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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM NEW DELHI, MUMBAI AND BHOPAL

NATION > 02
'Culture to connectivity': PM Modi's Tamil Nadu visit gives further...



HOLYWOOD > 06
Salma Hayek hasn't kicked her smoking habit...



SPORTS > 07
Big gains for Devine, Jones in ICC Women's ODI Batting Rankings...



March 2024 warmest ever, 12-month average temperature reaches new record

CLIMATE IS WARNING

EARTH'S GLOBAL SURFACE TEMPERATURE HAS ALREADY INCREASED BY AROUND 1.15 DEGREES CELSIUS COMPARED TO THE AVERAGE IN 1850-1900, A LEVEL THAT HASN'T BEEN WITNESSED SINCE 1,25,000 YEARS AGO, BEFORE THE MOST RECENT ICE AGE. THIS WARMING IS CONSIDERED THE REASON BEHIND RECORD DROUGHTS, WILDFIRES AND FLOODS WORLDWIDE.

GLOBALLY, 2023 WAS THE WARMEST YEAR IN THE 174-YEAR OBSERVATIONAL RECORD, WITH THE GLOBAL AVERAGE NEAR-SURFACE TEMPERATURE AT 1.45 DEGREES CELSIUS ABOVE THE PRE-INDUSTRIAL BASELINE (1850-1900).

THE WARMING MAY SET A NEW RECORD IN 2024 AS SCIENTISTS SAY EL NINO - PERIODIC WARMING OF THE OCEAN SURFACE IN THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN TROPICAL PACIFIC OCEAN -- TYPICALLY HAS THE GREATEST IMPACT ON GLOBAL CLIMATE IN THE SECOND YEAR OF ITS DEVELOPMENT.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The world experienced the warmest March ever due to a combined effect of El Nino conditions and human caused climate change, making it the 10th consecutive month since June last year to set a new temperature record, the European Union's climate agency said today.

The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said the average temperature of 14.14 degrees Celsius in March was 1.68 degrees Celsius higher than the month's average for 1850-1900, the designated pre-industrial reference period.

It was 0.73 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average for March and 0.10 degrees Celsius above the previous high set in March 2016.

C3S said the global average temperature breached the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold for an entire year for the first time in January.

A permanent breach of the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit specified in the Paris Agreement, however, refers to long-term warming over many years.

According to climate scientists, countries need to limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

The rise in global average temperature is attributed to the rapidly increasing concentration of greenhouse gases -- primarily carbon dioxide and methane -- in the atmosphere.

The continuing, albeit weaker, El Nino and



predicted above-normal sea-surface temperatures over much of the global oceans are expected to lead to above-normal temperatures over almost all land areas until May and influence regional rainfall patterns, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said in a March update.

El Nino occurs every two to seven years on

average and typically lasts nine to 12 months. The current El Nino event, which developed in June 2023, was at its strongest between November and January.

It is associated with increased rainfall in the Horn of Africa and the southern US, and unusually dry and warm conditions in Southeast Asia, Australia, and southern Africa.

INDIA HEADED FOR A NORMAL MONSOON: SKYMET

New Delhi: India is expected to get a normal monsoon in 2024, private weather forecasting agency Skymet said on Tuesday, which is good news for the country's agricultural sector that was hit by an erratic monsoon last year.

Monsoon rains are expected to be 102 per cent of the long-period average of 868.6 mm for the four-month period from June to Sept, according to

Skymet.

The forecasting agency said it expects "sufficiently good rains" in southern, western and north-western parts of the country.

Close to half the country's farm area is unirrigated and dependent on the rains for raising crops.

A good monsoon also ensures that the country's water reservoirs get filled up and can be used for subsequent irrigation.

RUSSIA, KAZAKHSTAN EVACUATE OVER 100,000 PEOPLE AMID WORST FLOODING IN DECADES

Moscow: Russia and Kazakhstan ordered more than 100,000 people to evacuate after swiftly melting snow swelled mighty rivers beyond bursting point in the worst flooding in the area for at least 70 years. The deluge of melt water overwhelmed scores of settlements in the Ural Mountains, Siberia and areas of Kazakhstan close to rivers such as the Ural and Tobol, which local

officials said had risen by metres in a matter of hours to the highest levels ever recorded. The Ural River, Europe's third largest which flows through Russia and Kazakhstan into the Caspian, burst through an embankment dam on Friday, flooding the city of Orsk just south of the Ural mountains. Downstream, water levels in Orenburg, a city of around 550,000, were rising.

Raj Thackeray extends 'unconditional' support to PM Narendra Modi

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) President Raj Thackeray on Tuesday extended his 'unconditional support' to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the interest of a strong leadership for the future of the country and its youth.

Making the announcement at a Gudi Padva (Maharashtrian New Year) rally here, the MNS chief also said that he had no expectations for any seats in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls or the Assembly elections scheduled later this year.

Scotching all speculation, Raj Thackeray said he is not concerned about the ruling



MahaYuti of Shiv Sena-BJP-NCP, or the aspects of seat-sharing in the state.

The MNS chief also said that he has extended his full support to the firm leadership of PM Modi for the future of the country and its youth, as he hinted at keeping his options open in the coming

days.

However, he called upon the MNS workers to get cracking for the Assembly elections due around October this year, amid loud cheers and claps at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Park here. The announcement by the MNS chief -- who is the estranged cousin of Shiv Sena (UBT) President and former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray -- is expected to serve as a psychological booster for the MahaYuti ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

The development came a day after BJP's Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis expressed hopes that Raj Thackeray would declare his support to the MahaYuti.

Kejriwal to move SC challenging Delhi HC order: AAP sources

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After the Delhi High Court dismissed the plea regarding his arrest by the ED in the excise policy case, incarcerated Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has decided to file an appeal in the Supreme Court challenging the order, AAP sources said.

"AAP national convenor might go to Apex Court tomorrow," said the sources within the party.

Delhi High Court on Tuesday dismissed Chief Minister Kejriwal's petition challenging his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the trial court order remanding him to the agency's custody. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, who



presided over the case noted ED's submission that Kejriwal was in possession of enough material which had led them to arrest him.

"The files and material placed before us reveal that the mandate of law was followed by the ED.

The trial court order is not a two-line order. The statements with ED are of hawala dealers as well as AAP candidates in Goa elections," the court noted.

MVA cracks seat-share formula, Uddhav Thackeray grabs maximum

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance has finally sealed its long-drawn seat-sharing deal 'amicably' for the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra, top leaders said here on Tuesday.

As per the arrangement, the Shiv Sena (UBT) led by former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will contest 21 seats, the state Congress headed by Nana Patole will fight 17 constituencies and Nationalist Congress Party (SP) led by Sharad Pawar will contest 10 seats. The announcement was made in the presence of all the other MVA allies, includ-



ing smaller parties like PWP, CPI, AAP, CPM, SP and other Dalit parties.

While the main contenders have already finalised/announced their candidates for a majority of the constituencies, the rest shall be done in the coming few days, and the decision was unanimously taken

based on the winnability factor in the maximum number of seats, the leaders said.

Pawar said there was no difference on any seat, while Thackeray appreciated the smaller parties for not building pressures on the alliance to contest seats "in view of the larger aim to save democracy".

106 govt employees suspended in Telangana for attending BRS meeting

Hyderabad | Agencies

As many as 106 government employees in Telangana's Siddipet district have been suspended for attending a meeting of Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) in violation of the Model Code of Conduct.

Siddipet District Election Officer and Collector M. Manu Choudary suspended 106 staff members of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) Siddipet (MGNREGS & SERP). They had attended the BRS meeting at Reddy Function Hall in Siddipet within the Medak parliamentary constituency on April 7 in violation of MCC. The action was taken after BJP's former MLA and party candidate for Medak Lok Sabha seat Raghunandan Rao complained to the Assistant Returning Officer and



Revenue Divisional Officer over the phone that DRDA staff was attending a meeting of BRS in connection with ensuing Lok Sabha elections and that money was also being distributed.

A flying squad team visited the venue and found 10-15 persons still in the meeting. It collected the CCTV footage from the management and found that BRS organised the meeting without obtaining permission from Assistant Returning Officer, Siddipet. A police complaint was also lodged against two leaders of BRS. Based on the CCTV footage, the election authorities identified 40 employees of DRDA who attended the meeting.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD ADULTS CHECK THEIR BP LEVELS?

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Adults aged between 18 and 40 must get their blood pressure checked every three years to gauge any underlying diseases, and to enable a faster diagnosis and treatment, said doctors here on Tuesday.

According to a recent study by the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research (ICMR-NCDIR), Bengaluru, about 30 per cent of Indians have never tested their blood pressure.

"People older than 40 years should have their blood pressure checked one time a year. The ages between 18 and 40 years old should get their blood pressure checked every three to five years unless they fall into the high-risk category," Dr Tushar Tayal, Lead Consultant, Department of Internal Medicine, CK Birla Hospital, Gurugram, told IA correspondent.

"All hypertensive patients should monitor blood pressure at least once monthly with a digital BP monitor, ideally after 15 mins of rest and cuff tied to mid-arm," added Dr Ajay Agarwal -



Director, Internal Medicine, Fortis Hospital, Noida.

He explained that in patients without risk factors, blood pressure must be below 140/90 mm Hg. And among those with risk factors such as diabetes or kidney disease to reduce the risk of target organ damage (in kidneys, heart, or eyes), it should be less than 130/80, Dr Ajay told correspondent.

The study also showed that about 34 per cent of Indians are in the prehyper-

tensive stage -- an intermediate state between normal blood pressure and hypertension. The research showed it is equally concerning, as it contributed substantially to cardiovascular diseases.

"It is important to check BP and keep it under control (with or without medication) because undiagnosed hypertension is a risk factor for stroke, heart attack, kidney damage, and eye damage," Dr Tushar said.

Congress opposes PIL against opposition alliance use of 'INDIA' acronym

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress, through its affidavit, has firmly opposed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed before the Delhi High Court, seeking direction to stop using the acronym INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) for their bloc.

The Delhi High Court on April 2 granted the last chance to several opposition parties including the Congress, TMC and the DMK to respond within a week to the PIL by businessman Girish Bharadwaj, aiming for resolution before the first phase of the Lok Sabha election scheduled for April 19.

In its affidavit, Congress labelled the PIL as politically motivated and lacking in



substance.

The affidavit stated that the PIL was devoid of concrete examples or evidence to substantiate its allegations against Congress or its alliance partners. Moreover, it accused the petitioner of deliberately concealing their close association with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a right-wing organisation linked to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Pointing to the petitioner's political affiliations, the affidavit argued that the PIL was filed with the ulterior motive of advancing political agendas rather than addressing genuine public interest concerns.



'CULTURE TO CONNECTIVITY': PM MODI'S TAMIL NADU VISIT GIVES FURTHER PUSH TO NDA'S MISSION SOUTH

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Having repeatedly highlighted that Tamil Nadu's development reflects the development of the nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues with the ruling government's 'South Push' as Chennai gears up big time for the PM's mega roadshow on Tuesday.

It was only last month that while addressing a public gathering in Salem, PM Modi urged the people of the state to ensure a decisive victory for the NDA and emphasised the importance of NDA securing over 400 seats for the development of Tamil Nadu and the nation.

"The overwhelming blessings for NDA and Modi have unsettled the DMK government. The INDI alliance is troubled due to the love Tamil Nadu has shown to the BJP. Now, Tamil Nadu has decided to vote for BJP and NDA on April 19, infusing new vigour into NDA's mission to develop Tamil Nadu," Prime Minister Modi said in Salem on March 19.

Ensuring that BJP's focus remains intact on South India, PM Modi then interacted with BJP Karyakartas from Tamil Nadu via NaMo App on March 29, underscoring the importance of booth-level efficiency and grassroots



engagement in winning elections.

Earlier in January, while announcing development projects worth more than Rs 20,000 crore in Tiruchirappalli, PM Modi had specifically mentioned his government's intense focus on Tamil Nadu, saying that more than 40 Union Ministers from the Central government have toured the state more than 400 times in the past year.

"India will progress with the progress of Tamil Nadu," he stated. As he had done in the past, PM

Modi mentioned the development of the Trichy Airport as a great opportunity for the world to connect with the Tamil culture and heritage.

"Tamil Nadu is home to the ancient language of Tamil and it is a treasure trove of cultural heritage," the Prime Minister said as he mentioned Saint Thiruvalluvar and Subramania Bharati among others who created magnificent literature.

"I believe in the continuous expansion of the contribution of Tamil cultural inspiration in the

development and heritage of the country," he added while referring to the rich heritage of Tiruchirappalli.

As the political atmosphere gets charged up in the run-up to Lok Sabha elections, Congress and DMK too will be keeping a close watch on PM Modi's two-day visit to the state.

During his earlier visit, PM Modi had accused the INDI Alliance of deliberately insulting Hinduism and the followers of the Hindu faith.

"Leaders of INDI alliance are intentionally insulting Hinduism and their statements are also well-planned and thought out. Congress and DMK, in particular, don't hesitate in denigrating Hinduism with their profane remarks, as they are not so generous for other beliefs and religions," said PM Modi at the Salem rally.

It is also expected that while highlighting his government's recent projects spanning roadways, railways, ports, airports, energy and petroleum sectors, PM Modi will highlight how it has created more employment opportunities for the youth of the state.

"I can see the rise of a new hope in the youth of Tamil Nadu. This hope will become the energy of Viksit Bharat," PM Modi said in Salem, last month.

After 10-yr stint in BJP, Haryana's Jat leader Birender Singh rejoins Congress

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After spending a decade in the BJP, former Union Minister and Haryana's one of the tallest Jat leaders, Birender Singh and his wife Premlata Singh rejoined the Congress in Delhi on Tuesday.

Their son and sitting MP Brijendra Singh joined the Congress last month. The family commands a big influence in Haryana, which will likely go to the Assembly polls in October after the Lok Sabha elections for the 10 seats on May 25.

Prem Lata Singh is a former BJP legislator from Haryana, while Birender Singh served as Union Minister in the first Modi Cabinet. He previously served Congress for over four decades. They joined in the presence of Mukul Wasnik and two-time Chief Minister Bhupinder Hooda, among others.

On the reason for quitting the BJP, Birender Singh said he joined the BJP in 2014 due to "certain reasons".

"When I joined BJP, I knew the ideology of this party



would be different and there would be some differences between the ideologies of the two parties. Later on, I experienced that there was a wider gap," he said. On the farmers' agitation, he said he had raised the issue on party platforms and urged that their grievances be resolved. "I felt that while I was giving suggestions, those were not being heeded."

A well-known leader from the Jat community, Birender Singh joined the BJP in August 2014, just before the elections to the Haryana Assembly.

His induction into the Congress is seen as a move

to woo the Jat voters in Haryana, Rajasthan, and western Uttar Pradesh.

On March 10, Birender Singh's son Brijendra resigned as a BJP MP and joined the Congress citing "compelling political reasons".

Brijendra Singh quit the BJP five months after his father gave an ultimatum to the party at a rally in Jind that he would leave the BJP if it continued an alliance with the Jannayak Janata Party (JJP). Singh joined the Congress, the BJP snapped its ties with the JJP.

Brijendra Singh is the great-grandson of prominent Jat leader Sir Chhotu Ram.

CEC gets Z-category security in view of potential threat 'People's problems cannot be solved by making speeches': Ajit Pawar taunts Supriya Sule

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After a threat perception report prepared by the central security agencies recommended strong security cover for Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, the Central government has provided Z-category VIP security to him, sources said on Tuesday.

Kumar, a former IAS officer from the 1984 batch, assumed the role of the 25th CEC on May 15, 2022, after being appointed as an election commissioner within the electoral commission on September 1, 2020. Sources said that the Central Reserve Police Force has been tasked by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs to deploy



around 40-45 personnel, following security agencies' recommendation for enhanced protection for the CEC. This decision coincides with the ongoing preparations for the

seven-phase general elections starting on April 19. The armed commandos will accompany the CEC during his nationwide travels, as per sources.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and NCP President Ajit Pawar on Tuesday took a dig at her estranged sister and the NCP-SP nominee Supriya Sule saying that the problems of the people cannot be solved by just making speeches in parliament.

He also targeted his estranged uncle Sharad Pawar during his speech at an election rally urging the voters to give him and his party's nominee a chance during this year's elections.

"Till today you have stood behind senior Pawar. Even during the upcoming elections, vote where you see senior Pawar so that you will get the satisfaction of voting for Pawar," he said while addressing an election rally in the Baramati constituency.

He said that senior Pawar and his daughter will make emotional



speeches but people should not vote for them due to the emotional rhetoric. "I have been elected seven times in my political life so I understand all

these nuances," he said. He said that Baramati's problems are not solved by just making speeches in Parliament.

"Ajit Pawar is number one when it comes to speech. I also give speeches but I also work and get funds to speed up the pace of development. When I decide, I see to it that the work is completed and thereby give results to the people," he said.

"I am aware that some of you are upset with my colleagues and leaders. But trust me, I will get through this. Don't penalise me or the candidate (Sunetra Pawar) for the mistakes of my associates."

Ajit Pawar admitted that he had in the past criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi but said that the situation there was different.

"PM Modi has never taken a holiday, he only focuses on how the country should develop. Funds from the Centre have come to Baramati. I have been trying for 15 years to connect the Baramati-Phaltan railway route, for which I met PM Modi," he said.

Four of a family killed while crossing railway line in Bihar's Siwan

Patna | Agencies

Four members of a family, including two children, died after being run over by a train in Bihar's Siwan district on Tuesday afternoon.

The accident occurred at Laxmipur village near Mairwa railway station on the Siwan-Gorakhpur rail section.

"The victims had gone to their agricultural land for farming. While returning, the children were crossing the track when a speeding train came on it. The two women named Sunita Devi and Neetu Devi tried to save their children, but came under the train. All the four died on the spot," said Ajay Bhaskar, Village Head of Murhari Panchayat.

The deceased were residents of Laxmipur village which is located right on the edge of the railway track.

Following the incident, a large number of villagers assembled at the place and protested against the rail-



way officials. They demanded adequate compensation to the family members of the victims. Officials of

the GRP, RPF and the railways have reached the spot. The bodies have been sent for postmortem.

THREE FOOTWEAR FACTORIES GUTTED IN DELHI, NO CASUALTIES

New Delhi: A massive fire was reported in three footwear factories in Delhi's Mundka area on Tuesday, the Fire Department said, adding that no casualty has been reported so far. Delhi Fire Service Director Atul Garg said that a call regarding a blaze at a factory was received at 11:12 a.m. on Tuesday, following which fire tenders were rushed to the spot. Upon reaching the spot, it was found that the flames had engulfed three footwear factories. "A total of 25 fire tenders were rushed to the site. Fire is extinguished and cooling operation is going on," Garg said, adding that the cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained.

SC grants interim bail to Abbas Ansari to attend father Mukhtar's 'fatiha' ritual

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted interim bail to Abbas Ansari - who is currently detained in Kasganj district jail - to attend the 'fatiha' ritual of his deceased father Mukhtar Ansari. A Bench presided over by Justice Surya Kant took note of the fact that the petitioner could not attend the funeral of his father since he was under judicial custody.

Gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari - accused of the killing of Awadhesh Rai, brother of Ajay Rai - died of cardiac arrest on March 28.

Imposing a slew of conditions, the Bench, also comprising Justice KV Viswanathan, said that Uttar



Pradesh Police will bring Abbas Ansari from Kasganj jail to his native place in Ghazipur under adequate security for observing the 'fatiha' ritual on April 10. "Keeping in view the distance between the two places, we direct that police and jail authorities ensure that

the petitioner could start his journey by today at the earliest but no later than 5 pm," the apex court ordered.

It added that after the ritual scheduled on Wednesday gets over, Abbas Ansari may be temporarily shifted to a local jail at Ghazipur.

ELECTION TO MP'S BETUL LS SEAT CALLED OFF AFTER CANDIDATE'S DEATH

Bhopal: The election to the Betul Lok Sabha constituency in Madhya Pradesh has been cancelled after the BSP candidate in the fray died of cardiac arrest on Tuesday, officials said.

Family members of BSP candidate Ashok Bhalavi told media persons that he complained of pain last night and was taken to a hospital in Betul where he died on Tuesday.

The election to the Betul Lok Sabha seat, along with five other seats of the state, was scheduled in the second phase on April 26.

Madhya Pradesh Electoral Officer, Anupam Rajan said the election in the constituency has been cancelled after the death of the BSP candidate. The BJP has retained the Betul Lok Sabha seat since 1996.

Proclaimed offender arrested for multi-crore real estate scam in Punjab

Chandigarh | Agencies

In a major breakthrough in the multi-crore Nature Heights Infra Scam, Punjab Police on Tuesday said that they have arrested the main accused, Neeraj Thathai, alias Neeraj Arora, who was absconding for the past nine years and was declared a proclaimed offender.

He was arrested from the Poudi district in Uttarakhand. The modus operandi used by the accused to collect the huge amount of money was to lure innocent people in lieu of giving them residential and commercial plots.

The development comes close on the heels of the arrest of Amandeep Kamboj, alias Aman Skoda, of Fazilka, who was proclaimed offender in eight cases, and in 18 cases he jumped bail. He was arrested from



Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh on March 15. Inspector General of Police (Faridkot) Gursharan Singh Sandhu and Deputy Inspector General (Ferozepur) Ranjit Singh Dhillon, in

a joint press conference, said police teams from both the districts headed by Senior Superintendent (Investigation) Pardeep Sandhu arrested the most wanted criminal

Neeraj Arora from Shri Nagar Garhwal in Uttarakhand.

Police teams have also recovered one luxury BMW car, mobile phones and fake documents from the possession of accused Arora.

Sandhu said the accused has been facing 108 first information reports (FIRs) registered in 21 districts for defrauding people by promising money or plots to people in the state.

Of a total of 108 FIRs, 47 were registered in Fazilka, eight in Ferozepur, six each in Patiala and Fatehgarh Sahib, five each in Rupnagar, Mohali and SAS Nagar; four each in Faridkot, Sri Muktsar Sahib and Jalandhar Commissionerate.

Accused Arora, arrested by the police in February 2016, had jumped bail and was declared a proclaimed offender in February 2017.

Six of family charred to death in Bihar's Rohtas

Patna | Agencies

Six persons of a family were charred to death in Bihar's Rohtas district on Tuesday afternoon after their huts caught fire, police said.

The fire incident occurred at Ibrahimpur Bridge in Kachwan village under the Kachwan police station.

The SHO, Kachwan police station said that the deceased included three women and three children. Another victim sustained burn injuries and was admitted to the hospital. Eyewitnesses said there were three huts adjoining the Kachwan bridge and they caught fire after a short-circuit occurred in an electric transformer and sparks fell on their roofs. In the heat, the blaze spread rapidly to engulf all three huts.



While some residents managed to save themselves, six could not escape.

Residents called for the fire brigade and also tried to douse the fire but were unsuccessful. Firemen reached the spot and extinguished the flames, but till that time, the six had died.

Following the blaze, a large number of people reached the spot. Teams of police and civil administration also reached the spot and sent the dead bodies for a post-mortem examination.



ACTION AGAINST CORRUPTION WILL SPEED UP IN 3RD TERM OF MY GOVT: PM MODI

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Launching a scathing attack on the Congress and the INDIA bloc while sounding a warning bell, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that action against corruption will speed up in the third term of his government at the Centre.

Addressing a rally in Maoist-hit Balaghat Lok Sabha constituency in Madhya Pradesh, PM Modi said that frustrated with the action against corruption, leaders of the INDIA bloc have been abusing him.

"The INDIA bloc is abusing and threatening me. But, I have decided to continue the action against corruption. In the next five years, Modi's operation against



corruption will pick speed," PM Modi said.

PM Modi said the Opposition is getting united and protesting against operations being carried out against corruption. "I assure that every single

penny looted from the people of this country will be recovered. The action against corruption will go on with more speed in the third term," he said.

PM Modi further added that he would need the sup-

port of the people for the action against corruption.

The Prime Minister also appealed to the people of Balaghat to vote for BJP candidate Bharti Pardhi as her election as Lok Sabha MP will empower him more.

The BJP has replaced its sitting Lok Sabha MP Dhal Singh Bisen and has fielded a fresh candidate - Bharti Pardhi from the Balaghat seat against Congress' Samrat Saraswat.

Balaghat Lok Sabha seat has been a stronghold of the Congress and Independents from 1952 to 1996.

However, the BJP wrested the seat from Congress in 1998 and since then, the party has been retaining it by winning it for six consecutive terms, including in 2019.

Rahul Gandhi makes surprise visit to women collecting 'mahua' flowers in Shahdol

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A group of women collecting 'Mahua flowers' in a forest in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol district on Tuesday had a surprise guest when Congress leader Rahul Gandhi stopped his convoy to meet them.

Rahul Gandhi, who stayed in Shahdol on Monday night, was heading towards a helipad to leave for Delhi. On seeing the women collecting Mahua along the highway in Umaria, he stopped his convoy and met the women.

Madhya Pradesh Congress shared photographs of Rahul Gandhi with the women on social media. After a short interaction with the women, Rahul Gandhi



moved on with the rest of the journey.

Congress' top star campaigner Rahul Gandhi kick-started the party's election campaign in Shahdol, one of the five Lok Sabha seats reserved for the Scheduled Tribes (ST) candidates.

On his first visit to Madhya Pradesh on Monday after the declaration of the Lok Sabha election schedule, Rahul Gandhi addressed three back-to-back public rallies in three different Lok Sabha seats -- Balaghat, Mandla and Shahdol. As per the MP Congress office, he was supposed to leave for Delhi after addressing the rallies by late evening, however, the special aircraft could not take off for some reason, and he had to stay in Shahdol.

PM Modi's visit to Maoist-hit district historic: Prahlad Patel

Team Absolute | Balaghat

Head of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Madhya Pradesh's Maoist-affected Balaghat on Tuesday, state cabinet minister Prahlad Singh Patel said that his visit would create history.

PM Modi will address a public gathering during his visit to Balaghat and it will be PM Modi's second visit to the state in the last three days.

Speaking to news agency, on PM's visit to the state, MP minister Prahlad Singh Patel said, "We are all fortunate and excited, not only the workers but also the public. Narendra Modi is coming here for the first time as Prime Minister. Today is a historic day and it is the first day of Navratri."

In Balaghat, women are more than that of men in sex ratio and Balaghat parliamentary seat got a woman candidate for the first time after independence, a woman MP will be elected from here, Patel said.

"I feel that the leader on whose behest and whose work and name people get votes in the country will be on the land of Balaghat for the first time today on New Year, this will create



history," the minister added.

The BJP has fielded Bharti Pardhi, a new face, from Balaghat, replacing the incumbent MP, Dhal Singh Bisen currently representing the party from the constituency. The election will be held here in the first phase on April 19 with five other parliamentary seats in the state.

Earlier on Sunday, PM Modi kicked off the party's election campaign in Madhya Pradesh by holding a grand roadshow in Jabalpur in which people gathered in large numbers on both sides of the road and showered petals on the Prime Minister.

AIIMS Bhopal and BMC Join Hands to Promote Cleanliness and Ensure Safety of Sanitation Workers

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the Swachhata Pakhwada initiative, a program was organized today at 11:00 AM at the Gandhi Gallery, aimed at promoting cleanliness and ensuring the safety of sanitation workers. Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh Executive Director and CEO of AIIMS Bhopal, in his address as the Chief Guest, emphasized the critical need for ensuring the safety and well-being of sanitation workers, who are particularly vulnerable in their line of duty. He highlighted the importance of cleanliness, stating that it is akin to godliness, and underscored the collective responsibility to safeguard the health and dignity of those who keep our surroundings clean.

Speaking on the occasion, Sh. Harendra Narayan, IAS, Commissioner BMC, expressed his commitment to extending full cooperation to AIIMS Bhopal in their efforts to maintain cleanliness and ensure a



hygienic environment. He pledged support for initiatives aimed at improving the working conditions and safety measures for sanitation workers. As part of the program, Sanitation Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) were distributed to

BMC and AIIMS sanitation frontline staff, ensuring their safety while carrying out their duties. Additionally, blue and green waste bins were distributed to patients, promoting awareness and encouraging waste segregation for a cleaner and healthier environment.

The collaborative efforts between AIIMS Bhopal and BMC underscore a shared commitment to promoting cleanliness, ensuring the safety of sanitation workers, and fostering a culture of hygiene and sanitation in the community.

CONGRESS AND SAMAJWADI PARTY HAVE LEFT THE FIELD IN KHAJURAHO: MP BJP CHIEF

Team Absolute | Panna

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has worked to change the lives of the poor. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lord Shri Ram was consecrated in Shri Ram Temple in Ayodhya on 22 January 2024. Along with Congress and Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samajwadi Party had also rejected the invitation to organize the consecration of Lord Shri Ram. The holy land of Bundelkhand will never accept such opponents of Ram. The people of Khajuraho Lok Sabha constituency gave such blessings to BJP in the last Lok Sabha elections that this time Congress and Samajwadi Party have left the field here. Bharatiya Janata Party State President and MP Vishnudatt Sharma said this while addressing street meetings in two



dozen villages of Gunnaur assembly constituency of Panna district on Tuesday. BJP State President and MP Vishnudatt Sharma said that Prime

Minister Narendra Modi has done the work of increasing the respect of India across the world by consecrating the life of Lord Shri Ram on

January 22 in Ayodhya. After 500 years of struggle, a grand temple of Lord Shri Ram has been built in Ayodhya. State President Sharma said that the holy land of Bundelkhand will never forgive those who opened fire on Shri Ram devotees going to Ayodhya and those who boycotted the life and prestige of Shri Ram. Sharma said that Prime Minister has worked to change the life of every poor by implementing poor welfare and public welfare schemes. Prime Minister is working to make India a developed nation. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, BJP is working to make India a world leader by the year 2047. The people of the country have made up their mind to make Narendra Modi, who has changed the lives of the poor of the country, as the Prime Minister for the third time.

Jubin Nautiyal seeks divine blessings at Mahakaleshwar Temple, sings 'Shiv bhajan'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer Jubin Nautiyal was seen offering prayers and attending the "bhasm aarti" at the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh.

He attended the "bhasm aarti" at the Nandi hall in the temple and was seen immersing himself into the divine experience.

Jubin said that he feels blessed after being a part of the aarti, where he prayed for the well-being of his family and the country. He was also seen singing a Shiv bhajan at the temple.

He also shared: "I come every year...As soon as I enter and I see Mahakaaal, I forget everything. I asked for blessings for my family, the country and Uttarakhand."

The singer will be seen performing at the Ramghat on the occasion of Vikram Utsav in Ujjain on Tuesday evening. Jubin is known for tracks such as 'Raataan Lambiyan',



'Barsaat Ki Dhun', 'Zindagi Kuch Toh Bata' and 'The Humma Song' to name a few.

AICC appoints Mitendra Singh as MP Youth Cong head

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Congress has appointed Mitendra Singh as President of the Madhya Pradesh Youth Congress Committee. A notification in this regard was issued by the AICC on Tuesday.

Mitendra Singh replaced Jhabua MLA, Dr. Vikrant Bhuria, son of Congress veteran and ex-Union Minister, Kantilal Bhuria. Dr. Bhuria headed the MP Congress Youth wing for the last three years and was elected MLA from Jhabua Assembly constituency in November last year.

The reorganisation of the party's youth wing in Madhya Pradesh comes two weeks before the Lok Sabha elections begin on April 19.

"I am hereby pleased to appoint you as President of Madhya Pradesh Youth Congress Committee with immediate effect. India Youth Congress is confident that you will devote your full time and energy to further strengthening the organisation as well as the Congress party under the leadership of Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi," the AICC's notification read.

The development came a



day after Vikrant Bhuria wrote to AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge mentioning that he was unable to devote full time to the post as he had to devote maximum time for his father's Lok Sabha election in Ratlam.

Mitendra Singh, a law graduate from Gwalior had been working as the National Secretary of the Youth Congress.

After its stunning defeat against the BJP in the November Assembly elections, the Congress has started reorganising different wings of the party in MP.

TWO ADDITIONAL COLLECTORS IN BETUL, ONE REMOVED BEFORE THE CODE OF CONDUCT, GOT A STAY FROM THE COURT

Bhopal: Another lapse has come to light in the transfers made before the implementation of the code of conduct for Lok Sabha elections of the General Administration Department (GAD). In the hasty transfers made by GAD, Additional Collector JP Saiyam posted in Betul was transferred to Jabalpur while his retirement was in May. Saiyam went to court in protest against this transfer and got a stay. Now there will be two additional collectors in Betul till the month of May.

During the transfers made till March 16, in the last round, the General Administration Department had made Rajiv Nandan Srivastava the Additional Collector of Betul in place of Betul Additional Collector JP Saiyam. After this, when Srivastava came to join Betul, the Collector got him to join. Meanwhile, Saiyam, who was transferred from Betul to Jabalpur, filed an application in the High Court against the government order. Since Saiyam's retirement is after two months in May. Therefore, the court put a stay on the transfer and now two additional collectors are working here.

Before this, the issue of posting of Ratlam District Panchayat CEO Aman Vaishnav to the post of Additional Collector in Anuppur had also got entangled. Shringar Srivastava, who was posted in Dhar, was posted in place of Vaishnav. Srivastava reached to join but Vaishnav, who was transferred on March 16 itself, was not relieved that day. After this, due to implementation of the code of conduct, Ratlam and Anuppur Collector had to seek guidance from GAD and Election Commission on his relieving and joining.

Traders Federation gave a grand welcome to Alok Sharma, assured him of victory



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Bharatiya Janata Party's Bhopal Lok Sabha candidate Alok Sharma was given a grand welcome on Monday by hundreds of people including President of Bhopal Traders Association Sunil Punjabi, General Secretary Vivek Sahu. The officials of Bhopal Grocery Traders Federation also welcomed the party candidate r. Alok Sharma and the officials also played Holi of flowers

with Sharma. Alok Sharma said that the business class is an important link for BJP. Through which the common people connect with them. He said that the Sangh officials should join the mission of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to increase 370 votes at every booth. Reach every home and tell about the schemes of the Prime Minister and the State Government. Sharma said that Bhopal is both my birthplace and place of work. May I get an opportunity to serve the

people of Bhopal by staying among you. He said that it is necessary for the wholesale traders of Bhopal to have a fixed place where all the traders can gather and do business. There should also be separate parking for traders.

President of Bhopal Traders Association, Sunil Punjabi said that after Alok Sharma becomes Bhopal MP, the Traders Association hopes that all our demands will be considered soon.

BSP CANDIDATE OF BETUL PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY ASHOK BHALAWI DIES OF HEART ATTACK

Bhopal: Bahujan Samaj Party's Betul Lok Sabha seat candidate Ashok Bhalawi died due to heart attack. He suffered chest pain on Tuesday afternoon and was brought to the hospital, where the doctor declared him dead.

Bahujan Samaj Party had made Ashok Bhalawi its candidate for Betul Lok Sabha constituency. Last time also Ashok had contested elections on BSP ticket. Ashok Bhalawi, who lived near Sohagpur village, was a vegetable trader by profession.

He had also been a member of Betul district. Ashok Bhalawi has four sons. His last rites will be held on Wednesday in his home village Sohagpur.

Collector Narendra Kumar Suryavanshi says that information will be issued whether the elections will be postponed or not. The Election Commission has been informed about this. Now further action will be taken on the instructions received from the Election Commission.





EDITOR'S SPECS

India is seeing a rising trend of diseases

Increased stress in life and a sedentary lifestyle combined with a spike in consumption of junk food, smoking tobacco, and alcohol is behind the surging cases of diseases in India, said experts here on Tuesday. About one in three Indians is pre-diabetic, two in three are pre-hypertensive, and one in 10 suffers from depression, reveals a recent Health of Nation Report by Apollo Hospitals. The prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health disorders has surged to critical levels, raising alarm for the nation's health. "Amongst the 1.4 billion population of India, the biggest health issues are related to a major jump in fatty liver diseases, obesity, diabetes, coronary artery diseases in the youth, and a plethora of malignancies of many organs affecting every section of society. This changing trend is more obvious as one encounters heart attacks and paralytic attacks in younger generations with alarming regularity," Dr Anil Arora, Chairman, Gastroenterology, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, said. "A combination of stressful life and sedentary lifestyle has catapulted us to newer illnesses which were not a reality in this younger lot, till recently," he explained. Infectious disease expert Dr Ishwar Gilada said the "altered lifestyle" followed by the young generations is making them more prone to the diseases. "Our youth is going berserk on junk food, smoking, tobacco, alcohol," and inviting diseases, he said. He also blamed the work-from-home culture that was introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to some extent with few companies. "We need to stop it because people, who are working from home, do not do any exercise, or walk. That will cause a problem," said Dr Gilada, Secretary General People's Health Organisation-India. He advised people to make health their own "responsibility".

Egypt, Singapore, Dubai, Vietnam, and Thailand emerge as top destinations amongst Indian travellers

As the summer season approaches, travellers can now embark on their summer adventures with confidence, knowing they're headed towards experiences that align with their preferences and desires. Atlys, an online platform for visa applications, unveils the top destinations and emerging travel trends based on its extensive data analysis. "We're excited to see such diverse travel interests among our users," says Mohak Nahta, Founder & CEO of Atlys. "While international travel keeps growing in India, and more and more Indians contribute to the global, these insights enable us to better tailor our services to meet the evolving needs of travellers worldwide." According to the report, Egypt, Singapore, Dubai, Vietnam, and Thailand emerge as the top countries for which Indian travellers have applied for visas for summer vacations, offering an enticing mix of culture, adventure, and relaxation for travellers of all interests. Conducting extensive research on gender-wise distribution, male travellers dominate the visa application scene, representing 77 percent in the United Arab



Emirates (UAE) and 71 percent in Singapore. Meanwhile, 30 percent of women travellers applied for Singapore visas and 25 percent of women applied for UAE visas. Data reveals a diverse age distribution among travellers. While younger demographics, particularly those in the age group of 20 to 35, are prominent, there's a notable representation across various age brackets, indicating the universal appeal of these destinations. The research also provided insights into city-wise travel. The City of Gold, Dubai turn out to be

popular among Indian cities with Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi, and Hyderabad leading the pack. Cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi are among the top contributors to the Vietnamese travel surge. Indian cities, including Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi, display a strong interest in exploring Singapore, the Lion City's charms. Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Delhi showcase a keen interest in Egyptian wonders, followed closely by cities like Chennai and Hyderabad. Overall, travellers from Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi are the top three cities, that people embark on to vacation. Solo travellers take the lead, representing approximately 65 percent of visa applications in the UAE, 60 percent in Egypt, 40 percent in Singapore, and 45 percent in Vietnam. Groups of two travellers make up around 20 percent of visa applications in the UAE, 30 percent in Egypt, 25 percent in Singapore, and 20 percent in Vietnam. Larger groups of three or more travellers also applied for visas, with varying proportions across destinations.

1984 anti-Sikh riots: Wound not over but victims grateful to Modi govt for mitigating their woes

While the 1984-anti Sikh riots and massacre will continue to remain a blot for the country, it is also a grim reminder of the highly anguished moment and painful times that the Sikh community went through, post former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination on October 31, 1984. Even after 40 years of massacre, many riot victims vividly recall the horror tales of the massacre, allegedly sponsored by the then Congress regime. However, many of them are thankful to the Modi government for bringing 'justice' to their endless fight and also healing their decades-old wounds. The first sense of closure for them came in 2022 when the SIT team, formed in 2019, arrested 44 accused after three years of investigations. The deadly riots broke after former Congress PM Indira Gandhi was brutally killed by her two Sikh bodyguards. Thousands of Sikhs were killed in the riots and Delhi was worst hit, followed by Kanpur. A couple of Kanpur residents on Sunday narrated the 1984 horror and also explained how the Modi government nursed their wounds in recent years. Harjit Singh, a resident of Ashok Nagar, Kanpur Harjit Singh, a victim of the 1984 anti-sikh riots, says that he lost his father and uncle in the bloodshed and also accused Congress of trying to save its leaders despite their direct involvement in the 1984 riots. Harjit Singh, a resident of Ashok Nagar, Kanpur, who was just 14 years old during the riots, says, "My uncle's (father's younger brother) marriage was about to be fixed. My father was coming back from his shop when a peace protest march was being carried out by Sikhs of Kanpur against the riots. The mob attacked with stone pelting on the Sikh protest march at Bhadoyia Chauraha. My father was hurt during the stone pelting and when my uncle tried to help my father, someone from the mob fired bullets at him and then finally both my father & uncle were burnt alive along with the tractor". While putting the entire blame on Congress, Harjit Singh said, "At night, the mob came to burn our house but a Hindu family who were our tenants saved us". He further said, "My grandfather took care of the family and I had to leave my education and join our family business as the economic condition of the family was not good. I lost my mother due to a brain haemorrhage in 1989 as she couldn't bear the loss of my father in riots. Congress never tried to give us any justice, rather they only saved their leaders who were involved in the riots". Thanking Modi government, he said, "We had lost all hope for getting justice but when PM Modi came in 2014, things moved quite fast. Many cases of Kanpur riots have been solved as the culprits have been put behind bars and the victims have received Rs 5 lakh compensation." Manjit Singh Chawla, another victim of anti-sikh riots in Kanpur Manjit Singh Chawla, another victim of anti-sikh riots in Kanpur, says that highly irresponsible statements by top leaders of Congress triggered riots, resulting in the killing of innocent Sikhs. Manjit Singh Chawla, recalling the horror, says, "When the word of Indira Gandhi's death spread, the next morning itself our neighbours accompanied by hordes of mob started ransacking shops, assaulting people and looting houses. Hundreds of Sikhs were killed by the rioting mob. The mob went on a killing spree due to the protection of police officers, administration and leaders of the Congress government; though miscreant elements from all different sections of society were involved in the massacre." The entire bloodshed took place under the political protection by leaders of Congress government and local administration to the goons. There were clear instructions not to leave anyone behind and kill all sar-



gars. The people living in our neighbourhood changed all of a sudden and started attacking us. This was the utter failure of the Congress government at the time as no help was provided to rehabilitate the victims of anti-Sikh riots; we all have to struggle a lot to stand on our feet again and make a living for ourselves again. The government of the time clearly had a hand in the massacre and irresponsible statements by top leaders of the Congress government triggered riots when a mob went on a rampage. These wounds have been etched on our souls for this lifetime and cannot be healed ever again," Chawla said. 1984 riots were plotted by the Congress govt, says Gurinder Singh Vasu Gurinder Singh Vasu Prince, the General Secretary of Shri Guru Singh Sabha Kanpur and a social worker says that he was in Class X at the time of the anti-Sikh riots of 1984.

Pinning the blame on the then Congress government, he said, "On the day of the incident, I was alone at home with my five sisters and mother when a mob of thousands of people attacked our house. Our entire family was inside the house, still, it was burnt by the rioters. All the wedding stuff kept in the house for my sister's wedding was looted. There was violence in the locality for three days. The neighbouring Jain family protected us. These riots were pre-planned. The then government helped the rioters because they had lists of names and houses of Sikhs. We had to go to the camp to save our lives. My father was a senior Sikh leader and Ward Congress Committee President for 18 years but after the incident he quit the Congress. Culprits like Jagdish Tytler, Sajjan Kumar, Lalit Maken, and Kamal Nath should be punished. We are happy that the culprits are now being punished during the PM Modi government." He further said, "Sikh community will never forgive Congress who are the perpetrators of genocide of our mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters". Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said, "Modi ji has knowledge of Sikh religion. He has done many things for the Sikhs like opening the Kartarpur Corridor, and celebrating the martyrdom of Chhote Sahabzads at national and international levels."

international

Toronto, other Canadian cities go dark as millions watch total solar eclipse

Toronto and many other cities and towns of Canada fell into darkness as millions of people flocked into public places to watch the total solar eclipse. In Toronto, which won't see the next total solar eclipse until 2144, clouds obscured the sun during the period of the eclipse. But when the time for total solar eclipse (99.7 per cent) came, it became pitch dark and very cold.



At Toronto's York University where thousands of students converged on top of one of its science blocks to watch the once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon, lights went on during the short duration of total eclipse at 3:19 pm on Monday.

Canada's top astronomer and York University former professor Paul Delaney, who was on hand to explain the significance of this solar eclipse, said, "From the point of view of science, when you are blocking the sun, you are changing the dynamics in the atmosphere and the

atmosphere responds very differently during a total eclipse. Radiowave propagation is impacted. NASA is launching its sounding rockets into the upper atmosphere from Niagara Falls to monitor changes as radiation is depleted from the atmosphere."

He said, "This total solar eclipse has allowed studying the diameter of the sun which has come under great scrutiny of late because scientists think it is changing. This eclipse is an opportunity to measure the diameter. They are looking at the sun's corona and corona sphere. It will tell us about magnetic fields around the sun. There is a lot of information that we will gain from this solar eclipse."

Toronto had its last total solar eclipse in 1925. "It was a cloudy day in Toronto back in 1925. Toronto University scientists tried to measure the change in the intensity of light coming from the sun that day. That total solar eclipse came quickly after the 1919 total solar eclipse when British astronomer Arthur Eddington verified Einstein's famous theory of relativity," he said.

Total solar eclipses occur every 18 months somewhere around the world, but North America's next total solar eclipse won't happen till August 23, 2044.

Relation with China based on equal cooperation, trustworthy dialogue: Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov

Beijing | Agencies Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov in Beijing Tuesday, and both sides expressed hope for strengthening practical cooperation in various fields. Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, extended congratulations to President Putin on his reelection. Xinhua news agency reported. Wang said that China will continue to support Russia's development and revitalisation under the leadership of President Putin and support the Russian people's independent choice of develop-



ment path. Wang said that the China-Russia relations have been of irreplaceable value to maintaining global strategic stability.

Maintaining and developing sound China-Russia relations is the natural choice of the two major, neighboring countries and serves the fundamental interests of the two peoples.

cooperation and trustworthy dialogue. Russia abides by the one-China principle and is willing to work with China to maintain close high-level exchanges, and deepen practical cooperation in economy, trade and other fields. Russia supports the Global Security Initiative, and is willing to deepen cooperation with China on multilateral platforms to promote the establishment of a more just and democratic international order, Lavrov added. The two sides also had in-depth exchanges of view on the Ukraine issue, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the situation in the Asia-Pacific region and other international and regional issues of common concern.

Egypt, Jordan, France urge immediate ceasefire in Gaza

Egypt, Jordan, and France have urged an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, which has been under Israeli siege and bombardment over the past six months. In a joint article on Monday, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, Jordanian King Abdullah II, and French President Emmanuel Macron called for an immediate and unconditional implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2728, which demands an immediate ceasefire in the conflict-stricken enclave, Xinhua news agency reported. "We warn against the dangerous consequences of an Israeli offensive on Rafah, where more than 1.5 million Palestinian civilians have sought refuge. Such an offensive will only bring more deaths and suffering, heighten the risks and consequences of mass forcible displacement of the people of Gaza and threat-



immediate regional escalation," said the leaders. Noting that there is an urgent need for a massive increase in the provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance, the leaders urged Israel to ensure the flow of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian population, a responsibility it has not fulfilled. They demanded an

immediate release of all hostages and reaffirmed their support for the negotiations brokered by Egypt, Qatar and the United States dealing with ceasefire, hostages, and detainees. The massive conflict in Gaza has so far killed 33,207 Palestinians, in addition to many unreported under the rubble, and injured 75,933 oth-

ers, according to the update released by Gaza's health ministry earlier on Monday.

Israel launched a large-scale offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip in retaliation to a Hamas rampage in southern Israel on October 7, 2023, during which about 1,200 people were killed and more than 200 were taken hostage.

6.0-magnitude earthquake jolts Indonesia



Jakarta | Agencies A 6.0 magnitude quake hit Indonesia's eastern province of West Papua on Tuesday, but did not trigger a tsunami warning, the country's meteorology, climatology and geophysics agency said. The agency initially reported the quake's magnitude to be 6.1 before revising it, Xinhua news agency reported.

The earthquake occurred at 07:02 a.m. Jakarta time (0002 GMT) with its epicenter situated 46 km southeast of Ransiki

town, and a depth of 11 km under the seabed, the agency said. The intensity of the quake was felt at III to IV MMI (Modified Mercalli Intensity) in the Ransiki town, it added.

The agency did not issue a tsunami warning as the tremors would not potentially trigger giant waves.

Indonesia, an archipelagic country, is prone to earthquakes because of its location along the Pacific Ring of Fire, a tectonic belt of volcanoes and earthquakes.

One killed, three injured in explosion in paper factory in Vietnam



Hanoi | Agencies One paper factory worker died and two others were injured in a huge explosion in Vietnam's Bac Ninh province on Tuesday morning, Vietnam News Agency reported.

The explosion occurred at around 10:30 a.m. at Hung Loi Paper Joint Stock Company in Phu Lam industrial cluster when the workers were repairing machines, Xinhua news agency reported.

A 31-year-old worker died on the scene, while two others were taken to hospital in an emergency.

A gas pit explosion was initially identified as the primary reason. According to Vietnam News Agency, Hung Loi company has faced administrative sanctions for not having an environmental permit and been required to suspend the operation of the waste generation source for 4.5 months since January this year.

Vietnam recorded 1,179 fires and explosions in the first three months of 2023, which left 24 people dead, 18 others injured and caused property losses of about 71.1 billion Vietnamese dong (2.8 million U.S. dollars), said the General Statistics Office.



MVA to ECI: Act against Mungantiwar for 'crass comments' in PM's presence

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Tuesday appealed to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to take strong action against Maharashtra BJP minister and Chandrapur Lok Sabha candidate, Sudhir Mungantiwar, at a rally addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday evening. Livid at the utterances by the BJP nominee, the MVA leaders like Congress General Secretary Sachin Sawant, Nationalist Congress Party (SP) National Spokesperson Clyde Crasto, Shiv Sena (UBT)'s National Spokesperson Kishore Tiwari, called upon the ECI to 'cancel' Mungantiwar's LS candidature for the shockingly low-level language in public, with PM Modi sitting on the stage.



gests their 'blessings' for such profanity and it's the ECI's duty to take exemplary action and cancel his (Mungantiwar's) candidature from Chandrapur.

Unfazed by the uproar, Mungantiwar posted early on Tuesday that when the Congress is reminded of its 1984 atrocities, "so many chillies fly."

"The Congress cannot hide the injustice done to the people by making a partial clip viral. Congress leaders should tell me that such atrocities did not take place in the 1984 riots. I will always speak against the dictatorial regime of the Congress and will not be intimidated by your mischief," he posted.

Issuing a veiled warning that "the Opposition has

to merely speak the truth to counter such language", Sachin Sawant said the "fear of losing has tipped the scales, and referred to the ECI notices slapped on AAP Delhi Minister, Atishi Marlena, Congress Spokesperson, Supriya Shrinete and Andhra Pradesh CM, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. They were warned by the ECI that "violations of the Model Code of Conduct will not be tolerated."

Sachin Sawant demanded that the same must be made applicable to Mungantiwar now for his false accusations and objectionable language.

"A humble question to the Honourable PM and all those who shared the stage with Mungantiwar when he made such disgusting utterances: Do you endorse his speech?" asked Crasto.

Using an old Sanskrit phrase, 'vinaashakale vipareet buddhi', Tiwari said that neither Mungantiwar's comments nor the BJP's silence on it are surprising as the party is bracing for a rude shock in the Lok Sabha 2024 elections not only in Maharashtra but across India.

While challenging the INDIA bloc's pleas on democracy being threatened under the BJP, Mungantiwar made vague references to the 1984 riots in Delhi, on how spouses and their children were separated and a "brother and sister were stripped naked and made to lie on a cot."

Meanwhile, activists of different local, social and political groups have expressed concerns over such comments that did not find favour with the masses there, especially the women and the youth, besides unleashing a storm on social media.

Congress leader Raju Waghmare joins CM Shinde-led Shiv Sena



Team Absolute | Thane

Maharashtra Congress unit leader Raju Waghmare, a spokesperson of the party, on Tuesday quit Congress and joined the Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena ahead of the Lok Sabha elections 2024.

Raju Waghmare joined the Shiv Sena at a function at 'Anand Ashram', former residence-cum-office of late Shiv Sena leader Anand Dighe, in Thane district of Maharashtra.

Speaking on the occasion, Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde said that the party will benefit from his experience. Waghmare would be a deputy leader and spokesperson of the Shiv Sena, he announced, a news agency reported.

Talking to reporters, Raju Waghmare claimed the Congress' failure to make a strong claim to Sangli and Bhiwandi Lok Sabha seats during the seat-sharing talks in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance led to confusion and concerns among party workers.

He decided to join the Shiv Sena after observing CM Shinde's style of functioning, he said, adding that the chief minister cares for the people as well as party workers.

"Even when I was in opposition, I praised his work," Raju Waghmare said.

The chief minister said his government has removed negativity and brought in positivity in politics, and its good work has given people confidence.

The opposition has no right to announce a manifesto for the next 50 years, CM Shinde said. "In fact, they should give people an account of their performance in the last 50 years," he said, the news agency reported on Tuesday.

On opposition leaders targeting him for holding political meetings at his official residence 'Varsha', CM Eknath Shinde said that there was nothing wrong with holding such meetings there.

All well with the ruling 'Mahayuti' alliance, CM Shinde said, informing that its candidates for the remaining Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra will be announced soon.

Shops and establishments in Mumbai not displaying Marathi boards to pay double property tax

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shops and establishments in Mumbai without Marathi nameplates will have to pay double property tax from May 1, the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation announced on Monday.

Also, the license issued for an illuminated signboard (glow board) not in the Marathi language will be cancelled with immediate effect and a new registration will have to be done. If the glow sign board license is revoked, the establishment owners concerned will be charged a penalty ranging between Rs 25,000 and Rs 1.5 lakh.

These decisions were taken at the meeting chaired by BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation Commissioner and Administrator Bhushan Gagrani.

It is binding on the shops and establishments in Mumbai to put up nameplates in Marathi written in Devnagari script following the order issued last year by the Supreme Court.

The BMC conducted an inspection from November 28, 2023, to March 31, 2024, and it



was found that of the total 87,047 shops and establishments inspected, 84,007 (96.50 per cent) had complied with the Supreme Court's order. However, the remaining 3,040 shops and establishments did not put up the boards as per the rules and the BMC had served legal notices to them.

Private offices in Mumbai suburbs to face action if leave not granted on polling day

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Mumbai Suburban District Collector and District Election Officer Rajendra Kshirsagar on Monday said that action will be taken against private establishments for not granting paid leave or concession of two hours to employees on the polling day. The action will be initiated based on the complaints. The polling in Mumbai Suburban district is slated for May 20. Kshirsagar has already issued instructions to private establishments to grant leave or concession of two hours in duty hours to their employees on the polling day.

Eknath Khadse's daughter says will stay in Sharad Pawar's party

Team Absolute | Pune

Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) leader Rohini Khadse, whose father and MLC Eknath Khadse is set to return to the BJP, on Monday ruled out any switch over and asserted she will remain with her current party and follow its ideology, reported news agency.

Eknath Khadse, a former state cabinet minister, has said he would be returning to the BJP in a fortnight after snapping ties with the NCP (SP), which he joined in 2020 post spending almost four decades in the

Rohini Khadse, who was in Pune to attend a meeting at NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar's residence at Modibaug, told reporters she is not planning any switch over.

Asked about her father's decision to go back to the BJP, she said he is competent to speak on his political move and has already clarified his stand.

"I have decided to remain with Sharad Pawar saheb and the NCP's ideology. The NCP has given us support in the last three-and-a-half years. Considering that support and the party's ideology, I can not think of leaving him. So I will remain in the party. I am here because I like the



NCP's ideology. One should work where he or she finds happiness," she said.

Rohini Khadse said her party workers and leaders were with her.

Notably, the BJP has given ticket to Eknath Khadse's daughter-in-law Raksha from the Raver Lok Sabha constituency in Jalgaon district, from where she is the party's sitting MP.

Four labourers killed after suffocating inside sewerage treatment plant in Virar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

At least four labourers died at a project site while cleaning a sewerage treatment plant at Virar West in Maharashtra, the officials said on Tuesday. The incident took place at the Sandipani project located at Global City in Virar West, they said.

The police said that the labourers died due to suffocation in the plant.

According to police officials, the incident occurred at around 11 am on Tuesday when as many as four labourers entered the sewerage treatment plant, which is 25-30 feet deep. During the process, they experienced suffocation which resulted in their deaths. Following the incident, locals immediately informed the police and fire brigade that rushed to the spot to rescue the labourers. All of them were removed from the sewerage treatment plant and were rushed to the hospital where they were declared dead before admission.

The deceased were later identified as Shubham Parkar (28), Amol Ghatale (27), Nikhil Ghatale (24), and Sagar Tendulkar (29).

The Amala police in Virar have registered an Accidental Death Report (ADR) in the matter and launched an investigation into the incident.

Conmen tell Mumbai college lecturer he is accused in murder case, try to extort money

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Two persons, including a 60-year-old man, were arrested for allegedly kidnapping a Mumbai college lecturer and trying to extort money on the pretext of a fake murder case, a Mumbai police official said on Monday, reported news agency. Manoj Dashrath Gupta (60) and Mulayam Birbal Yadav (27) approached Sagar Suresh Fadnavis (44) on Saturday night and told the Mumbai college lecturer a murder case was registered against him in Borivali police station, the official said.



of offence to commit extortion), 170 (personating a public servant), the official said.

In another case, police investigating the firing incident in Mumbai's Antop Hill area wherein a man was seriously injured last week have arrested the wife of the accused shooter, who is on the run, and his friend, an official said on Monday.

Parveen, the wife of the shooter and history-sheeter Vivek Shettyar, and his close friend Parag Gohil were arrested on Sunday under the charge of criminal conspiracy, a day after the

incident, the official said.

The exact motive behind the firing and the role of Parveen is being investigated while a search is on to trace Shettyar, he said.

Shettyar had allegedly barged into the house of Akash Swami (30) and fired at him with a country-made pistol, leaving him seriously injured, police said.

"Our investigation revealed that Shettyar had multiple cases pending against him. Two to three cases were also registered against the victim," the official said.

Meanwhile, a 23-year-old man from Navi Mumbai in Maharashtra allegedly lost Rs 4.92 lakh after being lured with high returns in the trading of shares, police said on Monday.

The police have registered an FIR in this connection against an unidentified person.

The accused contacted the victim, resident of Kopolli in Panvel area and employed with an airline, between November 1 and 3 last year and lured him to indulge in shares trading while promising him high returns.

The victim subsequently invested Rs 4,92,000 in shares through the accused, an official from Navin Panvel police station said.

When he sought returns and the invested amount, the accused demanded an additional sum of Rs 8 lakh for facilitating benefits of Rs 1.29 crore to him.

Sensing deception, the victim refused to comply, following which the accused threatened him with the forfeiture of both the invested amount and returns, the official said.

The victim approached the police with a complaint, based on which an FIR was registered under relevant provisions on Monday, he added.

BMC to survey roads for potholes, activists not hopeful

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to survey roads to identify bad patches that may turn into potholes. However, activists believe the city will still face pothole problems despite pre-monsoon work, as it does every year.



Additional Municipal Commissioner Abhijeet Bangar said, "We have decided to survey roads to proactively repair bad patches before the monsoon."

According to BMC officials, potholes mostly occur on stretches of asphalt road where the upper layer is damaged. Repairing these bad patches before the monsoon could reduce the number of potholes during the rainy season.

Even last year, BMC identified and repaired bad patches before the monsoon. However, data shows that despite these efforts, around 50 thousand potholes were repaired during the mon-

soon. BMC spent approximately Rs 273 crore on repairing potholes during both the monsoon and pre-monsoon periods.

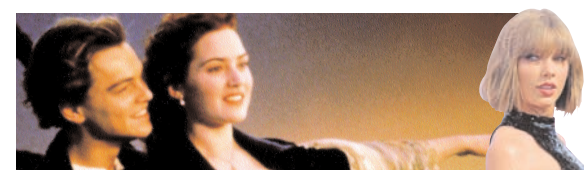
In 2022, BMC repaired 38,310 potholes; in 2021, 43,249 potholes were repaired; in 2020, 65,617 potholes were repaired; and in 2019, 94,918 potholes were repaired.

There are 2,050 km of roads, with 450 km under the concreting project and approximately 100 km under the defect liability period. Potholes on these roads will be repaired by the respective

contractors, while BMC needs to maintain around 600 to 700 km of roads.

Meanwhile, a civic activist questioned the quality of BMC's work. He said, "Even though BMC performs pre-monsoon work, there are still around 50 thousand potholes, according to BMC data. There is a question about the quality of the work."

Another activist said, "Potholes have occurred at places where BMC repaired patches before the pre-monsoon. BMC should seriously consider strict monitoring."



Zendaya

SHARES RARE INSIGHT INTO HER ROMANCE WITH TOM HOLLAND

Los Angeles | Agencies

Zendaya has shared a rare insight into her relationship with boyfriend Tom Holland as she graced the cover of British Vogue's May Issue. The actress, who is set to star in the steamy upcoming film *Challengers*, stunned in a tennis-inspired shoot for the publication, while sharing that the Spiderman star has 'beautifully' handled his own catastrophic rise to fame, reports [dailymail.co.uk](#).

Zendaya and Tom met on the set of *Spider-Man: Homecoming* in 2017, but predominantly keep their relationship out of the public eye. Speaking about her relationship, she said: 'We were both very, very young, but my career was already kind of going, and his changed overnight. I definitely watched his life kind of change in front of him. But he handled it really beautifully.'

Zendaya also revealed that she has also considered the prospect of starting a family in the public eye, admitting she doesn't want her future children to 'have to deal with her fame.'

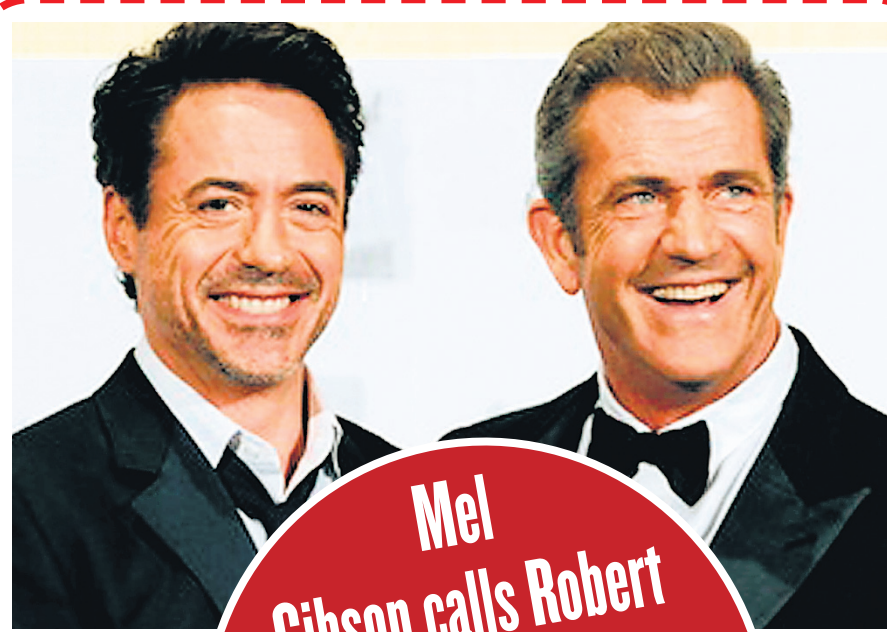
She said: 'It's a matter of sustainability, how she can continue to make this demanding business that she loves so dearly work for her. 'Because I don't necessarily want my kids to have to deal with this [fame]' ... and what does my future look like? Am I going to be a public-facing person forever?'

Discussing her fame, she added: 'You just kind of get used to the fact that, "Oh, I'm also one of these art pieces you're going to take a picture of." I just gotta be totally cool with it and just live my life.' 'I think growing up, I always felt like when someone asks for a picture, I have to do it, all the time. You have to say yes, because you just need to be grateful that you're here. And while I still feel that way, I also have learnt that I can say no, and I can say kindly that I'm having a day off, or I'm just trying to be myself today, and I don't actually have to perform all the time.'



Los Angeles | Agencies

India-born supermodel, TV host, producer, cookbook author and actor Padma Lakshmi and her daughter Krishna talked about what slang the mother-of-one should know.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor-film-maker Mel Gibson has expressed gratitude to Hollywood star Robert Downey Jr. for having his back after his 2006 arrest and anti-Semitic remarks.

The actor talked about the support he received from the 'Oppenheimer' star during an interview and said: "One time, I got into a bit of a sticky situation where it kind of ended my career." Gibson recalled in an *Esquire* interview: "I was drunk in the back of a police car, and I said some stupid shit, and all of a sudden, I was blacklisted. I'm the poster boy for canceled."

"A couple of years into that, he invited me

Mel Gibson calls Robert Downey Jr 'generous, kind' for defending him after 2006 arrest

to some kind of award he was getting -- we always had this kind of seesaw thing, where if he was on the wagon, I was falling off, and if I was on the wagon, he was falling off."

The actor added: "So I was pretty much nonexistent in Hollywood at the time, and he stood up and spoke for me. It was a bold, generous, and kind gesture. I loved him for that," reports [deadline.com](#).

Actress Jodie Foster also talked about how she pulled him aside during the filming of 1995's *'Home for the Holidays'* to talk to him amid his addiction struggles.

Padma Lakshmi's daughter says it makes her 'cringe' when her mom uses slang

The celebrity chef shared a video on Instagram of a conversation with her daughter Krishna, whom she tags as Little Hands.

In the video, Lakshmi asked what other slang she should know, to which her 14-year-old daughter replied, "Don't say sus."

I've heard you say that. It's short for suspect, or suspicious," reports [people.com](#).

Lakshmi said, before Krishna interrupted: "I know bro, but it comes from..."

"I'm not a bro," Lakshmi responded.

"Bruh." Krishna went on to say it makes her "cringe" to hear her mom attempt slang.

"Okay. Makes you cringe, or like cringe?" Lakshmi asked.

Krishna confirmed that she does find it a tad "cringe".

"Okay. What is not embarrassing to say that you think your mother should know? I'll wait," Lakshmi replied.

"I mean I think there's a difference between what I should be... what slang I should be using and what slang you should be using," her daughter responded.

Lakshmi challenged her daughter's assertion by asking why she thinks that.

"Because when you say certain things, it sounds odd coming out of your mouth," replied her daughter.

The former *Top Chef* host shares Krishna with businessman Adam Dell, whom she dated off and on from 2009-2021.

As an actor, 'you should do anything': Billy Dee Williams

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Billy Dee Williams has come out in support of performers wearing 'blackface', as he believes

actors should be able to perform in blackface.

In a new episode of Bill Maher's 'Club Random' podcast, the 'Star Wars' actor recalled watching Laurence Olivier in 1965's 'Othello', where Olivier wore blackface to portray the title role.

"When he did 'Othello', I fell out laughing," Williams said.

"He stuck his a** out and walked around, you know, because Black people are supposed to have big a**s. I thought it was hysterical. I loved it," Williams added, reports [variety.com](#).

"I love that kind of stuff."

The podcast host asked, "Today, they would never let you do that," to which Williams replied, "Why?" "Blackface?" Maher questioned in a tone of surprise.

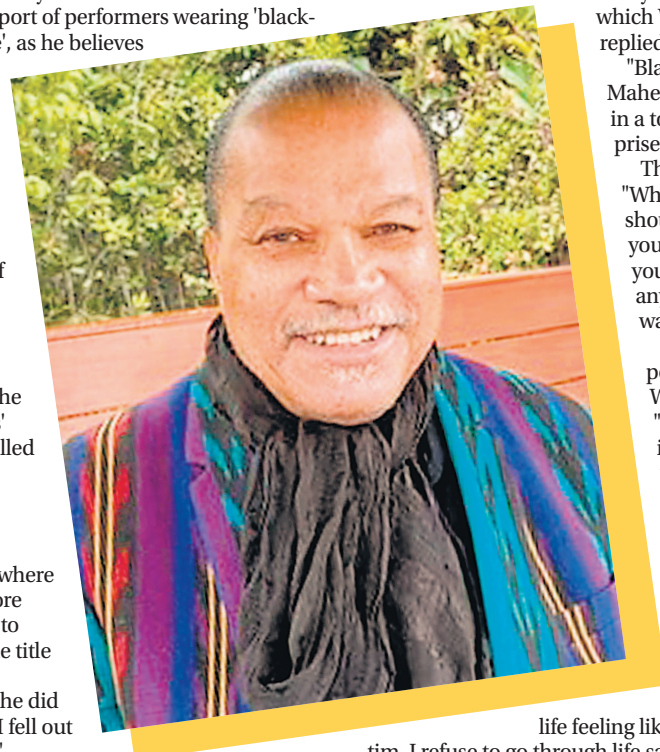
The actor said: "Why not? You should do it. If you're an actor, you should do anything you want to do."

Maher then pointed out that Williams, 87, "actually lived in a period where you couldn't play the parts you should've played."

Williams said: "The point is that you don't go through

life feeling like, 'I'm a victim. I refuse to go through life saying to the world, 'I'm pissed off.' I'm not gonna be pissed off 24 hours a day."

The actor is known for his role as Lando Calrissian in the 'Star Wars' universe, as well as the films 'Brian's Song', 'Lady Sings the Blues' and 'Mahogany'.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Salma Hayek proved she hasn't quite kicked her smoking habit as she enjoyed a cigarette while caught in traffic in Los Angeles on Monday.

The *Magic Mike* actress, wore a pair of black sunglasses along with a navy top during the outing. Wearing her locks in an updo, the film star tossed her cigarette out the window before driving away, reports, reports [dailymail.co.uk](#).

Selma previously hated cigarettes until she took on the role of Mexican painter Frida Kahlo in a movie about her life which required her to smoke.

She said: 'I hated cigarettes and I had to learn how to do it for the movie... When I started, I was smoking some horrible, old Mexican cigarettes with-

Salma Hayek hasn't kicked her smoking habit

out a filter, because that's what used to smoke.

"So, at the beginning, I used to throw up after a couple of scenes and then I actually got addicted to that thing that I hated so much."

"I stopped (for) two years when I was pregnant and I was breastfeeding. Thank God I breastfed for so long because it kept me away from the cigarettes."

Salma did previously try to quit, telling *Marie Claire* in 2007: 'It's the s***iest vice you could possibly pick. I've tried to quit before. But this time I'm done with it. I've changed.'

It comes after the Mexican beauty celebrated her 15th wedding anniversary to billionaire businessman Francois-Henri Pinault on Valentine's Day.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Maya Jama



IPL 2024: SHASHANK, ASHUTOSH'S VALIANT EFFORTS IN VAIN AS SRH BEAT PBKS BY TWO RUNS

Mullanpur | Agencies

With 67 needed from 24 balls, Punjab Kings had Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma, the heroes of their sensational victory over Gujarat Titans, at the crease against Sunrisers Hyderabad in Match 23 of Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023-24 at the PCA Stadium here on Tuesday.

The two youngsters nearly pulled off another heist, with valiant efforts on Tuesday but their brilliant knocks in a thrilling finish proved futile as PBKS fell agonisingly short by two runs, despite hammering 26 runs from the final over, the highest score in a chase.

Shashank Singh remained unbeaten on 46 off 25 balls, six boundaries and one six, while Ashutosh Sharma finished on 33 not out off 15 balls, hitting three boundaries and two maximums as Punjab Kings made 180/6 in 20 overs after Arshdeep Singh's 4-29 topped Nitish Kumar Reddy's 37-ball 64 in a match in which both the teams made many mistakes. However, players like Nitish Kumar Reddy, Arshdeep Singh, Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma showed nerves of steel they



showed great power-hitting and used the conditions superbly.

In a dramatic over, Ashutosh's shot off Jaydev Unadkat was palmed

over the rope and two wide balls later, Ashutosh's shot was again palmed over for a six. The batters run two doubles, thus leaving Punjab Kings 11 from two balls. Unadkat bowled another wide and Rahul Tripathi dropped Ashutosh, but they managed only one run, thus leaving PBKS leaving them needing nine off the last over. Shashank hammered a six but, in the end, their brilliant fightback went in vain as PBKS fell short by two runs. Punjab looked down and out at 114/6 when Jitesh Sharma was out in the 16th over. However, there was not much to differentiate between the two teams as Sunrisers Hyderabad 100/5 at one stage before going on to make 182/9 thanks to Reddy's pyrotechnics.

Brief scores

Sunrisers Hyderabad 182/9 in 20 overs (Nitish Kumar Reddy 64, Abdul Samad 25; Arshdeep Singh 4-29, Sam Curran 2-41, Harshal Patel 2-30) beat Punjab Kings 180/6 in 20 overs (Shashank Singh 46 not out, Ashutosh Sharma 33 not out; Sam Curran 29; Bhuvneshwar Kumar 2-32) by two runs.

Auckland | Agencies

Christchurch, Wellington, and Hamilton will host New Zealand's three match Test series against England scheduled in November 2024. New Zealand Cricket (NZC) confirmed the venues ahead of the home Test schedule.

Hagley Oval will host the first test on November 28. The second and third tests will take place on December 6 and 14 at the Basin Reserve and Seddon Park, respectively. The test series is part of the World Test Championship (WTC).

This is the only home Test series that New Zealand will be playing at home. They have an extensive run overseas before that with a one-off game scheduled against Afghanistan followed by two matches in Sri Lanka and three in India through September and October.

NZC said there had been an "extremely competitive venue allocation process" for the Tests which will likely see a strong influx of England supporters. There were sellout crowds for seven of the eight days of play between New Zealand and Australia last month.

"In the past, there's often been a lot of talk in New Zealand about the popularity of Test cricket - without that translating into ticket sales or viewership numbers," NZC chief executive Scott Weenink said. "The difference



over the past summer, and in terms of the upcoming Tests against England, is that the interest is being converted to bums on seats and is driving record viewership numbers. "We're looking forward to that continuing over the upcoming summer, and to welcoming the England team and their fans to the Tests, and of course all the Kiwi-based supporters as well."

Frattesi's late winner helps Inter turn around Udinese

Rome | Agencies

Inter Milan marched another step toward their 20th Scire A title as they rallied to beat Udinese 2-1 away on Monday, with Davide Frattesi scoring a last-gasp winner.

The Nerazzurri dominated the game from the very beginning but it was the home side that broke the deadlock in the 40th minute with a stroke of luck when Lazar Samardzic's strike took a slight deflection and went into the net, leaving Yann Sommer rooted to the ground, reported Xinhua.

Carlos Augusto thought he had grabbed the equalizer for Inter straight after the break, but it was wiped out due to Lautaro Martinez's offside position when flicking the ball. But Inter eventually got



back on level terms in the 55th minute when Marcus Thuram earned a spot-kick, and Hakan Calhanoglu stepped up to convert it. Inter continued the pressure and it paid off in the dying minutes when

Lautaro's attempt smacked the woodwork, and Frattesi was alert to tap it into the net. With the victory, Inter lead the table on 82 points, 14 points ahead of second-placed AC Milan with 7 rounds to spare.

BIG GAINS FOR DEVINE, JONES IN ICC WOMEN'S ODI BATTING RANKINGS

Dubai | Agencies

New Zealand captain Sophie Devine and England's wicketkeeper-batter Amy Jones have progressed in the ICC Women's ODI Batting Rankings after the end of their ICC Women's Championship series which England won 2-1.

Devine, who missed the fifth match of a preceding T20I series and the first two games of the ODI series due to a quad strain, produced a 93-ball 100 not out to win the final match for her team, moving from 20th to a career-best-equaling 10th position in the batting rankings. Jones struck 48 and 50 in the last two matches of the series played in Hamilton that were taken into consideration in the latest weekly update to the women's rankings, progressing five slots and attaining a career-best 12th position.



New Zealand's Brooke Halliday (up nine places to 43rd) and England's Maia Bouchier (up 19 places to 71st) are among others to gain in the batting rankings. England's new-ball bowler

10 of the bowling rankings, her five wickets in two matches lifting her from 16th to 12th position, the ICC informed in a media release on Tuesday.

Nat Sciver-Brunt (up nine places to 17th) and Hannah Rowe (up three places to 21st) have moved up after finishing with four wickets each in the two matches. Sciver-Brunt and Amelia are also up to second and third on the all-rounders' list.

In the ICC Women's T20I Player Rankings, Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu advanced two places to seventh position after a match-winning 46-ball 73 against South Africa helped clinch the series 2-1. Harshitha Samarawickrama's score of 54 not out helped her advance two slots and reach 18th position while spinners Sugandika Kumari and Inoshi Fernando have gained in the bowling rankings.

For South Africa, Anneke Bosch (up one place to 16th among batters) and Nadine de Klerk (53rd among batters and 38th among bowlers) are the main gainers.

Australia's 3-0 win over Bangladesh, which included two matches over the past week, is reflected in the gains for their players. Grace Harris is up 15 places to 40th among batters while in the bowling rankings, Ashleigh Gardner and Annabel Sutherland have moved up two places each to occupy 17th and 22nd positions, respectively.

Others to gain in the rankings include Tanya Ruma of Papua New Guinea (up three places to 29th) and Zimbabwe captain Chipo-Mugeru Tiripano (up seven places to 47th) among batters, and Bangladesh's Rabeya Khan (up five places to 16th) and Nahida Akter (up two places to 24th) among bowlers.



He is a proper all-rounder and CSK are lucky to have him: Rayudu

Mumbai | Agencies

Spinner Ravindra Jadeja's superlative bowling effort for Chennai Super Kings against Kolkata Knight Riders at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai has earned him praise from West Indies legend Brian Lara and former India and CSK teammate Ambati Rayudu. Jadeja claimed 3-18 in four overs and with pacers Tushar Deshpande and Mustafizur Rahman claiming 3-33 and 2-22, helped CSK restrict Kolkata Knight Riders to a below-par 137/9. CSK won the match by seven wickets with skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad scoring 67 not out.

Speaking exclusively on Star Sports Cricket Live, Rayudu expressed his views on Jadeja's bowling performance against KKR. "I think he tries to bowl on the seam. He attempts to get the seam into the wicket and get that grip on the surface. Additionally, he varies his speed. When he bowls to a left-hander, he tries to bowl quick, as he did to Venkatesh Iyer and Sunil Narine. It was wide, it was really fast, and he bowls directly into the wicket. He

knows the surface really well and he knows his bowling is now much better than it used to be. He's a proper all-rounder, and CSK is lucky to have him."

Lara too shared his thoughts on Jadeja's bowling performance against KKR and said the spinner knows where to bowl at the Chepauk Stadium pitch. "When he has the pitch that suits him, it's difficult. He's got a very low trajectory of the ball. Also, he bowls so quickly, giving you little time to think about what to do. He finishes his over in under two minutes sometimes. So, he's at you all the time. But he has a great amount of experience at that cricket ground (Chepauk), and he knows the size of the boundaries, he knows where to bowl the ball. And you see a lot of the guys getting out into the deep, Venkatesh Iyer, even Sunil Narine. So, I think worldwide, he's a great bowler. But at this particular ground, he's dangerous when the conditions are in his favour," Lara told Star Sports on Cricket Live on Monday.

Rayudu was also impressed with CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad's performance as he struck 67 not out off 58 balls to help CSK win the match.

'This is her time,' ex-India coach BI Fernandez backs Nikhat Zareen for Paris Olympics medal

New Delhi | Agencies

Long-serving boxing coach Blas Iglesias Fernandez has backed Nikhat Zareen to return with a medal from the upcoming Paris Olympics. The 68-year-old Cuban, who changed the face of Indian boxing since arriving in India for the first time in 1990, feels Lovlina Borgohain can win too but "only if she shows killer instinct." Fernandez, the only overseas coach to have ever won a Dronacharya award, is back in India after being appointed by the Sports Authority of India as High Performance Coach for a two-year period. Fernandez is stationed at the National Boxing Academy in Rohtak, Haryana. Speaking recently on the sidelines of the multi-



nation camp for junior boxers at the SAI's National Centre of Excellence in Rohtak, Fernandez evaluated India's chances at the upcoming Summer Games.

The much revered coach, who at various times during his stint with India, has been at the corner of legendary boxers like Dingko Singh, Vijender Singh, Sarita Devi and Mary Kom, said India can win "at least two medals" in Paris and Nikhat Zareen (50 kg) had a high probability to bag one of them. "I love the

boxing (style) of Nikhat. She is very intelligent. She has good ring tactics. She knows when she is winning and when she is losing," said Fernandez to SAI Media, indicating that the two-time world championships gold medalist, was a boxer who was always in control of her bouts. "This is Nikhat's time to prove herself. It's true that she had lived in the shadows of Mary Kom but now it's her chance to prove herself and make India proud," said Fernandez.

GODOY CRUZ BEAT SARMIENTO AMID TITLE PUSH

Buenos Aires | Agencies

Tomas Conechny scored a second-half winner as Godoy Cruz guaranteed themselves top spot in Group B of Argentina's Primera Division on Monday with a 1-0 home win over Sarmiento.

The 26-year-old finished a slick passing move by taking a touch to compose himself and then curling an unstoppable shot into the far corner from 16 yards, reported Xinhua.

The result leaves Godoy Cruz with 29 points from 13 outings, six points clear of second-placed



Lanus with only one matchday remaining.

Sarmiento are 13th in the 14-team group with just two wins in the campaign so far.

In other Primera Division fixtures on Monday, Huracan drew 0-0 at Deportivo Riestra and Platense won 3-1 at home to Tigre.

Real Madrid request UEFA permission to play Manchester City under a closed roof: Report

New Delhi | Agencies

Real Madrid have asked UEFA administration for permission to play Manchester City under a closed roof at the Santiago Bernabeu for Tuesday's Champions League quarter-final first-leg tie against the Premier League side, said a report.

According to ESPN, Madrid have made the request to UEFA, and the decision on whether to play with a closed or opened roof will be taken at a routine pre-match technical meeting on Tuesday.



The final decision will be made by UEFA in conjunction with match referee Francois Letexier, with the provision that the game must end under the same conditions as it started, unless severe weather forces the roof to be either opened

or closed.

City won their first Champions League title last season, and are due to face Madrid for the third-successive season in the competition. Pep Guardiola's team drew 1-1 at the Bernabeu in last season's semifinal first-

leg and lost 3-1 in Madrid in the semifinal second-leg 12 months earlier, while the club that won the first leg of the previous season finished 1-1 at the Bernabeu. The retractable cover was built to the stadium during renovations that increased the capacity to 85,000 spectators, but Madrid is now trying to make the most of it after losing 5-1 on aggregate in the semifinals of the previous season. Reflecting on past encounters between City and Madrid, Guardiola emphasized the evolution of both teams. New players

had come into the fold, altering the dynamics of the game. Despite City's advantage of playing the second leg at home, Guardiola remained grounded, knowing that every minute on the pitch would be fiercely contested. Analyzing Madrid's strengths, Guardiola highlighted their formidable attacking prowess, led by the likes of Rodrygo, Bellingham, Valverde, and Vinicius. Yet, he urged his team not to merely focus on containment but to seize every opportunity to assert their dominance on the field. "I have huge admira-

tion for Carlo," Guardiola said at his pre-match press conference. "But sometimes when you have the experience, because I was in Barcelona, when Real Madrid lose it was really, really bad and they have to think that the other team was better. "In football, it happens. That game, we were better, not because Real were bad. We made a lot of good things, but in those clubs, we are always judged as really bad and not good." "I try to think differently. Sometimes I came here and they beat me and I can say they were better."



Dhanush, Aishwarya Rajinikanth file for divorce



Team Absolute | Chennai

Actor-filmmaker Dhanush and director Aishwarya Rajinikanth have filed for divorce. According to media reports, the couple filed a petition seeking divorce at a Chennai family court recently under Section 13B of The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

(divorce by mutual consent).

In January 2022, Dhanush and Aishwarya had announced that they are moving their separate ways.

Taking to social media, Dhanush had written: "Eighteen years of togetherness as friends, couple, as parents and well-wishers to each other... The journey has been of growth, understanding, adjusting, and adapting.

"Today we stand at a place where our paths separate. Aishwaryaa and I have decided to part ways as a couple and take time to understand us as individuals for the better."

Dhanush and Aishwarya, who got married in 2004, are parents to two sons -- Yatra and Linga.

Big B says it was a 'quiet family bring in' for 'better half' Jaya's 76th b'day

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As his "better half", Jaya Bachchan, turned 76 on Tuesday, megastar Amitabh Bachchan penned a note expressing his love and gratitude for her. The actor also shared that it was a "quiet family bring in" at midnight.

Taking to the blog, Big B shared: "It is in the morn of another family birth... of which that has required no explanation... the better half celebrates her birthday TODAY, and all the greetings for her are recognised and shown gratitude, as always."

"A quiet family 'bring in' for the 9th on the midnight hour... and the love of immediate family presence," he added.

In June 1973, Big B and Jaya Bachchan got married. The two have a daughter, Shweta, and a son, Abhishek Bachchan.

The two have worked together in films like 'Sholay', 'Abhimaan', 'Zanjeer', 'Chupke Chupke', 'Mili', and 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham', among others.

The two were last seen together on screen in R. Balki's 2016 film 'Ki & Ka' in a special cameo. The film originally starred Arjun Kapoor and Kareena Kapoor Khan.



ANIL KAPOOR OPENS UP ON HOW HIS WIFE SUNITA SHARES THE 'LOAD' IN FINANCIAL MATTERS

Team Absolute | Mumbai



Bollywood superstar Anil Kapoor has opened up on how his ladylove and wife Sunita has shared the 'load' in his bad times. Anil and his elder daughter and actress Sonam Kapoor were present at the seventh edition of Ariel's iconic movements #sharetheload event.

Speaking about sharing the load in his personal life, Anil said: "For me in my life, it started many years back when I first met Sunita."

Sonam interrupted and said: "50 years ago." Anil laughed and said: "Yeah 50 years ago... We have been together for 50 years. There were times when I met her, obviously, I was not doing financially very well, and she was really taking care of a lot of things. And that's the way we share the load, where she steps forward to share the load where money is concerned. So it's not only in the household jobs." The actor, further said: "Like for example there were times when certain things I could not afford, very small things. But I did not have to tell her, automatically she would share the load. Like travelling sometimes, or a meal, sometimes we went to a normal restaurant, sometimes a slightly better restaurant, we were dating each other. Automatically she knows that I don't have the money to pay the bill. So, before I knew it, she used to pay the bill."

Sonam added: "She still pays the bill. My dad has no idea." The 67-year-old actor continued saying: "Now she is taking revenge. So, that understanding has to be there between partners, friends, and especially husband and wife that you share the load with."

"When you share the load without making an effort, and not making it obvious, and not making the other person feel about it, I think that's the wonderful part of sharing the load," he added.

Anil married Sunita, a costume designer in 1984. The couple has three children -- Sonam, film producer Rhea, and son-actor Harsh Vardhan.

From Jr NTR to Sunny Deol, celebrities shower Ugadi, Gudi Padwa and Navreh wishes

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A string of Indian film personalities, including names such as Jr. NTR, Sunny Deol, Sai Pallavi, Suniel Shetty, and Preity Zinta, among many others, sent out their good wishes on the occasion of Ugadi, Gudi Padwa, and Navreh on Tuesday. Ugadi, considered the beginning of the Hindu New Year, is celebrated in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Gudi Padwa in Maharashtra, Yugad in Karnataka, and Navreh in Kashmir. Celebrities took to social media to extend their wishes to their fans and well-wishers.

Jr. NTR wrote on X (formerly called Twitter): "Wishing everyone a Happy Ugadi, Gudi Padwa and Chaitra Sukhladi."

Actor Sunny Deol wished everyone luck, success, and happiness. He wrote: "Wishing everyone a very happy and prosperous Gudi Padwa, Baisakhi, Navratri, Ugaadi, Navreh and Cheti Chand. May this new year bring luck, success and happiness for us all. #Ugadi #HinduNavVarsh."

Star Nani simply wrote: "Wish you all a very happy Ugadi. #HappyUgadi."

Actor Sudheer Babu said: "Happy Ugadi! Wishing you all a year filled with new opportunities, new adventures, and new beginnings!"

Actor Suniel Shetty wished everyone "joy, prosperity, and



countless blessings."

He wrote: "Happy Gudi Padwa to all! Wishing for joy, prosperity, and countless blessings on this auspicious day. Let's embrace new beginnings with optimism and spread positivity everywhere we go. #GudiPadwa."

Actress Sai Pallavi said: "Mee Andariki Ugadi Subhakankshalu, I wish everyone positivity and love."

Actor Randeep Hooda urged everyone to be positive and kind.

He said: "As you all hoist the Gudi today, let's also raise our spirits high and fill the world with positivity and kindness. Wishing everyone a very happy #GudiPadwa. Also, warm greetings on Chaitra Navratri, Ugadi, Cheti Chand and Navreh. May the #HinduNavVarsh be full of hope, energy, health and prosperity for all."

Actress Preity Zinta said: "May the auspicious occasion of Gudi Padwa bring you happiness, prosperity, and success. Wishing you and your family a joyous and prosperous New Year! Happy Gudi Padwa! #GudiPadwa #NewYear #Ting."

The actress then wished everyone Happy Ugadi as she wrote: "Wishing you a year filled with new beginnings, joy, and prosperity. Happy Ugadi to you and your loved ones! #Ugadi #NewYear #Ting."

Actress Esha Deol said: "Happy Gudi Padwa." Filmmaker Gopichand Malineni said: "Wishing you all #HappyUgadi."



Diljit Dosanjh reveals he would cheat meals and then 'regret'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh, who often gives a sneak peek into his kitchen via social media, revealed that, just like anyone else, he too experiences "regrets" when he cheats on a meal. Talking to IANS, if he's a person who enjoys using cutlery to savour meals, Diljit said: "I can have anything. If there's cutlery kept in front of me, I would use that and if not, then I wouldn't wait, I would just have my food like that." Diljit keeps his meals simple, going by his social media. However, he shared that he "avoids carbs" and does not "eat rice." I don't eat rice. I have dal every day. I avoid carbs. I would take carbs in the morning, and then I would try to avoid them after that. Sometimes after four-five days, I would crave something, and I would eat something wrong at night." Then I regret it in the morning, but then I fix it in the morning," said the 'Lover' hitmaker. Speaking of his upcoming work, Diljit is all set to showcase his acting prowess in 'Amar Singh Chamkila' directed by Imtiaz Ali. The film is based on the slain singer, who was tagged as the 'Elvis Presley of Punjab'. Chamkila was considered a controversial figure, as the themes of his songs majorly consisted of women's objectification, sexual violence, domestic violence and alcoholism. In 1988, Chamkila and his wife, Amarjot Kaur, were assassinated.

JAYA BACHCHAN'S INSPIRING JOURNEY FROM FTII TO BOLLYWOOD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Jaya Bachchan, renowned for her work in Indian cinema and politics, is celebrating her 76th birthday on Tuesday. Born as Jaya Bhaduri in a Bengali family, Jaya's father, Tarun Kumar Bhaduri, was a well-known journalist and a poet.

After completing her education, Jaya attended the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, where she honed her acting skills. She made her acting debut as a teenager in 1963 with the Bengali film 'Mahanagar' directed by Satyajit Ray. The film starred Madhabi Mukherjee in the leading role. Jaya then transitioned to Hindi cinema and quickly gained prominence with her versatile performances in films like Hrishikesh Mukherjee's directorial 'Guddi', and 'Anamika'. The 1971 movie 'Guddi' featured Jaya as a petite schoolgirl who is obsessed with actor

Dharmendra. The film had created the girl-next-door image for her.

Movies like 'Uphaar', 'Piya Ka Ghar', 'Parichay' and 'Bawarchi' made her a superstar. In 1973, she married Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan, becoming one of the most celebrated couples in Indian cinema. Jaya first acted with Big B in the 1972 romantic drama 'Bansi Birju'. She took up the part of 'Mala' in the 1973 action crime film 'Zanjeer', after many lead heroines refused to work alongside Amitabh due to his series of flops. The film turned out to be a big hit, creating Big B's angry-young-man image. The two have then worked together in films like 'Sholay', 'Chupke Chupke', 'Mili', 'Abhimaan', and 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham', among others. Her daughter, Shweta, was born around the time Jaya and Amitabh were working on Ramesh Sippy's directorial 'Sholay'. Following this, she focused on

raising her children -- Shweta and actor Abhishek Bachchan.

She is the mother-in-law of actress and former Miss World Aishwarya Rai. Abhishek and Aishwarya got married in April 2007. They have a daughter, Aaradhya. Jaya's daughter Shweta is married to businessman Nikhil Nanda, who is the son of actor Raj Kapoor's daughter Ritu Nanda. The couple has two children -- daughter Navya and son Agastya.

Agastya has recently made his acting debut with the teen drama 'The Archies'. Jaya then starred in Yash Chopra's 1981 romantic drama 'Silsila', alongside her husband. She also wrote the story for the 1988 vigilante action film 'Shahenshah', starring Big B. After a gap of 17 years, Jaya returned to acting with Govind Nihalani's 1998 'Hazaar Chaurasi Ki Maa', which revolved around the Naxalite movement. In 2011, she appeared in the



Bangladeshi film 'Meherjaan' starring Victor Banerjee and Humayun Faridi. The film is based on a Bangladesh-Pakistan love story set against the backdrop of the 1971 Bangladesh atrocities.

Despite her successful acting career, Jaya's interests expanded beyond the silver screen. In 2004,

she entered politics and became MP in the Rajya Sabha, representing the Samajwadi Party. Throughout her tenure, she has been a vocal advocate for various social causes, including women's rights and the welfare of artists and performers. She has been elected five times as a Rajya Sabha MP.



Ananya Panday