

# absolute india

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## PAKISTAN TRAIN HIJACK: 346 HOSTAGES RESCUED, 50 BLA MILITANTS KILLED

Sources confirmed that the military operation to neutralise the attackers and rescue the hostages has concluded and a clearance operation has been successfully conducted in which at least 346 hostages have been rescued and around 50 attackers neutralized. The train, on its way from Balochistan's capital Quetta to Peshawar, the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), was hijacked by BLA militants and over 400 people were taken as hostages. Islamabad | Agencies

last night and 178 rescued today. 50 terrorists eliminated," confirmed a reliable security source. Security sources stated that the militants were using women and children as human shields. "The clearance operation was carried out with extreme caution and skill, resulting in many lives being saved. The number of passengers who had fallen victim to the brutality of terrorists is being determined," the source added. It was also revealed that the handler of the attackers, the mastermind behind the attack, was in active contact with the militants from Afghanistan. The BLA separatist group claimed responsibility for the attack, along with multiple unverifiable claims of releasing all women and children, and keeping over 200 hostages, who hailed from Punjab province and were working with the security forces. BLA also claimed to have killed at least 20 of the abducted



security personnel after checking their IDs. On Tuesday, a large number of BLA militants forced the Jaffar Express passenger train to come to a halt after blowing off the track in the Dhabar area of Bolan Pass in Balochistan. Security forces and the railway authorities confirmed that the train had come under attack near Tunnel No. 8 of the Bolan pass. Pakistan military launched a clearance operation reaching the site

through cargo trains. Sources say that the hostages released in the initial stage had to walk at least seven kilometers to reach the nearby railway station where they were received by the security personnel. "We came under attack from all sides. They were everywhere. We could hear gun shots fired from everywhere. Passengers were putting cloths over themselves to hide. It was horrific," said a rescued

hostage who detailed his ordeal during the whole incident. "We all walked about four about three-and-a-half hours and about seven kilometers before reaching the Panir railway station. The militants told us to not look back and keep walking. Some of the ladies, who have come here, have had to walk hours without their shoes on to reach the Panir station," he added. The attack has been condemned by several countries, including the United States, Iran, and Germany. Balochistan Chief Minister chaired a high-level meeting on law and order where he was briefed about the Jaffar train attack. "They want to impose their ideology with gun and violence. Should we allow them to take people off buses and kill them?", questioned Balochistan CM Sarfaraz Bugti. Bugti said that the passengers in the train comprised of many soldiers headed home while on leave, emphasising that they were unarmed.

### Eyewitness recalls harrowing moments

**Islamabad:** In a chilling account of the attack on the Jaffar Express in Pakistan's Balochistan province, eyewitnesses vividly recall the harrowing moments when terrorists hijacked the train, leaving over 100 passengers hostage. "We were shouting, and some just laid down. I also did the same; everyone lay down to save their lives," recounted one of the terrified passengers. The eyewitness described how the situation turned into a nightmare, with people scrambling to protect themselves amid the escalating violence. "There were some blasts, and we were begging for our lives," he added. "When the attackers allowed us to leave, they warned us not to turn back. My wife and a few others were among those who managed to escape."

The standoff between the fighters of the Baloch Liberation Army's (BLA) Majeed Brigade and the Pakistani military after the massive attack on Jaffar Express passenger train in Bolan district has finally ended after more than 24 hours, several reports indicated on Wednesday evening. "Operation concluded, site has been cleared. All hostages released. Total rescued 346 - 168

## MAHA GOVT PLANS TO CONDUCT ALL MPSC COMPETITIVE EXAMS IN MARATHI: CM

**Team Absolute | Mumbai**  
Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday announced in the state council that the government plans to conduct all competitive exams conducted by the Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC) in Marathi. He was responding to a question raised by a legislator Milind Narvekar. Stating that the examinations for technical posts in engineering and agriculture in the state are not being conducted in Marathi, the Chief Minister said that since engineering books are

not available in Marathi, these examinations are conducted in English. "But now permission has been given to conduct engineering education in Marathi. Therefore, the books of this course will now be available in Marathi. Accordingly, the government has planned to prepare the syllabus of engineering examinations in Marathi and conduct competitive examinations for all technical posts in Marathi," he added.



Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar announced in the state Assembly that the government will take stern action against the sale of artificial and fake cheese and cottage paneer in Maharashtra. He assured that substantial funds would be provided to the Food and Drug Administration run laboratories. He was replying to a question raised by legislators Vikram Pachpute and Kailas Patil. "Fake cheese or artificial cheese is defini-

tely a threat to the health of the citizens. Strict action will be taken against the vendors and related parties selling this cheese. A meeting will be held with the officials concerned, public representatives and experts in this field regarding the sale of artificial cheese or fake cheese under the name of analogue cheese. After taking a decision in this meeting, strict action will be taken against the sale of fake cheese," he announced. Dy CM Ajit Pawar said that samples are taken to identify adulteration in food items and these samples are examined and analysed.

## UP GOVERNMENT TO COVER 10 MOSQUES IN SAMBHAL DURING HOLI CELEBRATIONS

**Team Absolute | Sambhal**  
In a significant move, the Uttar Pradesh (UP) administration has decided to cover ten mosques in Sambhal during Holi celebrations on Friday. March 14 marks a rare sixty-year coincidence of the festival of colours and a Ramazan 'Jumma' falling together on the same day. Briefing the media over the UP administration's preparedness, Sambhal SP, Shrish Chandra, said that the decision was taken to maintain communal harmony and facilitate the two communities in celebrating their respective festivals with full glee and gaiety. "A total of ten mosques have been identified which fall in the proposed route of

the 'Chaupai' procession. All of them will be covered to prevent any disturbance or tension between the two communities," he said. He said that the decision has been taken to cover those mosques, from where the 'Chaupai' processions (a customary practice during Holi) will cross through and also added that this has been a practice for years. "The conventional route of the 'Chaupai' procession during Holi has been identified and ten mosques along the route will be covered," he said. According to reports, an agreement has also been reached to alter the timings of the Friday prayers and 'Chaupai' processions, so that the two don't overlap each other.



## TRUMP'S STEEL, ALUMINIUM TARIFFS GO INTO EFFECT; EU, CANADA HIT BACK

**Washington | Agencies**  
US President Donald Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from anywhere in the world went into effect on Wednesday morning drawing swift retaliatory levies from the European Union and Canada. Trump had reinstated from his first term a 25 per cent tariff on steel and an elevated rate of 25 per cent on aluminium, going up from 15 per cent. Unlike the first term though, no country has been exempted from these levies. Earlier this month, Trump had hit Canada, Mexico, and China with separate tariff hikes as punishment for allowing illegal migrants to pass through their borders (not China) and fentanyl, an addictive opioid. A third set of hikes is expected in April under Trump's reciprocal taxation system. The EU



has said it has targeted \$28 billion worth of imports from the US, which is about the same as the estimated worth of the EU's steel and aluminium exports to the US that will be impacted by the hikes. These EU hikes will come in two stages. In the first, retaliatory tariffs were announced in response to Trump's first-term levies. The EU had suspended these hikes during President Joe Biden's term, and that suspension will be allowed to lapse in April. Also in this stage are new tariffs targeting boats, bourbon, and motorcycles. The second stage will come after two weeks. At the same time, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, which is the executive branch of the European Union, told reporters she had told her officials to resume trade talks with US officials.

## Manipur: Shutdown continues to hit life in tribal areas

**Imphal:** Normal life continued to remain affected in the Kuki-Zo areas of Manipur for the fourth day on Wednesday due to the indefinite shutdown called by the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC), the apex body of the tribals, to protest the resumption of the bus services between state capital Imphal and the hill districts and the police action in the tribal areas on March 8. A police official in Imphal said that the situation in Kuki-Zo tribal inhabited areas, especially in Kangpokpi and Churachandpur districts, remained tense but calm on Wednesday and no untoward incident was reported from the tribal-dominated areas after Saturday's (March 8) clashes with the security forces.

## MP'S FOUR HISTORICAL SITES SECURE PLACE IN TENTATIVE LIST OF UNESCO'S WORLD HERITAGE

**Team Absolute | Bhopal**  
Four historical heritage sites of Madhya Pradesh -- Ashokan edict sites, Chauasath Yogini temples, Gupta period temples and fortresses of the Bundela dynasty have found recognition from the UNESCO. These heritage sites located in different parts of the state have secured a place in tentative list for inclusion of UNESCO's World Heritage sites. With this, the state now has 18 UNESCO World Heritage sites, with 15 sites in the tentative list and three in the permanent list. At present, Madhya Pradesh has three UNESCO sites (permanent list) -- the Khajuraho temple complex, Sanchi Stupa and

Bhimbetka, both located in Raisen district. Ashokan edict sites along the Mauryan routes stand as India's earliest written records, with rock and pillar inscriptions revealing Emperor Ashoka's messages on Buddhism, governance and ethics, preserved for more than 2,200 years. Madhya Pradesh offers its visitors to experience Sanchi pillar edicts, Rupnath minor rock edicts in Jabalpur, Gujara minor rock edicts in Datia and Panguraria Minor rock edicts



in Sehore. While, Chauasath Yogini temples dating back to the 9th-12th centuries, embody tantric traditions with their unique circular, open-air designs, intricate stone carvings, and deep-rooted spiritual significance in nestled in Khajuraho, Morena, Jabalpur, Mandsaur and Shahdol districts. The Gupta-era temples which have included in tentative list includes Udaigiri temple in Vidisha, Nachna temple in Panna, Tigawa temple in Katni, Bhumara temple in Satna, Sakor temple in Damoh, Deori in Sagar and Pawaya in Gwalior, according to a statement issued from Madhya Pradesh Tourism department.

## Two women journalists arrested for derogatory remarks against Telangana CM

**Team Absolute | Hyderabad**  
The Hyderabad Cyber Crime Police have arrested two women journalists of a news channel for circulating a video containing derogatory and abusive remarks against Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy. Pogadadanda Revathi, Managing Director of Pulse News, and Bandi Sandhya alias Thanvi Yadav, reporter of Pulse News, were booked along with a user of 'X' account 'Nippukodi' on a complaint by Congress social media cell state secretary. They have been booked under

Section 67 (publication or transmission of obscene material in electronic form) of Information Technology Act and Sections 111 (organised crime), 61(2) (criminal conspiracy), 353(2) (spreading false information or rumours that incite hatred or ill will between groups), 352 (intentionally insulting someone to provoke a breach of peace) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The complainant

said that he came across an abusive video on 'X' account 'Nippukodi', featuring a representative from the Pulse TV channel interviewing an unidentified individual in a provocative manner. During the interview, the individual makes derogatory and abusive remarks against Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, clearly indicating a deliberate attempt by the Pulse TV channel to defame

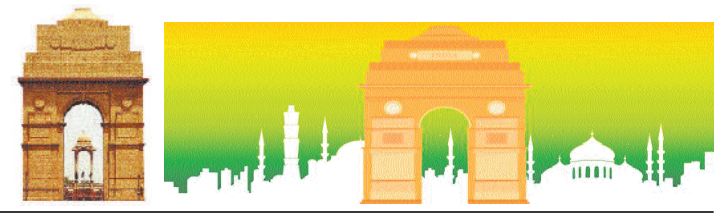


and spread false propaganda. The complainant said such posts are highly provocative, and their content has the potential to incite divisions within society, which are likely to lead to disturbances in law and order. According to the police, Revathi was previously involved in a case for verbally abusing a Dalit on a live show, for which she was arrested and released on bail. Another case was booked against her last year for intentionally making false allegations against Telangana State Power Distribution Company Limited.

## BENGALURU AIRPORT: INDIA'S FIRST TO FACILITATE NEURODIVERGENT PASSENGERS

**Team Absolute | Bengaluru**  
In a first-of-its-kind initiative in India, Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru has introduced a sensory room at the airport for the benefit of those suffering from autism, anxiety and mental health conditions, a statement said on Wednesday. Located near the 080 International Lounge at Level 4 of Terminal 2, the sensory room is a thoughtfully designed space made for neurodivergent passengers and individuals with sensory sensitivities. Research in sensory regulation and occupational therapy indicates that even brief periods (15-30 minutes) in a calming, sensory-friendly environment can significantly alleviate feelings of being overwhelmed and enhance well-being, making travel smoother and more manageable. This benefit supports neurodivergent children and adults alike, allowing them to navigate their travel

experiences with greater ease and comfort. Key features of the sensory room include multiple ambient lighting sources -- such as a bubble tube, galaxy projector, and LED cubes -- which offer diverse sensory stimulation, encourage visual tracking, and allow personalised sensory input. The art mural, with its organic abstract blobs, enhances emotional well-being through visually soothing patterns. Interactive elements like floor and wall projections, ball pool, and sensory toy station are some of the features of the room for cognitive engagement. Specialised items such as the crash pad, weighted blanket, and therapy mats aid in emotional regulation and relaxation. Visual and tactile features -- including the optical curtain, infinity mirror, and tactile wall panels -- encourage sensory exploration, while auditory elements like the white noise machine and sound system help create a consistent and calming atmosphere.



## GOLD SMUGGLING : DRI CITES NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS, GLOBAL, HAWALA LINKS; SAYS RANYA SHOULD REMAIN IN JAIL

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) submitted to the court that the gold smuggling case involving actress Ranya Rao, stepdaughter of a senior IPS officer of DGP rank, has international and hawala links, making it a matter of national security. Madhu Rao, senior counsel representing the DRI, argued against Ranya Rao's bail petition in court on Wednesday, stating that an investigation into the involvement of a smuggling syndicate is necessary. He emphasised that national security concerns and suspected hawala transactions are also being probed.



"If we consider the criminal intent behind the case, jail is the appropriate place for her. The court should not grant bail merely on the grounds that the accused is a woman," Rao stated. He further argued that the case

involves international links and smuggling carried out with the help of a protocol police officer. "It needs to be investigated how the money was transferred and how funds were arranged to purchase the seized gold," he said. The counsel also pointed out that Ranya Rao possesses an identity card showing her as a resident of Dubai, which increases the risk of her fleeing the country. "There is no valid reason to grant her bail, especially considering that she has smuggled gold worth Rs 12.56 crore. Additionally, Rs 2.67 crore in cash and Rs 2.06 crore worth of gold have already been seized. On March 4, her residence was

searched, and her arrest followed due legal procedure in accordance with Supreme Court guidelines," he submitted. He contended that granting bail to Ranya Rao could derail the entire investigation, as she has not been cooperating with the

authorities. "The court must consider the large-scale gold smuggling operation. At this stage, the evidence and findings of the investigating agency should not be questioned. The court must recognise them as presented," he asserted. "If bail is granted, there is a high possibility that she may flee the country, and crucial evidence could be destroyed. At this stage, she is best suited to remain in custody," he added. The counsel also informed the court that the second accused in the case has been arrested, and further investigations are underway. He urged the court to consider the Supreme Court's ruling in the Radhika Agarwal case while deciding on the bail plea. Meanwhile, senior advocate Kiran Javali, appearing for Ranya Rao, countered the arguments, stating that DRI officials had failed to present any declaration for the gold brought by Ranya Rao. "No supporting documents were provided to justify the possession of the gold. Section 102 of the Customs Act lays out clear guidelines on who must be present during a search," he argued. He alleged that DRI officials did not adhere to the provisions of the Customs Act during the arrest.

## BJP SWEEPS HARYANA POLLS, WINS NINE OF 10 MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS

Team Absolute | Chandigarh

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday swept the Haryana civic polls, with its mayoral candidates winning Ambala, Gurugram, Hisar, Karnal, Rohtak, Faridabad, Yamunanagar, Panipat, and Sonapat municipal corporations. The main Opposition Congress bit the dust even in Rohtak, the stronghold of Bhupinder Hooda. The Congress, which contested the state civic polls on its symbol for the first time, failed to open its account. In Manesar, independent candidate Inderjit Yadav defeated BJP's Sundar Lal by 2,235 votes. In Gurugram, BJP's Raj Rani secured 270,781 votes, defeating Congress candidate Seema Pahuja by a margin of 179,485 votes, while in Faridabad, Parveen Joshi of the BJP won the seat with 416,927 votes. In Hisar, Parveen Popli of the BJP won by a margin of 64,456 votes, while in Rohtak, Ram Avtar Valmiki of the BJP won by a margin of 45,198 votes. In Karnal, Renu Bala of the BJP won with 83,630 votes, defeating Congress candidate Manoj Wadhwa, who received 25,359 votes. In Yamunanagar, Suman of the BJP won. In



Ambala, Shailja Sachdeva of the BJP won the mayor by-election, while in Sonapat, Rajiv Jain of the BJP secured 57,858 votes to win the seat. In Panipat, Konal Saini of the BJP won with 1,62,075 votes. Elated over the party's major victory, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini told the media here,

"The people of Haryana have put their stamp of approval on the triple engine government... I thank the people of Haryana from the bottom of my heart. Our local body government and this triple-engine government will play a crucial role in fulfilling PM Narendra Modi's vision of 'Viksit Bharat.'" Believing the civic body election results won't have much of an impact on the Congress, party veteran Hooda said, "The Congress must have gained in some areas, but I did not go anywhere during the elections. I don't think these results will have an impact." The BJP's sweep, especially in urban areas like Gurugram and Faridabad, proves its dominance over the state's political landscape that made history in October 2024 by becoming the first political party to win three consecutive terms in the state Assembly elections.

## TEJASHWI DEMANDS CM NITISH KUMAR'S RESIGNATION, CALLS HIM 'UNFIT' TO GOVERN



Team Absolute | Patna

Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, demanding his immediate resignation over alleged insulting behaviour towards women and erratic actions in the Bihar Assembly and Council.

"We now feel pity for Nitish Kumar. His repeated speeches and actions in the House clearly show he is not normal. For the sake of Bihar, he should resign on his own," the RJD leader said. "We even pray for his health, as his behaviour raises serious concerns. He is unconscious and it is hard to understand how he is running the government," Yadav stated. He accused Nitish Kumar of insulting women. "He continuously makes inappropriate gestures in the House. We are getting the video footage from the Assembly to prove it. He even pointed towards a woman leader of his own party some time ago," he alleged.

"He should resign and open an ashram to take rest," Yadav said. The Bihar Legislative Council witnessed high drama on

Wednesday as former Chief Minister Rabri Devi, along with opposition leaders, staged a walkout and protest against Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Soon after, Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav joined the protest and launched a scathing attack on Nitish Kumar, demanding his resignation.

Reacting to Nitish Kumar's claim that he removed Tejashwi Yadav from the post of Deputy Chief Minister, he stated, "He (Nitish Kumar) repeatedly says he removed people, but the truth is, he himself resigned. He keeps attacking my father, Lalu Prasad Yadav, but Lalu Prasad was an MP and MLA long before Nitish even entered politics. I have also made Nitish sit on the CM's chair twice." On the ongoing political discourse about Holi and Ramzan celebrations, Tejashwi took a unifying stance: "Everyone should celebrate their festivals together, and no one should have any problem with it." The JD(U) is yet to officially respond, but party insiders call the opposition's protest a desperate election gimmick. The RJD and its allies are pushing the narrative that Nitish Kumar is incapable of governing Bihar any longer.

## Central government brings new unified Immigration Bill

New Delhi: With a twin-objective -- to underscore India as a more hospitable destination for global visitors and to tackle modern-day security challenges -- the Central government has introduced the Immigration and Foreigners Bill of 2025. A seminal piece of legislation, the Bill is designed to reform and streamline the nation's immigration framework. This forward-thinking measure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Central government, seeks to fortify national security while fostering economic prosperity and ensuring effortless access for legitimate foreign visitors; be they professionals, scholars, business magnates, tourists, or those in quest of medical care. Among the salient features of this Bill are its provisions for a reformed visa regime, wherein streamlined processes for various visa categories -- such as tourist, business, and medical visas -- are poised to render the entry, sojourn, and departure of bona-fide travellers a seamless experience. The legislation also aims to stimulate the nation's economy by facilitating smoother travel processes, thereby enhancing tourism -- including emerging field of medical tourism -- as well as expanding business opportunities.

## POLITICAL PARTIES OFFER MIXED REACTIONS AS SAMBHAL ADMINISTRATION COVERS MOSQUES AHEAD OF HOLI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a precautionary move to ensure peaceful celebrations of both Holi and Ramzan, the administration in UP's Sambhal covered the mosques with tarpaulin sheets ahead of the festivals, sparking reactions from political leaders, with both the BJP and Samajwadi Party members expressing support for the move. Speaking to reporter, BJP's Bihar MLA Haribhushan Thakur defended the action, stating: "It's mandatory because Muslims consider colour inauspicious. This move prevents any potential controversy or clashes. I thank the Uttar Pradesh government for taking this step to avoid communal tensions." Samajwadi Party MP Zia Ur Rehman Barq also acknowledged the initiative, but with some reservations. "It's good that the administration is taking steps, but

I question the need to cover the mosques. The police should be responsible for maintaining law and order. While I don't want to politicise this, if the coverings are necessary, it's for the better. We all



want both Jumma Namaz and Holi celebrations to be peaceful." The heightened security comes after last year's violent protests over a court-ordered survey of the Jama Masjid in Sambhal, which is believed by some to stand on the

site of a demolished Vishnu temple. This event led to clashes, causing fatalities, and the local administration is taking no chances with the upcoming festivals. Holi celebrations in Sambhal kicked off with the Rangbhari Ekadashi festivities, which traditionally last five days before the main celebration on Friday. The increased security measures reflect the sensitivity of the situation, particularly in the wake of the mosque-temple controversy. Holi is the festival of colours and joy and one of the most awaited in India. It is the day when people play gulaal, throw coloured water, eat gujiyas and other delicacies, and much more. It is a day of camaraderie, and people love to spend time with their close friends and family during the day. The excitement is such that people start collecting colours, gulaal, water guns, balloons, and gujiyas

## BENGAL CM GETS CENTRE'S APPROVAL TO VISIT UK TO DELIVER ADDRESS AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY

Team Absolute | Kolkata

The Union government has given permission to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to visit the United Kingdom (UK) later this month to deliver an address at the Oxford University. An email communique on this count has reached the Chief Minister's Office at the State Secretariat Nabanna on Wednesday noon, confirmed a state government official. "As a matter of protocol, such official tours in foreign countries by any Chief Minister require the final clearance from the Union government. Today the clearance related to the Chief Minister's scheduled tour to London has come," confirmed a state government official on

Wednesday. As per the schedule of the Chief Minister fixed so far, she will be leaving Kolkata on March 22. First, she will fly to Dubai from Kolkata, and from Dubai, she will be flying to



London. It is learned that in her speech at the Oxford University, the Chief Minister will be highlighting the role of different social welfare schemes introduced by her government, especially those related to women empowerment, in positively impacting the liveli-

hood of the people of West Bengal. Insiders from the State Secretariat said that besides delivering the lecture at Jadavpur University, the Chief Minister is also scheduled to participate in an industry meet at London, where she will be highlighting the factors related to ease of doing business in West Bengal. She will be returning to Kolkata on March 29. Mamata Banerjee was also invited in 2021 to deliver a lecture at the Oxford University. However, the programme was cancelled at a later state. The Trinamool Congress then alleged that the programme was cancelled due to the clandestine initiative by the Union government. In 2023, the Chief Minister visited Spain to scout investments for the state.

## CM Omar Abdullah says no new liquor vends allotted by J&K govt

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, on Wednesday, reacted to a news report that 200 liquor outlets were being advertised for allotment by the government as part of its excise policy 2025-2026. Taking to his social media platform X page, Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said, "NO NEW LIQUOR VENDS ARE BEING ADVERTISED OR ALLOTTED BY MY GOVERNMENT." "TV channels & news portals should immediately stop peddling this lie." In support of his statement, the Chief Minister also posted a screen shot of a government statement to clarify the actual position. The government statement said, "As per J&K excise policy for the year 2025-2026 notified vide SO 38 dated February 25, 2025, 305 number of vends (wine shops) were out to e-auction on February 15, 2025, and after the culmination of the bidding process, 271 vends got allotted through the e-auction process (conducted by the J&K Bank) to the successful H1 bidders and the rest 34 are being put to re-auction through public notice issued on March 7, 2025, and bidding process (to be conducted by the J&K Bank) shall be completed on March 17, 2025, for the 34 vends.

## Kerala Crime Branch makes second arrest in Rs 1,000 crore CSR fund scam

Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies

The Crime Branch wing of the Kerala Police on Wednesday made a second arrest in the Rs 1,000 crore corporate social responsibility (CSR) fund scam that has rocked the state, after thousands of innocent people were cheated. On Tuesday, hours after a local court in the state capital denied bail to K.N. Anand Kumar, Chairman of the NGO Confederation and a well-known social activist in Kerala, the investigation team took him into custody, but after he fell ill he was admitted to a private hospital, here. Later, the doctors treating him said that he suffered from a health issue and admitted him to the cardiac ICU. However

on Wednesday, a local magistrate appeared online and remanded Kumar to judicial custody and allowed him to continue staying in the hospital. Kumar is alleged to have received Rs 10 lakh per month over several months from 28-year-old Ananthu Krishnan, the alleged mastermind behind the massive scam. Krishnan, considered the kingpin of the fraudulent scheme, is currently in judicial custody. The scam, orchestrated by Krishnan and his associates, involved deceiving victims by offer-



ing high-value consumer products -- such as scooters, laptops, and sewing machines -- at half their market price under the guise of a CSR initiative. This aggressive promotional campaign attracted thousands of unsuspecting investors, who were led to believe they were making a lucrative purchase through corporate sponsorship. As the fraudulent scheme unravelled, several victims came forward, alleging that they had invested their savings in what appeared to be an enticing opportunity. However, once

the promised products failed to materialise, complaints began pouring in from across Kerala, prompting an extensive police investigation. The Crime Branch's investigation has revealed the staggering extent of the scam, leading to the registration of more than 500 cases of financial fraud across all 14 districts of the state. With the arrest of Krishnan, authorities had been closing in on key figures linked to the operation, including Anand Kumar, whose involvement was under scrutiny. Last month, as part of a parallel probe, the Kochi unit of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted raids at 12 locations across Kerala to trace the money trail and possible instances of money laundering linked to the scam.

## Delhi HC directs removal of defamatory video against Isha Foundation, Sadhguru

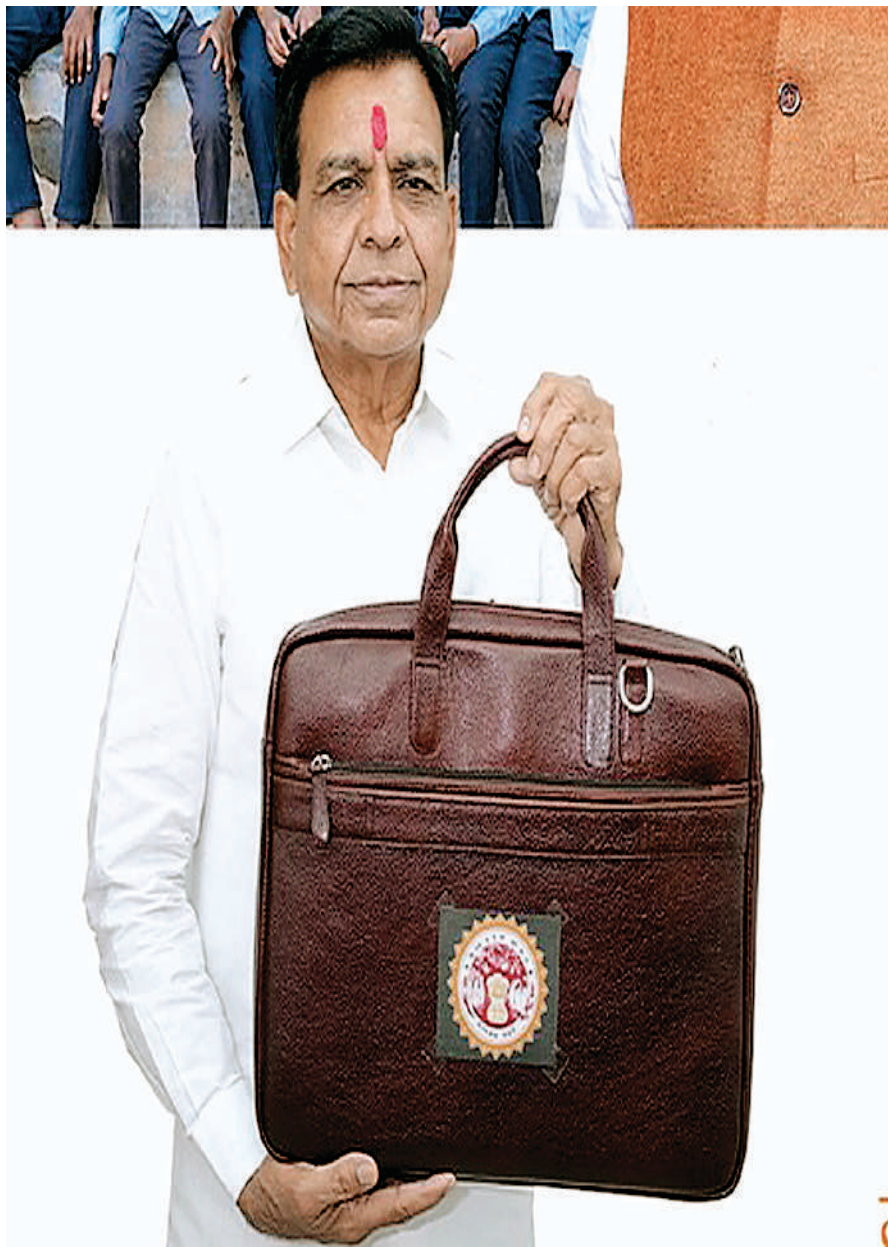
New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed journalist and YouTuber Shyam Meera Singh to take down a video about Isha Foundation and its founder and spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev from all social media platforms, considering it per se defamatory. The order comes in response to a defamation suit filed by Isha Foundation. A bench of Justice Subramonium Prasad ordered Google LLC, X Corp and Meta platforms to take down the video titled "Sadhguru EXPOSED: What's happening in Jaggi Vasudev's Ashram" suggesting that minors were being exploited in Sadhguru's ashram. In its interim order, the Justice Prasad-led Bench also ordered members of the public to not upload the video in question on any social media platform. It said that the contents as mentioned in the video are "per se defamatory" and the same directly impinge upon the reputation of the plaintiff in the eyes of the general public.



## MP PRESENTS RS 4.21 LAKH CRORE BUDGET, UP 15 PC FROM LAST YEAR

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Finance Minister Jagdish Devda presented a Rs 4.21 lakh crore budget in the state Assembly on Wednesday. This is Rs 48,954 crore more than the previous year's budget of Rs 3.75 lakh crore. Keeping the estimated fiscal deficit at 4 per cent of GSDP, this budget is focused on the target of doubling the budget size and GSDP of the state by the year 2029-30. The state Finance Minister made a provision of Rs 5,220 crore under the Chief Minister Kisan Kalyan Yojana, while the Minister said a provision of Rs 2,001 crore has been made under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (crop insurance scheme). The Finance Minister proposed an allocation of Rs 18,669 crore for the Ladli Behna scheme and Rs 1,193 crore under the Ladli Laxmi Yojna, while an amount of Rs 17,136 crore was proposed to be allocated for the Jal Jeevan Mission. Minister Devda said his government focused more on good governance. He said, "Our government has decided that the allowances currently payable to the government servants will be revised in accordance with the relevant levels of the Seventh Pay Commission from April 1, 2025." Similarly, the Minister said a provision of Rs 1,000 crore under the Chief Minister Krishak Faral Uparjan Rahayata Yojana and an equal amount has been earmarked for the payment of bonuses on crop procurement from farmers at the support price. Making another announcement for agriculture and allied activities, the Minister said an amount of Rs 850 crore has been made under the Chief Minister Krishak Unnati Yojana, and a provision of Rs 505 crore under Gau Samvardhan and Animal Conservation has also been made. As several thousand cows are protected in various cowsheds, an amount of Rs 40 per cow is given to the cowsheds across the state, which has been doubled from the past year. To fulfill Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolution of Developed India 2047, the Finance Minister said, "Our government has also kept the vision of Developed Madhya Pradesh 2047; this budget of the state is moving towards achieving that resolution." Announcing the size of the economy of the state, the Minister said the economy of the state has to be made 2 trillion dollars (about Rs 250 lakh crore) by the year 2047. "This budget is a draft to implement the 'GYAN' (Gareeb, Yuva, Annadata and Nari) mantra of PM Modi in the form of a vision on the land of Madhya Pradesh... This budget will strengthen the happiness and prosperity of villages, poor, youth, food providers, women and farmers," the Minister said. On other social sector allocation, Minister Devda announced a provision of Rs 7,132 crore under Atal Griha Jyoti Yojana, another provision of Rs 5,299 crore under reimbursement for free electricity supply to 5 HP agricultural pumps and one light connection by state electricity board, a provision of Rs 700 crore under the Mukhyamantri Jan Kalyan (Sambal) Yojana, an amount of Rs 1,277 crore is earmarked under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana Ayushman Bharat.



CONG CALLS BUDGET AS 'KARZ KA BUDGET'

**Bhopal:** Chief Minister Mohan Yadav-led BJP government, on Wednesday, presented its estimated state Budget of Rs 4.21 lakh crore, calling it a vision document for "Viksit (developed) Madhya Pradesh" on Wednesday, the Opposition Congress called it as "karz ka budget" (budget of debt). The Congress strategically criticised Chief Minister Yadav-led Madhya Pradesh government's Budget in and outside the Assembly premises. Congress MLAs led by Leader of Opposition (LoP), Umang Singhar, opposed the state Budget putting bundles covered with black clothes on heads at the Assembly premises. State Congress President Jitu Patwari and other senior party leaders, including former Chief Minister Kamal Nath, alleged that BJP government's budget is such that the limit of borrowing can be increased for further loan amount.

### SOCIAL IMPACT BONDS' INTRODUCED

**Bhopal:** The Madhya Pradesh government unveiled the Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) while presenting its fiscal blueprint to the State Assembly on Wednesday. An allocation of Rs 20 crore has been earmarked in the Budget to fund this initiative, with the bonds slated for introduction within a month. SIBs operate as an accord with governmental entities, wherein funds are allocated towards enhancing social outcomes. If predefined goals fail to materialise, investors forfeit their returns and receive no reimbursement for their initial investment. "The state plans to introduce social impact bonds as a pioneering financial instrument. Through these bonds, social service providers will secure funding from risk investors to deliver services to the intended beneficiaries. The Social Stock Exchange, operated by the National Stock Exchange, serves as a unified platform to facilitate this entire process," Finance Minister Jagdish Devda said in his Budget speech.

### Every assembly constituency in Madhya Pradesh will have a sports stadium: Vishwas Sarang



Team Absolute | Bhopal

After the Madhya Pradesh government presented the budget on Wednesday, Minister Vishwas Sarang claimed that a sports stadium will be built in every assembly constituency. This will happen in a state for the first time in the history of the country. In fact, the Madhya

Pradesh government presented a budget of 4 lakh 21 thousand crores in the House. This budget is 15 percent more than the previous budget. It has been said to start many new schemes. At the same time, no new tax has been imposed. While talking to the media on the government's budget, Minister Vishwas Sarang said that this budget is a budget that

will establish new dimensions of development by following economic discipline, including complete focus on knowledge, continuous campaign of development and welfare. PM Modi has resolved that by 2027 this country will become a developed India. Every state will have to be determined to fulfill this resolution of the PM. This budget of Madhya Pradesh will work as a foundation for India to become a developed India in 2047. All sectors and all sections are developing. He said that if the country has to be a hit, then the country will have to be fit. On the uproar of Congress over the budget, he said that what can you expect from Congress. This is the reason why Congress is declining rapidly and it is going to end in future.

### FESTIVALS SHOULD NOT BECOME A REASON FOR DISPUTE, OFFICERS ARE GOING TO THE SETTLEMENTS AND APPEALING

INDORE POLICE'S INITIATIVE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Minister Prahlad Patel on Monday defended his controversial remark that "people have developed a habit of begging from the government," clarifying that it was his personal opinion and not linked to the BJP. Patel, who heads the Panchayat and Rural Development Department in the Madhya Pradesh government, said he made the statement at a social program organised by members of his own community. He claimed his remarks were misrepresented. Speaking to reporter, Patel said, "It wasn't a BJP event, and Congress leaders were also present when I advised my community members to uphold self-respect rather than depend on handouts. I have made this appeal before and will continue to do so." Patel also hit back at state Congress president Jitu Patwari,

accusing him of distorting his words for political gain. "The BJP has nothing to do with my statement, yet the Congress is trying to defame the party. Jitu Patwari should apologise for his false allegations," Patel added, alleging a conspiracy behind the controversy. Patwari, responding to Patel's remarks, had accused the BJP of arrogance and insensitivity. "This is an insult to the struggles of those facing hardship," Patwari said on Sunday. "Before elections, they make false promises. When the people remind them, they shamelessly call them beggars. Let them remember -- soon, these very BJP leaders will come begging for votes." The controversy erupted after a video of Patel's speech at the unveiling ceremony of Veerangana Rani Avantibai Lodhi's statue in Rajgarh district surfaced online. In the video, Patel is heard saying: "People have developed a habit of begging from the government. Leaders arrive, and they are handed a basket full of petitions. They are garlanded on stage, and a letter is placed in their hands. This is not a good habit. Instead of asking, cultivate the mindset of giving. This will lead



to a happier life and help build a cultured society." He further remarked that this "army of beggars" is weakening society. "Can you name a martyr who has ever begged?" he asked. "Yet, we continue to organise events, make speeches, and move on. The protest-

ing parents are demanding the government and administration to take strict action against the coaching institute. They allege that there are many teachers who have left the institute recently and they are starting another institute.

### Vehicles older than 15 years will not run on the roads in MP UP TO 25 PERCENT TAX EXEMPTION WILL BE GIVEN ON SCRAPPING

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the budget, it has been made mandatory to scrap all types of vehicles that have completed 15 years of age. Keeping in view the environmental protection, vehicles can be scrapped under the Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility (RVSF). If any government or private vehicle gets scrapped, then he will be given tax exemption on purchasing a new vehicle. Transport expert Shyamsunder Sharma says that this will reduce the number of vehicles increasing across the state including Bhopal. The traffic system will be fine. Also, by scrapping petrol and diesel vehicles which are 15 years old, the environment will be protected. There are many such vehicles which spread air pollution by emitting smoke. This pollutes the surrounding environment, but the condition of the vehicles should also be seen in this. If the vehicle is in good condition, then it should be taken out of the scope of scrap. There are many people who get attached to vehicles in an emotional way and the PUC and fitness of their vehicles are fine. The best thing in the budget is that there will be a tax exemption on buying a new vehicle after scrapping the old vehicle. A provision has been made to give a tax exemption of up to 15 percent on transport vehicles and up to 25 percent on non-transport vehicles.



### FIRE BROKE OUT IN 15 SHOPS SELLING PRASADI IN SALKANPUR



Team Absolute | Bhopal

On Wednesday, a fire broke out in the shops of the famous Devi Dham Salkanpur, in which about 10 to 15 shops were burnt to ashes. The incident of fire took place at around 8.30 in the morning. Local people told that as soon

as the fire broke out in the shops in the morning, all the shopkeepers reached the temple and called the water tankers and florists used in the construction work of Devi Lok at the temple, and the shopkeepers extinguished the fire with plastic pots. Due to the steep slope of the temple, the fire brigade could

reach late. Local businessmen Arvind Malviya and Pankaj Sharma told that the fire was spreading rapidly. The shopkeepers showed promptness and controlled the fire. If the fire had not been extinguished, almost all the shops would have been burnt in the fire. The speed of the fire was so fast that the curtains, banners and mats of the front line after crossing the road also got burnt in the fire. SDM Dinesh Tomar, SDOP Budni Ravi Sharma, Tehsildar Bhopendra Kailashya, Police Station Incharge Rajesh Kahare, Salkanpur Outpost Incharge Bhavna Yadav, Temple Trust Secretary Ramkishore Dubey and other administrative officials reached the spot and inspected the incident. The police is investigating the cause of the fire, the reason is unknown at the moment.

### 14 Holi special trains including Rewa-Rani Kamalapati

Team Absolute | Indore

On the occasion of Holi festival, West Central Railway has announced to run several special trains keeping in view the convenience of passengers and increasing crowd. These trains will help passengers reach their destination easily. Railways has started trains connecting major places like Rewa, Rani Kamalapati, Danapur, Jabalpur, Kota, Anand Vihar and Hazrat Nizamuddin. Reservation of these trains can be done through computerized centers or IRCTC website. This step of the Railways has been taken for the convenience of passengers during Holi. Rewa-Rani Kamalapati Superfast Special Train 02186 will leave from Rewa on March 12 at 12:30 pm and will reach Rani Kamalapati at 9:10 pm. In return, train 02185 will leave from Rani Kamalapati at 10:15 pm and will reach Rewa at 7:30 am the next day. Rewa-Rani Kamalapati Special Train 01704 will

depart from Rewa on March 16 at 6:45 pm and reach Rani Kamalapati at 4:30 am the next day. Train 01703 will depart from Rani Kamalapati on March 17 at 6:15 am and reach Rewa at 5:10 pm. Rani Kamalapati-Danapur Special Train 01663 will depart from Rani Kamalapati on March 12 and 15 at 2:25 pm and reach Danapur at 8:45 am the next day. Train 01662 will depart from Danapur on March 13 and 16 at 11:45 am and reach Rani Kamalapati at 9:50 am the next day. Jabalpur-Danapur Special Train 01705 will depart from Jabalpur on March 11 at 7:40 pm and reach Danapur at 8:45 am the next day. Train 01706 will depart from Danapur on March 12 at 11:45 am and will reach Jabalpur at 3:40 pm the next day. Kota-Danapur Special Train 09817 will depart from Kota on March 15 at 9:05 pm and reach Danapur at 6:30 pm the next day. Train 09818 will depart from Danapur on March 16 at 9:15 pm and will reach Kota at 10:25 pm the next day.

### Citizen survey started for Madhya Pradesh Vision Document

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav launched the citizen survey for the developed Madhya Pradesh vision document being prepared by the State Niti Aayog here this evening. According to official sources, the citizen survey has been started with the objective of knowing the participation and opinion of the general public in the creation of 'Developed Madhya Pradesh @ 2047'. A QR code has also been made available along with the website for this survey, where the common man will also be able to participate in the citizen survey and give various suggestions. Chief Minister Dr.

Yadav said that the participation of all the citizens of the state is being ensured in the creation of 'Developed Madhya Pradesh @ 2047'. It is our endeavor that this vision document should not be just a government document but a document of the public. For this purpose, in the process of its creation, along with subject experts, stakeholders and departmental officials, the expectations and suggestions of the people of the state at large have been included. The Chief Minister said that our children are the future of the country and the state and to give place to their aspirations in this vision, essay competitions were also organized in the schools of the state on the subject of Developed Madhya Pradesh @

2047. Along with this, opinions were sought from the people from the district level to the Gram Panchayat level through Jan Samvad programs. More than 2.5 lakh citizens have ensured their participation in this process. In this episode, a citizen survey is being launched today, so that the opinion of maximum citizens of the state can be obtained. Madhya Pradesh State Niti Aayog is playing an important role in preparing the Developed Madhya Pradesh @ 2047 vision document. One can participate in this survey through the website of the Commission. A QR code is also available for this. It is noteworthy that on the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has been envisaged to become a 30 trillion

dollar economy and a democratic global superpower on completion of 100 years of independence in the year @ 2047. With its rich history, diverse cultures, vast natural resources and central geographical location, Madhya Pradesh is ready to play a key role in shaping India's future and realizing the dream of a developed India @2047. Deputy Chief Minister Jagdish Devda, Chief Secretary Anurag Jain, Additional Chief Secretary in the Chief Minister's Office Dr. Rajesh Rajoura, Additional Chief Secretary Urban Development and Housing and Planning Economic Statistics Sanjay Shukla and other senior officials were present on the occasion of the launch of the Citizen Survey.





WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY POLLS

Bengal Assembly polls and Congress

After Trinamool Congress announced not to ally with the grand old party in the West Bengal Assembly polls, it is to be seen whether Congress will forge an alliance with the Left Front or go it alone. Sources in the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee (WBPC) said there is a divided house in the grand old party over the alliance with the CPI(M)-led Left Front. "Those against any understanding to continue in the 2026 Assembly polls have their logic. Congress first had an alliance with Trinamool Congress in the 2009 Lok Sabha polls and 2011 Assembly elections. Their logic is that Trinamool Congress constantly weakened Congress in West Bengal by poaching the latter's elected public representatives one after another," said a senior state Congress leader. However, the state Congress leader added that there is an opposite view within the state unit of the party in this matter. However, he added, Congress' central high command is not in favour of enforcing any decision on this issue on the state leadership. Complications on the seat sharing agreement are there on the part of CPI(M) as well, which surface from the proposals in the draft political resolution for the 24th party Congress scheduled at Madurai in Tamil Nadu in April this year. In that draft political resolution, released last month, the CPI(M)'s central leadership focussed more on independent political lines in the coming days rather than on electoral understanding. To maintain the independent line, the draft resolution had cautiously touched upon West Bengal and Tripura, where the CPI(M)-led Left Front had electoral understanding and seat-sharing arrangements with Congress in the past elections.

CAN CONGRESS EVER RETURN IN GUJARAT? IT NEEDS TO DO THESE 3 THINGS

Amitabh Tiwari

India | Agencies

Rahul Gandhi recently threw an open challenge to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), claiming that the Congress would defeat the BJP in the 2027 assembly elections in the state. However, he highlighted several challenges the party faces in accomplishing his 'Mission Gujarat'. The Leader of Opposition alleged that a section of partymen in the state has been in "collusion" with the BJP and that only after getting rid of such leaders the Congress will be able to do well in the state, where it has been out of power for 30 years now. Speaking to Congress workers in Gujarat on Saturday, Rahul said that the revival of the party in the state was not a "two-to-three-year" but a "50-year project" adding that even if the party had to remove "20-30 people", it would do it. Rahul's comments have sparked controversy. "From alleging his party, people, constitutional institutions, and media, he has started blaming his own people. I'll suggest he do self-introspection instead of blaming others," said BJP leader Sudhanshu Trivedi, highlighting the Congress's internal struggles. No matter the rhetoric, defeating the BJP in Gujarat is no easy task. The Congress was routed here in 2022, winning just 17 seats (60 less than in 2017) with a 27% vote share (a drop of 15 percentage points). In contrast, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which was just making its electoral debut in the state, ended up bagging an impressive 13% votes-at the expense of the Congress. This also resulted in a record mandate for the BJP, which got 156 seats with a 53% vote share. The 2022 results were a big setback for the Congress considering its performance in 2017, when it had won 77 seats and scored a 42% vote share, pushing the BJP to less than a hundred seats; the latter got



just seven more seats than a simple majority. There are three things the Congress must focus on to change its fate in Gujarat. One, to be fair, Rahul is not wrong in his analysis about Congress leaders in the state jeopardising the party's prospects. Each assembly term, it sees a clutch of MLAs switching to the BJP. The usual trajectory is that they resign, become BJP candidates in by-polls, and return to the assembly. Between 2017 and 2022, some three dozen Congress MLAs and leaders joined the BJP. Even in the current assembly, the party's tally is down to 13. Four MLAs resigned, joined the BJP, and then won the by-polls held recently. Even so, the Congress high command cannot escape full responsibility for the party's sorry state. Even after its stellar performance in the 2017 elections, when it had benefited from the Patidar agitation, it ended up losing young firebrand leaders like Hardik Patel and

Alpesh Thakor to the BJP. While Patel alleged that there was a lack of seriousness about all issues in the Congress's senior leadership, Thakor said that "weak leaders" were at the helm of affairs and that the OBC community wasn't getting the representation it deserved. The Congress had consistently enjoyed a strong vote share of 38% to 42% between the 2002 and 2017 elections. However, internal sabotage and its inability to present an alternative vision gave way to the opposition AAP to claim some space in the state. According to exit polls after the 2022 polls, 13% of Leuva Patels, 6% of Kadva Patels, 6% of OBCs, 20% of SCs, 5% of STs and 41% of Muslims deserted the party, in comparison to 2017. Had AAP not been in the fray, the Congress theoretically might have won 55 seats in the last assembly polls. Herein lies the second correction. Today, the Congress needs, more than anything else, to

identify leaders who stand with the public, fight for them and respect them, and have the Congress in their heart. Those who do not fall into this category need to be weeded out. The control of the organisation, in the words of Rahul, should also be with such leaders. "The moment we do this, the people of Gujarat will want to storm into the party," he has said. In order to make this possible, the old guard will need to make space for new leaders who can take on the BJP on the ground, raising local issues. The AAP's losses in Delhi and the dent in Kejriwal's clean image are opportunities that the Congress must bank on in order to regain the vote it had lost to the party in Gujarat. Finally, while the Congress has a strong base in Gujarat's rural areas (109 seats), the BJP has the upper

hand in urban seats (74). But, with Gujarat's high urban population, the Congress cannot really afford to go down without a fight in such constituencies. In 2017, it was leading 62-43 in rural areas against the BJP, while in urban areas, it trailed at 15-57. Of the 36 purely urban seats in three big cities-Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Gandhinagar-the Congress could win just five. To improve its tally in these areas in 2027, the Congress will have to win over the dominant middle class here, which favours a 'business-friendly' BJP over an apparently 'pro-Muslim' Congress. Without these three steps, it would be difficult for the Congress to even dream of making a comeback in Gujarat, the BJP's strongest fortress.

international

HUMBLED TO RECEIVE HIGHEST NATIONAL AWARD OF MAURITIUS, DEDICATE IT TO 140 CRORE PEOPLE OF INDIA: PM MODI

Port Louis | Agencies

Spotlighting the special and unique partnership between India and Mauritius, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who on Wednesday attended the country's National Day celebrations as the Chief Guest for the second time in last 10 years, said that he was "humbled" to receive the Highest National Award of Mauritius. "Humbled to receive the Highest National Award of Mauritius. I dedicate it to the 140-crore people of India and the centuries-old friendship between our nations," said PM Modi during his remarks at the event. PM Modi is the Chief Guest at Mauritius' National Day for the second time, an honour he first received in 2015. The rare repeat invitation underscores India's special relationship with Mauritius which remains rooted in shared history, culture, and diasporas. The government of Mauritius on Tuesday announced its decision to bestow the country's highest honour 'The Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean' to Prime Minister Modi during his ongoing two-day State Visit to the Indian Ocean archipelago. Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam made the



announcement just before PM Modi began addressing an Indian community event in Port Louis on Tuesday evening. Prime Minister Modi is the first Indian to receive the honour. It is also the 21st international award bestowed upon PM Modi by a country. "It is very fitting for you, Prime Minister. Since we became a republic, only five foreign dignitaries

have got that title and among them there is a person who we call the 'Gandhi of Africa' - Nelson Mandela who received it in 1998. Let me tell you that we are greatly honoured to have you amongst us here today and that you managed to find time out of your very, very busy schedule," said Ramgoolam amidst huge applause. In December,

Kuwait bestowed its highest honour 'The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer' to PM Modi, in appreciation of his distinguished achievements and the efforts made to strengthen the relations between the two countries. The Order is awarded to Heads of State and foreign Sovereigns and to members of foreign royal families in sign of friendship.

Taiwan to conduct 'immediate response' military drills to counter China

Taipei | Agencies

Taiwan is set to conduct a new round of "immediate response" military drills that will begin on March 17 and last five days, local media reported on Wednesday. These drills by the Taiwanese defence forces will involve all military branches of Taiwan in response to China's grey zone warfare, state-run Central News Agency reported, quoting military sources. The drill will be "comprehensive," with troops dispatched to their assigned defensive positions accordingly, the source said, without elaborating. The armed forces would be put on high alert through the five-day drills, and the comprehensive exercise was planned as a warm-up for this year's annual Han Kuang exercises, reports the leading Taiwanese newspaper, Taipei Times. The military drills, scheduled for next week, are also to prevent China from sabotaging the nation's submarine cables, a defence official said on Tuesday.

Pro-Palestine protesters rally against Trump administration in New York City



New York | Agencies

Hundreds of pro-Palestine protesters staged a rally and march in New York City in protest of the Donald Trump administration's policies on the Middle East, campus protests and immigration. Protesters on Tuesday took to the streets and marched to the City Hall in Lower Manhattan from Washington Park in the afternoon, with a dozen of them detained by the police, Xinhua news agency reported. Last Friday, the Trump administration canceled \$400 million in federal fund-

ing for Columbia University in New York City on anti-Semitic grounds and opened a review of more universities. Mahmoud Khalil, a Columbia graduate student, was arrested on Saturday in his university dormitory by staff members from the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Khalil, a permanent resident of the United States, was instrumental in the pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University that began in April 2024. Khalil's wife, a US citizen who is eight months pregnant, also received threats from the ICE, according to Khalil's attorney.

Violence, displacements overwhelm healthcare system in Sudan's El-Fasher: UN



United Nations | Agencies

Violence and waves of displacements have overwhelmed the fragile healthcare system in El-Fasher, the capital of Sudan's North Darfur state, UN humanitarian

partners have been trying to provide medical supplies, but their efforts to deliver continue to be impeded by insecurity and access constraints, the office said. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that more than 70 per cent of hospitals and health facilities across areas impacted by the hostilities in Sudan are no longer operational, leaving millions without healthcare. "Sudan's health system has also come under relentless attack," WHO said. "As of mid-February, WHO recorded nearly 150 attacks on health care in Sudan since the war there began, but the real figure could be far higher." OCHA appealed to the parties involved in the conflict to ensure safe, sustained, and timely humanitarian access to reach people needing life-saving support.

YEMEN'S HOUTHIS SAY RESUMING ATTACKS ON ISRAELI SHIPS IN ARABIAN, RED SEAS

Sanaa | Agencies

Yemen's Houthi group announced the resumption of attacks against Israeli ships in the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Bab al-Mandab Strait. Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea on Tuesday said in a statement aired by Houthi-run al-Masirah TV that the attacks were resumed to support the Palestinians and pressure Israel to reopen the border crossings for the entry of aid into Gaza. On Friday, Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi issued a four-day ultimatum to Israel, demanding the allowance of humanitarian aid into the besieged enclave, or his group would resume naval attacks, Xinhua news agency reported. Previously, al-Houthi had warned of resuming attacks on Israeli cities and Israeli-linked commercial vessels in the Red Sea if Israel continued to violate the Gaza ceasefire. The Houthis had launched numerous



drone and missile attacks targeting Israeli cities and commercial ships in the Red Sea in support of the Palestinians between November 2023 and January 19, 2025, when the

Hamas-Israel ceasefire took effect. The group also attacked US aircraft carriers and naval vessels, vowing to close the Bab al-Mandab Strait if the US continued military shipments to

Israel. The Houthi attacks ceased following a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas. However, the group now threatens to resume operations if the blockade on Gaza is not lifted.



MAHA GOVT CRACKS DOWN ON FAKE BIRTH AND DEATH CERTIFICATES, AMENDS REGISTRATION LAWS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government, on Wednesday, released a notification curbing measures to prevent Bangladeshis and Rohingyas from obtaining fake certificates in the state.



certificates are required for school admission, passport, 7/12 records and other educational matters. To ensure that citizens receive birth and death certificates in a timely manner, the moratorium on issuing late birth and death certificates has been lifted as per the Revenue Department's order dated January 21, 2025.

must be backed by substantial evidence. Failure to provide valid proof will result in criminal charges. Certificates will be issued only after verifying records from the place of birth or death.

births and deaths is received after a period of more than one year, the Authorised Magistrate at the place where such person was born and died shall ensure the accuracy of the information and charge a late fee, thereby fulfilling several legal requirements.

Solar electrification of PHCs in 18 dists to ensure quality healthcare services: Maha CM



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday said that the primary health centers in 18 districts of Maharashtra are being solar-electrified.

facilitate the use of renewable energy in the state. "The solar electrification of primary health centers in Nashik, Ahilyanagar, Jalgaon, Buldhana, Gadchiroli, Nagpur, Latur, and Wardha has been completed.

Talks of 10 to 15 per cent hike in ready reckoner rates are 'baseless', says Maha Minister

Team Absolute | Mumbai

State Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Wednesday scoffed at rumours about 10 to 15 per cent rise in ready reckoner rates in Maharashtra from April 1 for the fiscal year 2025-26.



Minister said that the government has no intention of increasing ready reckoner rates in any part of the state, but while determining prices in the state, factors like local conditions, development rate and demand and supply are being considered.

mines the ready reckoner rates based on the advice of local people's representatives and experts, he added. In this, some reduction in ready reckoner rates is also considered as per the need, the Minister said.

Oppn stages walkout as Maha govt 'fails' to increase aid under Ladki Bahin Yojana

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Opposition in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly on Wednesday created a ruckus and staged a walkout to protest the Mahayuti government's "failure" to increase the monthly financial aid to beneficiaries of the Ladki Bahin Yojana from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,100.



the Assembly election that we will increase the aid if voted to power. Have I ever made a statement about when the aid will be given? Show me. We will announce when there will be a rise and after that, the

women beneficiaries will start getting it." Further, Chief Minister Fadnavis also said that the increased payout to beloved sisters is being worked out. During the debate on the annual Budget, the opposition leaders,

including Jayant Patil, Vijay Wadetiwar, and Jitendra Awhad, among others, allegedly slammed the government for not increasing the monthly aid to Rs 2,100 for women beneficiaries.

RAM KADAM DEFENDS MAHA CM FADNAVIS' WARNING ON NOISE LIMIT VIOLATIONS AT PLACES OF WORSHIP

Team Absolute | Mumbai

BJP MLA Ram Kadam defended Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis government's commitment to enforcing strict action against those violating noise limits set for loudspeakers at places of worship in the state.

said. "Anyone violating these limits will face stringent consequences." The Chief Minister reiterated the specific rules: No loudspeaker use is permitted from 10 pm to 6 am, with permissible sound levels capped at 55 decibels during the day and 45 decibels at night.



well-being of the country," Kadam stated. Kadam also reacted on the controversy surrounding the Ladki Bahini Yojana,

where Opposition leaders have raised concerns about the Maharashtra government's financial support to women.

Pune Man's Mother Denied Him Money For Drugs. He Then Did This

Team Absolute | Pune

A 27-year-old man set over a dozen two-wheelers, belonging to residents of the society he lived in, on fire after his mother denied him money for drugs in Pune on Wednesday.



family has been disturbed. We have a bank loan to pay as well. Don't leave him. If they leave him, he will burn us and the entire building. He has threatened to burn those living in the opposite slums as well...Thankfully, the residents have asked

to evict yet. I don't know where we will go if they throw us out," she said. Swapnil's brother also made a similar request to the police. "He has been troubling our family for the past 10 years. He is addicted to weed and alcohol.

Abducting BJP worker from Beed arrested for attempted murders, other offences

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker, who was abducting in attempt to murder and other cases, has been arrested from Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra Police said on Wednesday.

from these, he is also booked in a case under the Forest Act, a police officer said. He is also booked in some cases in Ahilya Nagar district of Maharashtra. Bhosale is an office-bearer of BJP's nomadic tribes wing, 'Bhatke Vimukta Aghadi'. He is a resident of Zapedwadi in Shirur Kasar tahsil, the officer informed.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

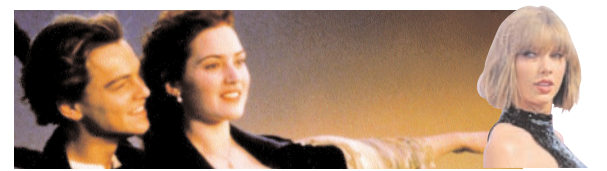
Mumbai on Tuesday recorded its hottest day of the year yet, with maximum temperatures soaring to 39.2°C. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said residents may experience above-normal temperatures over the next few days, with maximum temperatures ranging between 36°C and 38°C.

Mumbai hit by year's hottest day at 39.2 degrees Celsius



on weather conditions. Sharing its forecast for western states and peninsular India, Skymet Weather stated, "Hot and humid weather conditions may persist over Konkan, Goa, and coastal Karnataka until March 12. Heatwave to severe heatwave condi-

tions are possible over parts of Gujarat and pockets of South Rajasthan on March 11 and 12. Isolated heatwave conditions may also occur in Vidarbha and other of Maharashtra and Odisha between March 11 and 13.



## Amber Midthunder says 'Novocaine' co-star Jack Quaid never gives a 'bad take' for scenes

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Amber Midthunder has lavished praise on her co-star Jack Quaid, with whom she shares the screen in 'Novocaine'. The actress lauded his ability to get the tone and pitch of the character right, as she said that all his takes are top-notch.

'Novocaine' is an action-packed thriller, and promises high-stakes show-downs, explosive sequences, and a gripping storyline that will keep audiences on the edge of their seats.

Talking about Jack, Amber said, "He's amazing. I don't think I ever saw Jack do one bad take! He's an incredible actor. When we started with some of the big scenes, it was nice to feel like I had a great scene partner who was also a great actor and a support system throughout the process".

She further mentioned, "It means that our action is really exciting and different, but there's also a lot of heart in the movie at the same time. Jack did a phenomenal job of bringing this character to life and marrying, not just the action and the heart, but also the humour".

Earlier, Jack, who essays the role of Nathan Caine in the film, revealed that his passion for action films is what drew him to this explosive role.

For Quaid, taking on Nathan Caine was a dream come true, especially as a longtime fan of action-packed cinema, especially the fun ones of the 1980s and '90s. Talking about his love for action films, he said, "I find these movies so impressive when they're done right, especially if they can make you feel something or elicit a reaction. So what I loved about this movie is that it's very much inspired by older action movies where the focus is on the fun of it all".

In preparing the actor for the role, the directors provided Quaid with a list of movies to view. The actor shared, "Firstly, Dan and Bobby are two of my favorite people I've ever worked with. Their passion and joy about this entire experience was so infectious, and it created an amazing environment on set".

Directed by Dan Berk and Robert Olsen, 'Novocaine' is set to release in India on March 14, 2025 by Paramount Pictures.



## Renee Zellweger reveals she 'never' imagined starring in four 'Bridget Jones' movies

Los Angeles | Agencies

Renee Zellweger first played the iconic character in 2001's 'Bridget Jones's Diary'. The actress never thought that she would end up featuring in all the four installments of the movie.

Asked if she ever imagined herself playing the character in four films, Zellweger told The Hollywood Reporter: "Never. Never. No, I just didn't want to get fired off the first thing, and I didn't want to let anybody down, and I wanted Helen to be happy."

The latest 'Bridget Jones' movie, 'Mad About the Boy', features a host of so-called Easter eggs, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Zellweger said: "That's life, isn't it? We have our little things that are consistent throughout our lives that people can identify as recognisably true to who we are as people. And I don't throw my dresses away - I wear 'em for 25 years."

Director Michael Morris has described the movie's Easter eggs as "fan service".

The filmmaker explained: "There are more probably than you would ever see in the first run through. You could say Easter eggs are fan service. What's wrong with fan service? Those are people who have been with the franchise for 25 years."

"I really wanted to do a little bit of that, the texture and you know it's there."

Helen Fielding wrote the latest movie in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The novelist is said to be inspired by some of the resilience she witnessed during that time.

The 67-year-old screenwriter said: "Our family had lost quite a lot of people and not just the children's dad but close friends - it was a very hashtag deathly time for us."



## DENISE RICHARDS BREAKS IN TEARS AS DAUGHTER TELLS HER ABOUT AMBITIOUS NOSE JOB

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actress Denise Richards is disturbed with her daughter, Sami Sheen's decision to get a nose job.

During an episode of 'Denise Richards & Her Wild Things', Denise Richards' 20-year-old daughter, whom she shares with ex Charlie Sheen, revealed she was getting a nose job, reports 'People' magazine.

On their way to the consultation, Sami explained that this is something she has wanted "for as long as I can remember. Imagine how much prettier I'll be", Sami said as Denise rolled her eyes.



"(I'll be) able to contour without there being lumps on the side of it. Maybe we need to take you to an eye doctor", the 'Real Housewives of Beverly Hills' alum, 54, quipped, insisting Sami looked great. As per 'People', reflecting on her high school experience, Sami opened up about what pushed her to want a rhinoplasty. She said that people made fun of her nose, which deepened her insecurity.

"I had to deal with kids bullying me", she shared. "People would say I looked like my dad. I actually got a comment the other day of someone saying, 'You'll never be as pretty as your mom'".

Sami then joked that even if she "lived in Alabama" and had parents who "worked a normal job", she would still want a different nose. "I have this freaking honker stuck to my face", she declared. When Denise disagreed, she said, "Mom, I'm literally paying for your nose".

In her confessional, Denise admitted that it makes her emotional to know Sami wants to get plastic surgery.

"For my daughter to want to get her nose done, it made me so sad. I feel bad that she has to live up to my nose, or whatever, because I don't want (my daughters) to feel they have to look a certain way", she said breaking down in tears. "There were times I wanted to move the kids out of Los Angeles, and I couldn't because of where I worked. And they had two parents in this business. I feel bad".

## Gal Gadot talks about health scare due to blood clot in brain

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Gal Gadot revealed that she was "scared to death" after a blood clot was discovered in her brain in February 2024, right before she gave birth to her daughter Ori. The 'Wonder Woman' actress, who also has children Alma Maya and Daniella, with husband Jason Varsano, said on 'The Tonight Show' starring Jimmy Fallon: "I had a huge scare. All of a sudden, I realised what it means to be scared to death."

Gadot suffered from headaches for weeks before the issue was correctly diagnosed, reports femalefirst.co.uk. The actress was also "very pregnant" when her symptoms began. Gadot shared: "I had major headaches for three weeks and I was seeing doctors and different neurologists."

Initially, doctors blamed the actress' headaches on migraines and hormones. But the actress' mother convinced the actress to seek an MRI scan.

She added: "They found out this horrible thing and we were rushed to the hospital. And they got the baby out immediately. I went through a thrombectomy." Gadot actually opened up about her health scare during an Instagram post in December. The actress wrote: "In February, during my eighth month of pregnancy, I was diagnosed with a massive blood clot in my brain. For weeks, I had endured excruciating headaches that confined me to bed, until I finally underwent an MRI that revealed the terrifying truth."

"In one moment, my family and I were faced with how fragile life can be. It was a stark reminder of how quickly everything can change, and in the midst of a difficult year, all I wanted was to hold on and live. We rushed to the hospital, and within hours, I underwent emergency surgery. My daughter, Ori, was born during that moment of uncertainty and fear. (sic)"



## Salma Hayek talks about aging: I'm still sexy and I embrace it

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Salma Hayek talked about how growing older along with Hollywood's changing mindset towards middle aged women has helped her expand her horizons as a performer.

The 58-year-old star, who was known as "the sexy girl", told Marie Claire magazine: "There was a time when I was the sexy girl, but thank God age came and gave me the ability to expand to other territories. Although I'm still sexy and I embrace it."

She is also inspired by the idea of makings sure everyone realises "women are not disposable" once they reach "a certain age," reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She added: "Another calling that I have is to remind everyone that women are not disposable after a certain age in any department. We should battle that with all we've got."

Despite noting the way Hollywood has progressed, Hayek said that there is still a lot of work to be done, including the way people talk about the performers when a film is successful.

She said: "The credit goes to the man. The girl is just the girl."

The actress added: "I do have an audience and they go see me. But I've never gotten credit for the audience I bring into the cinema."

When it comes to her age, Hayek previously said how "meditation" is the secret to looking so youthful.

She has left fans stunned on Instagram with her bikini snaps over the years, and she opened up on how she avoids being bothered by growing old.

She told 'Entertainment Tonight' back in September 2023: "I really believe it is. People say it's exercising. I think it's meditation."

"You have to find your way. For me, exercising is hard... It's really, really difficult to have the discipline to do it. But meditation is a walk in the park, because it's my own form of it. You sit in a moment with yourself, that's already meditation. But do I do it every day."

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Michelle Randolph



## National Youth Athletics

# SURAJ SINGH SETS 1,000M RECORD; HARYANA EMERGE OVERALL WINNERS

Team Absolute | Patna

Uttarakhand's Suraj Singh hogged the spotlight as he became champion in the boys' 1,000m race with a new national record in the U18 group on the final day of the 20th National Youth Athletics Championship at Patliputra Sports Complex here on Wednesday. The boys' 1,000m race turned out to be the most exciting event of the final day as the top four runners improved the U18 meet record and the top two improved the 15-year-old national youth record of 2:27.20, set by Rahul Pal in 2010. Singh's winning time was 2:26.04, a National Youth Record. Vikas Kumar of Uttar Pradesh won silver with a time of 2:26.59 and also dipped below the national youth record. Sohiv Vijender of Haryana won bronze with a time of 2:27.27 which was better than the meet record of 2:28.89 clocked last year

by Md Nooruddin in Bilaspur. The boys' javelin throw gold went to Himanshu of Haryana whose best throw was 72.00m. While Misti Karmakar from West Bengal took home girls javelin throw gold with a distance of 45.04m. Overall, Nitin Gupta of Uttar Pradesh, who excelled in boys' 5000m walk, and Tamil Nadu's 400m runner Edwina Jason were declared the Best Athletes of the meet. Uttar Pradesh won the Team Championships in the boys' U18 section with 38 points while Haryana bagged the Team Championships in the girls' U18 section with 15 points. Haryana was declared the overall winner with 87 points with Uttar Pradesh following close

behind with 51 and Maharashtra in third place with 46. Results on the final day:

### U18 Boys

200m: Sayed Sabeer (Karnataka) 21.67 seconds, J Nived Krishna (Kerala) 21.85 seconds, Aditya Pisal (Maharashtra) 21.96 seconds. 1,000m: Suraj Singh (Uttarakhand) 2:26.04 (NR). Previous record of 2:27.20 was set by Rahul Pal in 2010, Vikas Kumar (Uttar Pradesh) 2:26.59, Sohiv Vijender (Haryana) 2:27.27. Long jump: Shivam Yadav (Uttar Pradesh) 7.26m, Rajeev Roy (West Bengal) 7.12m, Pradeep Kumar (Bihar) 6.69m. Javelin throw: Himanshu



# ROHIT CLIMBS TO NO. 3, GILL REMAINS ON TOP IN ODI RANKINGS AFTER CHAMPIONS TROPHY TRIUMPH

Dubai | Agencies

After the recently concluded ICC Men's Champions Trophy-winning campaign, India skipper Rohit Sharma moved up to third place in the ODI batting rankings chart, led by fellow opener Shubman Gill. India lifted their third Champions Trophy title with a thrilling four-wicket victory over New Zealand in Dubai, star performers from both teams have been rewarded in the rankings update released on Wednesday. Rohit, who smashed a match-winning 76 off 83 balls in the final, jumped two places to third. For his impressive performance in the final, Rohit was awarded the Player of the Match trophy. Meanwhile, Virat Kohli, who amassed 218 runs in the tournament, remains in the top five (fifth place) following his haul of 218 runs in the tournament. New Zealand's batters also made notable progress. Daryl Mitchell moves up one place to sixth, while young sensation Rachin Ravindra climbs an impressive 14

spots to 14th. Glenn Phillips also makes a leap, advancing six places to 24th. New Zealand's skipper Mitchell Santner was one of the standout performers with the ball, taking nine wickets in the tournament, including two in the final. His efforts see him jump six places to No.2 in the ODI bowling rankings, just behind Sri Lanka's Maheesh Theekshana. Fellow Kiwi Michael Bracewell also made a significant gain, moving 10 places up to 18th. India's spin duo Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja saw their rankings improve after their key contributions in India's unbeaten campaign. Kuldeep, who picked up seven wickets, climb to No.3, while Jadeja moved up to 10th after claiming five wickets. Afghanistan's Azmatullah Omarzai remained the top-ranked ODI all-rounder, but the Champions Trophy saw a major shake-up just below him. Mitchell Santner rose to fourth, while Michael Bracewell (up to 7th) and Rachin (up to 8th) make jumps after their all-round displays.



# GILL NAMED ICC MEN'S PLAYER OF THE MONTH FOR FEBRUARY

Dubai | Agencies

India's in-form opener Shubman Gill has been named ICC Men's Player of the Month award for February 2025. The 25-year-old outshone Australia's Steve Smith and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips to claim the honour. This is the third ICC Men's Player of the Month honour for Gill, who had previously won twice in 2023 - January and September. "I am elated to win the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for February. Nothing gives me more motivation than performing with the bat and winning matches for my country," Gill said in a statement. "The lead-up to the Champions Trophy 2025 was very crucial and I am glad I was able to



make the most out of it. It has been a phenomenal start to the year individually as well as for us as a unit. I am looking forward to an action-packed cricketing year ahead and hope to win many more matches for India." Gill's amassed 406 runs in just five ODIs over the course of the month, averaging 101.50 at a strike rate of 94.19. This included his stellar outing in the 3-0 series win over England, where he registered three consecutive scores of over fifty. The right-hander began with a fluent 87 in Nagpur, followed it up with a composed 60 in Cuttack, and capped it off in grand fashion with a masterful 112 off 102 balls in Ahmedabad. His innings earned him the Player of the Match award as well as the Player of the Series honour.

# SVITOLINA, ANDREEVA, SWIATEK REACH INDIAN WELLS QUARTERFINALS

Team Absolute | Indian Wells

No. 23 seed Elina Svitolina of Ukraine withstood rain and battled into the Indian Wells Open quarterfinals with a 5-7, 6-1, 6-2 upset of No. 4 seed American Jessica Pegula. The former Indian Wells semifinalist shook off her early misfortunes and flipped the match on its ear as she claimed 12 of the final 15 games to earn a trip to her 21st WTA 1000 quarterfinal, and first since 2021. On a misty day in the California desert, Svitolina and Pegula had to brave a lengthy rain delay after the first game of the third set. It was Svitolina who came back from the interlude with fire in her eyes. She put Pegula on the back foot and raced away with the



win. Pegula entered Indian Wells having just won the Austin title earlier this month, but Svitolina came out on top, earning just her third win over Pegula in their eight career meetings. Svitolina, who is into the quarterfinals at Tennis Paradise for the first time since 2019, will face either Mirra Andreeva, who ousted Elena Rybakina for the second time in three weeks to advance to the

quarterfinals with a commanding 6-1, 6-2 win. The 17-year-old Russian Andreeva's run in the desert comes fresh off the heels of her capturing a maiden WTA 1000 title at the Dubai Championships, which propelled her to become the youngest player to reach the Top 10 since 2007. Earlier, Iga Swiatek thumped 15th-seeded Karolina Muchova with 6-1, 6-1 victory to

march into the quarterfinals. The Pole has dropped just six games through three rounds, which ties Monica Seles' record for the fewest games dropped en route to the Indian Wells quarterfinals, with a minimum of three matches played. In the process, Swiatek ramps up her bid to become the first woman to ever win three Indian Wells Open titles, and the first woman to successfully defend the title here since Martina Navratilova in 1991. Since the event's inauguration in 1989, Monica Seles has conceded the fewest games en route to the women's singles title at Indian Wells, dropping just 12 games in 1992 (in five matches). If any player has a chance to match that incredible feat, it would be Swiatek.

# CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: PSG STUN LIVERPOOL ON PENALTIES TO REACH QF; BARCELONA, BAYERN & INTER ALSO PREVAIL

Liverpool | Agencies

Paris won 1-0 at Anfield before more Gianluigi Donnarumma shoot-out heroics helped them to overcome Liverpool on penalties and reach the UEFA Champions League quarterfinals. Paris keeper Donnarumma saved twice in the shoot-out as Paris overcame a 1-0 first-leg deficit to reach the quarterfinals. Ousmane Dembele completed a slick move by slotting in his seventh goal of the campaign in the 12th minute, drawing Paris level in the tie in doing so, but Liverpool dominated after the break and Luis Enrique's side needed Donnarumma to brilliantly paw Luis Diaz's header away and maintain overall parity in the tie. The visitors went closest during extra time before Donnarumma denied Darwin Nunez and Curtis Jones from the spot, allowing 19-year-old substitute Desire Doue to convert the decisive penalty. Earlier, Barcelona became the first team into the last eight, turning on the style in an emphatic second-leg win against Benfica



in the early kick-off. Raphinha and Lamine Yamal starred as Barcelona roared into the quarterfinals. The pair combined for the 11th-minute opener, the Spanish youngster providing a fine cross for the Brazilian international to coolly volley in. Nicolas Otamendi replied almost instantly for Benfica with a header. Yamal netted the pick of the goals with a sublime curling strike on 27 minutes, and Raphinha then fired in his 11th of the campaign to become the overall top scorer this season and end the contest before half-time. Bayern Munich also cruise through against Bundesliga rivals Leverkusen. Harry Kane's tap-in and Alphonso Davies' first-time finish sealed a convincing victo-

ry for Bayern. Kane, twice denied by Lukas Hradecky in the opening stages, extended the lead across the tie early in the second half with a straightforward strike after Patrik Schick's clearance rebounded into the path of the Bayern No9. The England captain then turned provider when spotting the run of Davies into the area, with the Canadian international full-back sweeping in impressively. The visitors pressed for further goals in the closing stages, with Jamal Musiala denied by the woodwork on two occasions. Bayern will meet Inter in the quarterfinals after the Nerazzurri completed their assignment against Feyenoord. Inter are through to the quarter-finals for just the second time since 2010/11 after wrapping up a comfortable aggregate triumph over Feyenoord. Marcus Thuram put the Serie A side ahead in style eight minutes in, receiving the ball midway inside the Feyenoord half and weaving his way into the penalty area before unleashing a sensational long-range strike.

# IML: INDIA MASTERS TO PLAY FIRST SEMIFINAL ON THURSDAY

Team Absolute | Raipur

Masters are at six points after playing all their matches. The final of the IML will also be played at Raipur March 16. The tournament will feature six teams, each led by legendary figures of cricket. Leading India is the iconic Sachin Tendulkar, while the West Indies team captained by the charismatic Brian Lara. Sri Lanka's team is led by the elegant Kumar Sangakkara, with Australia's charge headed by the dynamic Shane Watson. England's squad was under the leadership of the accomplished Eoin Morgan and South Africa's team was captained by the all-round maestro Jacques Kallis. The D.Y. Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai, the Niranjan Shah Stadium in Rajkot, and the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium hosted the IML league stage matches. The final phase of the tournament, including the semifinals and the grand finale, will be hosted in Raipur, ensuring a grand conclusion to the league.



# ALL-ENGLAND BADMINTON: SINDHU CRASHES OUT IN OPENING ROUND

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Two-time Olympic medallist P.V. Sindhu suffered a disappointing first-round exit from the All-England Badminton Championship 2025, losing to South Korea's Kim Ga-eun in Birmingham on Wednesday. Despite a promising start, the World No. 16 fell 21-19, 13-21, 13-21, extending her struggles at this prestigious Super 1000 tournament. Sindhu had looked in control in the opening game, surging to a 19-12 lead. However, Kim fought back to save seven game points before Sindhu eventually closed it out 21-19. Letting out a roar of relief,



Sindhu seemed poised to build on the momentum. But what followed was a complete shift in control. Kim dictated the rallies in the next two games, capitalizing on Sindhu's lack of rhythm and movement. The Indian, playing with visible taping on her right knee, struggled to respond to Kim's cross-court placements and decisive net play. In the decider, Sindhu looked deflated as Kim maintained her intensity, sealing victory in just over an hour. The loss marks Sindhu's fourth consecutive early exit at the All-England Open since her semifinal run in 2021, further highlighting her inconsistencies on this stage.

# Golf: Pranavi, Diksha, and Avani all set for Australian Women's Classic

Coffs Harbour (Australia) | Agencies

Top Indian golfers Pranavi Urs and Diksha Dagar, along with Avani Prashanth, will be hoping to see some action at the Australian Women's Classic, which has also been hit by poor weather. After the cancellation of last week's event in Brisbane, this week's event has been reduced to 54 holes and will begin on Friday. The three Indians were also due to play in Brisbane last week, but the event was called off due to a cyclone. The Indian challenge is Pranavi, a former winner of the WPGA Order of Merit; Diksha



and in the immediate aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Alfred. The 2025 Australian Women's Classic will begin on Friday morning, with the first tee time being approximately 7:30 am local time. The stars of the Ladies European Tour (LET), including the three Indians, are refusing to let the rain dampen their spirits as they return to Coffs Harbour this week for the Australian Women's Classic. It has been a tumultuous start to the circuit's Aussie swing after Cyclone Alfred devastated the Queensland coast causing last week's Australian WPGA Championship to be cancelled. No fewer than 132 players will tee up on Friday, a field comprised of 80 LET players, 30 WPGA Tour players, and 22 invites. LPGA winner Grace Kim headlines the \$300,000 event as the highest-ranked player in the Rolex Women's World Golf Rankings (83rd).



# RANBIR KAPOOR gets upset with Aamir Khan for getting his surname wrong

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A showdown is happening in the boulevard of B-town. On Wednesday, Bollywood star Alia Bhatt took to her Instagram, and shared a brand video featuring her actor husband, Ranbir Kapoor, and Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan, and actor Arbaaz Khan along with cricketers of the Indian National Cricket Team including Rohit Sharma, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Ravichandran Ashwin and others.

The brand video centres around Aamir forgetting Ranbir's last name and mistakenly calling him Ranbir Singh. This references the superstar habit of forgetting names. The video starts off with Rishabh Pant requesting Aamir for an autograph from Ranbir. Aamir approaches Ranbir, and lavishes praise on him in front of Rishabh Pant, however, he wrongly addresses him as Ranbir Singh.

This throws Ranbir off the handle, what follows is a chain of hysterical events and dialogues with Hardik even saying that Aamir has spread 'raita' because of his habit of forgetting names. The video then references a dialogue from 'Animal' as Ranbir then says, "Sunaayi de raha hai behra nahi hoon main". To this Aamir says, "Let's settle it on field" before he proposes the idea of Ranbir 11 and Aamir 11 on the Dream 11 betting app.

Earlier, Ranbir Kapoor, who was last seen in the blockbuster movie 'Animal', wrapped up the recording session for Telugu star Vijay Deverakonda's upcoming movie 'VD12'.

The anticipation for the film is sky-high, with fans eagerly waiting to see Vijay in this powerful avatar once again. A new update revealed by a source says that Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor has provided the voiceover for the teaser of VD 12, adding to the excitement surrounding the much-anticipated film.

As per an industry source, "Vijay Deverakonda is gearing up for his much anticipated 'VD12' releasing this year. But what's exciting is that Ranbir Kapoor has given the voice-over for the VD12 teaser which was recorded in Mumbai yesterday".

This unexpected collaboration between two superstars has amplified anticipation, promising a power-packed cinematic experience.



Pooja Chopra recalls water balloon fights and fond Holi memories with family

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As Holi approaches, actress Pooja Chopra looks back at some of her most cherished memories of the festival. She shares a personal glimpse into her childhood Holi celebrations, revealing how she would sneak water balloons into her tuition classes.

Recalling her childhood days, Pooja told IANS, "One of the craziest things I remember doing on Holi-or rather, the day before-was back when I was in school. I used to carry water balloons in my bag when I went for my tuition classes. I'd quietly attend my class as if nothing was up, and once we were done and came downstairs, I'd pull out the balloons and throw them at my friends when they least expected it. They would go back home drenched and come back next day with vengeance."

"Back in school, I remember being completely drenched in baby oil from head to toe before Holi every strand of hair, the creases of my ears, earlobes, nail beds, even my elbows were covered in oil! Thankfully, now everyone plays with gulal and organic colors, so I no longer have to worry about stubborn stains after a shower. But even today, I still like to apply a thick coat of moisturizer before heading out," Pooja added.

The 'Commando' actress also fondly recalled her favorite Holi treat, Puran Puri.

"My favorite food has to be Puran Puri with ghee! After playing Holi, my nani would make it for me thick, stuffed, more like a Puran Paratha than a Puran Puri, but absolutely delicious. Garam puran paratha with ghee, has to be my all-time favorite."

Reflecting on the tradition of Holika Dahan, Pooja recalled the sacred rituals that have remained unchanged since childhood.

Pooja Chopra mentioned, "Holika Dahan Since childhood, it has been about coming together for the puja, circling the bonfire, offering prayers and receiving sweets as prasad. But as kids, the most exciting part was sneaking away to play with water with friends right after! Even today, the essence of Holika Dahan remains the same it is a time for prayer, reflection, and seeking blessings also an excuse where u meet everyone in the community and sharing sweets."

Pooja, who won the Femina Miss India World 2009, got her breakthrough with "Commando: A One Man Army" and since then has appeared in many films, including Madhur Bhandarkar's movies "Fashion" and "Heroine."

## How Salman Khan is following his passion for bikes and motorsports?

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan is following his childhood passion for bikes and motorsports, as he has been crowned as the brand ambassador of the Indian Supercross Racing League. Salman, whose passion for motorcycles has been prominently featured throughout his film career, is set to bring authentic enthusiasm and star power to the rapidly growing motorsport in India.

Talking about the collaboration, Salman Khan said in a statement, "I am very excited to be a part of something I am truly passionate about-motorcycles and motorsports. What Indian Supercross Racing League is building is truly revolutionary with a long-term vision". He further mentioned, "The league has immense entertainment value and captures the spirit of igniting passion, showcasing skill, and creating heroes who will inspire the next generation. Together, we're set to make Supercross a household name in India and elevate our riders to the global stage".

From classic sequences in 'Maine Pyar Kiya' to high-octane chases in the 'Dabangg' franchise and 'Tiger' series, Slaman's on-screen relationship with motorcycles has inspired generations of fans.

Meanwhile, on the work front, the superstar is gearing up for his upcoming movie 'Sikandar'. The film marks Salman's return to the big screen after more than a year. The superstar was last seen in 'Tiger 3'. The Bollywood superstar will be seen opposite Rashmika Mandanna, who is currently basking in the success of 'Pushpa 2: The Rule', and 'Chhaava'.

The film is directed by A.R. Murugadoss, who is known for 'Ghajini'. 'Sikandar' marks the reunion of Salman Khan and Sajid Nadiadwala after their 2014 blockbuster, 'Kick', which also marked the directorial debut for the latter. Produced by Sajid Nadiadwala, 'Sikandar' promises to be a cinematic spectacle that blends action, drama, and emotion. 'Sikandar' is being developed with a strong focus on engaging storytelling and dynamic performances, setting the stage for yet another memorable Salman Khan performance.



## Seerat Kapoor shares essential hair and skin care tips for Holi

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ahead of Holi, actress Seerat Kapoor has shared her essential beauty tips to keep her hair and skin protected during the colorful celebrations. Seerat has opened up about her personal Holi skincare and hair-care routine that ensures she enjoys the festival without any worries. She shared, "Holi has always been memorable. I love the spirit of this festival. It's high on energy, music, the moments of laughter, and of course, indulging in balanced proportions of festive delicacies like coconut and mawa-stuffed gujiya, thandai, and jalebis set the mood right. While the colors make Holi special, I always ensure to use only eco-friendly and herbal colors. Chemical-based colors can harm both the skin and hair, so it's important to play safe and enjoy every moment responsibly."

Seerat also urged her fans to celebrate Holi by opting for natural colors and prioritizing safety while enjoying the festivities. "Holi is all about spreading love and happiness. Just remember to be mindful of your skin and hair, play safe, and make beautiful memories," she added.

For her skin, the actress recommended applying a thick



layer of moisturizer or sunscreen to create a protective barrier. "I make sure to cover my body with a good moisturizer and sunscreen before stepping out. This helps keep my skin from absorbing harmful chemicals in the colors," Seerat mentioned.

In preparation for the colorful celebrations, Seerat stresses the importance of oiling your hair. "Before stepping out for Holi, I always apply a generous amount of coconut or almond oil to my hair. This creates a protective barrier, preventing the colors from seeping into the strands and keeping the hair from getting dry and damaged," she shared.

Additionally, the Run Raja Run actress recommended tying the hair in a braid or bun to minimize exposure to colors and prevent tangling, allowing for a more manageable hairstyle.

Seerat also stressed the importance of staying hydrated, advising people to drink plenty of water and herbal liquids to keep their hair and skin nourished from within.

"Drinking plenty of water and herbal liquids will help detox your body and keep your hair and skin healthy from the inside out. Don't forget to moisturize your skin before heading out for Holi to keep it soft and protected," Seerat advised. Holi 2025 celebrations will take place on March 13 and 14, beginning with Holika Dahan and followed by Rangwali Holi.

## Nawazuddin Siddiqui is in Thailand for next 25 days for shooting of upcoming project

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Actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui, who is known for 'Gangs of Wasseypur', 'The Lunchbox', 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan' and others, is shooting for his next project in the far east.

The actor wrapped up the shooting of his movie 'Raat Akeli Hai 2', and has quickly moved on to his next production in Thailand.

A source close to the production revealed, "After 'Raat Akeli Hai 2', Nawazuddin Siddiqui has been juggling between projects and is now fully immersed in his next venture. He has begun an extensive 25-day shoot for his upcoming project in Thailand, further adding to his packed schedule".

The source added, "His dedication to his craft remains unmatched, and fans can look forward to yet another power-packed performance".

Earlier, Nawaz celebrated 10 years of his film 'Badlapur'. On the occasion of the film's 10th anniversary it was revealed that the actor banked on improvisation for his character in the film.

Nawaz said that his character evolves along a certain trajectory in the film, and for that he jammed with the director of the film, Sriram Raghavan.

Talking about the same, he earlier said, "Playing this role wasn't easy because he wasn't someone who openly expressed emotions. His transformation was happening internally, in a space that wasn't visible to the audience. And since he wasn't intellectually evolved, he couldn't even put those changes into words".

Nawazuddin Siddiqui's performance in 'Badlapur' is truly one of his finest, making the film an unforgettable thriller. His portrayal of Liak, a cunning yet strangely endearing antagonist, was widely praised.

Meanwhile, On the work front, Nawazuddin will be seen in 'Raat Akeli Hai 2', 'Noorani Chehra' and 'Sangeen'. He also has 'I'm Not An Actor' on the horizon. The film is set for its world premiere at the 2025 Cinequest Film Festival in California.



Kiara Advani