





# CM KEJRIWAL EATING MANGOES TO RAISE SUGAR LEVEL TO SEEK BAIL: ED ALLEGES IN DELHI COURT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) alleged in a Delhi court on Thursday that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is deliberately eating mangoes and other high-carb food in Tihar Jail to raise his blood sugar level to build a case for bail.



CM Kejriwal's lawyers had gone at length detailing his health conditions earlier, saying he was diabetic when he was sent to judicial custody.

The Delhi Chief Minister is in judicial custody till April 23 for his alleged involvement in the excise policy case.

The ED has alleged that CM Kejriwal is consciously consuming items like tea with sugar, banana, sweets (1/2 pieces), poori, aloo sabji, etc. on a regular basis, despite being a Type 2 diabetes patient.

ic constipation and cough (chronic bronchitis), who is under regular treatment," the ED counsel said.

However, advocate Vivek Jain, appearing for CM Kejriwal, opposed the federal agency's submission saying the ED counsel is playing by the gallery and making statements for the media.

The agency also said that this is being done to create a medical emergency "to obtain sympathetic treatment from the court on medical grounds".

"Further, the jail authorities on Wednesday asked AIIMS to prescribe a diet chart for the Chief Minister after considering his sugar records and the fact that he is a Type 2 diabetes patient with chron-

# BJP will hardly win 12-15 LS seats in south India: Telangana CM Revanth Reddy

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday claimed that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will hardly win 12-15 Parliamentary seats in the southern states in the Lok Sabha polls.

Speaking with NDTV's Marya Shakil at a rally while campaigning for Congress leader Adoor Prakash in Kerala's Attingal, Revanth Reddy said that the grand old party will win all 20 LS seats in Kerala, while it will bag at least 14 out of 17 LS seats in Telangana.



confuse people, but people are intelligent and they are going to teach a lesson to the party".

"We don't know, the Chief Minister (Revanth Reddy) himself may jump to the BJP,"

he said. KCR said while they want the Congress government to complete its five-year term, considering the recent developments, he doubts if it will last more than a year.

# K'TAKA SHOCKER: MAN LACES DRINKING WATER WITH PESTICIDE; WIFE, TWO CHILDREN DIE

Mandya: A man laced drinking water with pesticide and gave it to his family, resulting in the death of his wife and two children. The incident was reported from Nagamangala town in Mandya district of Karnataka on Thursday.

The deceased have been identified as 23-year-old Keerthana and her children, four-year-old Jayasimha and one-year-old Rishika.

The couple had frequent disputes and quarrels. Narasimha had reportedly decided to kill his wife and children and commit suicide.

# 'Yamraj' files nomination as Independent for Maharashtra's Madha LS seat

Solapur (Maharashtra) | Agencies

A man attired as 'Yamraj', the Hindu God of Death, and riding the deity's preferred mount, a buffalo, reached the Collectorate on Thursday to submit his nomination as an Independent candidate for Maharashtra's Madha Lok Sabha constituency.

Ram Gaikwad, garbed in a gold-and-black robe and dhoti, a gleaming golden headgear with two protruding curved white horns and toting a shining mace, announced that he would contest the LS polls from Madha to enter the Parliament with the aim of saving the country from the menace of corruption, poverty, unemployment and other ills.

He claimed that he was donning the role of 'Yamraj' to "finish" off corruption in the country, ensure Maratha quotas, prevent the misuse of central investigation agencies by the government against political rivals, the politics of hacking and breaking political parties, self-centred politics, etc. Gathering plenty of interesting glances from passers-by, who stopped



to see the unusual spectacle, the handle-bar moustache sporting candidate's arrival was heralded from quite a distance as over a hundred of his supporters lustily cheered and raised slogans in his support.

Though it was labelled as a 'publicity gimmick', Gaikwad's arrival as 'Yamraj' not only made waves but managed to garner much attention though most decided to keep a safe distance from the God of Death.

# Mehbooba Mufti files nomination for Anantnag-Rajouri LS seat

Srinagar | Agencies

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) President and former J&K Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti on Thursday filed her nomination papers for the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha constituency.

Accompanied by senior PDP leaders and a large number of supporters, she filed her papers before the District Development Commissioner, Anantnag, who is the returning officer of the constituency.

Earlier on Thursday, senior NC leader Mian Altaf Ahmad filed papers for this constituency, while Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) President Ghulam Nabi Azad, who hinted at joining the fray, has now announced he would not contest the Lok Sabha election.



Syed Altaf Bukhari, has decided to field Zafar Iqbal Manhas from the constituency. The BJP has not, so far, announced its candidates for any of the 3 Lok Sabha constituencies of the Kashmir Valley.

The Congress is supporting the NC candidates in the Valley, and the NC is reciprocating the support in the 2 Lok Sabha seats in the Jammu division.

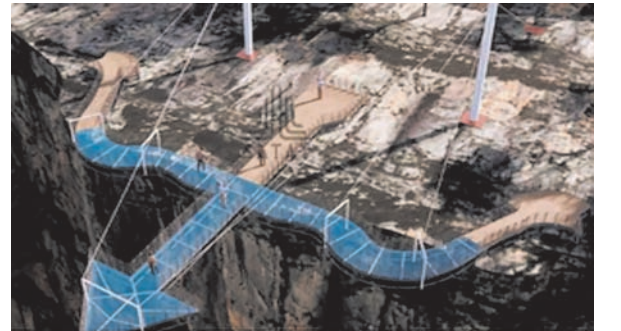
# UP's glass skywalk to open after Lok Sabha polls in Chitrakoot

Chitrakoot | Agencies

Uttar Pradesh will soon get its first-ever glass skywalk bridge, which will be set against the picturesque backdrop of Tulsī Waterfalls in the Markundi range of the Chitrakoot forest division.

Built from a fusion of glass and steel, this marvel of engineering takes the form of Lord Ram's revered bow and arrow, thereby symbolising strength and valour.

Drawing inspiration from Bihar's renowned skywalk glass bridge in Rajgir, Uttar Pradesh's glass skywalk is poised to captivate visitors



with its blend of aesthetic charm and structural brilliance. The bridge, said sources, will be inaugurated after the Lok Sabha polls.

Built by the esteemed Ghazipur-based Pawan Sut Construction Company, the bridge stands as a testament to collaborative effort and visionary planning.

# Rahul Gandhi holding Muslim League flag in Wayanad inciting anti-Hindu sentiments: Union Minister

Hubballi (Karnataka) | Agencies

Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Coal, and Mines, Pralhad Joshi, asserted on Thursday that Rahul Gandhi's act of holding the flag of Muslim League in Wayanad is inciting anti-Hindu sentiments.

Addressing reporters, Joshi stated that during his nomination paper submission in Wayanad, Rahul Gandhi held the flag of the Muslim League instead of the Congress party's flag.

Joshi alleged that the Muslim League had called for a 'direct action day' against Hindus, advocating violence such as killing Hindus and raping Hindu women. By aligning himself with the Muslim League, which supports subversive activities, and contesting elections, Rahul Gandhi is directly contributing to the escalation of anti-Hindu incidents, Joshi stated.

"Rahul Gandhi bears direct responsibility for the anti-Hindu acts occurring in Karnataka. Incidents such as attacks on Hindus for chanting 'Jai Shri Ram' are facilitated by the Congress party," he alleged.



Joshi slammed Congress for appeasement of Muslims, which he claims has led to incidents like the chanting of pro-Pakistan slogans in Vidhana Soudha, attacks on individuals for reciting Hanuman Chalisa and raising Jai Shri Ram slogans. He asserted that these incidents demonstrate the Congress party's anti-Hindu stance.

# Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee blames EC for Ram Navami clashes at Murshidabad

Kolkata | Agencies

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, on Thursday, blamed the Election Commission (EC) for the stray incidence of clashes during Ram Navami processions at Murshidabad on Wednesday evening in which some persons were reportedly injured.

The commission replaced the deputy inspector general of Murshidabad Range just before the Ram Navami festival. What was the reason for doing so. He was well acquainted with the entire district. There was no justification for replacing him. These are very sensitive states. We have to toil hard to keep things under control here," the Chief Minister said while addressing an election rally at Raiganj in North Dinajpur district.



Recently, DIG (Murshidabad Range) Mukesh Kumar was replaced by Syed Waqar Raza, a 2008-batch

Indian Police Service officer. Mukesh was removed reportedly after opposition parties accused him of not play-

ing an unbiased role since the model code of conduct for the Lok Sabha polls had been in place. Speaking at the election rally, the Chief Minister further said that in the clashes on Wednesday evening, even some officials of the district police were injured. Targeting the BJP, she claimed that they would first create problems in an area and then complain against Trinamool Congress holding it responsible.



## VOTING IN SIX LOK SABHA PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES TODAY

Voting will be held from 7 am till 6 pm. 1.13 crore voters will vote. Voting will be conducted in three assembly constituencies of Balaghat parliamentary constituency from 7 am to 4 pm

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the first phase of Lok Sabha Elections-2024, voting will be held in 6 Lok Sabha parliamentary constituencies of the state on Friday, April 19. Voting will be held from 7 am to 6 pm in Lok Sabha parliamentary constituencies No. 11 Sidhi, No. 12 Shahdol (ST), No. 13 Jabalpur, No. 14 Mandla (ST), No. 15 Balaghat and No. 16 Chhindwara. Voting will be held from 7 am to 4 pm in only three assembly constituencies of Balaghat Lok Sabha parliamentary constituency - No. 108 Baihar (ST), No. 109 Lanji and No. 110 Parswara. All the polling parties have left for their respective polling centers to conduct the voting.

In the first phase of Lok Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh, more than 1 crore 13 lakh voters will exercise their franchise in six parliamentary constituencies. During this period, complete security arrangements have been made. At the same time, air ambulance will also be available to provide emergency health facilities. State Chief Electoral Officer Anupam Rajan said that voting is going to be held on Friday in six parliamentary constituencies of the state, Sidhi, Shahdol, Jabalpur,



Mandla, Balaghat and Chhindwara. Of these, two areas Shahdol and Mandla are reserved for Scheduled Caste and Tribe category. Polling teams are reaching their respective polling centers with materials.

The six parliamentary constituencies where voting is to be held include 46 assembly constituencies and are spread across 13 districts. A total of 88 candidates are in the electoral fray, of which 81 are men and seven are women. Maximum 19 can-

didates are in Jabalpur and least 10 candidates are in Shahdol. Voting time will be from 7 am to 6 pm. Voting will be held from 7 am to 4 pm in the three assembly constituencies of Balaghat parliamentary constituency, Baihar, Lanji and Parswara, which are areas of Naxalite influence.

Giving information in view of the election preparations, Rajan said that one more ambulance is available in Jabalpur a day before the vot-

ing, which will remain till the end of the voting. Along with this, a helicopter is being kept in Balaghat till the completion of voting on 18th and 19th April. Till the first phase of voting, cash and material worth more than Rs 120 crore has been seized.

**Holiday declared on voting day**  
For the convenience of voters, there will be a public and general holiday on polling day (April 19) in the above mentioned 6 parliamentary constituencies. The state government has declared public holiday and general holiday in the respective areas on the day of polling using the powers conferred in Section 25 of the Negotiable Instruments Act.

**Citizens to get information about voting percentage from Voter Turn-out App and CEO MP website**  
On the day of voting, information about voting percentage will be available on the Voter Turnout App of the Election Commission of India and the website of Chief Electoral Officer, Madhya Pradesh <https://ceomadhyapradesh.nic.in>. Through this, citizens will be able to get information about the voting percentage recorded every two hours. Citizens will have to download the Voter-Turnout App by visiting Google Play Store.

## BJP candidate Alok Sharma filed nomination in Bhopal



Team Absolute | Bhopal

BJP candidate from Bhopal parliamentary constituency Alok Sharma filed his nomination papers on Friday. Former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Minister Vishwas Sarang and Minister of State Krishna Gaur were present with him during the nomination. Before leaving the house in the morning for nomination, he touched the feet of his parents and took blessings. Mother applied tilak on his forehead and wished him victory in the elections. After this he reached the Curfew Wali Mata Temple

located in Somwara and offered prayers with CM Mohan Yadav. An election meeting was held here at Bhawani Chowk in his support. Former mayor Sunil Sood also arrived here, who formally took membership of BJP today. This public meeting was addressed by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan. After the meeting, Alok Sharma left for the Collectorate to file nomination in the form of a rally. Addressing the nomination meeting of Alok Sharma, Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said that our family in the form of Bharatiya Janata Party is

growing every day. Congressmen face shocks day and night, but still they do not agree. There is no trace of Congress in Bhopal. Congress could not win in Bhopal for 25 years. We have the trust of the workers, this is where Congress fails. What I could not have imagined in 2014, Modi ji achieved by running a government with full majority. On this occasion, CM Mohan Yadav expressed confidence of BJP's victory on all 29 seats of the state and said that this time, Chhindwara will be crossed. This time a record of victory will be made on Bhopal seat also.

## Folk singer Neha sang 'Rewa mein ka ba': BJP MLA said- Neha unemployed; Congress strongly supported

Rewa | Agencies

Everybody must have heard this song "UP Mein Ka Ba". This song made a lot of headlines on social media. There was a lot of controversy regarding this. Voting is to be held in Rewa on 26th April. Less than 10 days are left for counting of votes.

Meanwhile, a song by Bihar's folk singer Neha Singh Rathore has come regarding Rewa. Which has become a topic of discussion in the entire district. This song went viral on social media on Wednesday evening. In which Neha Singh is seen singing Rewa mein ka ba?

In this song, she is also criticizing MP Janardan Mishra. With the release of this song at the time of elections, the



She said that Neha Singh Rathore is unemployed. They don't have any work. Because of which she keeps singing such sponsored songs from time to time.

I want to tell them to come here. I will take them around with me and show them what is not there in Rewa today. In between, she keeps singing such obscene songs which are without propriety.

Whereas Congress leader Brijendra Gupta has called this song the truth of Rewa. He said that Neha Singh Rathore has spoken the truth openly in this song.

Unemployment and corruption are at their peak in Rewa today. In such a situation, nothing wrong has been said in this song. This step of Neha Singh is commendable which we all strongly support.

hustle and bustle in the political circles has intensified. Where Congress is supporting this song. The same BJP is calling this song a slogan of Congress. After the song went viral, Manganagwa MLA Narendra Prajapati responded by saying that I invite Neha Singh Rathore to Rewa. They came to Rewa and saw what was happening in Rewa.

## Tube well mining will be done only after registration in mobile app

PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES WILL ALSO HAVE TO REGISTER. RECORDS OF EACH BORE WILL BE SAFE AND SECURITY WILL ALSO BE MAINTAINED.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In view of the frequent accidents happening in open tube well bores, Electronics Development Corporation has issued a new guideline for tube well boring. Under which a mobile app has been devel-

oped. Only with its help can a new bore be made. With this, private and government boring agencies will have to register in this app. The person doing the boring will also have to upload complete information regarding the bore. On the basis of which government agencies will get information related to the bore. Information about the new bore will have to be uploaded in the mobile app, in which information including photos regarding the success and failure of the bore will be uploaded. If the bore has failed, it must be safely shut down. The department has also started the trial of the new mobile app from Wednesday. The department has kept the



option of all types of information related to boring on this portal. In which information about all private and government open and closed tube wells in urban and rural areas will be uploaded. This will enable us

to know where there are bores that need to be protected. - Cemented platform will have to be made. If water does not come out during boring, then it will have to be filled with soil, ballast and other materials. Along with this, a cement block will have to be made and secured. Whose information will be put on the mobile app along with the photo.

Chief Engineer KK Songaria says that the department has also launched a mobile app along with the portal. In which along with the new bore, the boring agencies will also have to register themselves. Information about open bores will also be updated on the portal, so that accidents can be prevented.

## Election battle of 'Development vs Modi's Guarantee' in Chhindwara

Team Absolute | Chhindwara

Voting is going to be held on six parliamentary seats in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh on Friday. The hottest seat among these is Chhindwara. Here the elections are being fought entirely on 'development versus Modi's guarantees'. The silence of voters before voting remains an inexplicable puzzle for the candidates of BJP and Congress.

Chhindwara seat is known as the stronghold of Congress leader Kamal Nath. Till now, Nath family has been winning 11 times out of 18 elections in Chhindwara.

Once again Nakulnath, the representative of the same family, is in the electoral fray and his competition is against BJP's Vivek Bunty Sahu. This is the second election for Nakulnath. He had contested the last Lok Sabha elec-



tions as a Congress candidate and had registered a big victory.

In the Nath family, be it Nakul Nath or his father Kamal Nath or Priya Nath, all three are reminding the public of their relationships of the last 45 years. He is telling how much Chhindwara has changed during this

period. Kamal Nath is telling in every meeting how change took place in Chhindwara. He claims that a network of facilities ranging from electricity to railways has been laid in the village. Emphasis was laid on training to provide employment opportunities to the youth. As a result of that,

Chhindwara has got a separate identity in the country.

Kamal Nath alleges that BJP had made many promises including increasing crop prices and giving gas cylinders for Rs 450, but they have not been fulfilled yet. On the other hand, BJP has fielded Vivek Bunty Sahu. He had recently contested the assembly elections, where he had to face a crushing defeat. Political analysts believe that Chhindwara elections remain interesting. Both the political parties are counting their achievements. At the same time, they are also openly discussing each other's shortcomings. Development and Modi's guarantee are not only election issues, but both the candidates are also being discussed. This choice is not easy for anyone. This is the reason why both the parties are taking political steps forward with caution.

## Congress candidate Arun Srivastava and Aam Aadmi Party officials discussed election strategy

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Aam Aadmi Party workers and senior officials of India Alliance Party are playing an active role in the election campaign of Congress candidate from Bhopal parliamentary constituency Advocate Arun Srivastava. On Wednesday evening, senior officials and workers of Aam Aadmi Party met in the office located in Malviya Nagar. Discussions took place regarding the upcoming election campaign.

In this meeting, Congress candidate Arun Srivastava expressed his gratitude to the officials and workers of Aam Aadmi Party and appealed to get involved in the election campaign with great speed. He said that during its many years of rule, BJP has faced problems like inflation, corrup-



tion and unemployment. It has reached its peak and the people of the entire country and state are troubled by the rising inflation.

Now the opportunity has come through the Lok Sabha elections to remove this corrupt party from the throne of power. In this meeting, Aam Aadmi Party's State Joint Secretary Raisa

Malik also in her address urged the workers to join the election campaign with complete unity. In this meeting, a strategy was prepared to make the joint candidate of Congress and India Alliance, Arun Srivastava, win with a huge majority by reaching out to every voter in the entire Lok Sabha.

## Fashion show on 27th April with message of voter awareness, transgender model will present ramp for the first time

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Various innovations are being made by the district administration to motivate voters to vote more and more under Lok Sabha Elections 2024. With the aim of ensuring the participation of the transgender community in the great festival of democracy, the district administration has made the community's guru Haji Suraiya Nayak the district sweep icon. Guru Haji Suraiya Nayak has appealed to the citizens of Bhopal to vote compulsorily on 7 May 2024.

On Wednesday, Assistant Nodal Officer-Sweep Ritesh Sharma presented respect to



the transgender community guru, in which the community guru gave her consent for a jointly organized fashion show of transgenders and women to be organized on 27 April 2024. For the first time,

voters from the Kinnar community along with female voter models will participate in a fashion show on a public platform in Bhopal, giving the message of voting and equality.

## Modi government is supporting the senior citizens: Vishnudatt Sharma

Team Absolute | Khajuraho

In the assembly elections held a few months ago in Madhya Pradesh, Bharatiya Janata Party has received 68 percent votes in Chandla assembly constituency. Now Lok Sabha elections are taking place. Voting is to be held in Khajuraho Lok Sabha constituency on 26 April. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has to be made the Prime Minister for the third time with a historic majority, hence bless him if BJP gets more than 80 percent votes in Chandla Assembly constituency in the Lok Sabha elections. State President of Bharatiya Janata Party and party candidate from Khajuraho Lok Sabha constituency, Vishnudatt



Sharma said this while addressing street meetings in various villages of Chandla Assembly.

Sharma said that in the manifesto issued by the Bharatiya Janata Party

regarding the Lok Sabha elections, every elderly person above 70 years of age will be brought under the Ayushman scheme and will be provided treatment facilities. Sharma said

that this is not an announcement but a guarantee by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is providing support to the poor as well as the elderly of every section.

Prime Minister Modi ji has done the work of providing roofs to four crore poor people by building permanent houses. It has been resolved to build three crore more houses in the coming days. He said that after Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister in the year 2014, the country has developed in every field. India is moving towards becoming self-reliant. The Prime Minister is working to develop the country and make it a world leader.



EDITOR'S SPECS

## 11 from J&K qualify UPSC Exam 2023

Eleven candidates from Jammu and Kashmir have qualified for this year's Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Civil Service exams, the results of which were declared by the Commission on Tuesday. The notification issued by the UPSC said that 1,016 candidates have passed this year's Civil Service exam in which Aditya Srivastava from Uttar Pradesh has topped the selection list. Twenty-four-year-old Anmol Rathore from Doda district has secured seventh All India Rank (AIR) in the examination. She had also topped the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Service Examination (JKCSE) 2022 and is currently undergoing training at the Revenue Training Institute in Jammu. Anmol said she completed her studies from her house except for some mock tests and the UPSC Mains test series which she attended in Delhi. "Otherwise, I have prepared on my own using the material available online. I would say the youth of this region have huge potential provided their energy is channelled in the right direction," she added. Another candidate, Arjun Gupta of Kathua district has achieved 32nd rank in the select list. Manan Bhat of Srinagar district has secured 88th rank this year. He had earlier also qualified for the civil services exam securing 231 AIR. At present, Bhat is an IPS officer in the Telangana cadre. Harnit Singh Sudan of Jammu has secured an AIR of 177, Mohammad Haris Mir an AIR of 345, Mohammad Farhan Seh AIR 369, Aparajita Aryan AIR 381, Ghulam Maya Din AIR 388, Suwan Sharma AIR 412, Seerat Baji AIR 516 and Dinesh Kumar AIR 1,003.

# First phase of LS polls Will Modi-Yogi popularity override caste equations in UP?

The wave of Prime Minister Modi's popularity, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's stern dealing with the law & order situation and the euphoria over the Ram temple has started overriding the caste equations in Uttar Pradesh. The state has always witnessed the caste factor come into play whenever elections are to be held, but now it is the popularity of PM Modi and CM Yogi Adityanath that is overtaking all other issues.

In the first phase of elections in western UP, where normally the voting pattern of Muslims and Dalits decides the fate of candidates, this time there is a palpable difference because all that seems to be working is the Modi and Yogi factor.

The performance of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) candidates in this phase will also decide the party's future.

The BSP has tweaked its strategy when it fielded candidates from castes who, otherwise, are believed to be the core voters of the BJP but apparently, candidates are unable to wean away these votes from the BJP's bag.

For example, in 2014, Muzaffarnagar was won by BJP's Sanjeev Baliyan by a low margin of 6,400 votes, and Meerut was won by BJP's Rajendra Agrawal by a margin of around 4,700 votes.

In Muzaffarnagar, where the Muslims form around 30 per cent of the electorate, the BSP has fielded Dara Singh Prajapati, an OBC hoping to corner the votes of his community as well as the party's traditional Dalit community.

However, the BJP has gained ground in both these constituencies and caste factors have receded into the background.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally in Meerut and Yogi Adityanath's rally in Muzaffarnagar has turned the tide completely in BJP's favour.

In Meerut, the BSP has Deovrat Tyagi, a Brahmin against BJP's Arun Govil, who played Lord Rama in the serial 'Ramayana'. The BSP nominee is eyeing the support of around 50,000 'Tyagi' voters in Meerut, apart from Dalit and Muslim votes, but sources claim that upper castes and Dalits are preparing to vote for BJP this time.

In an interesting development, this time, the Muslim mood towards the BJP has also softened to an extent and even Dalits are veering towards BJP after being disillusioned by Mayawati's indecision.



Observers believe that, unlike Assembly elections, the Muslim voters will be more tactful this time. They will not blindly choose between the BSP and the SP-Congress alliance but will weigh the benefits they have received from the BJP governments at the centre and state.

Haji Ikhlq, a trader in Meerut, says, "The BJP is no longer untouchable for us. We have received the benefits of their welfare schemes and there is no reason why we will not vote for them. Muslims are breaking the earlier mindset and the change will be visible in these elections."

In the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and 2017 Assembly elections, the minority voters supported candidates of both SP and BSP leading to the division of votes. The BJP got the maximum number of 71 Lok Sabha in 2014 and 312 Assembly seats in 2022.

In 2022, the minority vote consolidated towards the Samajwadi Party, but it could not cross the 112-seat mark.

It is only the Jatavs among Dalits in the west UP region who are likely to remain loyal to

Mayawati.

In Saharanpur, BJP's Raghav Lakhan Pal, a Brahmin is pitted against Congress-SP alliance candidate Imran Masood and BSP's Majid Ali, one of the richest candidates in the fray.

Imran Masood is facing a tough challenge from BSP, which could make it easier for BJP to sail through to victory.

In Meerut, SP candidate and former mayor Sunita Verma, a Jatav, is likely to draw support from the voters of her caste which will dent BSP's base.

In Nagina (SC), Azad Samaj Party chief Chandra Shekhar Azad is likely to make some dent in BSP's vote bank.

"If Chandra Shekhar dents BSP, the victory run for BJP will be much easier," said a local leader.

BJP's Kunwar Sarvesh Singh, in Moradabad, could find it easier to reach the victory post as BSP's Israr Saifi is locked in a crucial battle of Muslims and Dalit votes with SP's Ruchi Veera.

However, in Pilibhit, BSP is not

a major factor.

In Pilibhit, Lodh Rajputs or Lodhs would be the deciding factor. It is the vote from this community which will decide who will have the last laugh - BJP's Jitin Prasad or SP's Bhagwat Saran Gangwar.

Jitin Prasad, meanwhile, is riding high on the Modi wave and the rallies by the Prime Minister and Yogi Adityanath have strengthened his position in the past week.

In Rampur, a lot will depend on how enthusiastic the voters are on the day of voting. There is a clear division of Muslim votes after SP leader Mohd Azam Khan refused to accept the party's official candidate Muhibullah Nadiwi. His supporters are throwing their weight behind Zeeshan Khan of BSP.

The BJP candidate Ghanshyam Lodhi stands safe in his position.

## international

## Kargil War was an 'ill-conceived blunder', admit former Pakistani military officers



**Hamza Ameer** | Islamabad

One of the many adventures in the Pakistan-India series of conflicts 'Operation Koh Paima', also known as the Kargil operation -- that was hailed as a success story by its architect and Pakistani military dictator Late General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf -- is now being labelled as a "strategic blunder" and a "political disaster" by a majority of experts, including former military officers who were serving during the 1999 operation. "The plan was a blunder and a massive failure. It not only turned out to be a disaster, it also violated the Lahore Summit agreement between India and Pakistan. Also, because the Pakistan Army denied its involvement, even refused to accept the dead bodies of its own soldiers who were later buried by the Indian Armed forces, turned out to be more embarrassing and attracted more dishonour to the institution," says Colonel (ret'd) Ashfaq Hussain. The Kargil conflict happened during May and July 1999. It was a decision, undertaken by some top military heads, who initiated the operation without even taking their own Prime Minister at the time, Nawaz Sharif in confidence. The main target of the operation was to cut off the link between Kashmir and Ladakh, block the National Highway-1 and force the Indian forces to compromise their positions from the Siachen glacier. The military minds were of the view that the operation would force India to retreat and come to table talks for resolving the Kashmir dispute on Islamabad's terms. "On one side, Pakistan was faced with international pressure and

on the other side, the plan failed miserably as China did not act as per Islamabad's assumptions. Our then Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz got a cold shoulder from China along with all others because Islamabad's version that it was not its Army but the Kashmir freedom fighters at Kargil, was a story not bought by anyone," Hussain added. At the time, General Musharraf was leading the operation while his team included Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Aziz Khan, Commander 10 Corps Lt. General Mahmood Ahmed, and Forces Commander Northern Areas Major General Javed Hassan. While the plan to execute the Kargil operation was the brainchild of a few military heads, the overall plan was bound to fail as it was based on wrong assumptions which were kept in hiding even from the Pakistani Prime Minister along with the country's Chiefs of Air Force and Navy.

Keeping in view that the normal practice of both Indian and Pakistani forces was to leave their posts at high altitude during the extreme weather conditions of winter snow and reoccupy them at spring, Pakistani forces and their proxies reoccupied the forward positions before the Indians and took control of the strategic heights of Kargil, Drass and Batalik.

The Indian forces then launched 'Operation Vijay' to retake their strategic posts. As the battle between the two sides gained heat, the Pakistani side took advantage of the higher peaks and responded to Indian artillery fire. "We had the advantage of the higher peak position. We could spot them from the height and counter fire on

them more effectively," said Colonel Ret'd. Ashfaq Hussain, author of the book 'Witness to Blunder' that details his firsthand experience of the time, sitting as an officer in the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in Rawalpindi.

The plan on Pakistan's side, limited to the few military minds, was that its occupation of the high peaks at Kargil would force the Indian forces away from Siachen and the international community would intervene during the early stage to normalise the situation, leaving Pakistan with gains along the LoC (Line of Control).

Nawaz Sharif, the then Prime Minister who claimed he was completely unaware of the Kargil plan at the start, seemed to act in a way that hinted otherwise. It seemed that he was aware of the plan but had no idea on the serious consequences of the stunt.

Sharif may have been of the view that if the Kargil operation goes as planned, then he would own up to it standing tall as the victor of Kashmir. But because of his limited information on the actual plan and lack of assessment on the counter-offensive strategy adopted by India, Sharif preferred to maintain being naive and unknown to the developments.

It was by the end of June that Kargil operation was established as a disastrous failure, with the US President Bill Clinton demanding Pakistan to immediately withdraw its forces from the Indian side of the LoC.

"Kargil adventure was a blunder. It was a much bigger blunder than the surrender of 1971," says Colonel (ret'd) Ashfaq Hussain.

## IDF carries out airstrikes in Rafah, casualties feared



**Tei Aviv** | Agencies

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) carried out aerial strikes in the Rafah area during the early hours of Thursday. According to Israeli and Arabic media, many were feared dead and several were injured in the attack. Since Iran carried out missile and drone attacks on Israel, the IDF has upped its ante against the Hamas and Hezbollah militants. On Wednesday, the IDF carried out an aerial attack in which seven people were killed. The allies of Israel, including the US, the UK and France had requested Israel not to attack the Rafah region as the population density in the region is high. An estimated 1.3

million people are living in the region and any attack to flush out militants could lead to heavy civilian casualties. While Israel has produced an evacuation plan for the civilians in the region, the US was not satisfied with the plan. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi had expressed his concern about a probable Israel attack on the Rafah region to the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken during his last visit to the Middle East.

President Sisi had informed Blinken that any attack on Rafah would lead to an unprecedented exodus of refugees to the Sinai region of Egypt that shares the border with Rafah region.

## 9 injured after 6.6-magnitude quake hits Japan



**Tokyo** | Agencies

At least nine people were injured after an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.6 struck a wide area of western Japan, local authorities said on Thursday. The quake struck at around 11:14 p.m. local time, registering lower 6 on the Japanese seismic intensity scale of 7 in Ehime and Kochi prefectures, both on Shikoku Island, with the epicentre in the Bungo Channel, a strait separating the islands of Kyushu and Shikoku, the Japan Meteorological Agency said as quoted by Xinhua news agency report. According to prefectural governments and local fire departments, six people in Ehime Prefecture and one person in Kochi Prefecture sustained minor injuries, while two were hurt in Oita Prefecture in the Kyushu region, southwestern Japan.

A valve defect reduced the power output of the No.3 reactor at the Ikata nuclear complex in Ehime Prefecture by two per cent, though there was no major problem with overall operations, Shikoku Electric Power said. Meanwhile, Japanese researchers warned that earthquakes could continue for another week or so following the powerful tremor, and people in the region should stay alert, Japanese daily Mainichi Shimbun reported. According to Takuya Nishimura, a professor at Kyoto University's Disaster Prevention Research Institute specialising in geodesy, which involves measuring Earth's geometry, said the area near the Bungo Channel has experienced quakes in the past that caused significant damage. "We need to prepare for earthquakes, keeping in mind that they will continue for the next week or so," the researcher warned.

## Indonesia issues tsunami warning after more eruption from Mount Ruang

**Jakarta** | Agencies

Indonesian authorities have issued a tsunami warning and raised the alert for Mount Ruang to the highest level after the volcano near Sulawesi Island had multiple large eruptions over the past two days.

The heightened alert was issued late on Wednesday after the 725-meter-high volcano had two large eruptions earlier in the day, spewing a column of ash 3,000 metres into the sky.

The head of Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation (PVMBG), Hendra Gunawan, said that authorities urged people living in the coastal area of neighboring Tagulandang island to remain alert for a potential tidal surge and tsunami which could be triggered by rockfalls from the volcano, which may collapse into the sea.

More than 800 people have been evacuated from two villages on Ruang island and



authorities imposed an exclusion zone within a 6-kilometre radius of the crater, which extends to the south-western part of Tagulandang Island.

"Mount Ruang's eruption spewed ashfall, rocks and gravels that fell five kilometres away from the coastal areas of Tagulandang Island. Several residents were reported to have been hit by the falling rocks and stones," said Abdul Muhari, spokesman for the National Disaster

Mitigation Agency.

Indonesian aviation authorities have issued a NOTAM ordering the closure of Sam Ratulangi airport in Manado, the provincial capital of North Sulawesi about 100 kilometres south of the volcano. The NOTAM has disrupted flights between Kuala Lumpur and major cities in Sabah and Sarawak, the Malaysian states in the neighbouring island of Borneo, which Indonesia shares with Malaysia and Brunei. Mount Ruang last erupted in 2002, spewing out pyroclastic flows that damaged the land and local settlements.

The eruptions at Mount Ruang, located in North Sulawesi province, were preceded by volcanic earthquakes in recent days.

There are roughly 500 mountains that dot the Indonesian archipelago, of which 127 are active volcanoes and dozens of them have been showing signs of increased activity.



# Salman case: Bishnois unhappy with Maha CM, seek apology for 'defaming' community

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

Days after Bollywood actor Salman Khan's Bandra home was targeted by the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde is now under fire from the enraged Bishnoi community. Members of the community have taken to social media, countering CM Shinde and expressed outrage over his purported remarks to "eliminate" the (Bishnoi) gangsters and vowed to protect the actor and his family from any future hits.

"Anybody who threatens the existence of the Bishnoi community must say sorry to us. Eknath Shinde Tender an Apology," said an X campaign launched yesterday, which got over 16,000 views, likes, forwards and comments.

The Bishnois, who are a Hindu sect and nature-lovers, are sprinkled across northern and north-western parts of India, and have been opposing Salman Khan since the blackbuck poaching incident of 1998.

On Tuesday, Shinde was received by Khans in the lobby of Galaxy Apartments, facing the Arabian Sea, and then escorted to the actor's sprawling first-floor residence where he interacted freely with the entire family.

After spending some time with Khans, the CM emerged and assured the media that contrary to speculation in some quarters, "there is no gang (war) in Mumbai".



Under the MahaYuti government, he said that the mafia has no (place) in Mumbai and said that protecting the family of Salman Khan is the duty of the police and the responsibility of the state government.

"I have assured Salman Khan and his family that we are with them. We will crush this (Lawrence) Bishnoi gang so that no one will dare to repeat such an act in Mumbai. The safety of Salman Khan is our job," asserted CM Shinde.

On April 14, two unknown assailants opened at least five rounds at the home of Salman Khan before speeding off on their motorcycle from there, using multiple getaway modes and escape routes.

The duo - later identified as Vicky Gupta, 24 and Sagar Pal, 23 - fled to Gujarat, in the Pakistan-bordering Kachchh district's Bhuj town.

Using tech intelligence and local field sources, they were nabbed in a joint operation of the Gujarat and Mumbai Police, cracking the case in barely 36 hours.

The shooters were brought to Mumbai on Tuesday and produced before a Magistrate Court which has remanded them to police custody till April 25.

Among other things, the interrogation of the accused has revealed the conspiracy of the shoot-out, the planning from a flat which served as a base camp in Navi Mumbai's Panvel - where the Khans also own a sprawling country house, Arpita Farms.

Gupta and Pal also claimed they junked the guns into some water bodies in south Gujarat. The accused revealed how they were instructed to fire a dozen rounds to virtually terrorise the family of the actor - who has run afoul of the Bishnoi community for over 25 years now.

Simultaneously, Anmol Bishnoi, the brother of the jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, posted a social media note informing Salman Khan to treat it as "the first and final warning", sending shudders down Bollywood which has witnessed many similar incidents in the past.

Meanwhile, security has been beefed up at both Salman Khan's Mumbai home and Panvel (Raigad) farmhouse, but there is no official reaction from the government, ruling Shiv Sena, or the Khan family to the Bishnoi social media campaign so far.

## Bitcoin scam case

# ED attaches assets worth over Rs 97 cr of Raj Kundra, Shilpa Shetty

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached immovable and movable properties worth Rs 97.79 crore belonging to Ripu Sudan Kundra aka Raj Kundra, businessman, and husband of Bollywood actor Shilpa Shetty, under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

The attached properties include a residential flat in Juhu, which is in the name of Shilpa Shetty, another residential bungalow in Pune and equity shares in Raj Kundra's name.

The financial probe agency had initiated an investigation based on multiple FIRs registered by Maharashtra Police and Delhi Police against Variable Tech Pte Ltd, Late Amit Bhardwaj, Ajay Bhardwaj, Vivek Bhardwaj, Simpy Bhardwaj, Mahender Bhardwaj and a number of MLM agents.

It has been alleged that they had collected huge amounts of funds in the form of Bitcoins (worth Rs 6,600 crore in 2017 itself) from the public with false promises of a 10 per cent per month return in the form of Bitcoins.



The collected Bitcoins were supposed to be utilised for Bitcoin mining, and investors were to get huge returns in Crypto assets.

"But the promoters cheated the investors and have been concealing the ill-gotten Bitcoins in obscure online wallets. The probe also revealed that Raj Kundra received 285 Bitcoins from the mastermind and promoter of Gain Bitcoin Ponzi Scam, Amit Bhardwaj, for setting up a Bitcoin mining farm in Ukraine," ED said in a statement issued on Thursday.

The said Bitcoins were sourced out of proceeds of crime collected by Amit Bhardwaj from gullible investors.

"Since the deal didn't materialise, Kundra is still in possession and enjoyment of 285 Bitcoins which are presently valued at more than Rs. 150 Crore," said the ED official.

During the investigation, multiple search operations were carried out in this case and three persons were arrested.

"Simpy Bhardwaj was arrested on December 17, 2023, Nitin Gaur on December 29, 2023, and Nikhil Mahajan on January 16, 2023. All of them are presently in judicial custody as of date," said the official.

However, the main accused Ajay Bhardwaj and Mahendra Bhardwaj are still absconding.

Earlier, ED had attached properties worth Rs 69 crore. The Prosecution Complaint in this was filed on June 11, 2019, and the Supplementary Prosecution Complaint on February 14, 2024.

"The Special PMLA court has taken cognizance of the same. Further investigation is under progress," the official added.

## Congress cries foul at MahaYuti for 'using' Maha public buses in poll campaign

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Congress on Thursday lodged a complaint against the ruling MahaYuti ally Shiv Sena for allegedly violating the model code of conduct by using some 1,000 Maharashtra state transport buses for a poll campaign, here. Congress Chief Spokesperson Atul Londhe has written to the Maharashtra Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) pointing out the unauthorised use of Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC)'s buses for displaying publicity material of the ruling MahaYuti alliance.

"The banners have a huge picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with the Bow and Arrow symbol of the Shiv Sena and photos of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar. As per the Election Commission of India's letter no. 437/6/INST/2015-CCS



dated 29.12.2015, the use of government and PSUs properties is banned for electoral campaigning. Despite this ban, the ST officials have allowed the illegal use of over 1,000 buses for the election campaign of Shiv Sena candidates," said Londhe's letter.

He called upon the CEO to take immediate and decisive action to address these violations, and cancel the candidature of all the LS candi-

dates of Shiv Sena plus initiate appropriate disciplinary measures against the Shinde-led party.

Londhe also demanded action should also be taken against the senior officials of the Planning and Commercial Department of MSRTC for violation of Model Code of Conduct and ECI instructions in this regard to ensure the integrity of the election process.

# Maharashtra gears up for Phase 1, voting for 5 constituencies to be held today

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The first phase of voting for the Lok Sabha elections 2024 will be held on April 19. More than 95 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their franchise on Friday in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections in Maharashtra covering five constituencies, including some Naxal-hit areas, where campaigning ended on Wednesday evening.

Polling will be held in the constituencies of Nagpur, Ramtek, Bhandara-Gondia, Chandrapur and Gadchiroli-Chimur, all located in the eastern-most parts of the state.

In Nagpur, a direct fight is on the cards between Union Minister Nitin Gadkari of the BJP and Congress candidate Vikas Thakre. The constituency, which houses the RSS headquarters, has a total of 22,18,259 voters - 11,10,840 males, 11,07,197 females and 222 transgender persons.

In Chandrapur, BJP candidate and Maharashtra minister Sudhir Mungantiwar is facing Congress nominee Pratibha Dhanorkar, wife of late Suresh Dhanorkar who was the lone Congress MP elected to the Lok Sabha from Maharashtra in 2019 from the seat. The Congress MP died last year. Chandrapur has a total of 18,36,314 voters, including 9,45,026 males and 8,91,240 females.

In Bhandara-Gondia, the BJP has fielded sitting MP Sunil Mendhe, who is pitted against Congress candidate Dr Prashant Patole. Bhandara-Gondia



has a total of 18,75,106 voters (9,36,041 males, 9,39,056 females and 12 transgenders).

Two-time MP of BJP, Ashok Nete, is contesting against Congress nominee Dr Namdev Kirsan of Gadchiroli-Chimur. In the 2019 elections, Nete defeated Congress candidate Dr Namdev Usendi. The constituency has 16,12,930 voters (8,11,836 males, 8,01,082 females and 12 transgenders).

In Ramtek, the fight is between Shyamkumar Barve of the Congress and Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena's candidate Raju Parwe. The constituency has a total of 20,45,717 voters (10,43,266 males, 10,02,396 females and 55 transgenders).

A statement by the state electoral office said five assembly segments (spread across two LS seats)

will vote between 7 am and 3 pm, unlike other areas where voters can exercise their franchise until 6 pm.

There are 95,54,667 voters in the five Lok Sabha constituencies where voting will take place on Friday (April 19). Of these, 48,28,142 are male, 47,26,178 female and 347 transgenders, said the statement.

"The assembly segments of Amgaon, Armori, Gadchiroli and Aheri (Gadchiroli-Chimur Lok Sabha constituency) and Arjune Morgaon (Bhandara-Gondia LS seat) will have voting between 7 am and 3 pm. This decision has been taken because most of the voting booths in these segments are located in remote locations, and the region is known for Naxalite activities," a poll official said.

Gadchiroli-Chimur, where some parts are affected by Naxal insurgency, is considered the largest parliamentary constituency in the state, chiefly because its remote villages are separated by vast dense forest regions.

This Lok Sabha constituency consists of the Amgaon assembly segment from Gondia district, Armori, Gadchiroli, and Aheri segments from Gadchiroli district, and Bramhapuri and Chimur segments from Chandrapur district.

Leader of Opposition in Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Vijay Vaidetiwar is the Congress MLA from Bramhapuri.

# Son of civic sweeper in Maharashtra cracks Civil Services Exam

Team Absolute | Thane

For 32-year-old Prashant Suresh Bhojane, whose mother works as a civic sweeper in Maharashtra's Thane city, cracking the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) exam was always his dream, and he persevered against all odds to finally fulfil the goal. In the UPSC Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2023 final results declared on Tuesday, he passed the exam by securing the 849th rank.

Prashant had started the journey towards fulfilling his dream in 2015, when he first appeared for the exam, and finally cracked it in the ninth attempt.

His achievement gave a reason to cheer for the residents of Khartan



Road Sweepers Colony, where his family lives, as they took out a procession in celebration on Wednesday

night. A few local politicians also took part in it. Prashant's mother works as a

sweeper with the Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC), while his father is a Class IV employee in the civic body. He completed his engineering degree, but was not interested in doing a job in that field as becoming an IAS officer was always his dream, his family members said.

Talking to PTI, Prashant said that while appearing for the UPSC exam, he started working in Delhi in 2020 at a competitive exam coaching centre, where he was given the job of checking mock exam papers of students.

"That way I could study as well as earn my livelihood," he said.

He said his parents would regularly ask him to stop giving the exams and return home, but he was confident and determined that he would achieve his goal one day.

## Bombay HC allows victim of child marriage to get her pregnancy terminated

Team Absolute | Mumbai

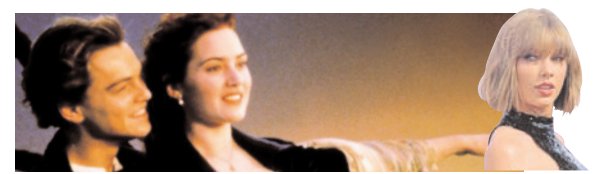
The Bombay High Court has permitted a teenager, a victim of child marriage, to undergo medical termination of her 28-week pregnancy on the grounds of foetal abnormalities. A division bench of Justices P D Naik and N R Borkar in its order of April 12 also noted that the girl was 'HIV seropositive'. A copy of the order was made available on Thursday. The 17-year-old girl had filed a petition in HC seeking permission to get her pregnancy terminated saying scans had shown that the foetus had skeletal anomalies with the possibility of genetic abnormalities.

Under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy



Act, a court nod is required to terminate a pregnancy beyond 24 weeks of gestation. The high court relied on a report submitted by the medical board of the state-run Sassoon General Hospital in Pune that recommended termination of the pregnancy as the girl is a

minor and a victim of child marriage with 'HIV seropositive status'. The board in its report said the foetus also has multiple defects. The high court said it was allowing termination of pregnancy taking into account the mental and medical situation of the girl.



# Kanye West Accused of Punching Man

Los Angeles | Agencies

**K**anye "Ye" West is reportedly under investigation by the Los Angeles Police Department for allegedly punching a man, whom the rapper, 46, accused of sexually assaulting his wife, Bianca Censori. The incident took place on Tuesday, April 16, at the Chateau Marmont Hotel on Sunset Boulevard in L.A., according to multiple outlets.

TMZ was the first to report the news on Wednesday, April 17. Per the outlet, Censori, 29, and West "took off" right after West allegedly punched the man in question. The unidentified person did not require medical attention. A rep for the "Jesus Walks" rapper also provided a statement to the outlet, claiming that Censori was not simply "grabbed" by the individual but was "sexually assaulted" by him.

"He put his hands under her dress, directly on her body, he grabbed her waist, he spun her around, and then he blew her kisses," the spokesperson said. "She was battered and sexually assaulted. 'Grabbed' is grossly inadequate as a description of what happened. Bianca was physically assaulted."



## Jennifer Garner turns oven mitts into boots, dances in them on her b'day

Los Angeles | Agencies

**A**ctress Jennifer Garner celebrated her 52nd birthday in a unique manner, showcasing her creativity with do-it-yourself (DIY) boots.

The actress transformed her new oven mitts into dancing shoes for a hilarious Instagram video, reports 'People' magazine.

The mother of three danced to Nicki Minaj's song 'FTCU'. Garner slipped her feet into the oven mitts, positioning them so that the thumbs served as the heels, and proceeded to kick her legs like a Rockette.

As per 'People', the birthday girl, dressed in sweatpants and a grey turtleneck sweater, stood up and continued to dance in her oven mitt shoes, laughing at herself as she nearly wiped out in the process.

"Fancy boots for my birthday! Yay, happy birthday to me," the '13 Going on 30' star wrote in the caption.

Garner recently told 'People' about her birthday plans, though oven mitt shoes were not part of the original idea.

"I love to have a good time and I love to make it nice and there'll be great food and all of those things," she said.

In addition to the traditional party elements, glimpses of which were captured in her playful dancing clip, Garner also incorporates a charitable aspect into her special day.



## TARANTINO SCRAPS HIS 10TH FILM, 'THE MOVIE CRITIC', WITH BRAD PITT; DOESN'T GIVE REASON FOR ACTION

Los Angeles | Agencies

**L**egendary filmmaker Quentin Tarantino, who is known for 'Pulp Fiction', 'Django Unchained', 'Reservoir Dogs', and others, is not interested in making 'The Movie Critic', which he previously said would be his final directorial venture.

The director has given the project a thumbs down, reports 'Variety'.

'The Movie Critic' would have been Tarantino's 10th feature film, but sources say he won't be looking to rewrite the script or revive the project, instead making plans to move on to something new.

As per 'Variety', Brad Pitt had been cast in a lead role in the film. At one point, Tarantino had said the 1977-set film was about a small-time movie critic who wrote smart reviews for a porn magazine. It was also rumoured that Pitt would play some form of his 'Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood' character Cliff Booth, who in Tarantino's novelisation of the feature was a big movie buff.

Tarantino talked briefly about 'The Movie Critic' before an audience at the Cannes Film Festival last year, saying, "I can't tell you guys (anything) until you see the movie. I'm tempted to do some of the character's monologues right now, but I'm not going to. Maybe if there were less video cameras. You just have to wait and see."

The news was first reported by 'Deadline'.

The plan to film 'The Movie Critic' was moving along before Tarantino had a change of heart. In addition to casting Pitt, the production had secured a \$20 million tax subsidy from the state of California.

It remains uncertain which project the auteur will pursue next, as he had also decided against an R-rated 'Star Trek' film in 2019, saying it was too big a project. "Look, I might come up with a really big idea. But right now, the idea of a smaller audience almost all the way around is appealing to me," he said at the time.



## BRIAN COX SAYS HE COULD HAVE DONE 'NAPOLEON' BETTER THAN JOAQUIN PHOENIX

Los Angeles | Agencies

**A**ctor Brian Cox wasn't impressed with fellow actor Joaquin Phoenix's performance in 'Napoleon'.

Cox didn't mince words when talking about Phoenix's performance, reports 'People' magazine.

The 'Succession' star, 77, called Joaquin Phoenix's performance as Napoleon Bonaparte in Ridley Scott's biopic 'Napoleon' "terrible" during a conversation at the British Library in London.

"It really is appalling," said the Scottish actor of the "truly terrible performance by Joaquin Phoenix," as reported by 'The Standard'.

"I don't know what he was thinking," as per 'People', Phoenix, 49, played Napoleon

Bonaparte in the Oscar-nominated historical drama directed by Scott and written by David Scarpa, released last November.

The 'Joker' Oscar winner starred opposite Vanessa Kirby as Josephine de Beauharnais, Tahar Rahim as Paul Barras, Rupert Everett as Arthur Wellesley, and Ben Miles as Armand de Caulaincourt.

In his conversation with moderator Clive Myrie, titled 'History on Stage and Screen', Cox said of Napoleon's lead role, "I would have played it a lot better than Joaquin Phoenix, I tell you that."

He added that the blame was on Phoenix, adding, "I don't think Ridley Scott helps him" as the film's helmer.

Cox said: "I think he's well-named. Joaquin... whack-eeen... whacky. It's a sort of whacky performance."

With regards to the historical accuracy of 'Napoleon' and other epics like it, Cox reportedly said: "You can say it's good drama. No - it's lies."

He also called the 1995 Best Picture Oscar winner 'Braveheart' as "a load of nonsense", adding that director-star Mel Gibson "was wonderful, but it's a load of lies".



## RIHANNA REVEALS THAT SHE MODELS HER SONS' OUTFITS

Los Angeles | Agencies

**R**ihanna admitted that her "biggest hack" when it comes to knowing how to style her sons' outfits is by following their dad ASAP Rocky. The popstar, 36, revealed that she takes inspiration for her sons RZA, 23 months, and Riot, 8 months, from her boyfriend, 35, while speaking to Entertainment Tonight at a launch event for her Fenty and Puma collaboration.

RiRi explained that she had initially thought about how she would dress daughters if she had them, but since she has two boys, she looks to their dad for inspiration. "When I dress them, I always try to dress them like Rocky," she told ET. "Because I always envision dressing a girl, right? We all do as women, like, 'Oh, I'm going to dress her in these cute little things,' but then you get sons and you're like, 'What do I do?'"

Ultimately though, things have worked out just fine as she's able to look to the Long Live ASAP rapper as a model for her sons. "I was like, 'You know what, I have the biggest hack - their dad,'" she told the outlet.

## SYDNEY SWEENEY LASHES OUT AT PRODUCER WHO CALLED HER 'UNWATCHABLE' IN 'ANYONE BUT YOU'

**Los Angeles:** Actress Sydney Sweeney, who garnered significant acclaim for her role in 'Euphoria', slammed Hollywood producer Carol Baum after she claimed in a scathing review that Sydney "can't act" and is "not pretty".

Baum harshly attacked the 26-year-old star during an interview with New York Times film critic Janet Maslin in front of a live audience this week, reports 'Mirror.co.uk'.

The 81-year-old producer ripped apart Sydney's latest performance in the rom-com 'Anyone But You' alongside Glen Powell, claiming that the film was "unwatchable" while critiquing her acting abilities.

As per 'Mirror.co.uk', after Sydney caught wind of the harsh public criticism, she furiously slammed the producer for tearing down another hardworking woman in the industry. A representative for Sydney told DailyMail: "How sad that a woman in a position to share her expertise and experience chooses instead to attack another woman." She continued, "If that's what she's learned in her decades in the industry and feels is appropriate to teach to her students, that's shameful. To unjustly disparage a fellow female producer speaks volumes about Baum's character."



Lucie Donlan



IPL 2024

# MI EDGE PBKS BY NINE RUNS IN A THRILLER

Mullanpur | Agencies

Ashtosh Sharma almost single-handedly won Punjab Kings he game out of nowhere, but Mumbai Indians survived his stunning assault to win by nine runs in a thrilling match at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh Cricket Stadium in Mullanpur on Thursday evening. PBKS were in real trouble of getting their net run rate being hit by a massive margin when they were 14/4 and later on at 77/6 in the chase of 193. After Shashank hit a 25-ball 41, Ashutosh continued dishing out good finishing knocks with a whirlwind 25-ball 61. But once he fell, PBKS were eventually dismissed for 183 in 19.1 overs, as the hosts' were confined to their fourth defeat of the competition coming in the final over. For MI, Gerald Coetzee and Jasprit Bumrah took three wickets each as the visitors' managed to get a win despite a real scare from Ashutosh.



Yorker, before strangling Sam Curran down leg on review. Liam Livingstone miscued a pull, and on seeing that, Coetzee made a slide to his left to complete a low catch. Impact Player Harpreet Bhatia couldn't keep the punch down and gave a caught-and-bowled dismissal to Shreyas Gopal. Jitesh Sharma missed a full toss from Akash Madhwal and was trapped lbw. The first signs of counter-attack were shown by Shashank in punching four off Coetzee and Madhwal,

before swinging Gopal for six. He took a liking to Gopal's bowling by cleanly striking him for sixes down the ground and over long-on, before being deceived by a slower ball from Bumrah. But the standout moment of his knock was Ashutosh staying low and sweeping a Bumrah yorker for a six over fine leg, followed by pulling Shepherd for another maximum. He would swing a Coetzee full toss for another four and with Harpreet Brar taking back-to-back fours off him,

PBKS felt they were in the hunt to do the impossible. Ashutosh reached his fifty in 23 balls by drilling Madhwal over mid-off for six, and then scooped a free-hit over the keeper for another maximum. Harpreet then hit Madhwal for six down the ground as PBKS now needed 28 runs off last four overs, with the crowd chanting Ashutosh's name. After Bumrah gave away only three runs in the 17th over, Ashutosh pulled the first ball of the 18th over from Coetzee straight to deep mid-wicket, falling for a whirlwind 28-ball 61. In the next over, Harpreet flicked to deep backward square leg off Hardik. Kagiso Rabada's six made the equation 12 runs off the final over, but his run-out by Mohammad Nabi ensured relief for MI and heartbreak for PBKS.

### Brief scores

Mumbai Indians 192/7 in 20 overs (Suryakumar Yadav 78, Rohit Sharma 36; Harshal Patel 3-31, Sam Curran 2-41) beat Punjab Kings 183 in 19.1 overs (Ashutosh Sharma 61, Shashank Singh 41; Jasprit Bumrah 3-21, Gerald Coetzee 3-32) by nine runs

# LONG JUMPER SREESHANKAR MURALI RULED OUT OF PARIS OLYMPICS WITH KNEE INJURY



New Delhi | Agencies

With less than 100 days to go for Paris 2024, ace Indian long jumper Sreeshankar Murali has unfortunately been sidelined from the Olympics due to a knee injury, he sustained during training, which requires surgery. The Asian Games and Commonwealth Games silver medalist shared the heartbreaking news with a social media post, "All my life, I've had the courage to look at a setback in the eye, accept situations I can't change, and work hard at dictating the outcomes of those I can. Unfortunately, in what feels like a nightmare, but is a reality, my Paris Olympic

Games dream is over," the post read. "To wake up healthy every single day, and watch yourself get into the best shape of your life, is every athlete's dream. I was living it, until this incident. Life writes strange scripts, and sometimes there is courage in accepting it and moving on. That's what I will do," the post further read. The 25-year-old sealed the Olympics qualification at the Asian Athletics Championships in Bangkok in July last year, clinching silver with a best jump of 8.37m, breaching the automatic qualification mark of 8.27m. "My journey to a comeback began the minute I injured my knee. This road is going to be long, difficult and will take a lot out of me. The good thing is, I have a lot to give. I will overcome this, because that's what Mamba Mentality is all about. "I will need your prayers, love and positive energy. I may jump alone, but it takes a collective push before every leap. This is my biggest one yet," Sreeshankar wrote. In 2023, Sreeshankar delivered a remarkable season, clinching a silver at the Hangzhou Asian Games and securing the silver medal at the Asian Championships. Last year, he also became the first Indian long jumper to qualify for the Diamond League final following his fifth-place in the Zurich leg after the third and fifth-place finish in the Paris and Lausanne legs, respectively. But he had skipped the prestigious event to focus on his preparation for the Asian Games.

# 'Hotels are full, sleeping on the floor': Two Indian wrestlers stranded at Dubai airport



New Delhi | Agencies

Indian wrestlers Deepak Punia and Sujet Kalkal have been stranded at the Dubai airport since Tuesday, because of heavy rains, while enroute to Kyrgyzstan's Bishkek for the 2024 Paris Olympics qualifiers, sources said. Speaking to IANS, sources close to wrestlers said that the duo will take flight at 11 pm on Thursday and their chances of participation in the tournament is 50-50. "They have been there for the past two days. Hotels are all full so they are sleeping on the floor

at the airport. Their chances of competing in the qualifiers is 50-50. Maybe they will reach Bishkek just before the start of the weigh-in, only if they manage to leave Dubai late tonight." The Asian Wrestling Olympic Qualifiers in Bishkek is scheduled to kick-start from April 19. There will be a total of 36 Paris 2024 quotas on offer in 18 weight divisions in Bishkek. India has fielded seventeen wrestlers. This qualifier will be the penultimate opportunity for Indian grapplers to secure a quota for the Summer Games. The World Qualification Tournament in Turkey, scheduled in May, will be the final wrestling qualifiers.

# Two-time world champion Kento Momota announces retirement from international badminton

New Delhi | Agencies

Two-time world champion Kento Momota of Japan announced his retirement from international badminton on Thursday, marking the Thomas & Uber Cup Finals in Chengdu, China as his final tournament on the international circuit. Momota became the first Japanese man to win the world championship in 2018 in China and the following year he successfully defended his crown in Switzerland. "I've realized I can no longer get back to the point where I'm aiming to be No. 1 in the world again," Momota said in a press conference in Tokyo as quoted by Japanese news agency Kyodo News. "I had a very fulfilling career playing for the national team. Now I want to be involved in helping all kinds of people find enjoyment in sports." In 2019, Momota won a record 11 titles on the BWF Tour and was named the top men's player. However, in January of the follow-



ing year, after winning the Malaysia Masters title he met with a tragic highway accident in Kuala Lumpur from which he miraculously survived. The former world no.1 made his competitive return in December the same year but his form has not

been the same since then. He also made a disappointing group-stage exit at the Tokyo Olympics and has had just two tour wins since the crash. "I'm not going to lie, after the accident I've asked myself, Why me?" Honestly, it was one difficult

time after another. But I didn't want to blame it on the accident. I wanted to try and beat it. "Since the accident in January 2020, there was a lot of hardship. I tried so many things but I just couldn't close the emotional, physical gap between who I used to be and who I am. I felt I couldn't become world No. 1 again. "I had eye surgery and I was seeing double. I couldn't move on the court the way I wanted to, I'd get tired like I never used to. I tried. But I just felt it was no longer possible to keep up with the world's best players. I couldn't play badminton the way I wanted to," he said. Momota's journey, marred by a gambling scandal that cost him his chance to vie for a medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics, had set his sights on competing in the Paris Olympics, but fell short of qualification due to his ranking. However, the 29-year-old plans to continue to play domestically in the national championships and the professional League.

# BAYERN EDGE ARSENAL TO REACH CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMIFINAL

Berlin | Agencies

Joshua Kimmich's sole goal helped Bayern Munich progress into the UEFA Champions League last four after beating Arsenal 1-0 (3-2 on aggregate) in the second leg. The German giants caught a bright start in front of the home crowd as Harry Kane's volley went just wide in the opening stages before Noussair Mazraoui's deflected shot missed the target with 23 minutes gone. Arsenal's goalkeeper David Raya was also busy as he had to palm away Jamal Musiala's dangerous effort moments later. The Gunners came also close and tested goalkeeper Manuel Neuer but neither Martin Odegaard nor Kai Havertz was able to score the opener from a promising position. Bayern started powerful into the second half and rattled the woodwork in quick succession. Leon Goretzka's header dropped off the crossbar allowing Raphael Guerreiro to hit the outside of the left post with the subsequent rebound. The



Gunners, meanwhile, lacked penetration and couldn't pose a threat to the host's well-organised defence, reports Xinhua. The Bavarians eventually broke the deadlock and shocked the visitors at the

hour mark when Guerreiro's whipped cross into the box found Germany international Kimmich, whose diving header caught Raya flatfooted. Tuchel's men gained momentum but

Leroy Sane and Kimmich got their chances denied later. Arsenal remained uninspired as Bayern's defense was able to keep the Gunners at bay. The visitor's best chance in the second half came from Odegaard, who rattled the side netting. Bayern protected its narrow lead to the final whistle and snatched the first semifinal ticket since 2020, the same year when it lifted the Champions League trophy. The German record champion joined Bundesliga rival Borussia Dortmund in the last four and clash with Real Madrid. "It is great to advance into the next round. Both sides took no risks in the first half, but we gained the upper hand after the half-time. We showed will and took the win," said Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel. "The first half was nervous, but we played very well in the second half and should have added more goals to our lead. The bottom line is that we deservedly progressed into the next round," commented Kimmich.

# AKANKSHA SALUNKHE MOVES INTO QUARTERS OF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ASIAN QUALIFYING SQUASH

Kuala Lumpur | Agencies

Second-seeded Indian Akanksha Salunkhe edged out Malaysia's Thanusaa Uthirani 11-7, 8-11, 11-3, 7-11, 11-5 in the women's first round of the World Championship Asian Qualifying squash event in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday. World No 71 Akanksha, the 2023 National Games champion and the lone Indian in the fray, will meet another Malaysian, Sehveettraa Kumar, in the quarter-finals of the 16-player draw on Friday. The men's and women's winners of the Qualifier will earn a spot in the World Championships to be held in Egypt next month.



# WORLD 10K BENGALURU 2024 DRAWS RECORD PARTICIPATION

Bengaluru | Agencies

The 16th edition of the World 10K Bengaluru scheduled for Sunday, 28th April, for the first time, is poised to welcome over 30,000 participants across on-ground and virtual categories. The World's Premier 10K will witness over 28,000+ participants take to the start line at the Cubbon Road outside Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw Parade Ground. Furthermore, 1500+ runners will also participate virtually from different parts of the world through the exclusive World 10K Bengaluru event App. Cheering on the participants will be legendary shot putter Valerie Adams, a four-time World Champion and two-time Olympic medalist, and the events' International Event Ambassador. The World 10K Bengaluru saw an overwhelming response from the running community across all categories, breaking all barriers. Registrations for the feature race - the Open 10K

and the Majja Run are over-subscribed. This is a glowing testament to the popularity of the sport of running. Today, running is the fastest-growing urban sport, and as many as 700 new runners are inspired each day to begin their running journey. Sunil Deshpande regional head of TCS Bengaluru, said, "The response from the running community to the 16th edition of the TCS World 10K Bengaluru has been phenomenal. The passion and dedication displayed by the runners as they come together to push their boundaries and showcase incredible endurance is truly inspiring. As a leading global IT services provider, we are committed to enhancing the race experience through technology to leave a lasting impression on the runners. We are truly excited to welcome our runners, who embody the spirit of resilience and determination that makes this event so special. Our best wishes to all participants, eagerly waiting to see them on race day." The 2024 edition of the World Athletics Gold



Label Race promises an enhanced experience for all participants. With support from the Indian Army, Karnataka & Kerala Sub Area, Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw Parade Ground

is the new home for the World 10K Bengaluru. The pre-race venue for all runners is Rajendra Sinhji Army Officers Institute (RSAOI) and post-race engagements are at Field Marshal Sam

Manekshaw Parade Ground. Runners across categories - 10K (Open & Elite), Majja Run, Champions with Disability and the Silvers' Run will congregate at the iconic Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw Parade Ground and take off on a scenic journey that winds past Bengaluru's famous landmarks. The Indian elite women's line-up will feature the defending champion Tamshi Singh and Sanjivani Jadhav, a two-time champion and event record holder with a time of 33:38 set in 2018. While last year's runner-up, Harmanjot Singh, will compete again in the men's category. The World's Premier 10K, with a total prize money of USD 210,000, has attracted some of the leading Indian and international athletes along with amateur runners from across the globe. Winners in the Indian Men's and Women's categories will be awarded INR 2,75,000 each. Furthermore, a record-breaking feat could see them take home an additional INR 2,00,000 thanks to the combined event record bonus and jackpot.



## Alia Bhat, Sakshi Malik, Ajay Banga, Satya Nadella, on TIME Magazine's 100 Most Influential People list

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Alia Bhatt, World Bank President Ajay Banga, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, and British actor with Indian roots, Dev Patel, have made it to Time magazine's '100 Most Influential People' list for 2024. Another prominent Indian who features in the list is Sakshi Malik, India's only female Olympic medalist in wrestling who led the protest against the alleged sexual harassment of female grapplers by former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. "Proud to be included in the 2024 #TIME100 list," Sakshi wrote on X.

Tom Harper, the director of the streaming film 'Heart of Stone', Alia's first Hollywood project, heaped praises on the actress, calling her a "truly international star".

"Despite her fame, Alia is self-effacing and funny on sets. There is a grace to the way she goes about her work: focused, open to ideas, and willing to take creative risks. One of my favourite moments in the film came from an improvisation at the end of a take where she took the emotional thread and ran with it.

"Alia's superpower is her ability to mix movie-star magnetism with authenticity and sensitivity. As an actor, she is luminous, and as a person, she brings the grounded assurance and creativity that make a truly international star."

Alia is the only Bollywood actor to feature in the Time magazine list.



## 'My whole heart for my whole life', Athiya for KL Rahul

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Athiya Shetty, who was last seen in the 2019 film 'Motichoor Chaknachoor', celebrated her husband and ace India cricketer K.L. Rahul's birthday on Thursday. Athiya, who is the daughter of Bollywood star Suniel Shetty, took to her Instagram and shared two pic-

tures with Rahul, wishing him the best on his special day. The first picture is from their holiday in which Athiya could be seen wearing a swimsuit with a floral pattern with her husband lying next to her.

The second is a monochromatic picture of the actress hugging Rahul.

Athiya wrote in the caption, "My whole heart for my whole life... happy birthday, my

everything." Wishing his son-in-law on his birthday, Suniel Shetty shared a picture of himself chilling on the couch with his son Ahan Shetty and Rahul. "They say it's not what we have in life, but who we have in our life that matters... feeling blessed to have you in ours for it's a connection I can't explain, happy birthday Rahul... love you son," the actor wrote as caption.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Huma Qureshi took a stroll down memory lane and reminisced about her father Saleem Qureshi, sharing how he used to work on every occasion as he was in the restaurant business, adding that she used to argue for his time. Actor Shailesh will read heartfelt poems highlighting the remarkable affection between a father and daughter.

Huma said: "When you (Shailesh) were presenting this soulful poem about the bond that a father-daughter share, I actually missed my father. I remember him working on every occasion or festival, as he was in the restaurant business, and holidays ensured a turnout. As a child, I used to argue with him that he couldn't spend time with us." "But now I realise that the amount of time he didn't spend with us was so important because who I am today is because of him and his sacrifices. I got very emotional when I heard your poetry," added Huma.

### HUMA QURESHI RECALLS HER FATHER'S SACRIFICES



## Pls roze aise achhe hair days de do : Janhvi Kapoor

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood diva Janhvi Kapoor, on Thursday, treated her fans to her picture of a "good hair day." Janhvi, who made her acting debut in 2018 with the Shashank Khaitan-directional 'Dhadak', co-starring Ishaan Khatter, has 24.1 million followers on Instagram.

Taking to the photo-sharing application, Janhvi shared a casual selfie, wearing a white T-shirt and kept her long tresses open. With a no-makeup look, she is flaunting her wavy hairstyle.

The post is captioned: "Pls roze aise achhe hair days de do.. shubh baal diwas."

The post was liked by her 'Bawaal' co-star Varun Dhawan.

On the professional front, Janhvi next has romantic sports drama 'Mr & Mrs Mahi' alongside Rajkumar Rao.

She also has the action thriller 'Uljah' starring Gulshan Devaiah, Roshan Mathew and Rajesh Tailang as lead.



## Director Sandeep Vanga slams Adil Hussain

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Director Sandeep Reddy Vanga, who delivered the Ranbir Kapoor-starrer blockbuster 'Animal' last year, doesn't take criticism lightly.

The director has slammed actor Adil Hussain for his remarks on the 2019 film 'Kabir Singh' starring Shahid Kapoor in the titular role.

Adil had told the YouTube channel AP Podcast that he agreed to do Kabir Singh without reading the script, calling it the only film he regrets being a part of.

"That's the only film in my life that I did without reading the script, without watching the Telugu movie it was based on. I went to see 'Kabir

Singh' in Delhi and after 20 minutes, I just walked out. The only film that I have regretted doing to date is 'Kabir Singh' because I think it is misogynistic and makes me feel small as a human being," Adil said.

Vanga took to his X handle on Thursday and shared a clip from the interaction with Adil, saying he will replace Adil's face in the film with the help of artificial intelligence.

"Ur 'belief' in 30 art films didn't get as much fame to you as ur 'regret' of 1 BLOCKBUSTER film did. I regret casting you, knowing that your greed is bigger than your passion. Now I'll save you from shame by replacing Your face with AI help. Now smile properly," Vanga posted.



## SONAM KAPOOR SETS NEW FASHION GOALS 'ONE OUTFIT AT A TIME'

Mumbai | Agencies

Known for serving iconic fashion looks, actress and fashionista Sonam Kapoor on Thursday dropped a series of pictures from a new photoshoot, leaving fans in awe of her outfits.

Sonam, who enjoys 35.2 million followers on Instagram, shared photographs from her recent photoshoot.

In one picture, Sonam is wearing a golden coloured outfit with a multi-coloured long cape. The second snap shows her wearing a body hugging black gown with long sleeves.

The 'Delhi-6' actress is sporting a bright blue outfit in the third picture. The last snap shows her wearing a black long satin coat and matching stockings. The post is captioned as: "Brightening up the world, one outfit at a time." One user wrote: "Fashion icon for a cause", another said: "Slayyyyy." A fan said: "fabulous."

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sagun Mehta