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ON THE TRACK

India's CPI inflation eases to 9-month low of 4.85 pc in March

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's consumer price inflation eased to a 9-month low of 4.85 per cent in March bringing relief to household budgets, figures released by the Ministry of Statistics on Friday showed.

Retail inflation has come down closer to the RBI's mid-term target of 4 per cent after which the central bank would be in a position to cut key interest rates to spur economic growth.

The country's CPI inflation had stood at 5.09 per cent in February and 5.1 per cent in January.

The declining trend in cooking oil prices continued in March with a 11.72 per cent fall during the month. The price rise in spices slowed to 11.4 per cent in March from 13.28 per cent in February.

The inflation in pulses also slowed to 17.71 per cent during the month compared to 20.47 per cent in January.

However, the data shows that vegetable prices shot up by as much as 28.34 per cent in March which remains a pain point for consumers. The prices of cereals also increased by 8.37 per cent during the month.

The consumer price inflation is still above the RBI's mid-term tar-



get of 4 per cent and is the main reason why the central bank has not gone in for a cut in interest rates to rev up growth.

The RBI is keen to keep inflation under control to ensure stability and has held the repo rate steady at 6.5 per cent for seven consecutive times in a row in its bi-monthly monetary policy reviews.

The RBI stated in its monetary policy review on April 5 that it expects inflation to come down to 4.5 per cent in 2024-25, assuming a normal monsoon this year.

Going forward, the inflation trajectory will be shaped by the evolving food inflation outlook. Rabi sowing has surpassed last year's level. The usual seasonal correction in vegetable prices is continuing, though unevenly, the RBI said.

India's forex kitty surges to new all-time high of \$648.56 bn

Team Absolute | Mumbai

India's foreign exchange reserves went up by \$2.98 billion during the week ended April 5 to scale a new all-time high of \$648.562 billion, data released by the RBI showed on Friday.

This is the seventh consecutive week marking a jump in the overall reserves. The forex kitty had increased by \$2.95 billion during the preceding week ended March 29, after notching a cumulative \$26.5 billion rise in the previous five weeks. Gold reserves, which also form part of the forex kitty held by the RBI, shot up by \$2.398 billion to \$54.558 billion during the latest week, while foreign currency assets increased by \$549 million.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by \$24 million to \$18.17 billion. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das referred to the record foreign exchange reserves as a reflection of the strength of the Indian economy. "It is our prime focus to build a strong umbrella, a strong buffer in the form of a substantial quantum of forex reserves which will help us when the cycle turns, or when it rains heavily," Das said while unveiling the first monetary policy review of the current financial year that began on April 1. Rising foreign exchange reserves



are a positive sign for the economy as they reflect an ample supply of dollars that help strengthen the rupee.

An increase in the foreign exchange reserves gives the RBI more headroom to stabilise the rupee when it turns volatile. This is because the RBI intervenes in the spot and forward currency markets by releasing more dollars to prevent the rupee from heading for a free fall. Conversely, a declining forex kitty leaves the RBI less space to intervene in the market to prop up the rupee.

India's forex reserves, including the central bank's forward holdings, can now cover more than 11 months of imports, which is a two-year high.

The RBI Governor also said the Indian rupee remained largely range-bound as compared to both its emerging market peers and a few advanced economies during 2023-24 and was the most stable among the major currencies during this period.

Mohan Yadav announced from Congress stronghold, 'Abki baar Chhindwara paar'

Chhindwara | Agencies

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has given slogans for the Lok Sabha elections, 'Once again Modi government' and 'This time we cross 400'. At the same time, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has also given a slogan regarding Chhindwara, 'This time we will cross Chhindwara.'

Actually, there are 29 Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh. Of these, BJP has control over 28 seats. There is only one parliamentary constituency, Chhindwara, where Congress has been winning. BJP wants to win in Chhindwara also. Senior leaders of the party are engaged in this mission.

A public meeting of BJP national president JP Nadda was held on Friday. In this, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said that your fight and ours are one. Why has a person from Chhindwara not been allowed to become the MP till date? All the MPs who have been elected here till date have been from outside. In our fight, the party president has come and proved that the national president is with every BJP worker.

Referring to BJP candidate Vivek Bunty Sahu, the Chief



Minister said that Bunty is not alone, every child of Chhindwara is behind Bunty. Let us all decide together, this time we will cross Chhindwara. ('Abki baar Chhindwara paar')

He further said that the way the country has become Modi-like under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the Lok Sabha elections held in the

state, BJP won 27 seats in 2014 and 28 seats in 2019. Now Chhindwara also has to be won. I would like to assure all of you that whatever you are demanding in Chhindwara, the BJP government will fulfill it. In the coming time, we will build a big airport, open big factories and provide whatever is necessary for the development of Chhindwara.

Bengaluru cafe blast case

NIA arrests bomber, his accomplice from West Bengal

Bengaluru | Agencies

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested bomber Mussavir Hussain Shazib and his accomplice Abdul Matheen Taha from a hideout on the outskirts of Kolkata city in West Bengal on Friday in connection with the Bengaluru cafe blast case.

After gathering inputs about their movements in Assam and West Bengal, the NIA arrested the accused, carrying Rs 10 lakh reward. Shazib a.k.a. Shazeb, 30, is a resident of Thirahalli town in Karnataka's Shivamogga district.

Another conspirator, Taahaa a.k.a. Mathen a.k.a. Taha a.k.a. Vignesh. D a.k.a. Sumit, was also wanted in other cases.



"Shazib is the accused who placed the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) at the cafe and Taha is the mastermind behind the planning, execution of blast, and subsequent evasion from the clutches of law," NIA sources said. Confirming the arrests,

West Bengal Police department said that, "Two suspects in the Rameshwaram Cafe blast case have been arrested from Purba Medinipur in a joint operation by the West Bengal Police and the central intelligence agencies."

DON'T TRAVEL TO IRAN OR ISRAEL TILL FURTHER NOTICE: MEA

New Delhi: India on Friday issued a travel advisory for its citizens, advising them not to travel to Iran and Israel "till further notice" due to the escalating tension in the region.

"In view of the prevailing situation in the region, all Indians are advised not to travel to Iran or Israel till further notice," the travel advisory issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

"All those who are currently residing in Iran or Israel are requested to get in touch with Indian Embassies there and register themselves. They are also requested to observe utmost precautions about their safety and restrict their movements to the minimum," it added.

Several other countries have also issued similar travel advisories for their citizens over the last 24 hours, warning them not to travel to the region due to security reasons.

Cong complains to ECI, accuses Gujarat Speaker of campaigning for BJP

Gandhinagar | Agencies

The Gujarat Congress Committee has lodged a formal complaint with the Election Commission of India against Shankar Chaudhary, Speaker of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly, for allegedly violating the Model Code of Conduct.

Manish Doshi, spokesperson for the Committee, submitted the complaint to the ECI along with video evidence to support the allegations.

The controversy stems from activities that allegedly took place after the Lok Sabha elections were announced on March 17, activating the Model Code of Conduct across India.

Manish Doshi said, "According to Parliamentary Systems and Procedures Part-1, Chapter-9, upon appoint-



ment, the Speaker must detach from any political affiliations and remain completely impartial in political matters."

Despite these stipulations, "Chaudhary is accused of engaging in political campaigning." The complaint details

that "Chaudhary organised and participated in meetings in Banaskantha District and the Vav-Tharad area, advocating on behalf of the BJP's Lok Sabha candidate, which could be a significant breach of conduct for a sitting Speaker."

The ECI has yet to

J&K will soon have Assembly elections & statehood will be restored: PM Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that the Assembly elections will be held soon in J&K and statehood will be restored so that the people have their elected representatives. Addressing a huge election rally in Udhampur, PM Modi vehemently campaigned for the BJP candidates Dr Jitendra Singh and Jugal Kishore Sharma who are fighting the Lok Sabha elections from Kathua-Udhampur and Jammu-Reasi constituencies respectively.

PM Modi said that J&K would soon have Assembly elections and its statehood would be restored so that the people elect their representatives and ministers.

Supernova behind brightest gamma-ray burst of all time in 2022: Study

▶ The burst known as GRB 221009A -- dubbed the B.O.A.T. ("brightest of all time") -- is the largest explosion since the Big Bang.

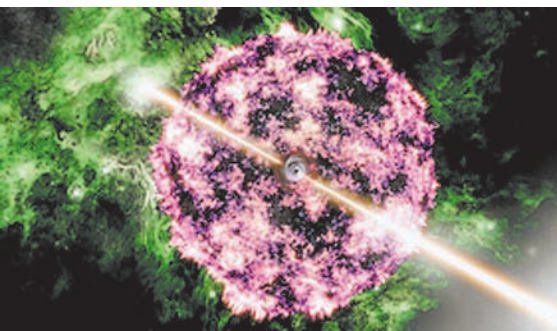
▶ It was found to occur once in every 10,000 years and was 70 times brighter than any yet seen.

▶ The supernova was discovered using the powerful next-generation James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), said researchers from Northwestern University in the US, who were also among the international group of scientists to discover B.O.A.T.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The brightest gamma-ray burst (GRB) ever recorded by scientists, in October 2022, was the result of a collapse and subsequent explosion of a massive star, or supernova, revealed a new study on Friday.

In the research, published in the journal Nature Astronomy, the team speculated that evidence of heavy elements, such as platinum and gold, might reside within the newly uncovered supernova. The team's extensive search did not find evidence of these elements, yet they noted that the origin of heavy elements in the universe continues to remain one of astronomy's biggest open questions. When we confirmed that the GRB was generated by the collapse of a massive star, that gave us the opportunity to test a hypothesis for how some of the heaviest elements in the universe are formed," said lead author Peter Blanchard, a postdoctoral fellow at Northwestern's Center for Interdisciplinary Exploration and Research in Astrophysics (CIERA). "We did not see signatures of these heavy elements, suggesting that extremely energetic GRBs like the B.O.A.T. do not produce these elements. That doesn't mean that all GRBs do not produce them, but it's a key piece of information as we continue to understand where these heavy elements come from. Future observations with JWST



will determine if the B.O.A.T.'s 'normal' cousins produce these elements," he added.

Blanchard started his search, about six months after the GRB was initially detected. It is because GRB was so bright that it obscured any potential supernova signature in the first weeks and months after the burst, he said.

Using the JWST's Near Infrared Spectrograph he observed the object's light at infrared wavelengths and found the characteristic signature of elements like calcium and oxygen typically found within a supernova.

"Surprisingly, it wasn't exceptionally bright -- like the incredibly bright GRB that it accompanied," he said.

BJP is not a washing machine which washes and makes it spotless: Rajnath Singh

Team Absolute | New Delhi

During the election period, investigative agencies have tightened their grip on many leaders. Some have got relief while some are stuck in trouble. Recently, Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh got bail while CM Arvind Kejriwal is still in jail. In such a situation, questions began to arise that when Sanjay Singh can get bail then why not Kejriwal. On this, Defense Minister Rajnath Singh said that BJP is not a washing machine which



makes it spotless. In an interview, Rajnath Singh accused the opposition of misleading the people of the country.

Defense Minister Rajnath Singh also reacted to the Congress party's allegation that the BJP has a washing machine which cleans up

leaders of other parties after they join the ruling party. Responding to this, Rajnath said that BJP does not have any washing machine and the government is not asking agencies to arrest specific people. There is no washing machine, he said, agencies have to do their work and they will do it. Are we asking the agencies to arrest a specific person? These are baseless allegations. They are trying to hide their mistakes and weaknesses to mislead the country.

6 YEAR OLD INNOCENT FELL INTO BOREWELL IN REWA

Rewa: Six-year-old Mayank, who was playing while harvesting wheat in a field in Tyonthar in Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh, fell into an open borewell. Relief and rescue operations are underway to bring Mayank out safely.

According to the information, Mayank was playing in the fields in Manika village on Friday afternoon. His family members were busy harvesting wheat when he fell into the borewell while playing. Relief and rescue teams have arrived to bring the child out safely. The pit is being dug parallel to the borewell with the help of JCB machine.

The child is at a depth of about 60 feet and till now a pit about 15 feet deep has been dug parallel to it. Along with this, oxygen is being supplied to the child and his movements are also being monitored. Intermittent rains are hampering relief and rescue operations.



AMIT SHAH SLAMS CONGRESS CHIEF KHARGE OVER REMARKS ON ARTICLE 370

Moradabad (UP) | Agencies

Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday criticised Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge over his recent remarks on the abrogation of Article 370.

Speaking at a rally in Moradabad, HM Shah said: "Mallikarjun Kharge asks what people of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have to do with Kashmir. I want to tell them (the Congress) that every child of Moradabad is ready to give his life for Kashmir. For 70 years, Congress has nurtured Article 370 like its child."

The Union Minister said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kashmir has been united with India forever.

Speaking at the rally, HM Shah said that the BJP flag will fly on all seats of Uttar Pradesh in the Lok Sabha elections. The state has 80 Lok Sabha seats.

HM Shah also said that law and order was weak in the previous governments. He said that smugglers and goons had earlier ruled Uttar Pradesh.

"Everyone defeated the Samajwadi Party together. Today,



during Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's rule, mafia and gangsters are migrating. After this, the development started here," HM

Shah said.

He said that there was a time when Hindus were migrating from Uttar Pradesh. He also gave the example of Kairana. "Today, goons are migrating instead of Hindus. Yogi Adityanath has worked to improve the law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh within seven years. Today, there is a rule of law in Uttar Pradesh. The mafia rule has ended," the senior BJP leader added.

HM Shah also said that airports are being built all over Uttar Pradesh.

"Expressways and six-lane roads are being constructed in Uttar Pradesh. The government is working to provide electricity to 80 lakh villagers.

PM Modi-led government has done the work of providing free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh to more than three crore poor people.

"Besides, 2 crore toilets were built in 10 years and 14 crore people have been availing the benefits," HM Shah added.

The Home Minister also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has provided houses to more than 4 crore people and gas cylinders have been given to 14 crore people.

Congress launches campaign song, amps up social media electioneering

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Stepping up its electioneering in the digital space, the Congress on Friday launched its campaign song on social media to draw the attention of netizens and garner their support on its key electoral issues, ahead of the Parliamentary elections 2024.

The campaign song was released by the official handle of the Congress on Friday and also shared by top leaders including Rahul, Priyanka Gandhi and party spokespersons.

The 30-second video clip highlighting the plight of farmers tries to hard sell the point, 'how one vote can change their destiny'. The three demands highlighted in the video include - the MSP guarantee for crops, GST-free farming and loan waivers.

The campaign song mentions the historic Rs 72,000 debt waiver for farmers by the UPA government (in 2008) and urges the farming community to raise voice for their rights.

As the Congress reiterates



"Haath Badlega Halaat," its campaign song sends across the message that farmers should cast their vote in favour of the party as this is their 'real voice' and it is the one that will fight for their rights.

Notably, social media has emerged as the new 'battle zone' in the run-up to the 2024 elections and is being optimally utilised by the political parties to amp up their campaign and lure new voters.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in particular has taken

the lead in this space and has been pushing multiple campaign songs and also customised videos to drum up the support of netizens.

Recently, BJP launched a series of campaign songs including "Sapne Nahin Hakikat Bunte hain..." and "Bharat Ka beta Modi..." in as many as 12 languages. It also released videos to show the Opposition in bad light. The video titled 'INDIA alliance mein fight but Main Hi Hoon Dulha right' became a runaway hit, drawing lakhs of views within 24 hours.

5 women held for targeting Metro passengers in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Police on Friday claimed to have busted a gang of thieves, who used to target passengers travelling in the metro and arrested five women, an official said.

The accused, all residents of Anand Parbhat, used to carry infants in lap to divert attention or to pick up quarrels from fellow passengers on the pretext of raising false allegations. According to police on April 9, one woman reported that while she was travelling by metro train on the blue line between Rajiv Chowk Metro Station and Rajendra Place Metro Station, her purse containing Rs 50,000 cash was stolen by some unknown persons.

During the probe, the police team scanned the CCTV cameras and tracked the movement of the victim till she boarded the Metro train on the blue line towards Rajendra Place.

"Thereafter the CCTV footage of Metro bogey was checked and it was apparent that five women surrounded the complainant from all sides in the crowd. Surprisingly, two of them were carrying infants in their laps and both were trying to divert the attention of the



complainant," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (metro) KPS Malhotra.

The police team then followed suspects' movements at R K Ashram Marg where they were seen exiting from the station and boarding in an autorickshaw. "All the accused women were nabbed, on the basis of specific information, from the Connaught Place area on April 10 when they were moving towards Metro station Rajiv Chowk," said the DCP. On interrogation, the accused revealed that all of them joined together to operate in a group with the common intention of committing theft at crowded Metro stations.

3 VILLAGE VOLUNTEERS INJURED IN EXCHANGE OF FIRE IN DIFFERENT MANIPUR DISTRICTS

Imphal: After a lull, incidents of armed clashes were again reported in different districts in Manipur on Friday, leaving three village volunteers injured, police said. A police official said that heavy exchange of fire between different armed groups was reported at the peripheral areas of Heirok of Thoubal and Tengnoupal districts, and also along Pallel of Kakching and Tengnoupal districts. The three injured were shifted to the hospital. After the firing exchange in Heirok, an irate group of village volunteers, along with a large number of villagers, retaliated against the rival ethnic group. Some angry armed attackers also burnt down a sawmill. Combined teams of security forces including Manipur Police, and commandos rushed to the mountainous areas and three attackers were apprehended and arms and some ammunition seized from them.

Schools may face disaffiliation if buses found 'unsafe' for students

Gurugram | Agencies

Gurugram district administration on Friday issued a fresh set of guidelines asking schools to either ensure the safety of students in school buses or lose affiliation.

Gurugram Deputy Commissioner (DC) Nishant Kumar Yadav said this while addressing the meeting of officers in Gurugram on Friday.

Haryana Chief Secretary TV.S.N. Prasad also ordered the DC, Superintendent of Police (SP) and other officers of all the districts of the state including Gurugram through video conference that school vehicles should be checked in every district in the next ten days. The latest warning by the district administration comes after the recent major school bus accident in Kanina in the Mahendergarh district which claimed several student's lives.

Meanwhile, while checking the school buses on Friday the Gurugram Police fined 16 buses and 11 buses were



impounded that failed to complete guidelines. At present, there are about 527 private schools and 2,600 school buses in the rural and urban areas of the district. The Surakshit School Vahan Policy lists some basic norms that school buses must meet. These include CCTV cameras in buses with storage of footage for 15 days, speed governors, contact numbers on the front and back of buses, reflective strips and the presence of a lady attendant in the buses.

The police also mandate that a driver have at least two years of driving experience. A fitness certificate from the civil surgeon is also required. The drivers are

strictly prohibited from using their mobile phones as well as interacting with passengers on board while driving.

In addition to this, the bus should have a Regional Transport Authority (RTA) clearance certificate, insurance and pollution certificate. The schools will have to ensure bus parking inside their premises and that the students are boarded and dropped within the premises, as per the policy. Moreover, no school bus is allowed to increase the speed above 50 kilometres per hour, all school buses should have a fire extinguisher and first-aid box and all bus drivers should undergo medical tests every three years.

A driver who has been challaned even once for the offence of over-speeding, driving dangerously or being charged under sections of the Indian Penal Code for any accidents, cannot be employed.

The Transport Department's helpline number and registration number of the vehicle shall be displayed at prominent places inside and outside the bus in contrasting colours.

Rs 34 crore blood money for Keralite on death row in Saudi Arabia set to be achieved, mother thankful

Kozhikode (Kerala) | Agencies

Fatima, mother of Abdul Rahim, who is on death row in Saudi Arabia, cannot hide her happiness as a staggering Rs 30 crore, of blood money to save him from execution, has been raised through crowdfunding.

Abdul Rahim requires another Rs 4 crore as a court in Saudi Arabia ruled in October last year that if he pays Rs 34 crore as blood money to the family of the victim, then he will be free. The last date for the payment of the blood money is April 18.

His house here is buzzing with activity after Fatima last month issued a passionate plea seeking help from all to save her son.

First, the local mosques came to her support and soon when the media took it up, an action committee to save the life of Abdul Rahim was formed and an app seeking contributions from all kind-hearted



souls from across the globe was created.

"On March 19, we were able to raise only Rs 1 crore and on Friday,

we touched Rs 30.11 crore. At the moment, we have decided to stop as it was decided to do an audit. We will resume it again later in the day and given the fantastic response that we saw, we are confident we will be able to achieve the target and Abdul Rahim and his mother will be able to meet soon," a representative of the group behind this crowdfunding venture said. An auto driver here, Abdul Rahim was drawn to the Gulf to make more money. He reached Saudi Arabia in 2006 and got a job as a personal driver-cum-care taker of a 15-year-old physically challenged boy, who also had a medical ailment where he breathed through an external device connected to his body.

The boy, according to Abdul Rahim, misbehaved with him while he was driving and as he was trying to quieten him, his hand accidentally touched the external medical device and it fell down and the boy died.

Lucknow | Agencies

Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav on Friday said that the realisation of the strength of farmers had made the BJP government at the Centre scrap the three "black" farm laws.

Launching his election campaign from Pilibhit, he said the people of Pilibhit have made up their minds to defeat the BJP and the ruling party is scared.

"The faces of BJP people turn 'peela' (yellow) on hearing the name of Pilibhit," he said.

The SP President also attacked the BJP government over the issue of electoral bonds and demonetisation. "Tell me if this electoral bond and the demonetisation are not ways to turn black money into white. They have made all their black money into white," he alleged.

The Samajwadi Party has pitted Bhagwat Sharan Gangwar against Jitin Prasada of the BJP and Anis Ahmed of the BSP in this seat. Pilibhit, which has over 18 lakh voters, will go to polls in the first round of the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections on April 19.

The Samajwadi Party, Congress and All



India Trinamool Congress are contesting the polls in Uttar Pradesh as part of the INDIA alliance.

Misa Bharti says media 'twisted' her statement on PM Modi

Patna | Agencies

RJD Rajya Sabha MP and Patliputra Lok Sabha candidate Misa Bharti, on Friday, blamed the media for "twisting" her statement on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. She further claimed that the media did not release her full statement.

Misa Bharti on Thursday had said that if INDIA bloc forms a government at the Centre, then a lot of BJP leaders, along with PM Modi, will go to jail.

Misa addressed media persons on Friday: "I said that the Supreme Court had made a remark on electoral bonds and termed it unconstitutional. If our government comes to power in the Centre, we will start an investigation into it and the culprits will be punished. My statement was twisted by the media."

Addressing the election campaign in the Maner area under Patliputra Lok Sabha constituency on Thursday, Misa had said: "BJP leaders are taking action against the Opposition through ED and CBI but this is not an issue. He (PM Modi) is not raising issues like unemployment and price rise in



the country."

"We are talking about doubling the income of farmers and implementation of Minimum Support Price (MSP) and he (PM Modi) is blaming us for doing appeasement," Misa added.

DELHI COURT SEEKS ED, CBI REPLY ON MANISH SISODIA'S INTERIM BAIL PLEA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court on Friday sought response of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on the interim bail plea of Aam Aadmi Party leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia.

Sisodia has sought interim bail to campaign for his party for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja of Rouse Avenue Court has listed the matter for next hearing on April 20.

Judge Baweja had, on Wednesday, said that she will hear, on April 15, Sisodia's bail application in the excise policy-related money laundering case.

The court had heard arguments from Sisodia's counsel, who opposed the submissions made by the ED, saying that the probe agency was reiterating arguments previously presented before both the Delhi court and the Supreme Court.



The AAP leader's judicial custody was extended till April 18 in the case.

Last time, the ED had contended that Sisodia and the other accused

persons were delaying the trial in the case.

Last week, Sisodia's bail application was filed by his counsel alleging delay in completing the investigation in the case.

Sisodia's counsel Mohit Mathur had argued there has been no evidence linking his client to the alleged bribe money.

He had argued that the alleged proceeds of crime were not proven to cause any loss to the exchequer or private consumers. He had stressed the delay in the trial, stating that the Supreme Court's order, allowing him to approach the court, is six months old, and the investigation should have been completed by now.

Citing the bail granted to another accused, Benoy Babu, Mathur had argued for Sisodia's bail, saying that he no longer holds a position of influence. He had also stressed that Sisodia met the triple test for bail, as outlined by the Supreme Court, and urged for a speedy trial.



OPPN DEMANDING CASTE-BASED SURVEY TO DIVIDE SOCIETY: BJP CHIEF J P NADDA

Team Absolute | Bhopal

BJP president Jagat Prakash Nadda on Friday said the INDI alliance is demanding a caste-based survey, but its real agenda is to divide the people in the name of caste and creed.

The BJP president said the opposition has nothing to say to the people of this country and therefore, they came up with the idea of caste-based survey.

"BJP wasn't against the caste-based survey in the country, instead we stand with the proposal, but their (opposition's) purpose is to divide the people, which the BJP won't allow ever," he said. Addressing a public rally in Chhindwara Lok Sabha constituency, the BJP chief said Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised on GYAN. Elaborating further, he said G stands for 'gareeb' (poor), Y for



'yuva' (youth), A stands for 'annadata' (farmer) and N for 'nari- shakti' (women empowerment).

"Before 2014, India's politics used to be based on caste, colour, region and religion, which has changed.

Politics of appeasement will no longer stand in the country. Congress has always played politics of appeasement, now they are exposed and they have nothing to say to the people," he claimed. He appealed to the citizens of Chhindwara to elect BJP's Vivek Banti Shahu as their Lok Sabha MP, to make an end to "parivarvad".

"All the opposition parties are busy in launching their family members and Nakul Nath is one of them. I would appeal to the citizens of Chhindwara to elect a BJP candidate as your MP this time," he added.

The BJP chief addressed two public rallies in Sidhi and Chhindwara in Madhya Pradesh, and both the constituencies will go for poll in the first phase on April 19.

MP's four other Lok Sabha seats which will go to polls in the first phase are - Jabalpur, Mandla, Shahdol and Balaghat.

Wet and low shine wheat will also be purchased from farmers in Madhya Pradesh: CM Mohan Yadav

Team Absolute | Bhopal

There has been hail-storm along with rain in many parts of Madhya Pradesh, causing huge damage to the crops of farmers. Farmers are also facing problems in purchasing wet and low shine wheat. In such a situation, State Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has made a big announcement.

While discussing with the reporters on Friday, the Chief Minister said that even if the wheat of the farmers gets wet, even if it loses its shine, we will buy it. We have issued instructions regarding untimely rains. There should be no loss of crop. Even if the wheat of the farmers gets wet, even if it loses its shine, we will still buy it.

The Chief Minister further said that if there is any loss inside the fields, then a survey will be conducted and compensation will be given.



Let us tell you that recently there have been complaints that the cooperative society has bought the low-shining wheat of the farmers. But the central agency is reluctant to accept it. Due to this, farmers are not being paid on time.

Let us tell you that recently there have been complaints that the cooperative society has bought the low-shining wheat of the farmers. But the central agency is reluctant to accept it. Due to this, farmers are not being paid on time.

Court notice to opposition leader of Madhya Pradesh Assembly

Team Absolute | Indore

Leader of Opposition in Madhya Pradesh Assembly Umang Singhar has been accused of adopting wrong methods to win the assembly elections. The Indore bench of the High Court has issued a notice on the petition filed by BJP candidate Sardar Singh Medha challenging the election.

The Leader of Opposition is an MLA from Gandhwani area of Dhar district and had defeated BJP candidate Sardar Singh in the 2023 assembly elections.

BJP candidates lost the elections by a margin of more than 22 thousand votes. BJP candidate Sardar Singh has accused Congress MLA and Leader of Opposition Singhar of hiding information and winning the election unfairly.

He has said that liquor was recovered from his vehicle during the election campaign. Hearing the petition filed by the BJP candi-



date, the division bench of the High Court has issued a notice to Umang Singhar and sought a reply within four weeks.

Congress top brass running away from contesting elections: Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday took a jibe at Congress, saying that its top brass is running away from contesting the Lok Sabha elections.

Chouhan claimed that Sonia Gandhi has decided not to contest the election from Raebareli (Uttar Pradesh) fearing a loss in the Lok Sabha elections.

"Indira Gandhi represented Raebareli Lok Sabha seat for several years, but the Congress top leadership, including Sonia Gandhi, is running away from contesting the election from this seat," Chouhan said.

Sonia Gandhi represented Raebareli constituency for five terms



between 2004 and 2019, while Indira Gandhi also won three elections (1967, 1971 and 1980) from this seat.

Hitting further at the opposition, the veteran BJP leader said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi lost one election from Amethi in 2019, and therefore, he too ran away from the field this time.

While talking to media persons at BJP headquarters in Bhopal, Chouhan said that the BJP alone will win 370 seats and Narendra Modi will become the Prime Minister for the third time.

Rahul Gandhi was defeated in the last general elections by the Smriti Irani in Amethi. As of now, Rahul Gandhi has filed his nomination only from Kerala's Wayanad constituency.

Distinguished Interactive Session Marks Collaboration Milestone between Amrita School of Medicine and AIIMS Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Ajai Singh Executive Director, AIIMS Bhopal, today, an interactive session marked a significant milestone in collaboration between Amrita School of Medicine, Kochi, and AIIMS Bhopal, fostering innovation and knowledge exchange in healthcare and medical education.

The session commenced with a warm welcome address by Prof. Jagat R Kanwar, HOD Biochemistry, AIIMS Bhopal, followed by an insightful briefing by the Dean of Research of Amrita School of Medicine, shedding light on the institution's progress and mandates.

Prof. Jaideep Menon, Associate Dean Research of Amrita School of Medicine, then presented ongoing



clinical and research work at Amrita, showcasing the institution's commitment to advancing medical science.

In a notable gesture of collaboration, Prof. Rehan ul Haq, Dean Research of AIIMS Bhopal, highlighted

ed the institute's research and publications from the past year, underlining the significance of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the two esteemed institutes.

As a symbol of camaraderie, Prof. Vasudevan presented meritorious MBBS and MD Biochemistry students of AIIMS Bhopal with signed copies of his textbook.

Dr. Sukhes Mukherjee, Additional Professor of Biochemistry and Nodal Officer of the MOU, expressed gratitude in the vote of thanks, emphasizing the importance of the milestones outlined in the MOU.

This session signifies a promising step forward in the collaboration between Amrita School of Medicine and AIIMS Bhopal, paving the way for future endeavors in medical research and education.

SC and ST students of state have not received scholarship for last two years: Congress

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Mukesh Nayak, president of the media department of Madhya Pradesh unit of Congress and former minister, has made a big attack on the state government by making serious allegations.

He said that the students of Scheduled Caste and Tribe category of the state have not received scholarship for two years. The Madhya Pradesh BJP government, which talks about the welfare of tribals, has not given the benefit of scholarship to more than seven lakh Scheduled Caste and Tribe students of the state for the last two years.

He further said that the



School Education Department of Madhya Pradesh has itself admitted that the scholarship has not been paid to the students of SC/ST category studying in pre-matric and post-matric.

Not only this, the Government of India has also given scholarship to Madhya Pradesh for the year. An amount of Rs 468 crore was not given for the scholarship given to the students of class 10th to 12th for 2023-24. From this it can be inferred that the BJP government at the Center and Madhya Pradesh is only working to collect votes in the name of tribals and Dalits.

Mukesh Nayak further said that the Mohan Yadav government of Madhya Pradesh makes tall claims, but the reality is that most scams are taking place under the BJP rule in the name of the welfare of tribals and Scheduled Caste class.

Congress unhappy with Dhar candidate, likely to replace with new face



however, he did not open even a single office for the election.

"Radheshyam Muvel was racing for the ticket but he is not active anymore on the ground. Local party workers have appealed to the party's Central leadership to replace him with a new face," a spokesperson told reporter.

According to sources, Congress is likely to replace Muvel with Mahendra Kannauj, who is a part of the Jay Adivasi Yuva Sangthan (JAYS) from Dhar.

The election in Dhar is scheduled in the fourth phase on May 13, along with six other constituencies of MP's Malwa-Nimar region, namely, Dewas, Ujjain, Mandsaur, Ratlam, Indore, Kargone and Khandwa.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Congress leadership is allegedly disappointed with its candidate for Dhar Lok Sabha constituency in Madhya Pradesh, and is likely to field a new face.

Congress has fielded Radheshyam Muvel from Dhar, one of the five Lok Sabha seats reserved for Schedule Tribes (ST) in Madhya Pradesh.

However, the Congress leadership found its candidate inactive on ground for the election. A senior Congress spokesperson said that Muvel's ticket from Dhar was cleared in the first list,

MANY CONGRESS LEADERS INCLUDING FORMER MLA JOIN BJP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In Madhya Pradesh, Congress has suffered a major setback in Sagar of Bundelkhand and Chhindwara of Mahakaushal. Apart from former MLA Parul Sahu, a large number of Congress leaders including Chhindwara District Panchayat Vice President Amit Saxena joined BJP.

In the program organized at the state office of BJP, in the presence of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan, many Congress leaders took mem-



bership of BJP. Former MLA from Sagar district Parul Sahu joined BJP along with his supporters and said that this is his homecoming. She was elected MLA from BJP and after

that she left BJP and contested the assembly elections as a Congress candidate. He joined the BJP along with his supporters.

Similarly, from Chhindwara, District

BJP government's focus is on rural development: Vishnudatt Sharma

Team Absolute | Khajuraho

The Congress Party, which ruled the country and Madhya Pradesh for years, never did any work regarding the development of Bundelkhand and solving the grave problem like drought here. The Congress government has made the people of Bundelkhand yearn even for drinking water. After Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister in 2014, basic facilities like electricity, water and roads could be provided to the people of Bundelkhand as well as across the country. Bharatiya Janata Party State



President and MP Vishnudatt Sharma said this while addressing a public meeting in village Pura of Rajnagar assembly of Khajuraho Lok Sabha constituency. State President Sharma

appealed to the Bharatiya Janata Party to win the Lok Sabha elections with a historic majority by conducting intensive public relations in more than a dozen villages of Rajnagar Assembly.

Vishnudatt Sharma said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given the gift of Ken-Betwa Link Project worth more than Rs. 44 thousand crores under the River Linking Project. This project will work to change the fate and picture of Bundelkhand region. This project will irrigate about 10 lakh hectares of land in the entire Bundelkhand region. Due to irrigation, farming will flourish and farmers will be happy.

Guggal worth Rs 930 per kg bought for Rs 1700 per kg, fraud worth more than Rs 30 lakh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Due to the patronage of Additional Chief Secretary Forest JN Kansotiya, Managing Director of Minor Forest Produce Association Bibhas Thakur is also not able to stop the irregularities in the purchase of raw material in MFP Park Barkheda Pathani. The latest case of Google purchase has come to light. The in-charge SDO and production manager instead of purchasing at the tender rate, purchased from Aryan Pharmacy at the rate of Rs 1700 per kg.

Absolute India don't endorse these allegations but as per the report, The manager of MSP Park had floated a tender for the purchase of raw materials including jagery, black pepper, asafoetida, punarnava etc. In the tender, the rate of Herbal Automation Haridwar for Guggal was Rs 930 per kg. Instead of purchasing from Herbal Automation Haridwar, the SP Park owner purchased 4000 kg from Aryan Pharmacy at a price of Rs 1700. Neither work order was given nor any kind of correspondence was done from Herbal Automation Haridwar firm.

The Sangh had to pay an excess of Rs 30 lakh 80000 due to the purchase from Aryan. During the tenure of



in-charge SDO and Production Manager Sunita Ahirwar, payments for the purchase of raw materials worth more than Rs 3 crore have been made out of the government supply of Rs 6 crore, out of which the bills of Rs 2 crore were from Aryan Pharmacy. Apart from this, repairs worth Rs 30-35 lakh have been made, says report.

After the removal of Prasanna Fuljhale, CEO of Minor Forest Produce Processing Centre, Barkheda Pathani, the arbitrariness of SDO in-charge Sunita Ahirwar has increased. Even promoted IFS Archana Patel has been made CEO as a dummy in place of Fuljhale. The park officials and employees are meeting with ACS and the main reason for this is said to be conservation. Thakur, Managing Director of Minor Forest Produce Association, had instructed ACF Mani Shankar Mishra to submit the investigation report within 7 days to investigate the storage, but more than 15 days have passed and the investigation has not started yet.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Women voters show power in Mizoram

Women voters have once again outnumbered men voters in Mizoram who constitute over 51.56 per cent of the total 8,56,364 electorate for the lone Mizoram Lok Sabha constituency, where elections will be held in the first phase of voting on April 19, officials said on Friday. According to election officials, like all previous elections, 4,41,559 women voters outnumbered the male electorate of 4,14,805 in the electoral rolls, which were published early this year after a special summary revision of the voters' list. Of the eleven districts in Mizoram, only in the Mamit district, the number of male voters (32,856) is higher than their female (32,278) counterparts. The officials said that in last year's November 7 Mizoram assembly election, 1.21 per cent more women voters exercised their franchise than their men counterparts. Around 80.66 per cent (6,87,334) of the total of 8.57 lakh voters exercised their franchise in the assembly polls in which female voters' turnout was 81.25 per cent while 80.04 per cent male voters cast their votes across the mountainous state. The ruling Zoram People's Movement, which is contesting the Lok Sabha election for the first time, has put up entrepreneur Richard Vanlalhmangaiha while the opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) fielded its sitting Rajya Sabha member K. Vanlalvena, the Congress nominated Lalbiakzama and BJP put up its state President Vanlalhuaka. The lone female nominee Rita Malsawmi, a singer and lyricist, was fielded by the Mizoram People's Conference and one independent candidate vying for the Mizoram Lok Sabha seat, reserved for the tribals. Congress candidate Lalbiakzama (64) is a former police officer and Mizoram's ex-Home Secretary. MNF's sitting Lok Sabha member from Mizoram C. Lalrosanga had expressed his reluctance to contest again, prompting the party to choose Vanlalvena.

From a firebrand BJP face to rebel leader, ex-K'taka Dy CM Eshwarappa at 'crossroads'

M.K. Ashoka

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader K.S. Eshwarappa is one of the frontline members of the party in Karnataka and has played a key role along with former chief minister B.S. Yediyurappa in making the BJP a force to reckon with in the state. The 76-year-old leader is the face of OBCs and the Kuruba community. The man who is regarded as one of the key leaders who built the BJP from scratch in Karnataka is today at 'crossroads', having vowed to defeat the candidate of his own party from the Shivamogga Lok Sabha constituency in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, in a strange turn of events. Eshwarappa has announced that he will file his nomination on Friday as an Independent candidate. He also asserted he would win the seat and "dedicate his victory on the feet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi". This decision has surprised everyone. Initially, everyone assumed that Eshwarappa would mellow down after the party high command spoke to him. However, his resolve to contest against the BJP candidate has become a major concern. The senior BJP leader would be contesting from Shivamogga as an Independent candidate against BJP candidate B.Y. Raghavendra -- the son of Yediyurappa. Eshwarappa wanted a BJP ticket from the Haveri Lok Sabha constituency for his son, K.E. Kanthesh. However, the party fielded former Karnataka CM Basavaraj Bommai from the Haveri seat -- a development that made Eshwarappa upset, with the ex-Deputy CM eventually deciding to contest against Yediyurappa's son in the Shivamogga Lok Sabha constituency. Eshwarappa expressed his outrage against Yediyurappa for not ensuring a ticket for his son Kanthesh for the Haveri LS seat. Following the incidents of the brutal murder of Bajrang Dal activist Harsha in Shivamogga and the suicide of a contractor Santhosh Patil, Eshwarappa was denied the ticket to contest Assembly election from Shivamogga seat, which he represented for five terms. When former CM Jagadish Shettar and ex-Deputy CM Laxman Savadi quit the BJP and joined the Congress last year ahead of the Karnataka Assembly polls following the denial of tickets to them, Eshwarappa remained calm and stated that he would abide by the party's decision. The "love-hate equation" between former Karnataka CM B.S. Yediyurappa and Eshwarappa is well known in Karnataka political circles. Sources within the party submitted that Eshwarappa is in a "hyper-sensitive" phase of his political career. And a defeat in the upcoming election could push him to a corner in the state's political arena. Karnataka unit BJP president B.Y. Vijayendra has already stated that "if Eshwarappa is willing to end his political career in this manner then no one can help him". Eshwarappa, a seasoned campaigner, has also seen a series of setbacks in his political career. He was asked to announce his resignation from the Cabinet in connection with the case of the suicide of a contractor in April 2022. Eshwarappa was denied ticket to contest from Shivamogga Assembly seat which he represented traditionally. And much to his chagrin, the party allotted ticket to his close aide Channabasappa, and he got elected. Eshwarappa, who did not speak a word then and kept toeing the party line has rebelled this time. He has vowed to challenge the



supremacy of his 'friend-turned-foe', B.S. Yediyurappa, in the party. "I can't simply sit and watch one of his sons becoming Union Minister, another becoming BJP state unit president and getting ready for the CM post. The BJP is in the clutches of the Yediyurappa family and I will get the party out of his clutches," Eshwarappa said. Eshwarappa's parents were daily wage earners. Motivated by his mother's wish to see him 'doing good in life', he went on to become one of the prominent politicians of Karnataka. Eshwarappa was born in Bellary district. His father Sharanappa and mother Basamma moved to Shivamogga in the early 1950s. His parents worked as daily wage earners. As a boy, Eshwarappa wanted to join his parents in the work. However, his mother did not allow him, and asked him to focus on education and "earn a good name in the society". His mother's words motivated him to continue his studies, and more so, focus on social work. Later, he was introduced to RSS through Narasimha Murthy Iyengar, a VHP leader from Shivamogga.

Since then, Eshwarappa never turned back in his life. From a student leader in ABVP, he became city unit president of the BJP in Shivamogga and went on to establish himself as a mass leader by defeating a heavyweight leader, then minister K.H. Srinivas, in the 1989 Karnataka Assembly elections. To date, he lost only once in elections from Shivamogga Assembly segment. Eshwarappa became Deputy Chief Minister in the erstwhile Jagadish Shettar-led Cabinet in 2012. He served as the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister in the previous Basavaraj Bommai-led Cabinet. He was also appointed state unit party president twice. However, he was also known for controversial remarks throughout his political career. Seen as a Hindutva leader, his remarks at times drew national attention. BJP President J.P. Nadda had once advised him to "slow down" for his "hoisting saffron flag on the Red Fort" remark.

international

'Sound & stable' India-China ties serve interests of both countries: Chinese FM spokesperson

Beijing | Agencies
Sound and stable India-China relations serve the interests of both countries and are conducive to peace and development in the region and beyond, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Thursday. Mao made the remarks at a daily press briefing when asked to comment on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent remarks about the bilateral relations between the two countries. Xinhua news agency reported. In an interview, Prime Minister Modi said that for India, the relationship with China is important and significant, and the two sides need to urgently address the prolonged situation on the borders so that the abnormality in the bilateral interactions



can be put behind. He added that stable and peaceful relations between India and China are important for not just the two countries, but the entire region, as he expressed hope and belief that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, the two countries will

be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquility on the borders. Mao said the boundary question does not represent the entirety of India-China relations, and it should be placed appropriately in bilateral relations and managed properly. She also said that China and India maintain close communication through diplomatic and military channels on handling issues related to the border situation. "We hope that India will work with China, approach the bilateral relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective, keep building trust and engaging in dialogue and cooperation, and seek to handle differences appropriately to put the relationship on a sound and stable track," Mao said.

Thermal power plant near Kiev destroyed in missile attack

Kiev | Agencies
The Trypilska thermal power plant (TPP) outside the Ukrainian capital has been completely destroyed in a Russian missile attack, the media reported, citing an official. Andriy Hota, Chairman of the supervisory board at the Ukrainian power plant Centrenergy, said on Thursday that a massive fire erupted in the plant's turbine room after the attack, Xinhua news agency reported. "All the workers who were on shift dur-



ing the strike are alive," Hota said, adding that efforts to extinguish the fire were

underway. Located 45 km south of Kiev, Trypilska TPP is the largest power generating facility in the Kiev region with an installed capacity of 1,800 MW. On Thursday morning, Russia fired 42 missiles, including six Kinzhal aeroballistic missiles and 40 combat drones, said the Ukrainian Air Force, which shot down 18 missiles and 39 drones. The Ukrainian authorities said that the attack targeted energy infrastructure facilities in five regions.

Russian regions grapple with severe flooding amid rising water levels

Moscow | Agencies
At least 13,000 people have been evacuated in parts of Russia as of Thursday, as multiple regions continue to battle extreme floods amid rising water levels, local authorities said. In some of the worst flooding in decades due to a continuous rise in daily average temperatures, snowmelt and rivers thawing, Russia's western Siberia, the Volga region and the Central Federal District have been flooded. A state of emergency has been declared in the Orenburg, Kurgan and Tyumen regions, Xinhua news agency reported. In the worst-hit western Orenburg region, 7,800 people have been evacuated, according to the regional government, with water levels in the Ural river around the

region breaking records last Thursday night. The flooding is expected to peak in the region in the near future, the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations said. In the Kurgan region, more than 6,000 people have been evacuated, said regional governor Vadim Shumkov. In the Tobol river near the region's severely affected Zverinogolovskiy district, water levels have surpassed 10 metre, over one metre above the critical level, and are expected to rise above 11 metre in the near future, local media reported. In the Tyumen region, water in the Ishim and Tobol rivers rose by 56 cm and 22 cm in one day, local authorities said on Thursday, adding that the peak of the flood is expected by April 23 to 25.



Sudan conflict claims thousands of civilian lives, displaces millions in one year: UN



United Nations | Agencies
The UN Fact-Finding Mission in Sudan reports that nearly a year of fighting in the country has left thousands of civilians dead and millions more displaced, a UN spokesman said. "It said that fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has killed thousands of civilians since it began in April last year," said Stephanie Dujarric, Chief Spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, on Thursday. "Over six million people have been displaced internally, while almost two million refugees have fled to neighbouring countries. Nearly 24 million people need aid," the spokesman added as quoted by Xinhua news agency report. April 15 marks the widespread conflict's first anniversary. Dujarric said France, Germany and the European Union will co-host a Humanitarian Conference for Sudan and its Neighbours in Paris on Monday. He added that Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Joyce Msuya, will attend alongside other UN officials and advocate for scaled-up resources to expand aid operations in Sudan and the region. Msuya will also advocate for improved humanitarian access so that agencies can ensure the timely delivery of life-saving supplies to communities in need. The spokesman said the Secretary-General will have a video message for the conference. Sudan has been engulfed in violent clashes between the SAF and the RSF since April 15, 2023. The violence has killed thousands of civilians, displaced millions more, and destroyed much of the country's infrastructure, especially in the capital of Khartoum.

Ukrainian Parliament passes law to toughen army mobilisation



Kiev | Agencies
The Ukrainian Parliament has passed a law to tighten military mobilisation rules, lawmaker Yaroslav Zheleznyak said on Telegram. The legislation, which aims to recruit more troops for the country's armed forces, was supported by 283 votes in favour, surpassing the required minimum of 226, Xinhua news agency reported on Thursday. According to the government-run Ukrinform news agency, Ukrainians liable for military services will be obliged to register at military enlistment offices or electronic cabinets once the legislation comes into effect. The new law also introduces some penalties for evaders, such as a ban on driving vehicles and restrictions on consular services. The mobilisation law is to be signed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky before it comes into force.

29 killed in Israeli airstrike on Gaza



Gaza | Agencies
At least 29 people were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a residential building here on Friday, Palestinian news and information agency WAFA reported. Dozens of people were injured in the airstrike, said the report, without giving further details, Xinhua news agency reported. The Israel Defense Forces said in a statement on Friday that the airforce has attacked more than 60 targets in the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours. Decomposed bodies of 13 people have been recovered from the Al-Balad area and the Al-Amal neighborhood in Khan Yunis Governorate. Details are awaited in Israel's response to the October 7 Hamas attack, 33,545 people have been killed.

Britain-trained Ukrainian saboteurs destroyed in Kherson region: Russia

Moscow | Agencies
Russian authorities have said that they have foiled the landing in the Kherson region of Ukrainian sabotage groups trained in Britain. The landing had been "planned by British special services" and was thwarted by the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Russian



Defence Ministry, said a statement by the FSB on Thursday as quoted by Xinhua news agency report. One Ukrainian

soldier was captured alive, and the soldier confirmed that the saboteurs were trained in Britain, it added. The FSB said that the Special Boat Service, a British maritime special forces unit, is supervising the activities in the Ukrainian military behind such operations, which "indicates the direct involvement of the UK in the war".



CM Shinde, Ajit tell Mahayuti candidates, cadres to avoid controversial remarks

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As campaigning in Maharashtra gathers momentum, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has urged Mahayuti candidates, leaders and functionaries not to make any controversial statements and attract the wrath of the Opposition and the electorate. In an emotional appeal at the Mahayuti rally in Pune late on Thursday night, CM Shinde went on to add that the alliance is looking to increase the voting margin of its nominees and not reduce it. "So, refrain from making controversial remarks and from objectionable behaviour. Our focus is to win the maximum seats in Maharashtra and thereby contribute to the 400 plus target at the national level to make Narendra Modi the Prime Minister for the third term," said CM Shinde.

Deputy Chief Minister and NCP National President, Ajit Pawar also advised the Mahayuti functionaries at the rally to be polite.

"Keep ice on your head before leaving home. Do not get angry but be patient and cordial," advised Ajit Pawar in the same rally. "The Mahayuti leaders and functionaries should take due care not to be arro-



gant and boastful as it is not Maharashtra's culture. Our aim is to win more than 45 seats in Maharashtra and not less than that. Therefore, our behaviour in public places and also in rallies should be decent," he added. The advice by Shinde and Pawar came in the wake of unsavoury statements by the Shiv Sena nominee from Kolhapur, Sanjay Mandlik against the Congress' nominee and Chhatrapati Shivaji's descendant Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj and also by BJP nominee and state Forest Minister Sudhir

Mungantiwar in connection with the 1984 riots.

Mandlik stoked controversy after he questioned the royal credentials of Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj. Mandlik commented that the present Maharaj (Chhatrapati) from Kolhapur is "not the true heir, but is adopted", and it is "the people of Kolhapur" who are the genuine legacy holders.

NCP SP chief Sharad Pawar assailed Mandlik's statement saying it shows the level the Mahayuti leaders have stooped to. He further said that

adoption is not a new thing in royal families.

Further, former Congress Minister Satej Patil demanded that Mandlik should offer an apology to the people of Kolhapur who would not tolerate objectionable statements against Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj. After strong criticism from various quarters Mandlik issued a clarification fearing damage to his poll prospects.

Furthermore, Mungantiwar triggered a row after he made 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".

The Congress party took strong objection to this and filed a complaint with the Election Commission of India urging it to cancel Mungantiwar's candidature for his incendiary speech.

Though Mungantiwar tried to counter the criticism by accusing the Congress of cherry-picking certain parts of his speech and distorting his statements, he received a lot of flak on social media for his speech, leading the party seniors to advice caution to its candidates.

Maha govt orders panchnama of unseasonal rain-hit crops spread over 50,000 hectares

Sanjay Jogi | Mumbai

Maharashtra's Relief and Rehabilitation department has ordered panchnama (on-the-spot assessment) of crops hit by unseasonal rains and hailstorms in about 11 districts in the state.

The badly affected crops of jawar, wheat, mangoes, oranges, bananas and Rabi are spread over 50,000 hectares of land in Nagpur, Amravati, Akola, Yavatmal, Washim; Vidarbha region and Parbhani, Beed, Nanded, Latur, Dharashiv and Hingoli from the Marathwada region.

The weather bureau has predicted unseasonal rains and hailstorms for two more days which has been a cause of worry for the farmers.

State Agriculture Minister Dhananjay Munde said the district administration has been asked to early complete the panchnama and submit reports suggesting the financial assistance to be given by the government.

The minister admitted that due to model code of conduct, there are curbs on the relief and rehabilitation department to declare the financial aid. However, the government will initiate the



action to provide relief to the farmers, he assured.

The department's directives are crucial as amid the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, the opposition Shiv Sena UBT, NCP SP and Congress have targeted the MahaYuti government for the damage to crops and the subsequent loss incurred by the farmers.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has countered the opposition's move by making it clear that the government will provide all the necessary assistance to the farmers affected by nature's fury. In Amravati district alone, Rabi crops and fruits

including oranges, mangoes, bananas, spread over 40,000 hectares were severely damaged. In the adjoining Akola, crops spread over more than 4,060 hectares in 74 villages were hit.

In Buldhana, crops spread over 3,500 hectares from 100 villages were affected.

NCP(SP) has slammed the BJP on the farmers' distress, saying that the party has now divided the farmers into which party they are associated with.

"BJP is approaching farmers only to seek votes but they will not allow such an insensitive government to continue," the NCP(SP) said.

Raj Thackeray's 'Engine' hitched to Sunetra Pawar's Baramati LS poll bandwagon

Team Absolute | Pune

Barely 72 hours after Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) President Raj Thackeray announced unconditional support to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the ruling MahaYuti government, he suddenly found himself catapulted from the political fringes onto the electoral mainstage, here on Friday. The MNS chief -- whose party symbol is a 'Railway Engine' -- finds a place of pride on the new posters, banners, handbills and publicity material of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) candidate from Baramati, Sunetra Ajit Pawar.

Baramati has already made it among the handful of top Lok Sabha 2024 constituencies with a 'Big Fight' scheduled between NCP President and Deputy CM Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra, and his cousin sister, Nationalist Congress Party (SP) Working President Supriya Sule, daughter of the Maratha strongman Sharad Pawar.

The visibly tough fight between the 'bhabhi' (Sunetra) and 'nanad' (Supriya) has sparked huge interest not only among the locals but all over the country, even labelled as a contest between a 'rook-



ie' and a 'veteran' -- with all the men and women coming to the aid of the party on both sides.

Now, with Raj Thackeray's entry, Sunetra A. Pawar's position seems to have beefed up, and his bespectacled photo in a saffron kurta is seen rubbing shoulders with the other bigwigs, occupying a

respectable spot.

They are Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar, Raj Thackeray, RPI (A) President and Union Minister Ramdas Athawale, Rashtriya Samaj Party leader Mahadev Jankar, and Rayat Kranti Sanghatana head Sadabha Khut.

At the top left is perched former Deputy Prime Minister Y. B. Chavan -- who was the Bombay State's last CM and the first CM of the newly-created state of Maharashtra, besides the founder of the original Shiv Sena Balasaheb Thackeray.

Facing an onslaught of opposition from almost the entire Pawar clan, Sunetra A. Pawar is earnestly campaigning to wrest the Baramati LS seat from Supriya Sule's clutches.

Nobody believes it will be a cakewalk for Sunetra A. Pawar -- after all, the Baramati LS has elected Sharad Pawar five times, plus one by-election, Ajit Pawar Pawar once and Supriya Sule three times.

It has been a traditional Congress-NCP (undivided) bastion from the 1957 LS elections, barring two occasions -- during the Janata Party wave of 1977 and a bypoll in 1985.

Chhagan Bhujbal refutes reports of contesting from Nashik on 'lotus' symbol

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Even though the MahaYuti partners in Maharashtra -- the BJP, Shiv Sena, and NCP -- are yet to arrive at an understanding on the candidate for the Nashik Lok Sabha constituency, state minister and senior NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal on Thursday denied reports of contesting the seat on BJP's lotus symbol.

Bhujbal, who has not hidden his desire to contest the Nashik seat, made it clear that he will fight only on the party's clock symbol.

"I have had a word with party President Ajit Pawar and Working President Praful Patel for the nomination from Nashik," said Bhujbal, as he called the reports claiming he will contest from Nashik on the lotus symbol 'completely false' and 'incorrect'. "Ajit Pawar has already staked the party's



claim on the Nashik seat, and a final decision will be taken by the MahaYuti leaders," he added.

Congress miffed as Shiv Sena (UBT) covets Mumbai North LS seat

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In another twist, the Shiv Sena (UBT) is keen to contest the Mumbai North Lok Sabha constituency which has been allotted to Maha Vikas Aghadi ally Congress, party leaders said here on Friday.

SS (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said that "if given, we are ready to fight Mumbai North" and expressed confidence that its candidate would win.

Simultaneously, the prime contender, SS (UBT)'s local heavyweight Vinod Ghosalkar also aired his desire to contest Mumbai North and defeat the main rival, Bharatiya Janata Party's Union Minister Piyush Goyal.

"It is not a question of who is my opponent... the ground situation is that I have a strong base and the support of people in this constituency. People are also keen to see a SS (UBT) candidate in the fray as they have been shocked by my son's killing in February," Ghosalkar said.



The Raut-Ghosalkar claims are likely to create fresh frictions between SS (UBT)-Congress which are openly at loggerheads over the Sangli Lok Sabha seat.

Congress leaders have slammed the state leadership and negotiators for not doing tough talk which saw the Sangli constituency slipping out of its hands and the SS

(UBT) announced its candidate Chandraraj Patil long before the seat-sharing negotiations were completed last week. So far, the Congress has not fielded any candidate for Mumbai North and party leaders have declined to comment on the latest statements of Raut-Ghosalkar coveting the seat, which is a BJP bastion.

Congress: Shiv Sena must apologise for slur on Kolhapur Chhatrapati's royal bloodline

Team Absolute | Kolhapur

The Congress has demanded an apology from Shiv Sena MP Sanjay S. Mandlik who raised questions on the royal credentials of his rival and INDIA bloc-MVA-Congress nominee Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj, here on Friday. As an ignoble row continued for the second day, Kolhapur Congress strongman, MLA Satej D. Patil, alias Bunty, slammed Mandlik for his utterances and clamoured for his apology.

"He has insulted the descendants of the legendary Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj by such comments. He must tender an apology to the people of Kolhapur, Maharashtra, and the Chhatrapati's family members," said an indignant Patil.

Unfazed by the raging controversy, Mandlik denied committing any disrespect or casting aspersions on the Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj.

"What I meant was that this Chhatrapati is not from Kolhapur, he was adopted and is an outsider... We have the highest regards for the Chhatrapati. Why should I offer any apology," demanded Mandlik. Patil shot back by asking "who has given Mandlik the 'script' to read out" and why did he suddenly remember the Chhatrapati's royal lineage after six decades. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said that the people of Maharashtra "will not forgive or forget" the slur by Mandlik on the Chhatrapati who is a revered personality, and the 12th direct descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Vanchit



Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) President Prakash Ambedkar said that "the whole world has accepted Chhatrapati and his family", so it's not appropriate to comment on someone's remarks against him. At an election rally on Thursday, Mandlik, hoping for a repeat term in Lok Sabha, raised the issue of the Chhatrapati's distinguished ancestry, and claimed that the latter was actually "an adopted royal". Mandlik questioned whether the Maharajas (Chhatrapati) are really from Kolhapur, and contended that "they are not the true heirs, but are adopted", and it is "the people of Kolhapur" who are the genuine legacy holders.

Kicking up a fracas, Mandlik's comments attract-

ed flak from the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, including Nationalist Congress Party (SP) President Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Sanjay Raut and Kishore Tiwari, and Congress' Atul Londhe.

"Adoption in royal families is not new... Many have become kings/rulers in this way in the past. For, once they are adopted, they become the rightful representative of that royal lineage. Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj is a highly revered figure in the public mind," said Sharad Pawar.

He lamented that Mandlik's remarks indicated the depths to which the ruling party players can stoop, and showed their mentality towards the Opposition candidates.

Waiting for LS ticket, Shiv Sena MP says BJP must take care of allies

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sitting MP from Mumbai North West and veteran Shiv Sena leader Gajanan Kirtikar on Friday said the BJP should fulfil its slogan of 400 plus seats, but at the same time, it must also take care of its allies. Kirtikar, who is unclear about his renomination from the same constituency, also said that the BJP should respect the opposition too.

"Now the slogan of '400 par' is being given. We will also take the initiative to make Narendra Modi the Prime Minister. But some BJP leader's attitude can create trouble for him," said Kirtikar. Kirtikar said, "I have



completed 57 years in Shiv Sena. But I have never been deceitful. I announced I would campaign against Amol Kirtikar (his son, who is the Shiv Sena UBT nominee in Mumbai North West)," Referring to the inquiry by

the Enforcement Directorate against Amol Kirtikar in connection with the alleged Khichdi scam, Gajanan Kirtikar defended his son and claimed that nothing would come out of the ongoing investigation. "Amol is

accused of the Khichdi scam. But that company was founded by Sanjay Mashelkar. These people were doing social work during Corona. After the concept of a jumbo hospital came up, Mashelkar's company did the work of providing materials for it. Amol and Suraj Chavan, who is from Shiv Sena UBT and is currently under judicial custody in connection with the scam, are not involved in it. They helped with the supply chain. There is no scam in this. Amol got his remuneration. Income tax was also levied on it," said Gajanan Kirtikar. Mumbai North West constituency will go to polls on May 20.

They tried but failed to lure Sharad Pawar': Jayant Patil on Praful Patel's claims

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nationalist Congress Party (SP) state President Jayant Patil on Friday said that the rival Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party made attempts to lure Sharad Pawar on its side, but failed. Patil said that Sharad Pawar did not compromise on his ideology and principles and hence he would never side with the Bharatiya Janata Party or the ruling MahaYuti. "They tried a lot to take him (Sharad Pawar). But he has always been clear on his ideological principles and would never support the BJP. Despite the claims by the (rival) NCP, has anybody gone there," asked Patil.

On the BJP's claims that the NCP (SP) is a "fake", Patil laughed and said it was strange that first they break a party and then call the original party a fake, as they did with the (undivided) Shiv Sena which split in June 2022, followed by the



(undivided) NCP that broke up in July 2023.

In this context, he referred to certain statements made by (ruling) Shiv Sena MP Gajanan Kirtikar's claims about why the party broke up, and said the people must take cognisance of the same.

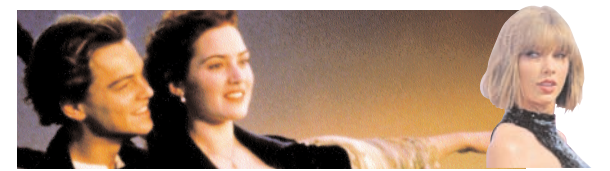
Patil's statements came after NCP's Working President Praful Patel, MP, claimed that in July 2023, Sharad Pawar was "50 per cent" prepared to extend support to the BJP after his nephew Ajit Pawar split the party to join the ruling MahaYuti government.

However, Sharad Pawar dithered at the last minute and it did not materialise, contended Patel.

He added that while Ajit Pawar took oath as Deputy CM on July 2, 2023, a fortnight later, the breakaway faction leaders met Sharad Pawar in Mumbai and Pune, but the latter was reluctant at the last minute.

Top NCP (SP) leaders, including Sharad Pawar, Jayant Patil, Clyde Crasto, Mahesh Tapase and others, dismissed Patel's statements as "blatant lies" terming it as a deliberate attempt by the rival NCP leader to sow confusion in the minds of the people ahead of the Lok Sabha 2024 elections.

The NCP (SP) has cautioned that the people of the state are observing all these things very closely and as the polls approach, the party remains committed to public welfare under Sharad Pawar Sahab's leadership and "the voters will choose wisely", Patil said.



Liam Gallagher slams rival Blur, complains their music is 'for posh brats'



Los Angeles | Agencies

English singer-songwriter Liam Gallagher has lashed out at longtime rivals Blur as he claimed that their music is "for posh brats." The former Oasis star responded to the Britpop group's frontman Damon Albarn, 56, who revealed several Americans have tried to claim songwriting credits for 'Song 2', reports 'Female First UK'. During Blur's pre-Coachella warm-up gig at the Fox Theater Pomona in California, this week, Damon said: "Because of the nature of American law, if someone gets a lawyer ... they can come quite a long way with absolutely

no grounds. Someone else this year - not only is it that person who's convinced they'd written it, but there was another person who was convinced. Firstly, I wonder why it's only that song that they're interested in." As per 'Female First UK', Liam then took to X to hit out at Damon for his comments. He wrote, "Gotta be out of your box to claim to have written that song absolute TURDOS (sic)". He later added: "It's music for posh brats." However, he did have some compliments for the rock group, and admitted he wished he had written 'Sing', from their 1991 debut album 'Leisure', as it makes him cry "like a baby."

Kirsten Dunst thinks that being a mother has made her a better actress

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kirsten Dunst, who is the mother of Ennis, five, and two-year-old James, has been in Hollywood for more than three decades but said that being a mother has made her a better actress. The actress told US TV show 'Extra': "My child turned one on this film, so I really felt like I was really in it still. They make me better at what I do, for sure. I think once you become a mom, you're just more fearless in life." The 'Jumanji' star, who plays a renowned war photojournalist in the new drama film 'Civil War', was then asked if she thinks her world perspective changed after working on her latest project and said that she just naturally has "anxieties" about the world in its current state, reports femalefirst.co.uk. Kirsten said: "I've thought about that, way before this movie... It's just naturally the anxieties of the time we're living in!" Meanwhile, the actress recently said that she needed an actor to play an unnamed soldier in a pivotal scene of the film, so she persuaded her husband to take on the job.



IMELDA STAUNTON REVEALS SHE STILL WEARS QUEEN'S CLOTHES FROM 'THE CROWN'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Imelda Staunton, who played the monarch in the series 'The Crown' for the final two seasons of the royal drama, shared that she still wears Queen Elizabeth's clothes from the show in her everyday life. Talking about how she keeps wearing Elizabeth's clothes from the show, she was quoted by The Sun as saying: "It was quite a serious job and quite a serious responsibility carrying all that stuff. I finished doing that last May and June and shaking that off -- so now I can be up and funny -- it's just taken me that time. I was doing it day in, day out. I knew in 2019 I was doing it, and I started in 2021, so it was a long time. Four years of her in my head. The work that went in, you can see it on the screen, every detail from the set to the costumes. I'm wearing one of her shirts now," she added. Staunton said at a charity event in Brighton while wearing one of the blouses she used to play Elizabeth, reports femalefirst.co.uk. With her portrayal as the monarch, who died aged 96 in September 2022, Staunton earned her Best Actress nominations from the British Academy Television and Golden Globe awards. Despite being appreciated, several royal commentators had hit out at her portrayal.



PRIYANKA CHOPRA LAUDS DEV PATEL FOR 'IMPRESSIVE DEBUT' AS DIRECTOR WITH 'MONKEY MAN'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Priyanka Chopra has heaped praise on Indian-origin British actor-filmmaker Dev Patel for his impressive debut as a director with 'Monkey Man'. Priyanka took to Instagram stories and gave a shout out to Patel and the cast of the film, which also includes Sikandar Kher and Sobhita Dhulipala. The actress wrote: "Bravo #DevPatel What an impressive debut!" Priyanka also tagged Sobhita Dhulipala, Sikandar Kher, and producer Jordan Peele. The film also stars Sharlto Copley, Makarand Deshpande, Ashwini Kalsekar, and others. The action thriller follows the journey of a young man portrayed by Dev Patel, who embarks on a mission to seek justice for his mother's death, caused by corrupt leaders. 'Monkey Man' was scheduled to release on April 19 in India, but the release has now been delayed indefinitely. As for Priyanka, she is currently busy filming her upcoming film, 'Heads of State'.



Judi Dench recalls first meeting with Pierce Brosnan: 'Adorable man, glorious to work with'



Los Angeles | Agencies

Veteran star Judi Dench, who first stepped into the world of 'James Bond' in 1995 with 'GoldenEye', went down memory lane and recalled her first meeting with the "adorable" Pierce Brosnan. Dench played the Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service known

as "M" in the movie, a role she held in each of the subsequent films in the James Bond franchise, until 'Spectre' in 2015. When Dench saw her co-star Brosnan on the 'GoldenEye' set, she couldn't help but notice his good looks, reports people.com. "Be still, beating heart," she said, clasping her hands over her chest when asked about the James Bond icon. She added: "He was just an adorable man. He was absolutely glorious to work with and as a person." Both Dench and Brosnan were nervous on the first day of shooting the 'Bond' film. "His first day on Bond was my first day. But he was Bond! The both of us, I think, (were) pretty jumpy." Dench also recalls one day when she brought her daughter,

Finty, to the set. "She walked out of my dressing room as Pierce was coming in. It was like a cartoon person," she says, miming her eyes popping out of her head. "I've never seen anything like it." Filming the Bond films didn't always give Dench a sense of the action going on, since she only came to the set to shoot her scenes. That's in contrast to her work on stage. When the Royal Shakespeare Company performed at the legendary Old Vic, she would often stand in the wings and watch the rest of the show just to get a taste of the magic of performing in front of a live audience. "I would go in, and I would do the day's filming (for Bond), perhaps, but then I wasn't part of (the rest)," Dench, who recently co-authored the new book, Shakespeare: The Man Who Pays the Rent, recalls. "So it's a very, very, very different feeling."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Bianca

DANIEL RADCLIFFE RECALLS HOW HE WAS 'TERRIFIED' OF ALAN RICKMAN IN EARLY 'HARRY POTTER' FILMS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Daniel Radcliffe has stated that he was "deathly afraid" of Alan Rickman's character, Professor Severus Snape, who taught potions at Hogwarts. "I was so intimidated by Alan Rickman. How can you not be by that voice? Even hearing that voice, you forget quite how low it was until it echoes through you," Radcliffe said on the 'Happy Sad Confused' podcast, reports deadline.com. "I was so intimidated by him for the first three movies. I was terrified by him and was like, 'This guy hates me,'" he added.

The actor who portrayed 'Harry Potter' then watched an interview in which Rickman discussed him and the rest of the young 'Harry Potter' stars before his death. In it, Rickman reflected on the "huge pride" he felt for Radcliffe succeeding on Broadway at the time and the pressure that the young actors faced from an early age. "He cut short a vacation in Canada to come and see me in Equus. He saw every piece of stage work I did when he was alive," Radcliffe said. The actor added: "He would take me out afterwards, and we would talk about it."





IPL 2024: SUPERB SHOWS BY MCGURK, KULDEEP HELP DELHI BEAT LUCKNOW BY SIX WICKETS

Lucknow | Agencies

Riding on debutant Jake Fraser-McGurk's stunning 55 after Kuldeep Yadav's three-for, Delhi Capitals defeated Lucknow Super Giants by six wickets in Match 26 of the Indian Premier League and Ekana Cricket Stadium here on Friday.

Batting first on the central spongy pitch hosts Lucknow Super Giants set Delhi Capitals a target of 168 after Ayush Badoni smashed a fine half-century. Kuldeep Yadav bowled brilliantly to end with figures of 3-20 in four overs, claiming the big wickets of K.L. Rahul and Nicholas Pooran.

Chasing the target, McGurk slammed a 35-ball 55, studded with two boundaries and five maximums as he shared a 77-run partnership with skipper Rishabh Pant to help Delhi Capitals reach 170/4 in 18.1 overs.

With back-to-back boundaries in the second over bowled by Naveen-ul-Haq, the Capitals openers kicked off their chase of 168 runs. Prithvi Shaw needed some treatment in the first over after taking a blow on the hand but seemed to have shaken that off. Given width to cut, he sent his fourth ball to the fence and then crunched the next - one that was much tighter to the stumps - through extra cover.



Warner also found the boundary in the opening over bowled by Arshad Khan. Yash Thakur, who claimed a maiden five-for in his last outing against Gujarat Titans, yet again provided the first breakthrough for LSG. Warner needed help from the physio before the start of the over, having taken a blow on the hand when trying to scoop Naveen, and the same shot sent him back to the pavilion against Yash's medium pace.

The ball skidded into his body, swung back sharply, and broke the bails before Warner could flick it away. Warner departed after scoring eight runs off nine deliveries.

He and Arshad Khan added 73 runs in 42 deliveries for the eighth wicket partnership, which propelled host Lucknow Super Giants to 167/7 at the end of 20 overs. It was the highest eighth-wicket partnership in IPL history. It was the first time Lucknow Super Giants lost a match defending the target of 160-plus.

Brief scores

Lucknow Super Giants 167/7 in 20 overs (Ayush Badoni 55 not out, KL Rahul 39; Kuldeep Yadav 3-20, Khaleel Ahmed 2-41) lost to Delhi Capitals 170/4 in 18.1 overs (Jake Fraser-McGurk 55, Rishabh Pant 41; Ravi Bishnoi 2-25, Naveen-ul-Haq 1-24) by six wickets

Mary Kom steps down as Chef-de-Mission of Indian contingent for Paris Olympics

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Boxing legend and 2012 Olympic Games bronze medalist M C Mary Kom has stepped down as Chef-de-Mission of the Indian contingent for the Paris Olympic Games, citing personal reasons.

Mary Kom, appointed as the Chef de Mission of the Indian Contingent last month, wrote a letter to Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president Dr PT Usha, asking to be relieved from her position as Chef-de-Mission of the Indian contingent.

In her letter to the IOA President, Mary Kom said she was grateful to the Indian Olympic Association for placing its faith in her to serve as Chef de Mission in Paris 2024.

"I consider it an honour to serve my country in every way possible, and I was mentally prepared for it. However, I regret that I will not be able to uphold the prestigious responsibility and would like to resign, owing to personal reasons. It is embarrassing to retreat from a commitment, which I seldom do, but I am left with no choice," she wrote.

"I am there to cheer on my country and the athletes competing in this Olympic Games, with great expectations," the letter further read.

IOA chief acknowledged the receipt of a letter from MC Mary Kom, and said a replacement would be named after appropriate consultations.

"We are sad that Olympic medal-winning boxer and Chairperson of the IOA Athletes Commission Mary Kom has stepped down citing personal reasons. We respect her deci-



sion and her privacy. I shall make the appropriate consultations and soon make an announcement about the replacement for Mary Kom," the IOA chief said.

"I completely understand her request and respect her decision. I have also conveyed to her that she will always have my own support and that of IOA. I also request everyone to respect the legendary boxer's privacy," she added.

The 41-year-old pugilist has represented the country in two editions of the Olympic Games (2012 London and 2020), winning bronze in the 2012 Games in London but missing out on a medal in the Tokyo Games.

Villa win, Liverpool and West Ham loses in Europa League QF first legs

New Delhi | Agencies

Aston Villa edged past Lille 2-1 while Liverpool lost 3-0 to Atalanta and West Ham suffered a 2-0 defeat at the hands of Bayer Leverkusen in the Europa Conference League quarterfinal first legs.

Villa, competing in their first major European last-eight tie for 26 years, will take a one-goal advantage into next week's second leg in France.

Watkins headed home his 25th goal of the season in the 13th minute to send Villa Park into raptures, before Emi Martinez made three superb first-half saves to preserve the hosts' lead.

And it was captain McGinn who doubled Villa's tally shortly after half-time with a well-taken low finish from 20 yards.

Gabriel Gudmundsson subsequently saw his effort ruled out for offside by VAR, before Bafode Diakite nodded in an 84th-minute reply for the visitors.

Liverpool must mount a stirring second-leg comeback to progress in the Europa League after Atalanta won 3-0 in Thursday's quarterfinal first leg at Anfield.

Gianluca Scamacca struck in either half and Mario Pasalic slotted in a late third to give Atalanta a commanding advantage and end Liverpool's nine-match winning home run in



the competition.

The Reds will travel to Italy next week with a significant deficit to overcome if they are to reach the last four.

In other match, late goals from Jonas Hofmann and Victor Boniface gave Leverkusen a deserved win just when it seemed West Ham would hold them to a goalless draw in Germany.

Goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski frustrated the hosts as he denied Alex Grimaldo, Patrik Schick and Edmond Tapsoba but after Hofmann pounced seven minutes from the end, he then turned provider for his teammate Boniface to head the clincher in stoppage time.

Indian men's hockey team goes down 1-3 against Australia in fourth match of test series

Perth | Agencies

The Indian men's hockey team continued to flounder, going down 1-3 against Australia in their fourth game of the five-match bilateral test series here, organised as preparation for the upcoming Paris Olympic Games. The Indian team went ahead in the 12th minute when captain Harmanpreet Singh netted a goal, but Australia came roaring back to score through Jeremy Hayward (19', 47') and Jack Welch (54') to secure victory.

Australia have won the first three matches with scores of 5-1, 4-2 and 2-1 as they continued their domination of India.

The Indian team started the match with a strong attacking approach. In the opening minute, Mandeep Singh left unmarked in the D area, unleashed a powerful shot towards the goal, only to be denied by Australia's goalkeeper, Andrew Charter.

The hosts, however, didn't lag in offensive play, earning two consecu-



tive penalty corners which they couldn't convert.

Despite Australia's pressure, India managed to secure multiple penalty corners themselves. Just before the first quarter ended, Harmanpreet Singh (12') capitalised on one of these opportunities, firing the ball with precision and power into the net, granting India a 1-0 lead.

With an aim to bounce back in the

game, Australia came out all guns blazing in the second quarter and also won two quick penalty corners, and they were able to capitalise on the second one when Jeremy Hayward (19') expertly placed the ball into the net.

The match continued with intense back-and-forth action, yet neither team managed to find the back of the net again in the quarter. As the half-

time whistle blew, the score stood at 1-1, setting the stage for an exciting second half.

India kicked off the third quarter with an aggressive approach, earning an early penalty corner which unfortunately didn't translate into a goal. On the other hand, Australia prioritized ball retention and utilized quick passes to navigate past India's defense.

Despite India adopting a counter-attacking strategy to keep the pressure on the hosts, neither team managed to break the deadlock in the third quarter. The penultimate quarter concluded with the score tied at 1-1.

The final quarter commenced with Australia asserting dominance, swiftly entering the circle and earning consecutive penalty corners. Jeremy Hayward (47') once again showcased his prowess by converting one, giving his team the lead. Despite India's efforts, including a near-miss for an equalizer shortly after conceding, they couldn't breach Australia's goalkeeper.

ATHLETICS: WORLD'S SECOND FASTEST 10K WOMAN RUNNER EMMACULATE ANYANGO TO RUN IN WORLD 10K BENGALURU

Bengaluru | Agencies

Emmaculate Anyango Achol, the world's second fastest 10K woman runner, will headline the 16th edition of World 10K Bengaluru, scheduled for Sunday, (April 28). The World Athletics Gold Label Road Race has total prize money of USD 210,000 and features the world's most accomplished road and track and field athletes. Among the star attractions, this year is Kenya's Anyango, who clocked an excellent 28:57 in Valencia, Spain, while finishing behind her teammate Agnes Ngetich, who posted a World Record 28:46 there. A silver medalist in the 2019 African Junior championships in 3000m, Anyango barely missed the Belgrade podium in this year's World cross-country championships, the organisers informed on Friday.

"I am very excited to be in Bengaluru for the first time for this incredible event, which has gained a worldwide reputation for being one of the best 10K races. I have heard so much about the events hosted in India and the running revolution they began nearly two decades ago. I am very much looking forward to being there and doing my best. The field of runners in the women's category is quite strong this year and I love a good challenge," expressed Anyango.

Five of her countrymates will also take the women's starting line-up in Bengaluru, with timings faster than the event course record (30:35). Lilian Rengeruk Kasait (29:32), Faith Chepkoech (29:50), Loice Chemnung (29:57), Cintia Chepngeno (30:08), and Grace Nawowuna (30:27) make their team formidable. Anyango's inclusion in this epic line-up draws attention to a power-packed elite women's race to

the title. Rengeruk and Chepngeno participated in the epic race in Valencia, while Chepkoech and Chemnung clocked their bests from Castellon and Paris. Nawowuna did it in Lille. Two Ethiopians, Aberash Minsewo, this year's Mumbai Marathon winner, and Lemlem Hailu, 2022 World Indoor 3000m champion, add further shine to the women's start lists. Kenya's Peter Mwaniki and Bravin Kipkoge headline elite men's line-up in the event, while finishing behind their teammate Agnes Ngetich, who posted a World Record 28:46 there. A silver medalist in the 2019 African Junior championships in 3000m, Anyango barely missed the Belgrade podium in this year's World cross-country championships, the organisers informed on Friday.

Meanwhile, in the elite men's lineup, Kenya's Peter Mwaniki Aila (29) entered with the fastest time among the men, 26:59. He achieved this mark while finishing third earlier this year in Valencia. In that process, Peter became the nineteenth runner in the World to run the 10K distance in under 27 minutes. His countrymate and 2019 African Junior Champion over 10,000m -- Bravin Kipkoge Kiptoo - is credited with 27:02 from Madrid last year along with Bravin Kiprop, who clocked an impressive 27:16 this February at Castellon, Spain, will keep the race interesting.

Two more Kenyans, Hillary Chepkwony, last year's third-place finisher, and Patrick Mosin, the runner-up in Castellon the previous year, are expected to provide the necessary boost to return fast timings here. Two young runners, John Wele from Tanzania and Boki Diriba from



Ethiopia may also pose a threat to the Kenyans. The 2024 edition is packed with pace as five men and six women who have entered the race are credited with personal best timings recorded on 10K road running that are faster than the course record timings for World 10K Bengaluru. Kenyans Nicholas Kimeli (27:38) and Irene Cheptei (30:35) have held the course record in Bengaluru since 2022. The World 10K Bengaluru will award a total prize pot of USD 210,000. The winners in the men's and women's categories will each take home USD 26,000. A course record bonus of USD 8,000 is also in the offing.



Jaipur Wax Museum unveils first look of Kohli's statue to come up on World Heritage Day

Jaipur | Agencies

The first look of the wax statue of ace India cricketer Virat Kohli, which will be installed at the Jaipur Wax Museum in Nahargarh on World Heritage Day (April 18), was unveiled on Friday. Anoop Srivastava, Founder-Director of the Jaipur Wax Museum, said there was a huge demand from tourists to install a statue of Virat Kohli in the museum for the past year. "Kids and young girls are crazy for Virat Kohli. So, a decision was taken that a wax figure of Kohli would be installed in the museum which already has statues of Sachin Tendulkar and Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Since Kohli is known for his aggressive playing style, we chose to give the statue a similar look," Srivastava said. The wax figure has been sculpted by Ganesh and Lakshmi, under the creative direction of Srivastava. The 5 feet & 9 inches tall statue weighs 35 kg, the costumes for which have been designed by fashion designer Bodh Singh. The museum presently has 44 wax figures, including those of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh, Kalpana Chawla, Maharani Gayatri Devi, Amitabh Bachchan, Harivansh Rai Bachchan, Mother Teresa, Sachin Tendulkar, and M.S. Dhoni, among others.

'Train was always on track, just took a while to get going', says Suryakumar after 19-ball fifty

Mumbai | Agencies

After Rohit Sharma and Ishan Kishan entertained the faithful Mumbai Indians supporters at the Wankhede Stadium with a 101-run opening stand, Suryakumar Yadav added more sparks in enthralling the crowd by hitting a 19-ball half-century to help the hosts' chase down 197 in just 15.3 overs. After Suryakumar hit the joint second-fastest for MI in their IPL history, quashing doubts on his return to form after a lengthy layoff caused by ankle injury and sports hernia surgery, the batter said he was always on track to being back at his best self, which took a while before Thursday's game.

"I think about the shots I play beforehand, because I have practiced all of them during the nets. I try to make sure that I bat according to the situation of

the game. If the game is progressing slowly, then I think of how I could possibly speed it up.

"Whenever I go into bat, I always try to see how I can change the game and how I can control it with my abilities. If I succeed, great, if I don't, I'll try again in the next game! I think the train was always on track, it just took a while to get going." "It's fine, we're coming back and have found our rhythm. It feels great to have won two games in a row at the Wankhede. It gives us great confidence and has improved the team's atmosphere as well," said Suryakumar to JioCinema, the official streaming partner of IPL 2024. The 33-year-old, who is the top-ranked men's T20I batter, was out for a duck in his return game against Delhi Capitals on Sunday, but his 19-ball 52 - laced with five fours and four sixes - has signalled that he's ready to

bring more fireworks with his trademark shots piercing the field with great panache, especially with India set to play T20 World Cup in USA and West Indies from June 1 after IPL 2023 ends on May 26. "When his mind's free, he just lets loose. The sky is the limit for him when he's batting like that. He can hit them and does hit them all around the ground. To be able to come in after a strong foundation has been laid by Rohit (Sharma) and Ishan Kishan, and just do that is fantastic." "When he's in the type of form like he showed tonight, the poor bowlers, no one can bowl anywhere. He's got an incredible awareness of the field but then the skill to be able to manipulate the ball into those gaps, it's freakish stuff. The Mumbai Indians are very lucky to have him," said Shane Watson, the former Australia fast-bowling all-rounder.



MENSTRUATION SIGNIFIES FEMININITY AND FERTILITY, NOT IMPURITY, SAYS SARA ALI KHAN

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Sara Ali Khan, a dazzling sensation among Gen Z, known not only for her Bollywood prowess but also for openly sharing her life journey is now the face of the feminine hygiene brand Sofy. In a light-hearted mood, Sara tells life during a conversation that some of her hits and favourite songs, such as Aankh Maare, Chaka Chak, and Ha Mei Galat, were shot during her menstrual cycle days. Read excerpt:

What are your thoughts about PMS? What is PMS for you?

Sara: Personally, it's the intense moodiness, bloating, and ice cream cravings. I experience pangs of sugar cravings, which are, of course, due to magnesium deficiency. You should try Paalak, which is not particularly tasty, but it helps.

What would you change about the way society treats menstruation? Is there a myth about periods that you believe should be debunked?

Sara: First and foremost, it is critical to understand that menstruation is not an indicator of impurity. I believe it represents the pinnacle of femininity and fertility. I am thrilled to be associated with a brand that not only understands the needs of young girls but also edu-

cates and empowers others. Menstruation is the reason for everyone's existence.

Do you ever miss your workout?

Sara: I try not to miss my workout any day. I exercise daily, even when I am on my period, as it boosts my mood and helps with pain relief. I incorporate light cardio and yoga during my period days.

Do you prefer XL pads or antibacterial napkins?

Sara: I prefer both, which is why I carry the Sofy Anti-Bacterial extra-large pads in my bag, which provide spotless and comfortable periods. I prefer feminine hygiene brands that avoid the risk of leakage and are safe for health.

Any experience with unusual places where you had to change your pad or tampons?

Sara: I remember once we were travelling in Rajasthan for the shoot. So, I had to change my pad on the moving bus in the outskirts of Rajasthan. I usually carry an extra-large anti-bacterial pad to ensure a comfortable experience during periods.

Have you ever used a creative excuse to get out of a situation because of a period?

Sara: I used to do that a lot in school during Hindi

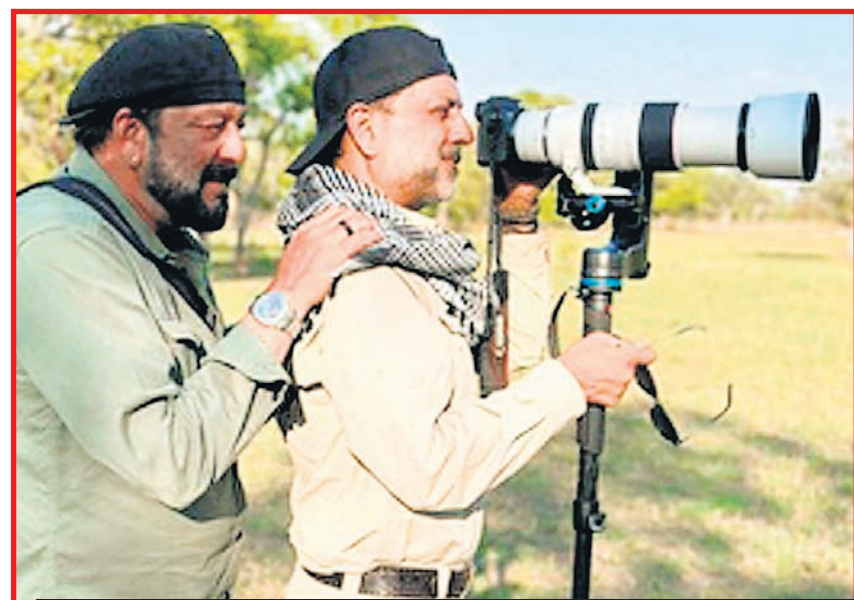
class, by using the excuse of cramps. I liked Hindi but didn't enjoy the class.

What advice would you give to women dealing with PCOD and PCOS?

Sara: Firstly, recognize the syndrome to make sure you are aware of the changes in the body, which may include weight loss and hair loss. Exercise regularly to minimize symptoms. Try to avoid binge eating and strive to live a healthier lifestyle. And, not to forget, remind yourself that the next day will be better.

Are there any period-related mishaps or memorable incidents you'd like to share with the audience?

Sara: I'm sharing this today because all of my hits and favourite songs, such as Aankh Maare, Chaka Chak, and Ha Mei Galat, were shot during my period days.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sanjay Dutt, who will be soon seen in the upcoming Kannada language film 'KD - The Devil', is celebrating the birthday of his best friend Paresch Ghelani.

On Friday, the actor took to his Instagram and shared four pictures of him with Paresch. In the pictures, they can be seen enjoying a peaceful time in the woods.

The first picture shows Sanjay looking through a telephoto lens as Paresch stands behind him, pointing at something. Another picture shows both of them enjoying a meal together.

The actor wrote in the caption: "Happy birthday, dear brother Paryal! May the God shower you with abundant blessings of success and good health. Having a brother like you is truly a gift. Your support has been my rock through every challenge and triumph. Here's to many more years of cherished memories. Love you, brother!"

@pareschghelani". Paresch inspired Vicky Kaushal's character of Kamli in the actor's biopic 'Sanju', which starred Bollywood superstar Ranbir Kapoor in the titular role.

The film showed a strong bond between Sanjay and his best friend, which formed a huge part of the emotional core of 'Sanju'.

Paresch has been with the actor through thick and thin and is a source of motivation for him in the darkest of times.

SANJAY DUTT CELEBRATES PARESH GHELANI'S B'DAY: 'HAVING A BROTHER LIKE YOU IS A GIFT'

Ayushmann Khurrana is an astrophile, looks at universe in poetic way

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ayushmann Khurrana, who is receiving a lot of positive response to his recently released synth-pop track 'Akh Da Taara', is fond of celestial bodies and often gazes at the universe with an "artiste's delight".

The actor shared that looking at the stars has been his favourite pastime since childhood.

Ayushmann told: "I went to a meteor shower in Pune a couple of months ago. I have a few astronomer friends in Pune, and we have this telescope. We go to a farmhouse where there's less light pollution, and the



entire night we just look at the stars. That's been my favourite thing since childhood."

The actor further mentioned that for him the universe is beyond the realm of science, and he is fascinated by it in a poetic way.

Ayushmann said: "I don't look at the stars and celestial bodies just through the lens of science. To me, they seem very poetic. So, my process is very different. It's more of an artiste's delight. I'm obsessed with the universe and the celestial bodies."

"I also do get philosophical looking at them. I write about these things normally as well, but I haven't exposed that part in my artworks so far. Let's see how and when this pans out," he added.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Filmmaker Karan Johar shared a scene featuring Ranbir Kapoor and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan from his 2016 film 'Ae Dil Hai Mushkil' and praised the actress for the lines she said.

Karan took to his Instagram stories and shared a scene where Ranbir is seen telling Aishwarya that they will "chit chat" on the plane, to which Aishwarya, who played a poetess in the movie, said: "Guffu bezar logo ki adat hai. Jo aankhein keh deti hain, unke aage lafzon ka darja kya."

Karan captioned it: "Her



KJo unspools memories of 'Ae Dil Hai Mushkil', praises Aishwarya's eyes

beauty, her eyes, and what she said @aishwaryarai Bachchan.arb #aedilhai mushkil #ranbir Kapoor."

'Ae Dil Hai Mushkil', a romantic drama directed by Karan Johar also stars Anushka Sharma and Fawad Khan. It tells the story of love, friendship, and heartbreak between the characters Alizeh and Ayan.

Ananya Panday misses 'godson' Pablo; asks BFF to send him for 'sleepover'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Ananya Panday shared a paw-dorable glimpse of her 'baby godson' Pablo, asking her bestie Shanaya Kapoor to send him for a sleepover. Taking to Instagram Stories, Ananya, who enjoys 24.6 million followers on the photo-sharing application, dropped a cute picture of her furry friend.

The post is captioned: "Missing my baby godson Pablo @shanayakapoor02 send him for a sleepover". She was last seen in the movie 'Kho Gaye Hum Kahan', directed by Arjun Varain Singh, written by Arjun, Zoya Akhtar, Reema Kagti and produced by Ritesh Sidhwani, Akhtar, Kagti, and Farhan Akhtar



SUSHMITA SEN DECLARES SHE CHOOSES TO SEE 'POSSIBILITIES, HOPE, KINDNESS, ABUNDANCE'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The former Miss Universe Sushmita Sen on Friday shared that she doesn't chase but attract and chooses to see possibilities, hope, kindness, love, gratitude and abundance.

The 48-year-old actress took to Instagram and shared a photo wearing a black tank top, and pink-tinted oversized sunglasses; her hair open, she is looking away from the lenses.

The post is captioned: "I don't chase, I attract... My rose tinted glasses often reminding me...it's not about 'what's there', it's more about 'what I choose to see'... I choose to see possibilities, hope, kindness, love, gratitude, oneness & abundance...what I choose, I attract."

"A gentle reminder to check, if the default mode of your life is Automatic...switch to Manual!!! I love you guys!!! #happyweekend #dugadugga," she added.

On the work front, Sushmita was last seen in the crime thriller series 'Aarya'.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Alaya F