

# absolute india

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TWITTER TAKES INDIAN GOVT TO COURT OVER 'ARBITRARY' CONTENT BLOCKING ORDERS, SAYS IT IS

## Disproportionate Measure

TWITTER HAS ALLEGED IN ITS WRIT PETITION THAT MULTIPLE ACCOUNTS AND CONTENT INCLUDED IN THE BLOCKING ORDERS ARE EITHER "OVERBROAD AND ARBITRARY" FAIL TO PROVIDE NOTICE TO THE "ORIGINATORS" OF THE CONTENT, AND ARE "DISPROPORTIONATE" IN SEVERAL CASES, SOURCES TOLD REPORTER.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM ALLEGED IN THE COURT PETITION THAT SEVERAL BLOCKING ORDERS THAT WERE ISSUED TO TWITTER ONLY "CITE" THE GROUNDS OF SECTION 69A BUT FAIL TO DEMONSTRATE HOW THE CONTENT FALLS WITHIN THOSE GROUNDS OR HOW THE SAID CONTENT IS "VIOLATIVE" OF SECTION 69A, THE SOURCES ADDED.

ACCORDING TO SOURCES, TWITTER HAS NOW SOUGHT JUDICIAL REVIEW OF SOME OF THE CONTENT THAT FORMS A PART OF VARIOUS BLOCKING ORDERS, REQUESTING RELIEF FROM THE COURT TO SET ASIDE THESE BLOCKING ORDERS.



Team Absolute | Chennai

Twitter has moved the Karnataka High Court against the Indian government's order to take down some content on its platform, on the grounds that the content blocking orders from the IT Ministry do not pass "the test of the grounds provided under Section 69A of the IT Act", reliable sources said on Tuesday.

In a June letter, the IT Ministry had warned Twitter of strict action if it does not comply with some content take-down orders.

According to the writ petition, account-level blocking is a "principally disproportionate measure" and "violates rights of users under the constitution, especially when the reasons stated to block URLs and reasons stated to

block an account lack specificity and merely cite grounds under Section 69A." The MeitY itself, in various filings in the Delhi High Court, stated that if only some portion or some content is unlawful, then the platform may take proportionate action of removing such alleged information alone, and should not completely suspend the user account.

In fact, MeitY has noted that taking down the whole user account should be a last resort, the writ petition alleged. In the June letter, the MeitY set out serious consequences of non-compliance, including, but not limited to, initiating criminal proceedings against Twitter's Chief Compliance Officer, and granted last opportunity to comply with a series of blocking orders which are issued under the Section 69A of India's

### BIG TECH MUST OBEY LAW OF THE LAND: GOVERNMENT

New Delhi: The Indian government on Tuesday said that all Internet intermediaries and social media platforms have to comply with the law of the land, after Twitter moved the Karnataka High Court against its order to take down some content on its platform.

Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said in a tweet that all foreign intermediaries and platforms have a right to approach the court and judicial review in India.

"But equally, all intermediary/platforms operating here have an unambiguous obligation to comply with our laws and rules," Chandrasekhar posted. IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that "be it any company, in any sector, they should abide by the laws of India".

The letter also threatened that failing to do so would cause Twitter to lose its safe harbour immunity as available to it under Section 79(1) of the IT Act.

Due to the seriousness of these threats, Twitter has chosen to challenge several blocking orders issued by the MeitY under Section 69A through the legal mechanism of a writ petition before the High Court of Karnataka.

"These blocking orders are being challenged on the basis that they are procedurally and substantially deficient of the Section 69A requirements," according to the sources who have seen the writ petition.

## Kali eats meat, accepts alcohol: Mahua Moitra



Kolkata | Agencies

Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra on Tuesday stirred a controversy by saying that she has every right as an individual to imagine Goddess Kali as a meat-eating and alcohol-accepting goddess, as every person has the right to worship god and goddess in his or her own way.

While the Bharatiya Janata Party went hammer and tongs against Moitra and wondered if it was the official stand of West Bengal's ruling party to insult Hindu gods and goddesses, the TMC distanced itself from the comment and condemned it.

While taking part in India Today Conclave East held in Kolkata, the Krishnanagar MP said it is up to individuals how they view their gods. Moitra said that people have the right to imagine their gods or goddess in the way they want. Moitra said this when asked about a film that had courted controversy after it had put up posters showing Goddess Kali smoking.

After her comments went viral, Moitra issued a clarification attacking the Sangh Parivar. "To all you sanghis - lying will not make you better hindus. I NEVER backed any film or poster or mentioned the word smoking. Suggest you visit my Maa Kali in Tarapith to see what food & drink is offered as bhog.

"For me, Goddess Kali is a meat-eating and alcohol-accepting goddess. And if you go to Tarapith (a major Shakti peeth in West Bengal's Birbhum district), you will see sadhus smoking. That is the version of Kali people worship (there). I, within Hinduism, being a Kali worshipper, have the right to imagine Kali in that way; that is my freedom."

Joy Ma Tara,' she tweeted.

The BJP wondered whether insulting Hindu gods and goddess is the official stand of the TMC.

The comments made by @MahuaMoitra at the #IndiaTodayConclaveEast2022 and her views expressed on Goddess Kali have been made in her personal capacity and are NOT ENDORSED BY THE PARTY IN ANY MANNER OR FORM. All India Trinamool Congress strongly condemns such comments.'

TMC said in a Twitter post

We respect all deities of all religions and do not endorse anything which hurts anybody."



Congress

## AJMER MAN ANNOUNCES HOME, PROPERTY FOR NUPUR SHARMA'S DECAPITATION



Team Absolute | Jaipur

A man from Ajmer district has announced to give away his house and property as reward to anyone who decapitates suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma for her controversial remarks on Prophet Muhammad. The man has been identified as Salman Chishty, reportedly a cleric at the Ajmer Dargah. In a video that went viral on social media, the accused could be heard saying that he would give his home and property

to anyone who brings the head of Nupur Sharma to him. He also said that the BJP leader has betrayed the pride of Khwaja Saheb and Mohammad Saheb, and in such a situation, he will give his house and his landed property to the persons who will bring him her head. He also alleged that Muslims are being persecuted and killed across the country. As his video went viral on social media, the Gaddi Nasheen-Dargah Ajmer Sharif shared Ajmer police's statement and clarified, "Here comes @Ajmerpolice statement as a police case has been registered against the murderous call given by a history-sheeter and hardcore drug addict who misused Ajmer Dargah Sharif's name and surrounding neighborhoods to create unrest and mistrust in the peaceful city of Ajmer Sharif.

"This person is a drug addict and history-sheeter, as per local police station records. Our Anjuman Committee has raised strong objections towards the misuse of the name of Ajmer Dargah Sharif by such criminal-minded individuals."

### RUPEE PLUNGES TO LIFETIME LOW OF 79.36 AGAINST USD



New Delhi: The rupee fell by 41 paise to close at a fresh lifetime low of 79.36 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday amid a strong greenback overseas and unrelenting foreign fund outflows.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 79.04 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 79.02 and a low of 79.38. It finally settled at 79.36 (provisional), down 41 paise over its previous close. On Monday, the rupee had closed at 78.95 against the US dollar.

## Congress seeks BJP's response on terrorists' alleged links with BJP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress on Tuesday came down heavily on the BJP over its alleged links with apprehended LeT terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir and killers of Kanhaiya Lal whose pictures with BJP leaders. Addressing a press conference here, Congress Communication in charge, Pawan Khera sought answers from the BJP.

He said: "Two incidents in the past week have exposed the two-faced BJP. First, we learned that one of the accused in Kanhaiya Lal's horrific murder in Udaipur was a BJP worker. Then it emerged that a captured Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist in Jammu and Kashmir was not only a BJP office-bearer who had previously been captured in photos with Home Minister Amit Shah but was also planning to attack the Amarnath Yatra."

It is "shocking" that the BJP, a party that loses no opportunity to preach about nationalism, has members and office-bearers who are deeply implicated in violent anti-national activities, he added. He alleged that there is long list of BJP func-



tionaries who have been caught participating at the behest of Pakistani agencies in terrorism and espionage. Former BJP leader and ex-sarpanch Tariq Ahmad Mir was arrested two years ago for procuring weapons for Hizbul Mujahideen commander Naveed Babu, he alleged. In 2017, the Madhya Pradesh Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) arrested the BJP IT Cell member Dhruv Saxena along with ten accomplices for spying for the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) Directorate, Balram Singh, a Bajrang Dal leader from Madhya Pradesh, was arrested in a terror funding case.

### PARTY ISSUES NOTICE TO JAMMU MINORITY MORCHA CHIEF

New Delhi: Facing flak over its alleged link with arrested Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist Talib Hussain Shah, the Bharatiya Janata Party on Tuesday issued a show-cause notice to party's Jammu Minority Morcha president Sheikh Bashir after an order purportedly written by him about the appointment of Shah as official of the unit emerged on social media platforms. The BJP also demanded a probe by National Investigation Agency into 'terror conspiracy' hatched against the party by LeT terrorist Shah. On Monday, Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police (DGP) Dilbag Singh said LeT terrorist Talib Hussain Shah was briefly associated with a political party and also posed himself as a mediator.

## IF PM THINKS DO, TN CAN BE DIVIDED INTO TWO: BJP LEADER



Chennai: Bharatiya Janata Party leader Nainar Nagendran said that if Prime Minister Narendra Modi thinks so the state of Tamil Nadu can be divided into two. He was addressing a public gathering on Tuesday. The BJP leader was responding to a statement by former Union minister and DMK leader, A. Raja urging the Prime Minister not to force his party to demand a 'separate state'. Nagendran said that Tamil Nadu has 234 legislators and it can be divided into two states with 117 legislators each. He said that BJP leaders will become Chief Ministers in the south and north. He added that it will be Pandiya Nadu and Pallava Nadu and said, "Don't think we can't do it. We are in a place where we can do it. If our PM Modi thinks, it shall be done." He said that if Raja can demand a separate state, then the BJP can have a wish to divide Tamil Nadu. The DMK slammed the statement of Nainar Nagendran and party leader TKS Elangovan accused the BJP of being drunk with power.

## Monkeypox: WHO reports 5,322 lab-confirmed cases in 53 countries

WHO CHIEF DR. TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS HAD SAID THAT THEY ARE FOLLOWING THE MONKEYPOX CASES 'EXTREMELY CLOSELY' AND THAT IF THE SITUATION FURTHER EVOLVES, HE WOULD 'RECONVENE THE MEETING QUICKLY'. HOWEVER, THE GLOBAL HEALTH AGENCY IS YET TO CONVENE A SECOND MEETING.

THE MAJORITY OF THE CURRENT CONFIRMED CASES OF MONKEYPOX ARE MALE AND MOST OF THESE CASES OCCUR AMONG OF GAY, BISEXUAL, AND OTHER MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN IN URBAN AREAS AND ARE CLUSTERED SOCIAL AND SEXUAL NETWORKS.

THERE HAVE BEEN FEW HOSPITALISATIONS TO DATE, AND ONE DEATH IN AN IMMUNOCOMPROMISED INDIVIDUAL WAS REPORTED, THE WHO SAID.

THE WHO RECENTLY ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN AS THE OUTBREAK HAS SPREAD TO VULNERABLE PEOPLE, INCLUDING CHILDREN, PREGNANT WOMEN AND THOSE WITH WEAK IMMUNE SYSTEMS. REPORTS CLAIMED INFECTIONS IN CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN SPAIN AND FRANCE, WHILE TWO CASES HAVE BEEN FOUND IN THE UK SINCE MAY.

Geneva | Agencies

The World Health Organisation (WHO) on Tuesday said that 5,322 laboratory-confirmed cases of monkeypox had been reported to it from 53 countries -- both endemic and non-endemic.

"From January 1 to June 30 this year, we have 5,322 laboratory-confirmed cases and one death," from 53 countries, WHO spokeswoman Fadela Chaib told reporters.

Of these, "85 per cent are in Europe, followed by the African region, the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Pacific", she added.

Even as the case numbers are rapidly increasing, the WHO has not yet declared the virus a global health emergency. It



said the virus is "unusual and concerning" and an "evolving threat".

"The WHO continues to ask countries to pay particular attention to monkeypox cases to try to stop further infections," Chaib said.

While the virus did manifest earlier in chil-

dren, this reportedly is the first in the recent outbreak.

The increasing trend of infections, majorly seen among men who have sex with men "is likely to continue", said Ghebreyesus. "We are starting to see this with several children already infected."

"I am concerned about sustained transmission because it would suggest that the virus is establishing itself and it could move into high-risk groups including children, the immunocompromised and pregnant women," Ghebreyesus said.

## VOTING FOR 1ST PHASE OF MP CIVIC POLLS ON WEDNESDAY



Bhopal: The campaigning for the first phase of urban body elections in Madhya Pradesh ended on Tuesday and the voting will be held across 133 municipal corporations in 49 districts of the state on July 6 (Wednesday), officials said. The voting will be held between 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. According to the State Election Commission (SEC), a total of 13,148 polling booths have been set up for the first phase of civic polls. The voting for the second and the last phase is scheduled to be held on July 13, and the counting would be done on July 17. State Election Commissioner Basant Pratap Singh said of the 133 civic bodies that are going to polls in the first phase, polling will be held in 11 municipal corporations, 36 municipal councils and 86 city councils. Voting will be done through EVMs.



# INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY, RULE OF LAW FAVOURS INDIA AS INVESTMENT DESTINATION, CJI IN UK

Team Absolute | New Delhi/London

Chief Justice of India (CJI) N.V. Ramana on Tuesday said India can be chosen as a favoured investment destination due to the independence of its judicial system and for giving paramount importance to the rule of law.

The Chief Justice, in the presence of Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, also said that pendency of cases is a major issue in India and in the absence of infrastructure and sufficient number of judges commensurate with the increasing workload, the problem is intensifying.

Delivering the inaugural address at the conference on 'Arbitrating Indo-UK Commercial Disputes' at Mansion House, London, he said: "Apart from ease of enforcement, another advantage for choosing India as a favored investment destination is its judicial system. Both the legal systems in India and the United Kingdom are known for giving paramount importance to the rule of law."

Chief Justice Ramana added that both the nations share a similar legal culture, where courts are known and respected as independent institutions. "Apart from this, the investors



would be entering into a common familiar legal field as both nations follow the common law system. Laws on important issues are often convergent between both nations," he said. He said there is no denying that pendency of cases is a major issue in India and the reasons for this include growth of the Indian economy, population, rising awareness about rights etc.

"In the absence of infrastructure and sufficient number of judges commensurate with the increasing workload, the problem is intensify-

ing. This is why I have been strongly advocating for transforming and upgrading the judicial infrastructure in India, as well as filling up of judicial vacancies and augmenting the strength," he said.

He pointed out that after he became the CJI, "in addition to filling up 11 vacancies in the Supreme Court, the Collegia could secure appointment of 163 Judges to various high courts. 23 more recommendations are pending with the government".

The CJI added that the Central

government is yet to transmit another 120 names received from various high courts to the Supreme Court Collegium. "I have been reminding the government to expedite the process so that the remaining 381 vacancies can be reduced considerably. I am hoping for some forward movement in this regard," he said.

He said another way of reducing the burden of pendency is to promote and popularise other means of dispute resolution, such as arbitration or mediation, adding that he has been a strong advocate of dispute settlement mechanisms that do not require litigants to face traditional litigation. He said the presence of international arbitration centres will not only boost India's global position as an investor friendly nation but also will facilitate the growth of a robust legal practice.

"Personally, I think it is the era of Institutional Arbitration and Mediation in India. To catch up to the developed world, world class arbitration and mediation centres need to be set up and promoted. Individual arbitrators and mediators would have an opportunity to support, and develop these institutions, while also becoming empanelled," the CJI said.

# Techie beaten to death by Ola cab driver after argument over OTP

Chennai | Agencies

A software developer from Coimbatore, who was in Chennai for weekend holiday along with his family, was beaten to death by an Ola cab driver following a dispute over delay in entering the one-time password (OTP) on the Old Mahabalipuram Road here on Sunday.

Greater Chennai Police Commissioner, Shankar Jiwaj, told reporter that the police have now directed all the cab operators to monitor the antecedents of the drivers they employ for ferrying passengers.

Jiwaj also called upon the cab operators to submit Aadhaar and other identification records of the drivers with the local police stations for background check.

On Sunday, H. Umendar (34), a software developer, visited a mall to watch a movie along with his wife Bhavya, their two children, Bhavya's sister Divyapriya and her two children. Bhavya booked an Ola cab



at around 3.30 pm and on seeing the registration number of the vehicle, all seven hopped into it.

The driver of the vehicle, Ravi (41) from Salem, was furious that the customers entered the vehicle without verifying the OTP and asked them to get out of the car.

This led to an altercation between Ravi and Umendar and in a fit of rage, Ravi showered blows on the soft-

ware developer. The driver also smashed his mobile phone on the forehead of Umendar, besides hitting him on the nose repeatedly.

Umendar was rushed to the hospital, where he was declared brought dead. Ravi tried to flee from the scene but was apprehended by the local people and handed over to the police. He has been sent to judicial custody.

# Girl helps boyfriend to escape from police lockup in Gujarat

In the wee hours of Monday, when the staff at the Nandasani police station were in 'deep sleep', a girl unlocked the lockup and helped her boyfriend escape.

Mehsana (Gujarat) | Agencies

However, the minor girl was caught by the police while trying to run away from the spot. Her boyfriend, also a minor, is still at large even 36 hours after the incident.

The SHO of the Nandasani police station, Jairam Desai, told reporter, "The Mehnsana Superintendent of Police will carry out an inquiry against the police staff on night duty at the police station."

Head constable Nikita

Sagrambhai said, "On Sunday evening, the accused Alkesh and Padmini (names changed as both are minors) had surrendered before the police along with their advocate. Padmini's parents had registered a case against Alkesh for eloping with their daughter. The police had filed a kidnapping case in this matter. While Alkesh was lodged in the lockup, Padmini was under the observation of Gram Rakshak Dal (GRD) constable Benazir Mohammad. Another GRD constable,

Arvind Babubhai, was also on duty.

At around 3.30 am, when all the three staff present at the police station were fast asleep despite being on duty, Padmini on Alkesh's instruction stole the lockup key from table drawer and helped Alkesh flee by jumping over the compound wall. However, Padmini was caught by the GRD jawans while she was trying to run away from the police station. Now both Alkesh and Padmini have been booked under the relevant sections of the law.

# POPULAR VAASTU EXPERT GURUJI STABBED TO DEATH; TWO HELD

Hubballi (Karnataka) | Agencies

The police in Karnataka have arrested two persons in connection with the murder of 'Sara Vaastu' fame Chandrashekar Guruji at a hotel in Unakal near Hubballi earlier on Tuesday.

The police managed to arrest Manjunath Dummavada and Mahantesh Shirur -- within four hours after Guruji was stabbed to death, from Ramdurg town in Belagavi district.

Both hail from Kalaghatagi taluq of Dharwad district. Manjunath was a former employee with Guruji. Mahantesh's wife Vanajakshi -- detained for questioning, had also worked for Guruji.

The alleged killers were trying escaping to Maharashtra after committing the crime.

Police teams after gathering information about accused persons travelling in the bordering district of Belagavi tracked them down and nabbed them.

Guruji of 'Sara Vaastu' fame was stabbed to death in Hubballi earlier on Tuesday. The assassins had come disguised as his devotees to a private hotel in Unakal near Hubballi city.



According to the police, the culprits took Guruji's blessings by touching his feet first when he was at the hotel reception. Catching him

unawares, the miscreants then stabbed him repeatedly.

Police said that Guruji has been stabbed multiple times on chest and abdomen. After Guruji collapsed in a pool of blood, the assailants escaped from the spot.

The incident took place in broad daylight in front of guests at the hotel.

Police said Guruji has been stabbed more than 60 times on his chest and abdomen repeatedly. The incident caused horror as the chilling footage of the act came out in public domain and went viral on the social media, shocking the people.

Preliminary investigations have suggested that persons known to Guruji may have committed the crime. The police have taken Vanajakshi, a former employee of Sara Vaastu Company run by Guruji, into custody to question her, according to sources.

The police have identified the killers as Manjunath Dummavada and Mahantesh Shirur. Manjunath was a former employee. Mahantesh's wife Vanajakshi -- detained for questioning, had worked for Guruji.

# HYDERABAD WOMAN LOSES RS 39 LAKH IN CYBER FRAUD

Hyderabad | Agencies

A woman from Hyderabad lost Rs 39 lakh to cyber fraudsters who cheated her in the name of the 'KBC lottery'.

Cyber Crime Police of Hyderabad City arrested Rakesh Kumar from Patna for the fraud.

According to police, a housewife of Khairatabad area received a phone call on October 2, and the caller informed her that she won a lottery by KBC and also explained to her the withdrawal procedure.

The caller advised her to deposit amounts towards various fees. Some other people in the guise of a bank manager also spoke to her and convinced her to send money. She sent a total amount of Rs 39 lakh in the name of different charges, but later realised that she had been cheated.

After the woman lodged a complaint, police took up the investigation and cracked the case in Patna with the arrest of the accused. Police seized 16 mobile phones, 73 debit cards, 30 SIM cards, 11 bank pass-books and two cheque books.



Police have cautioned people not to believe any lotteries like KBC lottery or Naptol and lucky draws

announced by the unknown persons. In another case, Cyber Crime

Police arrested 11 persons including four women from Noida for cheating a woman in the name of reward points.

A woman resident of Kanchanbagh received a call from a person claiming to be from SBI Credit Card division and offered to redeem reward points into cash. The victim followed the caller's instructions, and also revealed the OTP received on her phone. She lost a total amount of Rs 1 lakh in three transactions.

During the probe into the victim's complaint, the police arrested 11 accused by busting a call centre in Noida, which was being used for the cyber fraud.

The accused are Neeraj Kumar, 35, Rohit Kumar, 28, Akash Kumar, 23, Ajay Singh, 23, Pragya Tondon, 22, Sachan Vaishnavi, 19, Himanshi Kateri, 22, Radhika Dhamija, 22, Priyanka Sharma, 28 and Preeti Kumari Sinha, 20.

The initial investigation revealed that the accused are involved in 18 cases across Telangana and 101 crimes all over India.

# Jharkhand SDM sent to jail for sexually harassing IIT student

Khunti's Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Syed Riaz Ahmed, was sent to jail on Tuesday evening on charges of sexual harassment of an IIT student. Earlier, he was produced in Khunti district court.

Ranchi | Agencies

After going to jail, he will most likely be placed under suspension, according to the government rules.

An FIR was lodged against him by an IIT student from Himachal Pradesh in Khunti Mahila Police Station under IPC sections 354A (sexual harassment) and 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) on Monday evening. On Tuesday, her statement under section 164 was recorded in the court.

Twenty IIT students had come to Khunti for an academic tour and internship. The incident took place on July 2. It was alleged that the SDM had called the girl students to his residence for a party where drinks were also served.

It is alleged that the SDM took her aside on the pretext of talking to her and spoke obscenely with her. He tried to kiss the girl.



At this, the girl left with her companions. The victim is studying in IIT Indore, Madhya Pradesh. Riaz Ahmed, a 2019 batch IAS officer, hails from Nagpur, Maharashtra. His wife is also an IAS officer, who is posted as SDM in Chhattisgarh.

# Man held captive for over 2 years rescued by police

Guwahati | Agencies

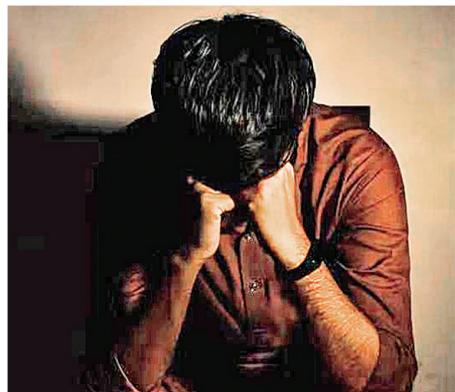
A worker from Assam who was held captive in Haryana's Mewat for nearly 2.5 years has been rescued following a joint operation by Assam and Haryana police, an official said on Tuesday.

The person was identified as Anand Baraik a.k.a. Bahadur.

According to sources, a stranger took him to Haryana's Mewat on the pretext of providing an employment opportunity. But it was learned that Bahadur was not paid a single penny for the last 2.5 years.

He was forced to work without pay. Despite repeated requests, he was not allowed to return to his home.

Based on inputs, the Assam police with the help of the Haryana security per-



sonnel managed to trace Bahadur's location and rescued him, the sources added.

On Tuesday, he was brought to Guwahati. Kamrup Superintendent

of Police Hitesh Roy told reporter that the detail of this matter is yet to be investigated. However, he confirmed the rescue of the man.

Vadodara | Agencies

Tribal woman leader Sarla Vasava has alleged that inferior liquor in large quantities is available in the grey market in Gujarat. She demanded that either the state implement prohibition strictly or lift it.

Bharatiya Tribal Party leader Chhotu Vasava's wife Sarla alleged that "Inferior quality liquor is available in the local market. Either the state should implement prohibition strictly or lift it, so at least good quality liquor is available to those who love to drink."

"Tribals do prepare mahua liquor, but they never sell it in the market, these are false allegations that liquor flows in the tribal belt, the state government is implementing prohibition strictly," claimed Ramesh Vasava, BJP General Secretary of Narmada district. What she is saying is nothing new. If prohibition is strictly implemented, how will the



ruling party make money, if it does not collect money from liquor smuggling, they will be short of election funds, alleged Chandrikaben Bariya, Congress MLA from Devgadhi Bariya.

The IMFL sold openly is smuggled from other states. The BJP is in

power in Gujarat as well as in Delhi, yet liquor flows in the state without any check, said the Congress MLA.

Prohibition has been implemented since the state came into existence, during the Vijay Rupani government the prohibition Act was

made more stringent. At the same time, checkpoints at the borders with Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and the two Union Territories of Dadra Nagar Haveli and Diu-Daman were removed which opened the gates for liquor smuggling, alleged the MLA.



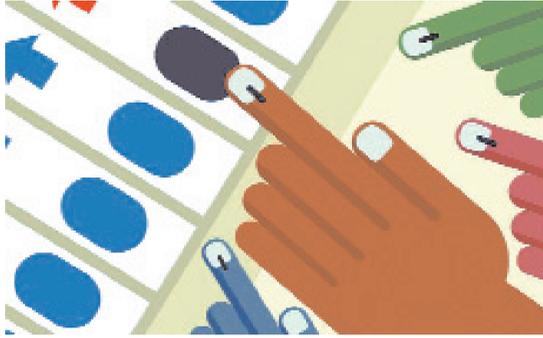
# Preparations for voting in urban bodies complete: SEC

Team Absolute | Bhopal

State Election Commissioner Basant Pratap Singh has informed that the first phase of polling in the urban body election-2022 will be held on July 6 from 7 am to 5 pm. All preparations have been completed for peaceful polling. Singh has said that voters should exercise their voting rights without any fear.

Polling teams have reached the designated polling stations. In the first phase, polling will be held in 11 municipal corporations, 36 municipalities and 86 Nagar Parishads in 44 districts. A total of 13 thousand 148 polling stations have been made for this. Of these, 3296 polling stations are sensitive. About 79 thousand staff and officers have been deployed on duty in the polling parties. About 27 thousand police force has been deployed.

In the first phase, 101 candidates are in the fray for the post of mayor



in 11 municipal corporations. There are 2850 posts of corporator in a total of 133 urban bodies. Out of these 42 posts have been elected unopposed. Election is to be held on the remaining 2808 posts. For this 11 thousand 250 candidates are contesting the elections.

In the first phase, there is no vot-

ing in any urban body of Barwani, Jabua, Khargone, Sidhi and Shahdol districts. The tenure of the urban bodies of Mandla, Alirajpur and Dindori districts is yet to be completed. Therefore, elections have not been announced for the urban bodies of these districts.

In the first phase, one crore 4 lakh

41 thousand 897 voters will be able to exercise their voting rights. Out of these 53 lakh 62 thousand 457 are male voters and 50 lakh 78 thousand 635 are female and 805 other voters. There are 10 lakh 68 thousand 267 voters in Gwalior Municipal Corporation, 2 lakh 22 thousand 584 in Sagar, 2 lakh 14 thousand 188 in Satna, 2 lakh 5 thousand 886 in Singrauli, 9 lakh 76 thousand 61 in Jabalpur, one lakh 90 thousand 742 in Chhindwara, 17 lakh 6 thousand 735 in Bhopal, one lakh 75 thousand 644 in Khandwa, one lakh 77 thousand 666 in Burhanpur, 18 lakh 35 thousand 955 in Indore and 4 lakh 61 thousand 169 voters in Ujjain district. In this way, the maximum number of voters is in Indore and the least number of voters are in Khandwa Municipal Corporation.

The state government has declared a public holiday on July 6 in the urban bodies where elections are being held.



## SHRI RAM MUSEUM TO BE BUILT IN BHOPAL SHOULD BE THE CENTER OF TOURIST ATTRACTION - CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the efforts made by Tulsi Manas Pratishtan to make the youth aware of Lord Shri Ram and his ideals are commendable. A museum based on an episode between Lord Shri Ram and Manas will be built in the premises of the establishment, which will surely make a mark as an attractive and inspiring place. The museum should be developed in such a way that tourists visiting Bhopal must also visit it. Giving information about Lord Shri Ram's life, Ayodhya prasang and ideals of Lord Shri Ram and the plan to visit Ayodhya, the birthplace of Ram and the planning to visit Ram Janambhoomi is commendable. All possible cooperation will be provided by the state government in the works of the establishment.

Chouhan was presiding over the meeting of the Managing Committee of the establishment today. Chief Minister is also the President

of this establishment. Chouhan said that visiting the museum would make it easier for the students to imbibe the teachings of Shri Ram. Necessary financial support will also be provided to the establishment to set up this museum.

Working President of the establishment Raghunandan Sharma, informed that the knowledge of Ramcharit Manas is being disseminated for the spread of harmony in the society. Efforts are being made for the promotion of Tulsi Manas in the educational centers and the deprived sections of the society. The competition is being conducted in collaboration with the Department of School Education and Culture, to assess the knowledge level of the students. Teaching of Sunderkand in Hindi subject has been started in the first year classes of graduation level in the colleges of the state. The process of including chapters related to Ramcharit Manas and Ayodhya episode in the syllabus is also in progress. Workshops are being organ-

ized by the establishment with the help of education officers at the divisional level. The process of granting approval by the Government of India for the establishment of Shri Ram Museum in Tulsi Manas Pratishtan is underway. For this cooperation is expected from the state government.

Chouhan was presented a copy of Tulsi Manas Bharti and Swarna Jayanti issue of monthly magazine of the establishment. The convener of the establishment, Rajendra Sharma proposed the vote of thanks. Kailash Joshi, Secretary of the Foundation, Prabhudayal Mishra, Editor-in-Chief of Tulsi Manas Bharti, Members Vijaydutt Shridhar, Ramesh Sharma, Kamlesh Jaimini, Mahesh Saxena, Madhav Singh Dangi, Sushila Shukla etc. were present.

Chief Minister Chouhan paid obeisance by garlanding the statue of Goswami Tulsi Das ji at Tulsi Manas Pratishtan. He also inaugurated the newly built Pt. Ramkinkar Upadhayay Library and Research Center.

## GMC Appoints Dental Residents Despite Not Having Dental Surgery Course, HC Issues Notice

Team Absolute | Jabalpur

While considering a plea against Bhopal-based Gandhi Medical College for appointing only resident doctors in the institute, the division bench of Madhya Pradesh High Court has recently issued notices to the Director of Department of Medical Education, the Commissioner of Bhopal and the Dean of the medical college. The plea alleged that even though the college does not have any course in dental surgery, it only appoints students in the posts of resident doctors.

Issuing notice in the matter, the MP

High Court Division bench has posted the matter for further hearing on August 16, 2022. Dr. Anjana Banthia Nahar, who hails from Bhopal has moved the plea against the medical college after approaching the State Medical Education Minister and the Director of Medical Education. As per the latest media report, Dr. Nahar has pursued her PG Dental education (MDS Course) from Bhopal based Rishiraj College. She came across a notification of Gandhi Medical College, which sought to appoint resident doctors.

The rules of appointment issued by the medical college mentioned that only

students of Gandhi Medical College would be eligible to be appointed in the posts of resident doctors. However, the college does not have any course in dental surgery. Therefore, Dr. Anjana Nahar approached the medical education minister, director medical education and commissioner of Bhopal regarding this issue and made a representation before them. However, the authorities did not respond to the representation. Following this, she approached the Division bench of MP High Court. Making all the relevant authorities parties in the plea, the HC bench has listed the matter for further hearing on August 16, 2022.

### CM CHOUHAN PLANTS PEEPAL, NEEM AND KARANJ SAPLINGS

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Peepal, Neem and Karanj along with the members of Ujjara Welfare Society of Bhopal in Smart City Park. Society's Praveen Dixit, Kavita Dixit, girls Prasadhi, Tanishka, Khyati and Vedika also planted saplings. Peepal is a shady tree. It purifies the environment. It has religious and Ayurvedic significance. Neem, abounding in antibiotic elements, is full of medicinal qualities. Karanj is used in religious works.

## CM Chouhan Takes Time Off From Election Campaign, Plays Badminton

► CHIEF MINISTER SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN PLAYING BADMINTON COMES IN THE MIDST OF A HECTIC CAMPAIGN FOR THE UPCOMING TWO-PHASE CIVIC POLLS IN MADHYA PRADESH.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Chouhan on Monday took a break from his election campaign and spent his free time playing badminton at Bhopal's Bhojpur Club. Taking to Twitter, Mr Chouhan shared a video of himself playing badminton in a white kurta-pyjama with the members of the Bhojpur club located in Arera Colony, Bhopal.

"Today, when I got some time off from the election campaign, I enjoyed badminton with the members of Bhojpur Club located in Arera Colony, Bhopal. Spending a few moments like

this after a long time made me feel very happy and blissful. It felt like childhood had returned. Really enjoyed it," said the chief minister.

Since being shared, the video has racked up more than 22,000 views and hundreds of likes. This comes in the midst of a hectic campaign for the upcoming two-phase civic polls in Madhya Pradesh. The first phase of voting will take place on Wednesday, 6 July, and the second phase on 13 July. The Madhya Pradesh CM conducted roadshows and addressed several public gatherings on Sunday.

Chouhan addressed a public gathering in Jabalpur, where he alleged that "terrorism" is

at its peak in the country because of the Congress party. "Terrorism grows only because of the policy of appeasement. There is no place for any terrorist, goon and crook on the soil of Madhya Pradesh," he said. Further, Chouhan stated that he will bring a "social revolution" to MP. He even claimed that children from middle and poor families, whose command over the English language was weak, were deprived of medical and engineering studies.

"From now onwards, we will provide them with an option to study in Hindi, so that children can fulfil their dreams," the Madhya Pradesh CM said.

## CARETAKER SUSPENDED AFTER BJP RS MP'S BELONGINGS SHIFTED IN CIRCUIT HOUSE

■ Two days after a video of BJP Rajya Sabha member Sumitra Balmiki surfaced on social media where she was seen in a furious mood after her belongings were shifted in her absence, a caretaker of the Circuit House in Sagar district was suspended on Tuesday.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Two days after a video of BJP Rajya Sabha member Sumitra Balmiki surfaced on social media where she was seen in a furious mood after her belongings were shifted in her absence, a caretaker of the Circuit House in Sagar district was suspended on Tuesday.

Sagar district collector Deepak Arya said the rest house caretaker Harinarayan Kori has been suspended with immediate effect.

Meanwhile, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) and the district hospitality officer Sapna Tripathi were issued show-cause notices. The administration has sought their reply within two days, otherwise disciplinary action will be proposed against them.

In the video, Balmiki can be heard saying, "I have complained to Bhopal. Just because a mantri has come, does it mean you can do this." As per the report, Balmiki was in Sagar to participate in the election campaign for BJP candidates contesting the ongoing local body polls and she was staying in a government rest house. Officials told IANS that Balmiki came to Sagar on July 3 to campaign for the BJP's mayoral candidate for Sagar. "She was staying in the rest house but in the evening when she returned to the rest house, she found that her belongings had been shifted to another room in her absence. Valmiki alleged that the male staffer touched her innerwear," said a BJP leader over the phone.

The show-cause notice said that the dignity of the Rajya Sabha MP was not taken care of by the subordinate staff of the district hospitality officer and the prescribed protocol was not followed. It comes under the category of serious misconduct under the Civil Services Conduct Rules, said the notice.

Meanwhile, the Congress attacked the BJP-led state government for insulting a Dalit leader. Congress Rajya Sabha MP Vivek Tankha uploaded this video on his Twitter handle and admonished the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government for showing disrespect to an MP in order to welcome a minister. "We came to know that she was evicted from the room because it was booked for a minister of the Madhya Pradesh government. However, the minister did not visit the rest house after the controversy. It is an insult to a Dalit woman leader and it showed the real character of the BJP," said KK Mishra, Madhya Pradesh Congress spokesperson.

## MP gov't official 'influences' poll result in his wife's favour, removed

■ Madhya Pradesh Assembly Speaker's personal secretary Avdhesh Tiwari was removed from his post for alleged misuse of power to influence result in favour of his wife in panchayat election.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Assembly Speaker's personal secretary Avdhesh Tiwari was removed from his post for alleged misuse of power to influence result in favour of his wife in panchayat election.

Tiwari's wife Krishnavati was one of the candidates for sarpanch post in Sura gram panchayat (under Gangeo block) in Rewa district.

Krishnavati Tiwari lost the polls by 20 votes, post which Avdhesh Tiwari, using political influence, forced presiding officer for recounting of votes.

After recounting, Krishnavati lost the polls to Deepthi Dwivedi by a margin of 12 votes. However, Avdhesh Tiwari again forced the election team to recount the votes for the third time. Subsequently, after holding counting for the third time, Krishnavati Tiwari was declared winner by three votes. The other candidates, who were the second and third runners up, accused the presiding officer and police officials deployed in Sura gram panchayat of favouring Krishnavati Tiwari. Ironically, when people of the village raised objections alleging that election was not conducted in fair manner, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) and in-charge of election did not even accept their application and left the polling booth.

Evidence showed that family members of Deepthi Dwivedi tried to convince SDM and other election officials to conduct election in a fair manner and demanded recounting of votes again, but the officials were heard saying "nothing will happen now".

During the voting, presiding officer of polling booth was seen distributing tokens at 4 p.m. despite the Election Commission fixing voting time between 7.30 am. to 3 pm.

After no response from the election officials or SDM and district collector, one of the candidates for the sarpanch post attempted suicide by consuming poison. He was rushed to Sanjay Gandhi Memorial hospital Rewa and after treatment was discharged from the medical facility.

Deepthi Dwivedi was still hopeful that the administration will pay heed on her grievances.

"For the last three days, we have been trying to meet district collector and SDM but none is ready to meet us. They are under pressure of Avdhesh Tiwari. We have all evidence that how unfair election was conducted here in Sura gram panchayat. We will stage a protest at district collector office, and if needed, will go the state election commission. A defeated candidate was declared winner, this is unacceptable," Deepthi Dwivedi said.

Whether the Election Commission or the administration will pay heed to these allegations and will order for an inquiry into this matter is yet to be seen. However, soon after this controversy erupted, MP Assembly Speaker Girish Gautam asked Avdhesh Tiwari to resign for his post with immediate effect.

Avdhesh Tiwari was removed from his post on Sunday. The Panchayat polls were held on July 1.

# RTI activist killed in MP had received several threats: Fact-finding team

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A month after 42-year-old RTI activist Ranjeet Soni was shot dead in a government office in Madhya Pradesh's Vidisha district, a fact-finding team of activists has released a report noting that Soni had been under severe pressure from local government contractors to stop his activities.

The report available with IANS mentioned that the team visited Vidisha on June 19 to meet the family of Soni, who was killed on June 2. The team comprised activists Anjali Bhardwaj, Rolly Shivhare and Amrita Johri who are members of the working committee of the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information; Ajay Dubey who is board member of Transparency International, India, and Santosh Malviya who works with Dubey in Madhya Pradesh.

The report states that Soni's widow Gayatri said that he was most recently pursuing issues related to fake Fixed Deposit Receipts (FDRs) made by certain contractors in collusion with officials to bid for government contracts.

The report suggested that Soni himself was a contractor for government work but stopped working with two of those arrested for his murder -- Jaswant Raghuvanshi and S. Kumar Choubhe -- after a falling out. Police have arrested three others, including the shooter Ankit Yadav who was allegedly assigned the task. Soni had been using the RTI Act to access details of public work and government expenditure and would file complaints against irregularities he had noticed. Local journalists told the fact-finding team that over 130 RTI requests had been filed by Soni.

Based on the RTI replies, he filed complaints before various authorities including

the Lokayukta, public works department and the Chief Minister's Office seeking action.

"A perusal of the RTI applications filed by him show that in several cases he was seeking information which in any case should have been proactively disclosed by the concerned public authority as required under Section 4 of the RTI Act," reports said.

The fact-finding report notes the discovery of several RTI applications made by Soni to unearth allocations and acquisitions at government hospitals, eligibility of persons appointed for government jobs, and details of road construction. In 2016, Soni filed a police complaint alleging a physical attack by Raghuvanshi and his people over an RTI on road construction deals filed by him. Raghuvanshi allegedly also got a person, who Soni alleges he did not even know, to file a case under the SC/ST Act against him.

The family, even before Soni's death, had made significant changes to their lives to accommodate the shift in Soni's profession, even selling their house and moving when payments to Soni stopped due to "action by these contractors."

"In our view, the connection between Ranjeet's murder and his use of the RTI Act to access information and expose alleged corruption/irregularities cannot be denied," the team notes in the report.

The report also mentioned that the family is in deep financial crisis and the government must provide immediate compensation. The report requests the authorities to place in the public domain, on the website of the concerned public authorities, all the RTI applications filed by Soni in the last one year (including any pending applications) along with the information and replies.



EDITOR'S SPECS

SC'S REMARK AGAINST NUPUR SHARMA WAS INAPPROPRIATE!

A group consisting of 15 retired judges of various high courts, 77 retired bureaucrats and 25 retired armed forces officers have written an open letter criticising the observations of the Supreme Court on a plea by former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma. The veterans said they believe that the democracy of any country will remain intact till all the institutions perform their duties as per the Constitution. It further added that observations are not in sync with judicial ethos and by no stretch these observations, which are not part of the judicial order, can be sanctified on the plank of judicial propriety and fairness. The veterans said through such observation, perceptionally there is virtual exoneration of the dastardliest beheading at Udaipur in broad daylight. They said Sharma was de facto denied access to the judiciary and in the process, there was an outrage on the Preamble, spirit and essence of the Constitution. The veterans said the legal fraternity is bound to be surprised and shocked at the observation that an FIR should lead to arrest and the observations on other agencies in the country, without notice to them, are indeed worrisome and alarming. Sharma had moved the top court seeking clubbing of FIRs, registered in various parts of the country, into one FIR at Delhi in the matter connected with her remarks against the Prophet Muhammed. On July 1, the apex court slammed Sharma for her controversial remarks. The statement said the allegations constitute only one offence for which separate prosecutions (FIRs) were launched and Article 20 (2) of the Constitution prohibits prosecution and punishment more than once for the same offence.

SMOOTH TRANSITION OF POWER BUT BUMPY RIDE AHEAD FOR THE CM!

Vinod Kumar Shukla

A new government is installed in Maharashtra with rebel Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde, who is now expelled from the party by Uddhav Thackeray, taking over as the new Chief Minister but the real story is former CM Devendra Phadnavis taking oath as the Deputy CM. Social media enthusiasts and BJP netizens are calling the move as a masterstroke despite the fact that his body language, facial expression and the way he was carrying himself after his name was announced for the post of Dy CM suggested otherwise. Only time will tell if this is a masterstroke or hit wicket but aye-sayers and naysayers have their own arguments. A Shiv Sena CM replacing a Thackeray will certainly decimate the political authority of the family in Maharashtra which of late was struggling to keep their party folks together. This decision will end the family control over the party. Moreover, the family charisma is completely missing after the demise of Bal Thackeray. Now, for any harsh decision against SS, NCP and the Congress leaders who are involved and might be found to be involved in corruption cases Eknath Shinde will be held responsible. Hindutva politics will once again be played in Maharashtra with every accountability of Shinde. Some clashes might also take place in Mumbai and other parts of Maharashtra that the BJP has very cleverly made a Shiv Sena versus Shiv Sena by bringing Shinde at the helm instead of it being a Shiv Sena versus the BJP. Apparently, with this move the BJP wants to finish the rest of the SS in the state to emerge as the only Hindutva flag bearer in the state. The BJP under Phadnavis was accused of running a Peshwai in Maharashtra for him being a Brahmin leader by politi-

cians like Sharad Pawar. Pawar was able to generate support of the Maratha community with this kind of arguments but with Shinde being in the saddle will blunt the edge of the weapon of the aging Maratha leader in the state. So the decision seems to be hitting many birds with just one stone and the BJP will save itself from any blame or backlash too. Maharashtra is no exception to conspiracy theories which suggested that there was no harsh statement from Pawar over this coup against the Thackeray government. This suggests that his purpose to form the government in Maharashtra with Shiv Sena is over. Now, he will chart his own course who feels that some year of active politics still remains with him. Moreover, with Shinde at the helm of affairs, it is also being said that the party will gradually disappear from the political scenario of Maharashtra as he can't ever be a Bal Thackeray. Thackerays will try to bring back rebels to the party fold again. After many other games of political one-upmanship to bring back rebels, Uddhav played the emotional card as the last resort and tried to get sympathy by saying that the BJP wanted to dislodge a Shiv Sena government to form a BJP-led government. But the idea was nipped at the bud before it traveled to people. On the contrary, the BJP has managed to send a message to Shiv Sainiks who always wanted a Marathi Manus at the helm, Marathi glory underlined, and a Maratha taking over reins in Mumbai that they are here for the same cause. The BJP has helped them realise their dream that they



were cherishing since the formation of Shiv Sena in 1966. This is what the BJP wants to make people understand by these moves. But what they really want to gain is rather more important and real. When in 2019 Phadnavis took the oath of office of Maharashtra CM early in the morning with Ajit Pawar as his deputy, the objective was clear to have a BJP government in Maharashtra. But lots of dirty linen have been washed in public since then and the BJP wanted to put a check on this to achieve its objective for the 2024 elections. So it is an attempt to restore faith among electorates that the BJP is the party to rely on for the welfare of the people of Maharashtra. BMC elections are the first test that the BJP and its newly found partner will be put to test in August-September this year. In the last elections, the BJP and Shiv Sena had a difference of just two seats with 82 and 84 seats, respectively in BMC. The BJP wants to give a message to the people that it is the only party that can provide them stability and faster development. The new government is likely to expedite projects like the metro and bullet train which were halted after the Thackeray government took over in the state in 2019. The BJP's focus is more on the 2024 Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. Now, they have a 175 plan for 2024 Assembly elections out of 288 seats in Maharashtra Assembly to form the government of their own. For the bigger gain, they seem to have sacrificed the chair of the CM that is just for half term. The visibly upset Phadnavis swallowed the poison for the party as a disciplined worker. But sacrificing self-respect of an individual over party is rather a better political game plan that the BJP leadership appears to have played. One thing is also certain that the government will have a bumpy ride not only in running the government but also tackling the issues on the street with the other SS group not leaving any chance for the CM to relax or remain at ease. Moreover, change of names of cities like Aurangabad and one other will see protests from AIMIM whose MP Imtiaz Jaleel already threatened to take the matter from the street to the highest level. All these issues are the responsibility of the CM to handle and all praise and criticism will only go to the CM. But who will be benefited out of these developments is still a matter to speculate on.

international

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CLEARS 2 KEY DIGITAL LAWS TO TAME BIG TECH

London | Agencies

In a historic move, the European Parliament on Tuesday approved two major pieces of digital regulation that will set out unprecedented standards on the accountability of online companies within an open and competitive digital market. The Parliament held the final vote on the new Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA), following an earlier deal reached between Parliament and Council. The two bills aim to address the societal and economic effects of the tech industry by setting clear standards for how they operate and provide services in the EU, in line with the EU's fundamental rights and values. The Digital Services Act was adopted with 539 votes in favour, 54 votes against and 30 abstentions. The Digital Markets Act was adopted with 588 in favour, 11 votes against and 31 abstentions. "For too long, tech giants have ben-



edited from an absence of rules. The digital world has developed into a Wild West, with the biggest and strongest setting the rules. But there is a new sheriff in town -- the DSA," said Christel Schaldemose, rapporteur for the Digital Services Act. "Now rules and rights will be strengthened. We are opening up the black box of algorithms so that we can have a proper look at the money-

making machines behind these social platforms," he added. The Digital Services Act (DSA) sets clear obligations for digital service providers, such as social media or marketplaces, to tackle the spread of illegal content, online disinformation and other societal risks. Very large online platforms and search engines (with 45 million or more monthly users), which present

Hot air is US military's newest weapon against China and Russia

Washington | Agencies

The Pentagon is working on a new plan to rise above competition from China and Russia: balloons, a report said. The high-altitude inflatables, flying at between 60,000 and 90,000 feet, would be added to the Pentagon's extensive surveillance network and could eventually be used to track hypersonic weapons, Politico reported. The idea may sound like science fiction, but Pentagon budget documents signal the technology is moving from DoD's scientific community to the military services. "High or very high-altitude platforms have a lot of benefit for their endurance on station, maneuverability and also flexibility for multiple payloads," said Tom Karako, senior fellow for the International Security Program and Missile Defense Project director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Politico reported. The Pentagon continues to invest in these projects because the military could use the balloons for various missions. Over the past two years, the Pentagon has spent about \$3.8 million on balloon projects, and plans to spend \$27.1 million in fiscal year 2023 to continue work on multiple efforts, according to budget documents. Meanwhile, the Pentagon is working on its own hypersonic weapons program, despite



Wednesday's failure of the latest test. A bright spot for the US is the balloons may help track and deter hypersonic weapons being developed by China and Russia. China surprised the Pentagon in August by testing a nuclear-capable hypersonic missile, which narrowly missed its target by roughly two dozen miles. Russia began ramping up hypersonic weapons development in response to the US withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002. The Russian government claimed to fire a hypersonic missile in an attack on Ukraine in March, marking its first use in combat. That's one way the balloons could be useful -- augmenting expensive satellites in tracking the missiles. The teardrop-shaped balloons harvest complex data and navigate using AI algorithms, Politico reported.

KREMLIN DENIES REPORTS OF XI REFUSING TO VISIT RUSSIA

Moscow: Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has denied media reports suggesting that Chinese President Xi Jinping refused to visit Russia. "This is not true. This is completely untrue. The fact is that certain Covid restrictions in China continue, and this is absolutely normal, and this should be treated with understanding," RT quoted Peskov as saying. "And as all these relaxations of these restrictions allow, of course, all visits will be carried out," he said. Earlier, the media reported that the Chinese President refused to visit Moscow in response to the invitation from his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. As reported, the Russian leader invited Xi during a telephone call on June 15. Peskov said that the country's Ministry of Defence has its own plans in connection with the launch of the process of Finland and Sweden joining NATO. "Such options are being worked out not in the Kremlin, but in the Ministry. We have already said many times that there are relevant plans there and work is being done to ensure our security," Peskov said. Thus, he answered the question whether the Kremlin is considering the option of placing a NATO base on the border with Russia and how Moscow can respond in this regard. At the same time, Peskov added that Putin had already assessed the entry of Finland and Sweden into NATO.

'Neighbouring country' played a role in Karachi University bombing: Officials

Karachi | Agencies

Pakistan Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said on Tuesday that the April 26 Karachi University suicide bombing was a jointly planned by the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), in which a "neighbouring country" had played a role, media reports said. In April, a female suicide bomber, Shari Baloch, detonated herself outside KU's Confucius Institute, killing three Chinese teachers and their local driver. At the time, the BLA had claimed responsibility for the attack, Dawn reported. In a meeting on Monday with a Chinese delegation at the Chief Minister's house, Sindh police chief Ghulam Nabi Memon disclosed that an "important suspect" has been taken into custody. During a press conference, Inam Memon said that the suspect, whom he termed as a



terrorist, has revealed that the KU attack was the joint work of the BLF and the BLA. He said that at the time, the BLA had claimed responsibility and had also released video statements, "proudly" taking credit for the cowardly attack. After that, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) collected CCTV footage, conducted geo-fencing and DNA sampling which led to the arrest of the BLF commander in Karachi, he said, identifying the suspect

as Daad Baksh, Dawn reported. "During the investigation process, the suspect made some important revelations. He said that he was the commander of a BLF sleeper cell in Karachi," Inam Memon said. The suspect also said that he had been conducting reconnaissance of different BLA targets on the orders of his organisation's commander, Khalil Baloch alias Musa, he said. He had conducted reconnaissance of the sensitive installations and of the Chinese citizens working at KU, the minister added. He went on to say that the suspect met with the husband of the female suicide bomber, Haibastan Bashir, and another "important terrorist" named "Zeb" in Karachi, and helped carry out the KU attack, Dawn reported. Memon said that the suspect has revealed that Zeb was the KU attack mastermind, who entered Pakistan from a "neighbouring country" and had been staying in Karachi with Baloch and her husband, Dawn reported.

He said that while being interrogated, the suspect confessed to conducting reconnaissance in Gulbai along with his accomplice as well as firing at a vehicle carrying two Chinese engineers in July 2021, which left one injured. He further confessed that he joined the BLF in 2013 and carried out multiple attacks on security forces in Balochistan's Balgatar area, Inam Memon said. "In 2017, he fled to a neighbouring country at the directives of the BLF commander. He later returned and stayed in Karachi." He went on to say: "In 2022, the terrorist went to a neighbouring country and was trained by Zeb in making IEDs at the BLF and BLA camp at the Majeed Brigade's headquarters in Captain Rehman Gul's basement." "Zeb is an extremely dangerous terrorist and an expert in making IEDs," Inam Memon said, adding that he had entered KU before Baloch and had left immediately after the attack was carried out, Dawn reported.



# PM MODI, AMIT SHAH ASSURED FULL SUPPORT FOR MAHARASHTRA DEVELOPMENT: EKNATH SHINDE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has said Prime Minister and Union Home Minister have assured him full support for the development and growth of the state. Addressing hundreds of Shiv Sainiks on Monday night during his first visit to hometown Thane after taking over as the CM, Shinde said the risk that he took (referring to political developments over the last fortnight) has been appreciated by people, despite criticism from certain quarters.

"I am going to undertake a tour of the entire state and allot projects in every constituency. There will be a total transformation of the state. I do not exaggerate much, I do work and then speak," he said

He said Prime Minister Modi has told him to work for the development and growth of the state.

"He (the PM) told me that he and the central government would support me. Even Union Home Minister Amit Shah has expressed his full support. They said I am good work for Hindutva," Shinde said.

Referring to the political developments of the last fortnight when he



along with some Sena MLAs left for Surat, later stayed in Guwahati and then in Goa before returning to Mumbai, Shinde said 50 legislators had faith and confidence in him.

"We had stood up against injustice and not revolted. (founder) Balasaheb Thackeray had asked us to rise against injustice, this was his teaching and also of (Shinde's mentor) Anand Dighe," he said, adding that it was due to the blessings of the two leaders and good wishes of citizens that he became the CM.

"We were out for 15 days, and as much as you wanted to meet me, I

was also eager to meet my Shiv Sainiks and activists. Even now I don't feel like I am the CM. I am one among you. Henceforth also, I will be a 'karyakarta' among you all," he said.

Shinde said no matter how big his stature may grow, the Shiv Sainik in him will always remain.

The CM also said he has given a commitment to the 50 MLAs who supported him that none of them will face defeat in the next elections.

"If I give a commitment once, I never listen to even myself till it is fulfilled," he said.

Referring to some strong critical remarks made by Sena leaders after he had left Mumbai with some MLAs, Shinde said "Kamakhya devi (the deity of a famous temple in Guwahati) gave her blessings to us."

"Truth always wins. We will make the best use of the golden opportunity we have got now to lead the state," he said. "We have to make our mission successful and honour Hindutva, which also means respect every religion," he said. Shinde said every caste, creed and region will get due respect and everyone, including farmers and the poor people, will get justice in his government. On his speech in the Assembly after the floor test, he said, "Everything was spontaneous, whatever I spoke was an expression of my feelings. I could not believe that I could deliver such a speech."

"I have contributed to the Shiv Sena all my life at the cost of my family," Shinde said while lauding his supporters who gathered in a large number during his address braving the heavy rain. The CM also visited the office here and was greeted by BJP city president and MLC Niranjan Davkhare.

# I shall fight and give strength to Shiv Sena: Uddhav Thackeray

Former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has said that he was "hurt" to see some members ditching the party despite getting benefits and will visit Hingoli in Marathwada soon, party leader said on Tuesday, a day after local Sena MLA, Santosh Bangar, crossed over to the Eknath Shinde faction just ahead of the test vote.

Team Absolute | Aurangabad

Interestingly, Bangar, the MLA from Kalamnuri in the Hingoli district, was recently seen weeping asking rebels to return to the Sena fold in videos during the earlier days of the revolt.

After Bangar joined the Shinde camp and voted in favour of the trust vote in the Assembly on Monday, a meeting of district Shiv Sena leaders was held at the government guest house in Hingoli on Tuesday where Uddhav Thackeray spoke to party workers over the phone and told them that he would visit Hingoli soon.

Thackeray told Sena workers that it was painful to see that those (MLAs and ministers) who won due to Sena workers and got everything (positions in the party) have left him. "But those who didn't get anything are with me. I shall fight and reinvigorate Sena. I will come to (Hingoli) soon to meet you," Thackeray told the party workers in the meeting, a video of which has gone viral.

Shinde said Sena workers were shocked to see Mr Bangar joining the Shinde group at the last moment. "Shiv Sena is intact. The Sena



workers who were informed about the meeting attended it," he said. One video had shown Bangar sobbing and saying that the environment in the state had turned bad and all dissidents with Shinde must return to the party fold as Uddhav Thackeray would surely forgive them. He had also hailed the Sena as followers of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Bal Thackeray and said it was the duty of everyone to keep the saffron flag of Hindutva flying high without any taint.

# RAINS POUND MUMBAI, KONKAN, MANY AREAS INUNDATED

Heavy rains clobbered the country's commercial capital Mumbai, the coastal Konkan and other parts of the state since last night, inundating many towns, villages in different areas, hitting road and rail traffic, officials said here on Tuesday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Heavy rains clobbered the country's commercial capital Mumbai, the coastal Konkan and other parts of the state since last night, inundating many towns, villages in different areas, hitting road and rail traffic, officials said here on Tuesday.

Personally monitoring, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has put all districts on high alert and directed them to make all arrangements including shifting of people living in vulnerable areas as the incessant rains continued.

In Mumbai, the chronic flood-prone areas like Sion, Wadala, Kings Circle, Bhandup, Parel, Kurla and Nehru Nagar were flooded with knee-deep or waist-deep water, several subways were water-logged hampering east-west traffic movement and traffic crawling at a snail's pace on the two highways.

The Central Railway and Western Railway suburban trains as well as Mumbai Metro services were operating normally after overnight downpour.

The BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has deployed extra



pumps to eject the flood waters in several areas. Other coastal districts of Palghar, Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg were also lashed by heavy rains with big and small local rivers swelling above the danger levels.

Many towns like Chiplun, Vaibhavwadi, Ambet, Khed, Poladpur and others were flooded with road traffic closed, and a minor hillside reported in a couple of areas in the Western Ghats in Ratnagiri district. Villagers living in the vicinity of landslide or hillside prone areas and on the banks of rivers or the Arabian Sea have been put on high alert with the major Vashishth and Jagbudi rivers flooded and flowing above the danger marks in some areas. The Kundalika river has also crossed the danger mark, while Amba, Savitri, Patalganga, Ulhas and Gadi rivers are flowing close to the danger levels. The IMD's Regional Meteorological Centre has forecast heavy rains in Mumbai and coastal Maharashtra for the next four

days, with an Orange Alert sounded.

The entire west coast from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka and Kerala is covered with dense clouds with the possibility of very heavy to heavy rains, and isolated extremely heavy rains for the coastal regions plus central and western Maharashtra, said IMD-Pune head KS Hosalkar.

The state government is keeping an eagle eye on the monsoon situation unfolding in different areas and has kept teams of NDRF, SDRF and other disaster agencies on high alert to be deployed at short notice.

Shinde has asked for specific monitoring in Palghar, Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg and Kolhapur districts to keep all agencies in top preparedness for any eventuality.

Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said the government has reviewed the rainfall situation in the state and the administration has been put on a high alert.

# 24 NDRF, SDRF teams deployed as rains clobber Mumbai, Konkan

Against the backdrop of heavy rains in several parts of Maharashtra, the state government is fully geared to tackle the situation by deploying 24 teams of the NDRF and the SDRF in the flood-prone coastal Konkan on Tuesday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Against the backdrop of heavy rains in several parts of Maharashtra, the state government is fully geared to tackle the situation by deploying 24 teams of the NDRF and the SDRF in the flood-prone coastal Konkan on Tuesday.

Two teams each of the National Disaster Response Force have been deployed in Mumbai, Thane, and Kolhapur and one each in Palghar, Raigad, and Ratnagiri.

One team each of the State Disaster Response Force are already in the field in Nanded and Gadchiroli where heavy rains continue since Tuesday evening. Besides, 9 NDRF teams are kept ready - with 3 each at the base stations in Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur, in addition to 2 SDRF teams at the base stations in Dhule and Nagpur.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde is monitoring the disaster management and response as downpour continued in



many districts including Mumbai since Monday evening.

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase slammed the state government for its shoddy preparedness despite heavy rains in many parts and warning of more rain over the next few days.

"It is the job of the respective District Guardian Ministers to monitor these things. But the new government has not yet appointed any ministers owing to severe differences between CM Shinde and Bharatiya Janata Party Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis," he alleged. Owing to this, even 6 days after the government was sworn-in, the cabinet is not in place nor have Guardian Ministers been appointed and this could severely hamper the work of disaster management in

the coming days of the predicted downpour, said Tapase.

Meanwhile, Mumbai recorded 117 mm rains, Mumbai suburbs 124mm, and Palghar notched 100 mm average rain in the past 24 hours, said an official.

Owing to a flood-like situation developing in two villages of Amravati, work has been taken up to evacuate the stranded villagers, using available locals teams. Though there is no flood situation in Ratnagiri, 2 major rivers in the district are flowing above the danger levels and the authorities are on full alert, and in Kolhapur as river level has risen, two NDRF teams have been deployed.

Several hillslides on the Parshuram Ghat on Mumbai-Goa Highway led to the closure of the road as a precaution.

# Sona Mohapatra draws Twitter CEO's attention to sexism in his alma mater

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Playback singer Sona Mohapatra, who has crooned hit numbers such as 'Bedardi Raja', 'Ambarsariya' and 'Rangabati', has addressed a lengthy tweet to Parag Agrawal, CEO of the microblogging site, slamming the practice of not inviting women as headliners for cultural events at his alma mater IIT Bombay.

In her tweet, Sona wrote, "Dear @paraga, Ur alma-mater has for decades, mostly never hosted women as headliners in their cultural festival. IITB alumni, even CEOs slammed me on fb for writing this letter." Sona urged Agrawal to watch her film 'Shut Up Sona' to get a glimpse of what female artistes have to go through to get equal respect, representation, and remuneration. She added: "I hope U



watch my film #ShutUpSona to see what our reality as female artists in the 21st century is. Love & Light." She also attached screenshots of her viral open letter on Facebook. The tweet serves as a reminder to what even the most successful women have to face when they come up against systemic sexism.

# FORMER MUMBAI POLICE COMMISSIONER APPEARS BEFORE ED IN NSE SCAM CASE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a latest development in connection with the National Stock Exchange's (NSE) co-location scam, the Enforcement Directorate is recording the statement of 1986 batch IPS official and former Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Pandey at its Delhi-based headquarters.

Pandey was on July 3 asked to get his statement recorded before the ED team. He has now joined the probe. Pandey is very close to former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. The ED's case is on the basis of the CBI's case.

In April, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had filed its first chargesheet in the matter against Chitra Ramkrishna, the ex-CEO of NSE and Anand Subramanian, the ex-Group Operating Officer of the NSE. Subramanian was arrested by the CBI on February 24 while Ramkrishna was placed under arrest on March 6. The federal probe



agency is probing the matter since May 2018 but it has not found any concrete evidence to identify the mysterious 'Himalayan Yogi' with whom the classified information was shared by Ramkrishna. However, the CBI had told a Delhi court that Anand Subramanian was the 'Himalayan Yogi' who allegedly influenced the decisions of Chitra Ramkrishna. Recently, the SEBI had imposed a fine of Rs 3

crore on Ramkrishna, following the market regulator finding that she allegedly shared vital inputs about the NSE with the yogi. "Information regarding organisational structure, dividend scenario, financial results, human resource policies and related issues, response to regulator, etc., were shared by her with the yogi," said the source. Between 2014 and 2016, she sent emails at rigyajur-sama@outlook.com. On April 1, 2013, Ramkrishna became the CEO and MD of NSE. She brought Subramanian to NSE as her advisor in 2013. Subramanian was made the Chief Strategic Advisor of NSE. He served at this post between 2013 and 2015 before being made Group Operations Officer and Advisor to the MD between 2015 and 2016, despite having no exposure to the capital market. Previously working as a mid-level manager in Balmer and Lawrie, he had seen his salary increased from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 1.68 crore annually, and then to Rs 4.21 crore.

# SPICEJET PLANE LANDS IN MUMBAI WITH CRACKED OUTER WINDSHIELD



Mumbai: A SpiceJet flight landed safely in Mumbai with its outer windshield of the cockpit cracked, an airline spokesperson said on Monday.

The incident took place on SpiceJet flight SG-3324 operating from Kandla (Gujarat) to Mumbai by a turboprop Q400 aircraft.

At around 23,000 feet height, the outer pane of the windshield on the co-pilot's side cracked but the cabin pressurisation was observed to be normal. The flight landed safely at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport later, said the spokesperson, but the cause of the accident - the second on Monday for the low-cost carrier - is not clear yet.

# IANs-CVoter National Mood Tracker: Majority Indians believe Shinde govt will complete its tenure

The new government in Maharashtra, led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and supported by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), won the floor test in the state Assembly on July 4.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The new government in Maharashtra, led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and supported by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), won the floor test in the state Assembly on July 4. In the test of strength, while 164 MLAs voted in favour of the confidence motion, 99 legislators voted against it.

The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly has 288 members. The new government came to power after the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government headed by Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray was dislodged because of a major rebellion in the party led by Eknath Shinde.

The Congress party and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) are the coalition partners of MVA. Maharashtra witnessed two weeks of political turmoil since Shinde raised the flag of rebellion against the Thackerays. A large faction of Shiv Sena MLAs jumped the ship and joined the rebel camp.

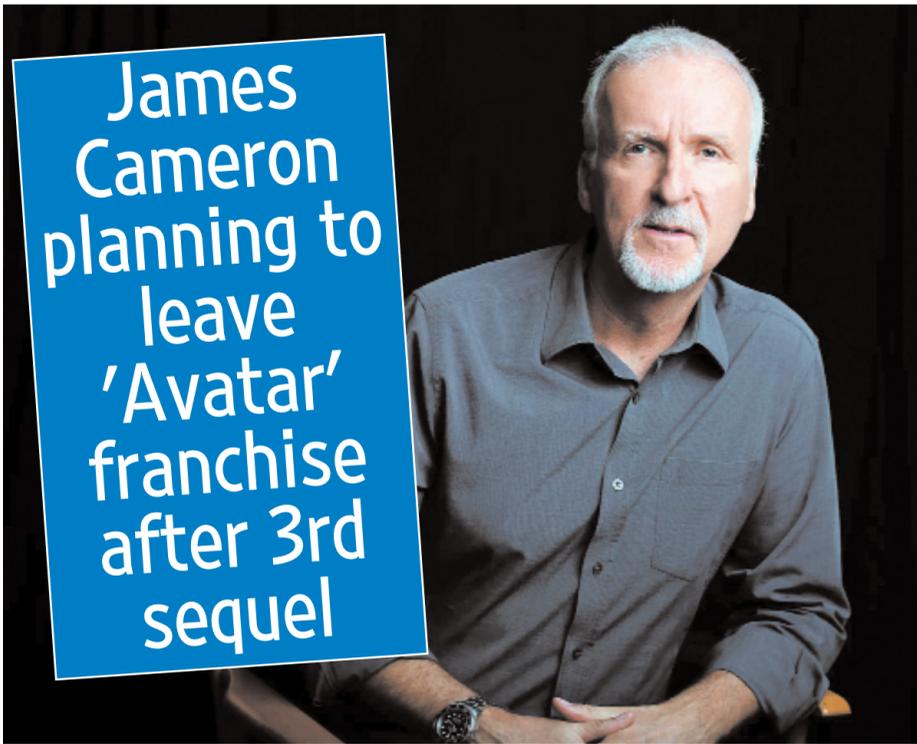
Shinde has been claiming that he has the support of around 40 of 55 Shiv Sena MLAs.

Though the fledgling Shinde government has comfortably won the trust vote, NCP chief Sharad Pawar has predicted that the new government will fall within six months and mid-term Assembly elections will be held in the state. CVoter-IndiaTracker conducted a nationwide survey on behalf of IANs to know peoples' views about Pawar's comment and survival of the Shinde government. During the survey, the majority of Indians did not agree with Pawar and 64 per cent of the respondents said that the Shinde government will survive till the next Assembly polls scheduled to be held in the state in 2024. Interestingly, during the survey, while the



majority of NDA voters -- 75 per cent -- expressed their faith in the survival of Shinde government, a substantial proportion of opposition supporters -- 57 per cent -- also opined that the new government will not collapse within six months, as predicted by Pawar. Notably, the majority of respondents from different social groups said Pawar will be proven wrong as the new Maharashtra government will complete its tenure. During the survey, 75 per cent Upper Caste Hindus (UCH), 66 per cent Scheduled Tribes (ST), 65 per cent Other Backward Classes (OBC) and 64 per cent Scheduled Castes (SC) said that the new ruling dispensation will complete its full term and there will be no mid-term polls in the state. However, during the survey, majority of Muslim respondents -- 73 per cent agreed with the views of

Pawar. The survey further revealed that Indians remain divided about the leadership of the real Shiv Sena. During the survey, while respondents were divided in their views, a bigger proportion -- 52 per cent now believes that Shinde is the leader of Shiv Sena, 48 per cent still consider Thackeray as the head of the party. Notably, in the CVoter-IndiaTracker survey, conducted on the issue of leadership of Shiv Sena on June 24, a large proportion of respondents -- 53 per cent -- had opined in favour of Thackeray. In the past ten days, Shinde has emerged from being a Shiv Sena rebel to the new chief minister of Maharashtra, who has won the trust vote. During the survey, while the majority of NDA voters -- 64 per cent -- stated that Shinde is the new chief of the real Shiv Sena, views of opposition voters were divided on the issue. According to the survey data, while the opinion of opposition voters was divided on the issue, a bigger proportion of them -- 55 per cent -- expressed their views in Thackeray.



**James Cameron planning to leave 'Avatar' franchise after 3rd sequel**

Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker James Cameron, who is awaiting the release of his upcoming fantasy epic 'Avatar: The Way of Water', has shared that he might possibly stop directing the films in the franchise after the third sequel, reports 'Variety'. The director told 'Empire' magazine that he's considering leaving the

world of Pandora behind for other projects down the line and would pass on the baton to other deserving filmmakers in the process.

Movie is set to hit theatres on December 16. Cameron told "The 'Avatar' films themselves are kind of all-consuming. I've got some other things I'm developing as well that are exciting. "I think eventually over time -- I don't

know if that's after three or after four -- I'll want to pass the baton to a director that I trust to take over, so I can go do some other stuff that I'm also interested in. Or maybe not. I don't know." Even so, Cameron expressed excitement about the potential to watch his grand plan for the 'Avatar' saga come to fruition.

## 'Switching teams was the best decision', says Amber Gill

Los Angeles | Agencies

Amber Gill has declared that 'switching teams' was the best decision she has ever made as she insisted she could not 'go through it again' with a man. The Love Island winner was commenting on the antics of the male contestants on this year's show after the girls were shipped off to Casa Amor. reports; dailymail.com.

Amber said that watching the men 'made her feel ill', after everyone but Luca Bish made moves on the new arrivals in the main villa.

In a series of tweets, Amber wrote: 'Switching teams was the best decision I made in my life.'

'Watching men makes me feel ill. I couldn't put myself through it again.'

Amber also responded to a follower that replied to her saying: 'Me and my gf were saying just yesterday that we predict you'll end up settling down with a woman.'

The reality personality wrote: 'That's cute. Tell me why.' The fan wrote: 'Because you seem to be very disenchanted by men these days, and we feel like a woman (the right woman) is more likely to appreciate you for all your complexities and inner fire. 'And treat you with the level of care/sensitivity that you deserve.' Clearly touched by the message, Amber wrote: 'Now I'm crying.'



**David and Victoria toast 23rd anniversary in Paris**



Los Angeles | Agencies

Elizabeth Hurley looked glamorous in a gold halterneck dress as she posed at her 20-year-old son Damian's graduation party on Monday. The actress wowed in the sleek number as she proudly posed in a group snap with her ex-husband Arun Nayar.

Arun is not Damian's biological father, but Elizabeth has previously said she always considered him his dad after getting married when Damian was five.

**Elizabeth Hurley celebrates son Damian's graduation party**

Damian - who has been at drama school - captioned the post: 'Mama and Daddyo at graduation with me!' Arun was married to Elizabeth from 2007 to 2011 but they remained good friends after they divorced.

Los Angeles | Agencies

Victoria Beckham has celebrated 23 years of marriage with her husband David as they enjoyed a romantic date night in Paris. The designer and the former footballer took to their respective Instagram Stories on Monday evening to give an insight into their intimate celebrations. reports; dailymail.com.

Their date night saw them enjoy a bottle of wine on a rooftop where they also let off heart-shaped balloons. For their celebratory evening, Victoria was the epitome of elegance in a chic white blazer dress, which she paired with glittering silver tights and heels.

She flaunted her natural good looks with a light make-up and let her brunette tresses fall natural over her shoulders as she cosied up to David. The couple, who tied the knot in 1999, celebrated with a romantic alfresco dinner overlooking Paris' incredible views, where they took loved-up selfies.



## J-Hope's More gets a shout-out from 'BFF' American singer Lizzo

Los Angeles | Agencies

BTS dance leader, rapper and sub-vocalist J-Hope aka Jung Hoseok has just released his single, More. The whole album Jack In The Box is expected to drop in a few days. Taking a complete break from pop music which has been the core of BTS, J-Hope aka Hobi's song More is combination of old school hip-hop with rock. The song has got great response from music critics for its experimental style. A number of Korean hip-hop artists have also showered love on the song. J-Hope has been sharing all the positive words for his song on his social media handle. Fans are curious to know if there is a collab song in the album Jack In The

Box. reports; Bollywoodlife.com.

Today, American singer Lizzo shared an Insta story of More and told fans to check out the song. J-Hope shared her story and said 'Thanks BFF. She also re-shared it calling him My Hope. The whole interaction is so cute. J-Hope, V and Jimin had met Lizzo during the Harry Styles concert in Los Angeles. They met and exchanged hugs and numbers. It seems she said that she had a crush on V and Jimin. Lizzo's sister later said that J-Hope shared his number with the singer. It looks like the friendship is here to stay. Here is how fans reacted.

BTS is now on a break from group activities. They are focused on solo projects.



## Tom-Zawe to become parents soon

Los Angeles | Agencies

After romance rumours, Loki star Tom Hiddleston and Zawe Ashton had moved in together in 2020. The couple had sparked engagement rumours during their joint appearance at the 2022 BAFTA Awards where the actress was clicked sporting a diamond ring. It is now being reported that Tom and Zawe are all set to welcome their first child together.

At the Mr. Malcolm's List premiere in New York City on Wednesday night, Zawe debuted her baby bump at the red carpet, thus announcing her pregnancy in a subtle way. She was seen wearing a beige, off-the-shoulder gown. While Tom was not present at the event, Zawe was joined by her co-stars Freida Pinto, Sope Dirisu, Theo James and Sianad Gregory and director Emma Holly Jones. reports; bollywoodlife.com.

The couple's pregnancy news came two weeks after Tom confirmed his engagement with Zawe, who has been roped in to play the villain in Captain Marvel 2. "I'm very happy," Tom had responded to a question about his engagement by Los Angeles Times.



## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Jilly Anais



## Malaysia Masters Badminton

# SINDHU, PRANNOY LEAD INDIAN CHALLENGE; SAINA TO START AGAINST KOREA'S KIM GA EUN

Kuala Lumpur | Agencies

World No 1 and former World Champion P.V. Sindhu, World No 24 Saina Nehwal, Thomas Cup winner H.S. Prannoy and 2014 Commonwealth Games gold medalist Parupalli Kashyap will lead the Indian challenge in the BWF Malaysia Masters Super 500 badminton championships in Kuala Lumpur, this week.

Two-time Malaysia Masters winner Sindhu is seeded seventh and takes on China's He Bing Jiao in her opening match hoping to better her 8-10 head-to-head record.

Saina, who lifted the trophy in 2017, starts her campaign against South Korea's Kim Ga Eun in the opening round. In the absence of World Championship silver medalist Kidambi Srikanth, H.S. Prannoy, who had reached the quarterfinal stage of the Malaysia Open last week, will face France's Brice Leverdez in his opening match while Kashyap takes on Indonesia's Tommy Sugiarto.

Former World Championship bronze medalist B. Sai Praneeth will open his campaign against Kevin Cordn of Guatemala. The other Indian male players in the fray are Sameer Verma, who will open his campaign against fourth-seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei.

Meanwhile, in first-round action on Tuesday, India's Treasa Jolly and



Gayatri Gopichand went down to Tan Pearly and Tinaah Muralitharan of Malaysia in a women's doubles match on Court 1, losing 21-14, 21-14. In another women's doubles match, Pooja Dandu and Arathi Sara Sunil lost to the eighth-seeded pair Gabriela Stoeva and Stefani Stoeva 21-17, 21-17 in 30 minutes.

Another Indian women's doubles

pair, K. Ashwini Bhat and Shikha Gautam lost to fourth seeds Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota 21-7, 21-10. India's Srivedya Gurazada and her American partner Ishika Jaiswal failed to get the better of Chinese pair Liu Xuan Xuan and Xia Yu-Ting, losing 21-10 and 21-10 in 26 minutes. In the women's singles qualifying, Malvika Bansod went down to

Malaysia's Goh Jin Wei 21-10, 21-17 in a 33-minute encounter. The Malaysian took control of the first game after 2-2 to win seven consecutive points. She maintained the margin throughout the game and won 21-10. The second game was a bit closer as Malvika tied scores at 2-2, 5-5, 12-12 and 17-11 before Goh Jin Wei won the last four points to win the match.

## ENG v IND, 5th Test

# Root, Bairstow slam unbeaten tons in England's clinical seven-wicket win

Birmingham | Agencies

Joe Root slammed his 11th Test century since 2021 while Jonny Bairstow hit his second hundred of the rescheduled Edgbaston Test as England defeated India by seven wickets on the fifth day of the match.

Resuming from 259/3, Root (142 not out off 173 balls) and Bairstow (114 not out off 145 balls) achieved the required 119 runs in an hour and a half to tie the series being played for the Pataudi Trophy 2-2 and deny India their first series victory in England since 2007.

The successful chase of 378 is also the highest England have chased ever in Test cricket. After chasing 277, 299 and 296 against New Zealand, England chasing 378 against India also made them the first team in Test cricket to chase four 250+ scores successfully in consecutive matches. Root and Bairstow were efficient, flawless and dominant in their unbeaten stand of 269 as the Bazball winning juggernaut continues for England.

Nine balls into day five in front of a crowd offered free tickets, the ball was changed, not for the first time in the match. The last time ball change happened; India got three quick wickets on day four. But Jonny Bairstow quashed all hopes of an encore, slamming back-to-back boundaries through cover point and backward point.

Root survived chopping onto his stumps off Shami, but apart from this, looked in immaculate control. India were all over the place with the ball, with Shami leaking eight byes and giving England free gifts. Another ball change happened in the 65th over, but it brought no respite for India as Root hit Jasprit Bumrah for successive boundaries -- steering through the third man and



### Brief scores:

India 416 & 245 lost to England 284 & 378/3 in 76.4 overs (Joe Root 142 not out, Jonny Bairstow 114 not out, Alex Lees 56; Jasprit Bumrah 2-74) by 7 wickets

leaning forward to clip through deep mid-wicket, which also brought the 200 of the partnership.

Root reached his fifth Test century of this year by dabbing a listless Mohammed Siraj past gully. He continued to flow effortlessly, caressing Siraj for a boundary through extra cover and getting a top-edge fly past a sprinting fine leg. But the jaw-dropping shot of the day came when he pre-mediated the reverse sweep over fine leg for a six off Thakur, two balls after he danced down the pitch to hit a boundary over the bowler's head.

On the other side, Bairstow had to spend a quiet time in the 90s, including playing a maiden over off Ravindra Jadeja. But he reached his century with a single through square leg off Jadeja. He then treated Siraj with absolute disdain -- smashing a hat-trick for boundaries through point, down the ground and mid-wicket.

Root nailed a reverse sweep off Jadeja for a boundary before repeating the same

shot for the winning run to get the job done easily for England.

"I think yesterday we fell short with the bat and we had to come back quickly with the ball. I think that is the place where we let the opposition in and then the momentum just kept shifting away from us."



Jasprit Bumrah, Captain, India

"We are trying to rewrite how Test cricket is being played, in England in particular. It's not always about the top of off, it's about taking ten wickets. We are bringing a new set of fans to Test cricket."



Ben Stokes, Captain, England

# Deepti Sharma, Shafali Verma gain in ICC Women's ODI Player Rankings

Dubai | Agencies

India all-rounder Deepti Sharma and opener Shafali Verma have made significant improvements to their positions in the ICC Women's ODI Player Rankings after helping the country take a 2-0 lead against Sri Lanka in the ICC Women's Championship (IWC) series being played in Pallekele.

Deepti, who grabbed three for 25 and scored an unbeaten 22 to win the 'Player of the Match' award in the first ODI, has moved up two places to 29th position among batters and three slots to 16th among bowlers. In the rankings for all-rounders, she has gained 20 rating points to reach within one point of Australia's Ashleigh Gardner, who is sixth in the list.

Verma, who is leading the run aggregate in the series with 106 runs including an unbeaten 71 in the second match, is up 12 places to a career-best 36th among batters. She is currently ranked fifth in T20Is but has been ranked No.1 in that format in the past.

Other Indians to move up the batters' list are Pooja Vastrakar (up three places to 61st), Rajeshwari Gayakwad (up four places to 93rd) and Meghna Singh (up seven places to 100th). They have all also moved up the bowlers' list -- Gayakwad from 12th to 11th, Meghna from 58th to 47th and Vastrakar from 57th to 50th.

Seam bowler Renuka Singh is a major gainer, her seven wickets including a Player of the Match effort of four for 28 in the first match lifting her 38 places to 65th position.



# India placed in Group D in FIFAe Nations Cup 2022

Zurich (Switzerland) | Agencies

India have been drawn in Group D of FIFAe Nations Cup 2022 alongside Netherlands, Poland, Italy, Mexico and Morocco after the official draw was held at Zurich, Switzerland on July 4.

The Indian team comprising Charanjot Singh, Siddh Chandarana, and Saransh Jain etched their names in the history books by qualifying for the FIFAe Nations Cup 2022. This will be India's debut appearance at the esports showcase event, which will take place in Copenhagen, Denmark from July 27 to July 30, 2022.

In the FIFAe Nations Series 2022 playoffs, India overcame the Korea Republic and Malaysia to qualify for the FIFAe Nations Cup 2022.

The Indian efootball team's adventure began in January 2021, when the AIFF and FIFA inked a participation agreement for the FIFAe Nations Series 2021. India was one of 60 countries that took part and was assigned to the Middle East and Africa Zone. India came in third place in their zone, just missing out on a spot in the FIFAe Nations Playoffs 2021. India won 12 games, lost 11 games, and drew 9 games during the play-ins over four Match Weeks. India remained in Division 1 for the entire four-match weeks. India quali-



fied for the Playoffs by finishing second in the Consistency Points table, putting them one step closer to the FIFAe Nations Cup in 2022. India also reached its greatest global ranking of 19 during this time period. Esports in India are on the verge of rising, as we got to see when eISL was introduced in the last edition of Hero Indian Super League. Saransh Jain who played for the Chennaiyin FC eISL team while speaking to AIFF said, "It has been a great experience to represent the Indian national team. I've known both Charanjot and Siddh for almost 5 years now. We're great friends even off the field and get a lot which helps our coordination as well."

India will begin the tournament against Italy on July 28, followed by matches against Netherlands, Poland, Mexico, Morocco. The return fixtures will take place the next day.

The final of FIFAe Nations Cup will take place on July 30.

# NADAL SETS UP QUARTERFINAL CLASH AGAINST FRITZ AT WIMBLEDON

London | Agencies

Spanish stalwart Rafael Nadal produced some of his best tennis for the second consecutive match after struggling in the initial rounds here at Wimbledon, to advance in straight sets against 21st seed Dutch Botic van de Zandschulp 6-4, 6-2, 7-6(6).

The winner of 22 Grand Slams will now take on 11th-seeded American Taylor Fritz on Wednesday for a place in the semifinal. This is the third consecutive time Nadal has secured a last-eight berth at SW19. He has reached the last-eight stage a total of eight times here, and will



# HALEP SHOCKS BADOSA, TO MEET ANISIMOVA IN QUARTERS

London: Former champion Simona Halep stunned No 4 seed Paula Badosa to storm into the women's singles quarterfinals at Wimbledon on Monday. Halep rolled past Badosa in a fourth-round match, losing only three games in the process and dominating her Spanish opponent from start to finish in a 6-1, 6-2 triumph at the Centre Court. Halep will face No.20 seed, Amanda Anisimova, in the quarterfinals.



look to reach his third semifinal in as many tries when he takes on Fritz.

He will next face Fritz, who was a 6-3, 6-1, 6-4 winner against Jason Kubler of Australia. The American had beaten Nadal in the Indian Wells final in March. The 24-year-old is enjoying a breakout year, having reached a career-high ATP Ranking of No. 13 after his triumph at the BNP Paribas Open in his native southern California.

# TATJANA MARIA SEALS MAIDEN SEMIFINALS SPOT

London: Germany's Tatjana

Maria came up with another fighting display as she fought back from 2-4 down in the final set to get the better of compatriot Jule Niemeier in an all-German encounter at Wimbledon to seal a maiden Grand Slam semifinal spot on Tuesday.

After losing the first set 4-6, Maria came back strongly to win the second 6-2 but was facing ouster as she was trailing 2-4 in the decider but came back strongly to win the match 4-6, 6-2, 7-5.

Ranked outside the world's top 100, the 34-year-old mother of two is proving to be the best escape artist in the draw in the grass-court tournament, winning four three-setters on her way to the semifinals.



# IRELAND RETAIN SAME T20 SQUAD THAT PLAYED INDIA FOR SERIES AGAINST NEW ZEALAND



Malahide: Ireland have retained the same 14-member squad for the upcoming three-match home T20I series against New Zealand, which played India in the recently-concluded two-match assignment.

Ireland gave an impressive performance against India, the No.1-ranked men's T20I team in the world, by taking them the distance in the second T20I despite losing the series 0-2. Both newcomers Conor Olphert and Stephen Doherty have retained their spots. While Olphert made his international debut against India, uncapped Doherty could well be in line to get an opportunity in the upcoming assignment. The three-match T20I series will be preceded by three ODIs, for which Ireland have already announced their squad.

# NZC announces equal pay for men and women cricketers

Auckland | Agencies

New Zealand Cricket (NZC) on Tuesday announced a groundbreaking agreement, which will see the country's professional women's and men's cricketers receive the same pay for the same work on the same day.

The five-year landmark agreement struck between NZC, the six Major Associations, and the New Zealand Cricket Players Association (NZCPA), will see the White Ferns and domestic women's players receiving the same match fees as the men across all their formats



and competitions. This is a first deal in which the men's and women's professional environments have

been combined in one agreement, said NZC in a statement.

NZC, the NZCPA and the six Major Associations worked towards a pay equity framework with the advice of Australian gender pay expert Yolanda Beattie, whose expertise was sought by NZCPA.

The improved pay and conditions are part of an agreement calculated on the country's men's and women's professional players receiving 29.75 per cent of all NZC forecast revenue over five years (NZD 349m), expected to amount to NZD 104m.

# PSG name Galtier as new head coach after Pochettino's exit

Paris | Agencies

Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday appointed Christophe Galtier as their new head coach after the departure of Mauricio Pochettino.

Galtier, who left Nice last month after guiding them to fifth in Ligue 1 and a runner-up finish in the French Cup last season, has signed a two-year deal until the summer of 2024 with PSG.

The 55-year-old Galtier joined Nice in 2021 after leading Lille to their first Ligue 1 title. Before joining Lille, the Frenchman spent eight seasons at Saint Etienne, where he won the French Cup in 2012-2013.



Earlier in the day, PSG confirmed the departure of Pochettino after 18 months in charge. The Argentine leaves the club after guiding them to a record-equalling 10th French title, his first league success as a manager. The 50-year-old Pochettino oversaw an unbeaten home record in the league this season, ending the campaign with 16 wins in 19 games.



# Malaika Arora showers love on boyfriend Arjun Kapoor

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Malaika Arora and Arjun Kapoor are one of the hottest couples in tinsel town. The two never shy away from expressing their love for each other. Be it hanging out with friends to celebrating special occasions together, the couple drops a glimpse of their adorable moment and wins our hearts for all the right reasons.

Recently, as Arjun Kapoor turned a year older, the couple jetted off to Paris to celebrate his birthday.

But looks like the actress is in a romantic mood as she shared a loved-up post for Arjun Kapoor giving a glimpse of their Paris trip.

Malaika Arora took to her social media and penned, "This weather is so romantic .... #throwback to Banta hai...I?paris @arjunkapoor."

As soon as she dropped this video, a ton of compliments for the couple flooded the comments section. Sanjay Kapoor commented, "Waah, waah." While Neelam Kothari dropped multiple heart emojis.

For the unversed, the two have been dating for over four years. On the work front, Arjun Kapoor is looking forward to the release of Ek Villain Returns.



## Allu Arjun chills with family in Tanzania

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Before 'Icon Star' Allu Arjun gets busy with the shoot of the Sukumar-directed sequel of 'Pushpa: The Rise', which is scheduled to start in August or September, he is taking a break at the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania.

The actor's wife, Allu Sneha, posted a family photo from the vacation on her Instagram page. In the photo, Allu Arjun is seen having a good time with his wife and children son Allu Ayan and daughter Allu Arha.

The scripting for the sequel of the blockbuster film is said to have been completed and Allu Arjun is expected to return to Hyderabad some time soon to start preparing for the shoot.

## Varun Dhawan, Janhvi Kapoor wrap up Amsterdam schedule



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Varun Dhawan, who is currently basking in the success of his film Jugjugg Jeeyo, is currently busy shooting for his upcoming flick Bawaal. The film also features Janhvi Kapoor alongside him. The film marks the collaboration of the two for the first time.

Janhvi and Varun were recently shooting in Amsterdam for the film. However, they have now wrapped up this shooting schedule.

Twinning in white outfits, the actors shared a picture and wrote, "Having a #Bawaal time in Amsterdam Amsterdam sched wrap, Poland are you ready for us? #niteshtiware #sajidnadiadwala".

Reading the caption, looks like the two will not jet off to Poland and shoot the next schedule of the film.

Apart from this, Varun Dhawan has films like Bhediya in his pipeline. Whereas, Janhvi Kapoor is gearing up for the release of Aanand L Rai's Good Luck Jerry.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Deepika Padukone, who was enjoying a vacation in the US, ended her stay here as chief guest at the 10th edition of the Konkani Sannam in San Jose, California.

Hosted in the heart of Silicon Valley, at the San Jose McEnergy Convention Center, the three-day event laced with performances, music shows, seminars, food and the works, celebrates and promotes the Konkani cultural heritage and an initiative to keep the culture alive across the world. The Bollywood star later took to her social media to thank the Konkani Association of California.

She posted a few pictures in ethnic outfit and wrote in the caption: "A people without knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots. Thank you #KAOCA and to the people of my community for your love, warmth and blessings. I couldn't be more proud." In a few viral videos, Ranveer can be seen as he impressed the audience with a few lines in Konkani, he said "I'm really happy" in Konkani. Soon after, the room filled with a loud cheer. Deepika also cheered her husband and said, "Well done". Towards the end, Ranveer said, "Dev bare karu (May God bless you)" and exited the stage.

## Deepika opens US Konkani meet, Ranveer flaunts his language skills



BHUVAN BAM'S 1ST INDIAN LIMITED SERIES TO CLOCK HALF BILLION VIEWS



Team Absolute | Mumbai

YouTube creator Bhuvan Bam's situational comedy show 'Dhondora' hosted by YouTube, has clocked in half a billion views on YouTube, and has become the first limited Indian web-series on the video platform to do so. Reacting to the show garnering unprecedented success, Bhuvan said in a statement, "I am overwhelmed with all the love we have received for series. The fact that our content has garnered so many eyeballs is a sign of the connection it has made with the audience, which to me is the most important part." "I could not have done this without the support of my amazing team at BB Ki Vines. I'm so glad to be back doing what I love and I'm looking forward to what the future has in store." Bam said. Meanwhile, the YouTube creator is also gearing up for his official digital debut with OTT series, 'Taaza Khabar', which will drop on Disney+ Hotstar. The series is currently under production.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Warina Hussain