanjay Varkey, Director, Shell India Markets Private Limited, said, "Shell is committed to offering integrated solutions that prioritise convenience, safety, and sustainability in charging EVs. Our ultra-fast and reliable chargers ensure that our customers enjoy a sustainable, hassle-free and efficient charging experience."

Have SOP for hospitals concerning termination of pregnancy beyond 24 weeks: HC to Maha govt

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court has directed the Maharashtra government to formulate a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for handling cases related to termination of pregnancy beyond 24 weeks. A division bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Nitin Sambre in its order of April 5 noted that the amended Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act permits termination of pregnancy beyond 24 weeks in cases of severe abnormalities in the foetus. Under the amended provisions of the Act, the state government is required to constitute medical boards in each district which has the power and discretion to allow or deny termination of pregnancy beyond 24 weeks of gestation period. The bench was hearing a petition filed by a woman seeking termination of her



32-week pregnancy due to abnormalities in the foetus. As per the plea, the general hospital in Wardha informed the woman about the fetal abnormalities during her 24th-week scan. While giving relief to the woman, the bench noted that it was disturbing that instead of referring her to the medical board directly, the hospital asked the petitioner to approach the court to seek termination of the pregnancy. The high court said the provisions of the amended MTP Act permit termination

of pregnancy exceeding 24 weeks if the medical board thinks that way and has diagnosed that the foetus has substantial abnormalities. "Under the Scheme of the MTP Act as amended up-to-date, there is no such requirement of seeking any permission from the court by any woman who intends to get her pregnancy terminated even if the pregnancy is beyond 24 weeks," HC said. The bench permitted the woman to terminate the pregnancy and directed the general hospital in Wardha to bear the expenses.

Medical officer, his nurse wife booked for amassing 'disproportionate assets'



Team Absolute | Thane

A case has been registered against a medical officer and his wife posted at a government hospital for allegedly amassing assets disproportionate to their known sources of income, the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) said, reported news agency. The accused were identified as Dr Vijay Eknath Gavli (57), who is currently serving as a medical officer at the Sub Divisional Hospital at

Panvel, and his wife Varsha (54), employed as a staff Nurse with the Sub-district Hospital at Pen (both in Raigad district), an ACB release said. During their government service, the couple misused their position and collected disproportionate wealth, it said. On September 19, 2018, an offence of demand and acceptance of a bribe was registered against the doctor, it said. Following that, an inquiry was conducted into the income of the family

members for the period from January 2008 to September 2018, and it was found that the couple had collected wealth to the tune of Rs 1,52,40,530 which was more than their known sources of income and hence a case was registered against them, the ACB said. Based on the complaint filed by the ACB, the couple was booked under the Prevention of Corruption Act at the Pen police station on Wednesday, the agency added.

Eight African women rescued after police bust sex racket; two others arrested

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Police on Thursday arrested two African women for running a sex racket in Navi Mumbai, and rescued their eight female compatriots, an official said, reported news agency. The arrest was made after a raid was conducted at a row house in Kharghar area of Navi Mumbai around 9 pm on Wednesday, senior inspector Rajiv Shejwal said. "Acting on a tip-off that some women from Africa were running a flesh trade at the row house, the police raided the premises and arrested two of them. Another woman managed to escape from the spot during the raid," he said. "Eight African women, all in the age group of 25 to 30 years, were rescued. They are currently lodged at a rescue home," Shejwal said. A case was registered against the arrested duo and their absconding accomplice under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 370 (trafficking of person) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) and under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, he said.

Over 1.50 lakh new voters added in eight LS seats of Maharashtra



Team Absolute | Mumbai

More than 1.52 lakh new voters have been registered in eight out of total 48 Lok Sabha constituencies in Maharashtra in the latest round of electoral roll revision, in which the number of new women voters was more than their male counterparts, officials said, reported news agency. In this special drive conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI), as many as 82,658 new female voters were registered as against the 69,652 new male voters

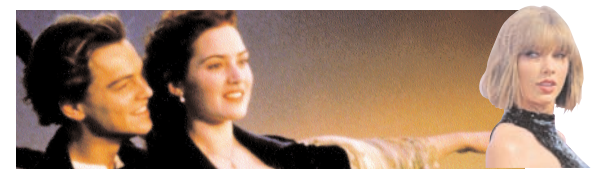
in these eight constituencies - Buldhana, Akola, Amravati, Wardha, Yavatmal-Washim, Hingoli, Nanded, and Parbhani. However, the total number of female voters across these eight segments is way below the count of male voters. There are 53,99,057 female voters as against the 77,21,374 male voters. There are 432 voters registered as transgender, an official statement issued by the chief electoral office of Maharashtra. These eight constituencies will go to polls in the second phase on May 7.

Man booked for raping, impregnating social worker

Team Absolute | Thane

The Navi Mumbai police have registered a case against a man for allegedly raping a 35-year-old Navi Mumbai social worker on several occasions and impregnating her, an official said, reported news agency. The 40-year-old accused, Nitin Gavand, hails from Avre village at Uran in Raigad district, while the victim belongs to Kopri in Navi Mumbai's Vashi, he said. "In 2018, the accused befriended the Navi Mumbai social worker and assured to take care of her son. He repeatedly raped her at different locations and impregnated her. He also forced her to undergo abortion," the official of Vashi police station said. "Besides this, he purchased herbal medicines worth Rs 50,000 from the victim, but paid only Rs 31,500 in return," he said. The case against him was registered under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 376 (rape), 376(2)(n) (repeated rape of same woman), 420 (cheating), 313 (causing miscarriage and death of a woman), 504 (intentional insult) and 506 (criminal intimidation), he said, adding that a probe was on.





Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Jennifer Aniston has shared that she still gets nervous during public appearances more than 30 years after she shot to fame. Asked if she still gets nervous, Aniston said: "Always. Always. Right now, literally in this chair." Aniston shot to fame playing Rachel Green in the sitcom 'Friends' in the early 1990s.

She starred alongside Courteney Cox, David Schwimmer, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc, and the late Matthew Perry.

The actress recalled the early days of filing her signature role and described it as a "magical" time.

She told people:

"Oh, everything was the most exciting thing on the planet. It was just magic. Nothing was not exciting. And it's still exciting, but we've had more experiences. We've learned more lessons. There's a little more behind us."

Aniston had been struggling to make it in Hollywood until she had a chance meeting with television executive Warren Littlefield in a gas station, who recommended her for the part in 'Friends', reports femalefirst.co.uk.

When the 'Morning Show' actress was asked what advice she would give her younger self, she said that she wouldn't be so focused on "making it" big as she remembered her first acting appearance in a school Nativity play at the age of 11.

Discussing when she first caught the acting bug, Aniston said: "Probably when I was onstage for the first time when I was about 11. I was in a Nativity play, and I played the archangel. "From that moment on, I caught the bug. That feeling when it wasn't about "making it" but just working - maintain that."

Jennifer Aniston reveals she still gets nervous when she walks on the red carpet



FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA, GEORGE LUCAS, KEVIN COSTNER TOP FORMIDABLE CANNES LINEUP



Paris | Agencies

Even as the Indian media celebrates the inclusion of Payal Kapadia's first feature film in the competition section of the Cannes Film Festival, world cinema's most prestigious event this year will bring together several iconic filmmakers, reports 'Variety'.

The roster includes notable names such as Francis Ford Coppola with 'Megalopolis' starring Adam Driver, George Miller with 'Furiosa' featuring Anya Taylor-Joy, and 'Star Wars' creator George Lucas, who will be feted with an honorary Palme d'Or.

Kevin Costner will also be on hand with the first installment of his Western epic, 'Horizon. An American Saga'. Some of the high-profile films in the pipeline for this year's competition, according to

'Variety', include 'Poor Things' helmer Yorgos Lanthimos' 'Kinds of Kindness', a stylised three-part story set in the present that reunites the Greek director with Emma Stone and Willem Dafoe; Paul Schrader's 'Oh Canada' with Richard Gere, based on a screenplay by the late Russell Banks ('Affliction'); Jacques Audiard's musical melodrama 'Emilia Perez' with Zoe Saldana and Selena Gomez; Paolo Sorrentino's 'Parthenope' starring Gary Oldman; and David Cronenberg's 'The Shrouds' featuring Vincent Cassel and Diane Kruger.

There's also Coralie Fargeat's 'The Substance', a female-powered horror film starring Demi Moore and Margaret Qualley, 'Barbie' director Greta Gerwig will be presiding over the jury.

Last year, the festival set a record

in terms of representation of women, inviting seven female directors to the Official Competition, 'Variety' adds. The Palme d'Or was ultimately awarded to Justine Triet for 'Anatomy of a Fall' -- and it was just the third time that a woman had won the festival's top honor (and the film went on to win the Best Adapted Screenplay award at the Oscars, BAFTAs and Golden Globes).

This year, the number of women in competition stands at just four, including India's Payal Kapadia.

Hollywood, notes 'Variety', may have a lighter presence because of a combination of factors -- including last year's actors' and writers' strikes, which created production delays, as well as a tough economy -- but this year's festival will see no shortage of glamour and stars on the red carpet.

Will Smith 'to address elephant in the room' as he prepares for Hollywood comeback

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Will Smith says he will handle his infamous Oscars slap "head on" ahead of his Hollywood comeback with 'Bad Boys: Ride or Die'.

The 55-year-old actor stars alongside Martin Lawrence in the upcoming film and is preparing to embark on a big campaign ahead of the release.

'Bad Boys: Ride or Die' is the actor's first big project since he slapped Chris Rock at the Academy Award in 2022.

"This film is Will's big comeback, and his team is going all out to get him out there," a source told The Sun newspaper.

The source shared that Smith plans to address the "elephant in the room" during the promotional campaign for the movie, reports femalefirst.co.uk.



"He will deal head-on with the slap and how he has changed since then. It's likely he will also speak about his marriage to Jada, after they secretly split up more than six years ago," the source said.

"The slap is still a bit of an elephant in the room, and Will is going to tackle it head-on. He is booked to appear on a number of big US TV shows and will be an open book."

"People love a redemption story, and Will has done a lot of work on himself. He also has a huge fan base who want him back in the thick of the action."

Smith had apologised to Rock for his behaviour at the Oscars.

The actor in a statement had promised that he would make amends for his mistake.

Los Angeles | Agencies

Prince William has returned to social media nearly one month after his wife, Princess Kate, revealed her cancer diagnosis to the world.

Although William, 41, did not mention Kate's health in his latest message, he signed the note with his initial, "W".

"Thank you for so many unforgettable performances with @Lionesses, @RachelDaly3. Plenty more goals for Villa now! W," he tweeted on Wednesday, April 10. The Prince of Wales was referring to the news of soccer player Rachel Daly's decision to retire from the women's team.

William's tweet comes amid his family's health crisis, as both his wife and his father, King Charles III, have been diagnosed with undisclosed forms of cancer this year. On March 22, Kate, 42, shared a video to her and William's social media account, revealing that she and her husband have "been doing everything we can to process [her cancer diagnosis] and manage this privately for the sake of our young family."

The spouses share children Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Princes Louis together. Kate appeared in the social media clip alone.



PRINCE WILLIAM SHARES FIRST SOCIAL MEDIA POST AFTER WIFE PRINCESS KATE'S CANCER REVELATION

Los Angeles | Agencies

Music icon Jon Bon Jovi, who underwent surgery on his vocal chords in 2022, is still working on "vocal therapy" at every available opportunity.

"Day to day, I'm working hard on it. Nothing else matters until I work on getting better. It's up to God at this point. I've done everything I can do," he told Entertainment Tonight.

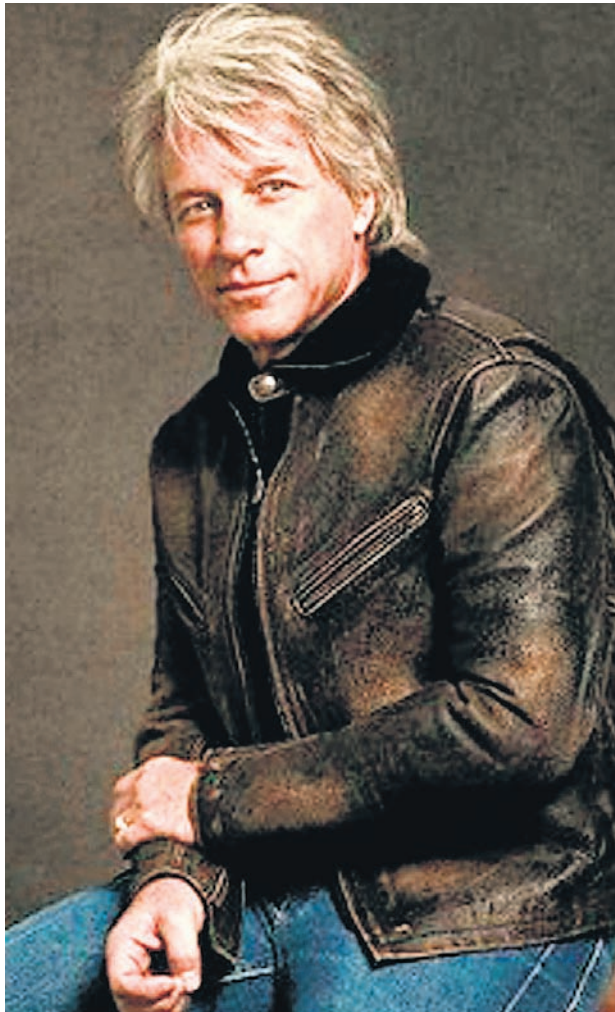
The music star is determined to return to full health.

Bon Jovi said: "I won't compromise who we are as a live band, because I'd like to think we're a pretty darn good band. I sang on the new record. I've done MusiCares and nailed it..."

"When I woke up after that night, it was the first time in a decade that the only voice in my head was mine - fear wasn't there, doubt wasn't there - and (my wife) Dorothea texted the kids and said, 'He's back!'"

Bon Jovi has been helped through his recovery by his longtime friend Bruce Springsteen, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

He has found Springsteen to be a "therapeutic" influence amid his recovery.



Jon Bon Jovi says he's working hard on recovery after his vocal chords surgery

HELEN MIRREN SHARES THE LIFE ADVICE HER MOTHER GAVE HER: 'NEVER BE AFRAID'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Helen Mirren has talked about the life advice her mother gave her, and it explained why she has "never been afraid" of getting older as she approaches her 80th birthday.

Mirren, who is still one of the most celebrated stars in Hollywood more than 40 years into her career, told E! News: "It's nature, it's what happens. And, as they say, along with getting older comes a certain kind of wisdom, a certain kind of understanding of that fact."

"My mother said the greatest thing to me: 'Never be afraid of getting older,'" added the actress, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Mirren shared that teenagers may think that the concept of middle age is like a "foreign country".

The actress said: "Of course, when you're 18, middle age is like a foreign country. It's so far away from you. But, you know, when you arrive in that country, you realise that country has great things."

"Maybe you like that country better than the country you left behind. All I can say is, don't worry (about aging). It's cool."

The Academy Award-winning actress also feels that life is about "taking risks" and that people should be more keen to take on "challenges" that might scare them.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Katie Maloney



IPL 2024: Ishan, Surya hammer blazing fifties as Mumbai Indians thrash RCB by 7 wickets

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav hammered blazing half-centuries in a brilliant display of power-hitting as Mumbai Indians thrashed Royal Challengers Bengaluru by seven wickets with 27 balls to spare for their second successive victory in Match 25 of Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 at the Wankhede Stadium here on Thursday.

Ishan Kishan set a breakneck pace as he hammered a 23-ball half-century on his way to a 34-ball 69, adding 72 runs off the first six overs and raising a century-partnership with Rohit Sharma (38) as Mumbai Indians raced to 199/3 in 15.3 overs, Jasprit Bumrah had set up Mumbai Indians for victory with a sensational bowling display, claiming 5-21 off after Faf du Plessis (61), Rajat Patidar (50) and Dinesh Karthik (52 not out) struck superb half-centuries to help RCB reach a challenging 196/8 in 20 overs.

Suryakumar Yadav then took over, hitting a 17-ball half-century, the second fastest this season only in his second match on return from an ankle injury and a sports hernia operation



in Germany. He scored 52 off 19 balls, hitting five boundaries and three sixes. This was Mumbai Indians' fifth victory at the Wankhede and second victory in five matches in IPL 2024, which took the five-time champions to seventh position in the 10-team competition after Hardik Pandya won the toss and asked RCB to bat first.

Suryakumar Yadav continued to torment the RCB bowlers. A four and a six followed by two more boundaries off Topley in the 13th over as SKY sliced, scooped and flicked off his wrists as he stormed to his half-century off 17 balls. He was finally out in the 14th over, finding the fielder off Vijaykumar Vyshak, scything it

straight to deep point for Lomror to pick a fine catch.

Hardik Pandya, who was booed once again by the crowd but also had a section of the stands rooting for him, started with a six off Will Jacks off the first ball. He hammered Vyshak for a six in the 14th over before sealing victory with a six, a brilliant shot to end the match as Mumbai Indians chased down 197 in 15.3 overs, giving their Net Run Rate a much-needed boost after starting IPL 2024 with three successive defeat. Hardik remained unbeaten on 21 with Tilak Varma remained 16 not out as Mumbai Indians won the match with 27 balls to spare. Akash Deep conceded 1-55 in 3.3 overs while Vijaykumar Vyshak claimed 1-32 for RCB.

Brief scores

Royal Challengers Bengaluru 196/8 in 20 overs (Faf du Plessis 61, Rajat Patidar 50, Dinesh Karthik 53 not out; Jasprit Bumrah 5-21) lost to Mumbai Indians 199/3 in 15.3 overs (Ishan Kishan 69, Suryakumar Yadav 52, Rohit Sharma 38; Will Jacks 1-24, Vijaykumar Vyshak 1-32) by seven wickets.

Joe Root to make red-ball return for Yorkshire after two years

Headingley | Agencies

Joe Root is all set to play in the second round of the County Championship this week against Gloucestershire, marking his first red-ball outing for Yorkshire in nearly two years.

Root's absence from the domestic scene since May 2022 has been felt keenly, his sporadic appearances in T20 cricket and the Hundred unable to quench the thirst of the Yorkshire faithful. Now, with the Ashes and subcontinent tour behind him, Root's focus shifts back to the traditional format, where his elegant stroke play and astute leadership promise to reignite Yorkshire's fortunes.

Root will play the next four rounds after missing the initial match against Leicestershire due to the two-month tour of India. The seventh round, which starts on May 24, will take place away from home in Northamptonshire. The 33-year-old, who had resigned as Test captain, had not played first-class cricket for



his home county since May 2022 against Warwickshire.

Joining Root in the fray is the dynamic Harry Brook, who had not played since England's white-ball tour of the West Indies in December 2023 after withdrawing from the India series following the death of his grandmother Pauline. Brook scored scintillating unbeaten century in his comeback in 69 deliveries. Brook's last fixture will be against Glamorgan at home, starting May 3, before taking a break ahead of England's T20 series against Pakistan

that leads into the T20 World Cup.

After a lackluster subcontinent tour in which he amassed 320 runs at 35.55—his lone century coming in the fourth Test as India won 4-1—Root will utilise the upcoming month to hone his skills in preparation for a busy six months. This season, England will host three Test series, the first of which starts on July 10 at Lord's against the West Indies and Sri Lanka. Before the year ends, they go to Pakistan and New Zealand.

BADMINTON ASIA

Indian campaign ends as Prannoy, Sindhu suffer second round defeat

Ningbo (China) | Agencies

India's campaign came to an early end at the Badminton Asia Championship as Olympics medalist PV Sindhu and Asian Games medal winner HS Prannoy lost their respective second-round matches on Thursday.

Sindhu lost to 6th seed Han Yue of China in a three-game battle with a scoreline of 18-21, 21-13, 17-21. On the other hand, HS Prannoy was defeated by World No. 19 Li Chun Yi in a disappointing straight-game defeat, losing 18-21, 11-21.

Coming into the match, Sindhu had a lead of 5-0 over Han Yue in head-to-head record. The Indian star fought valiantly, her resilience shining through as she battled her opponent in a grueling three-game encounter. Despite a sensational fightback in the second game, Sindhu's hopes were dashed as Han Yue emerged victorious, cheered on by the fervent local crowd.

The disappointment weighed heavy on Sindhu's shoulders, echoing the struggles she had faced in recent tournaments. From the All England Open to the Madrid Open, she had



encountered setbacks, grappling with inconsistency since her return from a long injury layoff. India's doubles hope also vanished as Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto lost to 3rd seeds Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida 17-21, 12-21 in the women's doubles second round. While Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty opted out of the premier continental tournament, Paris-bound shuttles Sindhu, Prannoy and Laskhya Sen were shown the door early.

MAYBE KISHOR WILL GET TO 90M BEFORE ME: NEERAJ CHOPRA

New Delhi | Agencies

Tokyo Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra remarked that while he's often questioned about reaching the 90m throw, he suggested that maybe his compatriot Kishor Jena would achieve the mark before him.

Jena, a rising javelin throw star, won silver with his personal best throw of 87.54m at the Asian Games last year, finishing behind Neeraj who reclaimed the gold. For the first time in the history of the Asian Games, Chopra and Kishore Kumar Jena made it a javelin one-two in Hangzhou 2023.

With his silver-winning throw at Asiad, Jena has breached the Paris Olympic qualification mark of 85.50m.

During the virtual media interaction, when asked about Jena's resurgence at the international stage and having two Indian javelin throwers competing at the World level, Neeraj hailed his compatriot and said it would be a dream come true if there were two Indians on the podium at the Olympics.

"It would be a dream come true if



we had two Indians on the podium in Paris. Who knows, there might be more than two as well. We already had two on the podium at the Asian Games... but it would be even more satisfying if we had two at the Olympics. I think Jena will be working hard to make that happen. I think he will throw well there.

"Last year, he progressed well from the Worlds to the Asian Games. He's made a lot of improvement, while I've been stuck at 88m since 2018. And

since everyone keeps asking me about getting to 90m, who knows maybe Kishor will get to 90m before me!"

After kick-starting his season at the Doha Diamond League meet on May, Neeraj will compete at the Paavo Nurmi Games in June to face a high-quality field of competitors which include the name of Germany's Max Dehning, who became the youngest javelin thrower to breach the coveted 90m mark earlier this year with

90.20m throw, which is the world-leading mark.

Addressing the prospect of competing against Max, the reigning world champion expressed that it's nothing new to face off against someone who has thrown 90m. He added that he's eager for the opportunity to compete against Max.

"When I competed at the Tokyo Olympics and also at last year's world championships and other events, many athletes had throws over 90m. So, it's not a new thing to compete against people who have thrown that distance," he said.

"Like I always said; what matters is what you can throw on that day. I am excited to get a chance to compete against them. The more they throw in competition, the more fun it becomes. When we are competing together, the main factor that determines the winner is who handles the pressure on that day better than the others.

"I will compete with Max at the Paavo Nurmi games. I've never competed with him before. He went from throwing 79m straight into 90m. He skipped the 80m page completely," he added.

Sinner sweeps past Korda, Tsitsipas dispatches Etcheverry in Monte-Carlo



Monte-Carlo | Agencies

In his first match on clay this season, Jannik Sinner sweeps past Sebastian Korda 6-1, 6-2 to reach the third round at the Monte-Carlo Masters.

Sinner saved all three break points he faced and was impressive on his first-serve, winning 95 per cent (20/21) of points behind his first delivery to advance after 76 minutes.

The 22-year-old will next play Jan-Lennard Struff after the German defeated Borna Coric on Tuesday to earn his 200th tour-level win.

Sinner is chasing his second crown on clay after winning in Umag in 2022. He is making his fourth appearance in the Principality, where he advanced to the semi-finals last season.

Meanwhile, two-time champion Stefanos Tsitsipas also raced into the third round after the Greek dispatched Tomas Martin Etcheverry 6-1, 6-0 in just 64 minutes to set a third-round clash against Alexander Zverev.

Tsitsipas, a champion in 2021 and 2022 in the Principality, struck 22 winners and broke Etcheverry's serve six times according to ATP Stats to improve to 16-3 at the clay-court event.

The fourth seed Daniil Medvedev reached the third round in the Principality for the third time with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Frenchman Gael Monfils. Medvedev, who reached the semi-finals in

Monte-Carlo last season, will next play Karen Khachanov after the World No. 17 defeated Francisco Cerundolo 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Medvedev enjoyed success on clay last year, winning his maiden tour-level title on the surface at the ATP Masters 1000 event in Rome. The 28-year-old is chasing his first trophy of the season this week, with his best result in 2024 a final run at the Australian Open.

Casper Ruud dispatched Chilean Alejandro Tabilo 6-2, 6-4 in one hour and 23 minutes to reach the third round.

Ruud, who has captured nine of his 10 tour-level titles on clay, will meet 10th seed Hubert Hurkacz following his 21st tour-level victory of the year.

In other action, Holger Rune was leading 6-3, 2-1 when play was suspended for the day due to rain. The 20-year-old, who is competing in his first clay-court match of the season, reached the title match in Monte-Carlo last year.

Grigor Dimitrov, fresh off his final run in Miami, held a 6-4, 2-1 advantage against Miomir Kecmanovic when rain halted their match.

STEVEN SMITH JOINS MAJOR LEAGUE CRICKET'S WASHINGTON FREEDOM

New York | Agencies

Australian cricket star Steven Smith has officially signed with Major League Cricket (MLC) franchise Washington Freedom ahead of the second season starting from July 4. The move, long speculated upon, comes as no surprise, given Smith's previous role as a brand ambassador for Freedom and his expressed interest in playing in the USA.

Smith, who owns an apartment in New York, expressed his excitement about the opportunity, calling it "pretty cool" to be part of the burgeoning cricket scene in America.

The high-performance partnership between Smith's domestic team, New South Wales (NSW), and Freedom likely played a role in facilitating the move, despite coaching



changes within the NSW setup. While Smith prepares for his MLC debut, he faces a challenge in earning a spot in Australia's final squad for the T20 World Cup. Having had limited opportunities in T20 cricket recently, since his prolific return to the BBL for Sydney Sixers in the 2022-23 season, where he made 346 runs at a strike rate of 174.74, Smith has played two T20Is in India, two matches in last season's BBL and as many games against New Zealand in

February, where he made 11 and 4 while opening the batting. Despite the uncertainty surrounding his international future, Smith remains focused and relaxed, stating that he's prepared for whatever decision comes his way. With a successful stint in the Big Bash League under his belt and a desire to make an impact on the global stage.

GAVASKAR CALLS RASHID KHAN A 'WANTED PLAYER' AROUND THE WORLD

Jaipur | Agencies

Former India cricketer Sunil Gavaskar has lauded Afghanistan's spin-bowling all-rounder Rashid Khan's performance in Gujarat Titans' thrilling 3-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals (RR), saying his commitment makes him "a wanted player by franchises worldwide."

Former India cricketer Sunil Gavaskar has Afghanistan's spin-bowling all-rounder Rashid Khan's performance in Gujarat Titans' thrilling 3-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals (RR) and said his commitment makes him as "a wanted player by franchises all around the world."

Riding on a splendid knock of 72 off 44 from captain Shubman Gill, followed by a final flourish from Rashid (24 off 11 not out) and Rahul Tewatia

(22 off 11), Gujarat Titans pulled off a thrilling last-ball win over Rajasthan Royals on Wednesday night.

Before showcasing his batting skills, the 25-year-old Afghan all-rounder bowled an economical spell, finishing with figures of 1-18 in his four-over quota. He was adjudged Player of the Match for his all-round show in GT's win.

Speaking on to Star Sports on Cricket Live, Gavaskar praised Rashid's commitment to the game. "Yeah he didn't hit the wickets like he usually does, but when he was needed with the bat he came and delivered. This is the reason he's such a wanted player by franchises all around the world. They want him because they can see his commitment, batting, bowling and fielding.

"Look at the way he gives everything while he's fielding. Bowlers



sometimes can be a little concerned about diving on their bowling shoulder,

because if they dislocate their shoulder careers are in threat. Not

with Rashid Khan, he just wants to give 100%." "There's another cricketer who is not playing in this IPL but who's again similar is Ben Stokes. Anyone you see Ben Stokes batting, bowling or fielding he's a 100%, he gives it everything. And those are the cricketers that coaches and captains want, they might not always deliver but you know the percentage is not going to be anything less than a 100%," he added. Former Australia cricketer Aaron Finch echoed the same sentiments on Rashid's performance against RR, he said, "It's not easy picking Rashid Khan, particularly when he bowls in the powerplay and he created a couple of chances too, Mathew Wade put a couple of tough chances down. In a game where almost 400 runs were scored, for a guy to go below 20, it's extraordinary. We talked about it pre game that

he may be back to his best after surgery, but he put us all to shame tonight. He just got the job done and that's the great thing, always gets his 100% and gets the job done."

Besides GT batters, Rajasthan Royals' in-form batter Riyan Parag also stole the show with his impressive batting display. He hit three fours and five sixes in his third fifty of the season coming at a strike-rate of 158.33. Parag's tally in IPL 2024 now stands at 251 runs in five matches, which is only second behind leading run-getter Virat Kohli. Gavaskar also shared his thoughts on Parag's performance, saying, "The way he's been batting, if he had got another eight deliveries to play, he could have scored 30 to 35 runs more in those eight deliveries. So, that would have resulted in Gujarat Titans chasing 225 instead of 197."



Big B reminisces about acting in a Nikolai Gogol play when he was at Sherwood College

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan recalled playing a mayor in Russian playwright Nikolai Gogol's 'The Government Inspector' in 1957, when he was studying in Sherwood College in Nainital.

The actor took to his blog and wrote: "How time has kept us all in tune and line... 1957 Sherwood, Nainital, School Play, Nikolai Gogol's 'The Government Inspector', Danny Kaye the phenomenal talent, playing the Inspector... and I use it on stage in Milman Hall for the Annual Concert, where I play the Mayor."

Big B shared an anecdote from the rehearsals of the play and mentioned that he had taken home the Best Actor's trophy at that time.

"And during a rehearsal, classmate Chris Borthwick, who plays the Inspector, suggests the famous line to be spoken at a particular

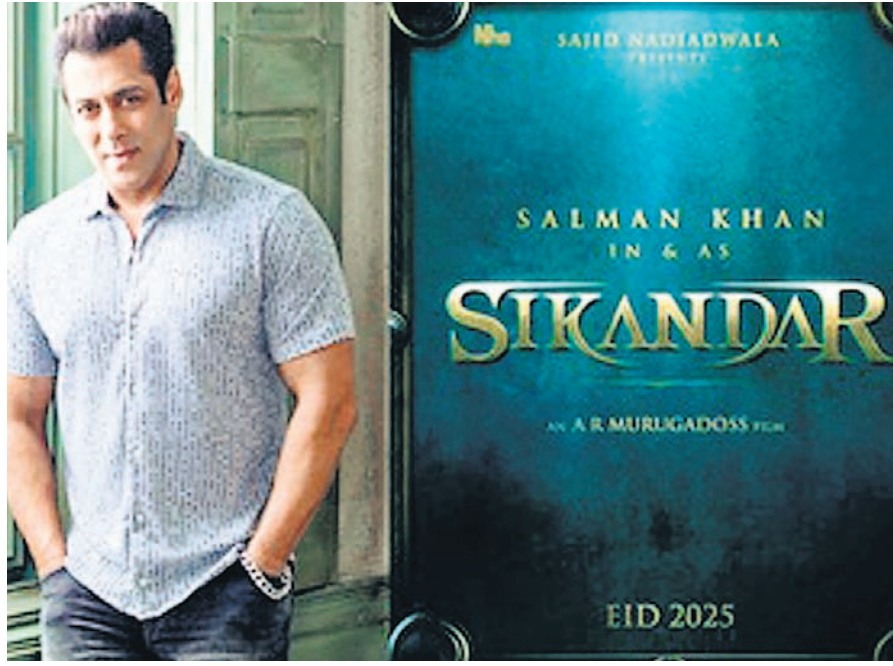


scene - impromptu... and the entire Hall comes down... It was the most popular song of the World... and gives me my best actor Cup - the Kendall Cup."

The actor shared how he had to give up starring in the play because he was "prepping for his final senior Cambridge exams." "That Geoffrey Kendall, who built the drama Company Shakespeareana, travelling all over the World with it... came to put up the plays of Shakespeare in School... asked me to play a part on one such day... I did not coz' was prepping for my Finals Senior Cambridge Exam... John Kurrien, classmate did it."

He then shared that Bollywood star Shashi Kapoor married Jennifer Kendal, who was the daughter of Shakespeareana's Geoffrey Kendall.

Big B added: "Shashi Kapoor married his daughter - Jennifer - who acted on stage with her Father, and where and when Shashi ji met her."



SALMAN KHAN HAS ANNOUNCED HIS NEW FILM 'SIKANDAR' ON THE OCCASION OF EID

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On the occasion of Eid on Thursday, Bollywood superstar Salman Khan has announced his new film 'Sikandar' directed by A.R. Murugadoss.

The actor also announced the movie's release date, confirming that it will hit theaters on Eid 2025.

Taking to Twitter, Salman shared a glimpse, which had "Salman Khan in and as Sikandar". The film is presented by Sajid Nadiadwala.

Salman captioned the announcement: "Iss Eid 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan' aur 'Maidaan' ko dekho aur agli Eid Sikandar se aa kar

miloo... Wish you all Eid Mubarak!

#SajidNadiadwala Presents #Sikandar Directed by @ARMurugadoss @NGEMovies @WardaNadiadwala #SikandarEid2025"

This is not the first time Salman is working with A.R. Murugadoss.

The two have previously worked together in 'Jai Ho', where he was the writer.

Murugadoss has worked on films such as 'Kaththi', 'Dheena' and 'Stalin', among many others.

His first Bollywood film was the 2008 Aamir Khan-starrer 'Ghajini', a Hindi remake of his Tamil film of the same name. He directed the action thriller 'Thuppaki' starring Vijay.



SRK, son AbRam greet sea of fans outside Mannat; 'may Allah bless us all with love'

'Eid Mubarak': Aamir with sons Junaid and Azad at home; distributes sweets to paps

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On the occasion of Eid, Bollywood's 'perfectionist' Aamir Khan was spotted outside his building with his sons Junaid and



paparazzi. Junaid is the son of Aamir and his first wife, Reena Dutta. He also has a sister, Ira. Azad is the son of Aamir and his second wife, Kiran Rao. The visuals show Aamir wearing a white plain kurta pyjama and rounded off his look with black slippers. His elder son, Junaid, wore a white chikankari kurta and paired it with blue denim jeans. Azad wore a white chikankari kurta and a matching plain pyjama. The trio can be seen happily posing together for the lenses. Aamir adorably holds his sons close to him while they get clicked. There were sounds of dhol beats around his residence. The paps can be seen asking Aamir, "ek photo aapki akele me lete hain," to which the superstar smiles and replies, "nahi saath me hi lete hain". Aamir, who was last seen in 'Laal Singh Chaddha', further said: "Eid Mubarak" to everyone present there. He then distributed sweets to the paparazzi. Aamir then handed over the box of sweets to the camerapersons and said: "Sabko baant do." He also ate a piece of sweet from the hands of a paparazzi.

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Superstar Shah Rukh Khan on Thursday greeted his fans outside his residence Mannat, on the occasion of Eid, and said 'may Allah

bless us all with love, happiness and prosperity'.

The visuals show a sea of fans waiting outside Mannat for SRK, to get a glimpse of the 'Badshah' on Eid.

SRK was seen wearing a white plain kurta pyjama, and sporting a ponytail, which is his signature 'Pathaan' look. He was accompanied

by his younger son AbRam.

The video shows him waving, and giving flying kisses to the fans, while the massive crowd was cheering for him amidst the high security.

Taking to social media, SRK wrote: "Eid Mubarak everyone... and thank you for making my day so special. May Allah bless us all with love, happiness and prosperity."

The actor has recently won the hearts of the fans with his portrayal of Vikram Rathore in 'Jawan'. He also had a special appearance in Salman Khan-starrer 'Tiger 3'.

SRK last appeared in 'Dunki' which revolved around illegal immigration. The film stars Taapsee Pannu, and Vicky Kaushal.

National Award-winning choreographer Kruti Mahesh joins Anupam Kher's

Team Absolute | Mumbai

National Award-winning choreographer Kruti Mahesh, who has choreographed numbers such as 'Ghoomar', 'Dholida' and 'Garmi', has come on board for the film 'Tanvi The Great' directed by Anupam Kher.

Anupam took to Instagram and shared the announcement along with a picture of him posing next to Kruti.

"ANNOUNCEMENT: Happy and delighted to share that #NationalAward winning choreographer #KrutiMahesh is choreographing the songs for my directorial film #TanviTheGreat," he wrote.

Praising the choreographer, Anupam said: "She creates magic on screen with her sensitivity, imagination and of course her brilliance! Thank you dearest @iamkrutimahesh for being part of our musical #TanviTheGreat! Jai Ho! #Ghoomar #Dholida #Garmi #Pranavalaya."

Directed by Anupam, the film also has Oscar-winning music director M.M. Keeravani and Japanese DOP Keiko Nakahara.

Expressing her gratitude, Kruti said: "Tanvi The Great" holds a special place in my heart. I'm thankful to Anupam Kher for his belief in me. Together, we are committed to delivering a memorable film for the audience."

On his 69th birthday, the National Award-winning actor announced his next directorial 'Tanvi The Great', which marked his return to the director's chair after 22 years. Anupam made his directorial debut with 2002 film 'Om Jai Jagadish' starring Anil Kapoor, Fardeen Khan and Abhishek Bachchan.



Disha Patani



Team Absolute | Mumbai

As Ankita Lokhande and her husband Vikas Jain completed six years of marital bliss, the actress said that she was unsure how they "ended up here" but are loving it.

Ankita took to Instagram and shared some glimpses from her six-year anniversary celebrations. In the images, the husband and wife are twinning in white. For the caption, she wrote: "Last night we celebrated six years of 'we met, we dated, we're still not sure how we ended up here, but we're lovin' it' kind of love."

Ankita was first dating late star Sushant Singh Rajput in 2010. In 2016, they parted their ways. In 2019, she announced that she was in a relationship with Vikas Jain, a businessman. The two got married in December 2021.

Ankita and Vikas were seen as contestants on 'Bigg Boss 17'. The two have now come out with a music video christened 'Laa Pila De Sharaab', which also features actor Saurabh Sachdev.

WE MET, DATED, STILL NOT SURE HOW WE ENDED UP HERE: ANKITA-VIKAS