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SC SEEKS DELHI POLICE RESPONSE ON PLEA SEEKING FIR AGAINST BJP LEADERS ON

HATE SPEECH

The Supreme Court on Monday sought response from the Delhi Police on a plea by CPI-M leader Brinda Karat against the Delhi High Court order, dismissing a petition challenging the trial court's refusal for an FIR against Union Minister Anurag Thakur and BJP MP Pravesh Verma for alleged hate speeches over anti-CAA protests.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

A bench, headed by Justice K.M. Joseph, noted that prima facie the stand of the magistrate that sanction was required for registration of the FIR against the BJP leaders was not correct, saying that reasoning of courts below that sanction under

Section 196 of the CrPC was required may not be correct.

The bench, also comprising Justice B.V. Nagarathna, issued notice to Delhi Police and sought its response within three weeks.

The Delhi High Court, in June last year, had dismissed the plea filed by CPI-M leaders Karat and K.M. Tiwari against Thakur and Verma for their

"Sacrament in Hindu Law. Even in Islam...": Centre opposes Gay Marriages

New Delhi: Calling marriage an "exclusively heterogenous institution", the Centre today again opposed granting legal sanction to same-sex marriage, and said the question of considering it equal to the existing concept of marriage "seriously affects the interests of every citizen". A court order recognising same-sex marriages would mean a virtual judicial rewriting of an entire branch of law, the government argued, adding that the Court must refrain from passing such "omnibus orders".

It's not discrimination to grant recognition to the "heterogenous institution of marriage alone" to the exclusion of same-sex marriage, the government argued, saying that this is because conventional and universally accepted socio-legal relationships like marriages across all religions, are "deeply rooted in the Indian social context and indeed is considered a sacrament in all branches of Hindu law. Even in Islam, though it is a contract, it is a sacred contract and a valid marriage is only between a biological male and a biological woman".

A five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court is set to hear a clutch of petitions seeking legal recognition for same-sex marriages on Tuesday.

alleged hate speeches. The high court had declined to interfere with the trial court's order.

Before the trial court, the petitioners had contended that BJP leaders had sought to incite people as a result of which three incidents of firing took place at two different protest sites in Delhi.

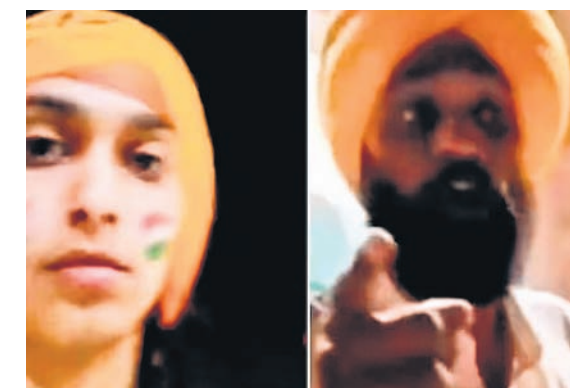
Citing a rally in Delhi in January

2020, the petitioner alleged that Thakur, after criticising the anti-CAA protestors of Shaheen Bagh, incited the crowd to raise an incendiary slogan. Also, Verma made an inflammatory speech against the Shaheen Bagh protesters in the same month, claimed the petitioners.

In August 2021, the trial court dismissed petitioners' complaint.

Woman with national flag tattoo on face denied entry into Golden Temple

'This is Punjab, not India'



Amritsar | Agencies

A video has gone viral showing a Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) employee stopping a woman tourist with the national flag tattoo painted on her face from entering the Golden Temple, also known as the Harmandir Sahib.

She claimed that she was denied entry over the tri-colour row.

The sewadar, an SGPC employee, who denied her entry, was heard purportedly saying "This is Punjab, not India" when the woman said this was the Indian flag.

In the 40-second video clip, two people accompanying the woman were heard asking the guard "Is the Golden Temple not in India?" On being asked why the woman was not allowed to enter the holy shrine, he pointed out the flag painted

on the woman's face. The guard also tried to stop the woman and the man accompanying her from capturing the incident on their phone.

Apologising for misbehaviour by its employees towards the visitors, SGPC General Secretary Gurcharan Grewal told the media that this is a Sikh shrine. Every religious place has its own decorum. "We welcome everyone. We apologise if an official misbehaved. The flag on her face was not our national flag as it didn't have Ashoka Chakra. It could have been a political flag."

Slamming the people for criticising the SGPC on the social media, he said, "Don't these people know that Sikhs have played a great part in India's Independence? Will anyone tweet about who sacrificed 90 out of 100 heads for the national flag? The Sikhs are being defamed intentionally."

INDIAN CLIMBER GOES MISSING AT MT ANNAPURNA IN NEPAL

Kathmandu: An Indian climber went missing below the Camp III of Mount Annapurna in Nepal after he fell into a crevasse while returning from Camp IV this afternoon, an official of his expedition organiser confirmed to the reporter.

Mingma Sherpa, Chairman of Seven Summit Treks told Himalayan Times that Anurag Maloo, 34, from Kishangargh of Rajasthan, India, went missing after he fell down from around 6,000m while descending from Camp III. An official at the Seven Summit Treks also confirmed to the reporter that Mallo has gone missing since Monday morning and his whereabouts are yet to be known. Anurag Maloo had successfully climbed Mount Ama Dablam only last year and was planning to ascend Mount Everest, Annapurna, and Lhotse which are also based in Nepal this season.



Kerala gold smuggling case: ED conducts raids, seizes 4500 gm gold

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said it conducted searches at two places in Kerala and two premises in Tamil Nadu covering the office and residential property of Nandu alias Nandagopal, the head of KGN Bullion, Samju T.M and Shamsudheen in the Kerala gold smuggling case.

"During the searches, the statement of Samju T.M. was recorded wherein he had inter-alia admitted that he had procured 4500 grams of smuggled gold from Mohammed Shahi (smuggler) which was subsequently sold through the shop of his father-in-law, Shamsudheen to end customers," the ED said.

During the course of the search proceedings seven immovable prop-



erties worth Rs 1.13 crore and gold worth Rs 27.65 lakh were found and seized. Earlier, an ECIR was recorded in the Kerala gold smuggling case on the basis of a FIR registered by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Kochi, consequent to the seizure of 30.245 kgs of smuggled gold by customs (preventive) at Trivandrum International Airport, which was camouflaged as diplomatic baggage of the UAE consulate, Thiruvananthapuram.

Ex K'taka CM, BJP stalwart Jagadish Shettar joins Congress

Bengaluru | Agencies

In what is being seen as a big blow to BJP's Karnataka unit ahead of Assembly elections, senior party leader and former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar joined Congress on Monday, a day after he snapped ties with the saffron party. He was welcomed by AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge and AICC General Secretary B.C. Venugopal at the CONGRESS headquarters here. With the joining of Shettar, the task given by Rahul Gandhi to win more than 150 seats in Karnataka is appearing closer, Kharge stated. "I welcome him wholeheartedly to the party," he added. Addressing the media at the Congress headquarters in Bengaluru after joining the grand-old party, Shettar stated that on the lines of senior leaders B.S. Yediyurappa and the late Ananth



Kumar, he had built the party in north Karnataka. "I have strengthened the party. The BJP party has given me all positions and respect. In return as a loyal worker, I have built the party," he said.

Meanwhile, the BJP has jumped into damage control mode and sources said that national President J.P. Nadda is rushing to his hometown Hubballi.

With the Congress projecting the

development of Shettar being denied the ticket as an insult to the Lingayat community, the ruling BJP is trying to control the damage from his exit. Sources said that Nadda is reaching Hubballi on April 18 and will take part in two important programmes which will be held in Hubballi-Dharwad Central constituency. Shettar is contesting from this constituency as a Congress candidate this time.

CONGRESS PROTESTS AGAINST PM ACROSS MAHARASHTRA

Mumbai | Agencies

The Maharashtra Congress organised noisy protests across the state demanding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi clarify his position on the recent statements made by former Jammu & Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik on the 2019 Pulwama attacks and corruption, officials said here on Monday. The protests were carried out in all districts in the state with posters, banners condemning the Bharatiya Janata Party government and chanting of 'Shame on Modi, Shame on You'. Leading one of the demonstrations in Pune, state Congress President Nana Patole thundered that it is wrong for the country's PM to remain silent on such big and serious issues and he must come clean on Malik's allega-



tions. He reiterated his statement that the 300 kgs RDX that was used to kill 40 CRPF jawans in Pulwama had gone from Nagpur, but the matter has not been investigated so far. "On the contrary, the PM and BJP made political capital of the tragic incident during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections... After Malik's expose, the authoritarian government is avoiding all the questions that are disturbing the people of the country," said Patole. He warned that unless the government makes a statement on the issue, the Congress will take to the streets and further intensify its agitation.

Tiger terror in Uttarakhand: Curfew imposed in several Pauri villages

Pauri | Agencies

In view of the tiger terror, the Pauri Garhwal district administration has imposed curfew in dozens of villages of Rikhanikhal and Dhumakot tehsils.

The prohibitory orders will remain in force from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Apart from this, schools and Anganwadi centres of both these tehsils will remain closed on April 17 and 18. The orders were issued after a man was killed by a tiger in Dalla village of Rikhanikhal. Two days ago, the forest department installed a cage in the village to catch the tiger.

On Sunday, a drone was flown in the surrounding area, in which the movement of a tiger has also been seen in Padiyar Pani village.

Earlier, a tiger had also attacked Bharatiya Janata Party MLA from



Lansdowne, Dalip Rawat.

Khushendra Singh, head of Gram Panchayat Meldhar, said that after the death of an old man in a tiger attack, there is panic in the surrounding villages.

He said that 10 streetlights have been given by the district administration to make arrangements for lighting on the roads of the affected villages. The district administration has imposed an 11-hour night curfew in Rikhanikhal, Dhumakot tehsil area of Lansdowne assembly constituency till further orders.

- The Gangetic West Bengal and Bihar may see heat wave conditions for four days on the trot. Sikkim, Odisha and Jharkhand may also experience heat wave conditions over the next two to three days.
- Similar conditions are expected in isolated pockets over Punjab and Haryana on April 17, and western Uttar Pradesh on April 18. Eastern Uttar Pradesh may also be affected on April 18-19, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.
- Heat wave conditions have been prevailing in isolated pockets of the Gangetic West Bengal for the last six days, coastal Andhra Pradesh for four days and Bihar for three days, it said.
- The Met office said a western disturbance active in the western Himalayan region will provide some relief from the soaring temperatures in the plains of north-west India starting Tuesday.

Heat wave to persist in East India, relief in North Western plains soon

India is bracing for an extreme summer as large parts of the country recorded temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius. The first two spots in the weather office's list were claimed by cities in West Bengal. Murshidabad recorded a scorching 43 degrees while Bankura boiled at 40 degrees. Heat wave-like conditions have been predicted in parts of east India over the next four days and the northwest region of the country over the next two days. Maharashtra will see a 2-3 degree rise in its maximum temperature over the next three days, according to the IMD.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Heat wave conditions are predicted in parts of east India over the next four days and the northwest region of the country over the next two days, the Met office said on Monday.

Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Rajasthan are likely to experience isolated to scattered rainfall during April 18-20, it said.

Heavy rainfall is anticipated in iso-

lated areas of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh on April 18.

Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand are expected to experience heavy rainfall on April 18-19.

Isolated hailstorms are likely over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab over the next two-three days.

The threshold for a heat wave is met when the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, at least 37 degrees Celsius in coastal areas,

and at least 30 degrees Celsius in hilly regions, and the departure from normal is at least 4.5 degrees.

Earlier this month, the Met office predicted above-normal maximum temperatures for most parts of the country from April to June, except parts of the northwest and the peninsular regions.

Above-normal heat wave days are expected in most parts of central, east and northwest India during this period.



CONGRESS AIMS TO RETRIEVE LOST GROUND IN MP'S VINDHYA' REGION, INDUCTS EX-BSP MLA

Praveen Dwivedi | Bhopal

With the Assembly polls in Madhya Pradesh inching closer, the state unit of the Congress led by former Chief Minister Kamal Nath seems to be leaving no stone unturned to retrieve lost ground in Vindhya region.

The party is looking for strong contenders to maximize the possibilities for winning maximum seats in neck-to-neck fight with the ruling BJP, which had won 24 out of 30 Assembly seats in 2018 in this region.

In the process, the Congress has inducted former BSP MLA Sheela Tyagi, who had won the Mangawan seat (in Rewa district) with 34 per cent votes in 2013. She was given the best MLA award for raising the highest number of questions and debating over Bills in the state Assembly for two consecutive years -- 2016 and 2017. BJP's Panchulal Prajapati had won Mangawan Assembly seats securing 49 per cent votes against Congress (Babita Saket) 35 per cent in 2018.

In fact, the BJP had won all eight Assembly seats in Rewa, despite it used to be a strong base of the Congress till a decade ago -- during the era of ex-speaker (late) Srinivas Tiwari. Rewa's Mangawa seat where Congress and BJP had always been in a neck-to-neck fight, was represented by two Assembly Speakers -- Srinivas Tiwari (1993-2003) during



the 10 years of the Digvijaya Singh-led Congress government.

The present Assembly Speaker, Girish Gautam had also contested two Assembly elections from Mangawa -- first in 1993 (then he was in CPI) and had lost against Congress' Srinivas Tiwari. In 2003, Gautam joined the BJP and defeated old political rival Tiwari. In 2008, Mangawa Assembly seat, which has the highest vote share of Brahmins (up to 55 per cent) was shared with Scheduled Caste, and Gautam shifted to Devalab.

Sheela Tyagi's shifting into the Congress will undoubtedly give an edge to the grand old party due to various reasons, but more because

of high anti-incumbency against sitting BJP MLA Panchulal Prajapati. The people of Mangawa are angry with the sitting MLA and even the BJP was trying to induct Tyagi.

After joining the Congress, during a conversation with correspondent, Tyagi said, "I was approached by BJP's top leadership also. But, my ideology does not match with the BJP. It may be that the Congress has been struggling for the past few years, but it has maintained its basic route of democracy, which is why I joined the Congress."

When asked if the Congress leadership had promised her the ticket, Tyagi said, "I am happy to work under the leadership of Kamal

Nath, and I have already achieved a lot by joining the Congress. Meanwhile, party leadership also said the decision on ticket would be taken on the basis of survey reports, and I am fully confident that people of Mangawa will support me because I have served them honestly for years, even after losing in 2018."

A Rewa-based political analyst claimed that Tyagi's shifting from BSP to the Congress will undoubtedly increase the possibility of winning Mangawa, if she contests the election. Former Assembly Speaker Srinivas Tiwari is no more now, but he has made a strong base for the Congress and the people of

Mangawa still support his grandson, Siddharth Tiwari (Raj) who had contested the Lok Sabha election. However, he lost against BJP's Janardan Mishra. His father Sundarlal Tiwari, who died in 2019, also was an ex-MP (1999-2004) from Rewa.

Importantly, Tyagi was inducted into the Congress a week before Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to arrive in Rewa, during which he would address a mega rally beside launching several projects for the Vindhya region.

Bordered by eastern Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, it was the Vindhya region which prevented Congress from returning to power on its own after 15 years in the 2018 Assembly polls and also gave the BJP the respectable number to topple the Kamal Nath government with Jyotiraditya Scindia's help just 15 months later in Madhya Pradesh.

Knowing that Vindhya is important for its 2023 poll plan, the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government has since the last few months been zeroing on that region only with focused announcements/initiatives. They include MP's longest tunnel between Rewa and Sidhi districts, laying foundation of much awaited full-fledged Rewa Airport, announcing Bhopal-Singrauli Vindhya Expressway and incentives for Kols (the largest tribal group of Vindhya region).

Tension in Khandwa, 3 injured in stone pelting



Team Absolute | Bhopal

At least three people were reportedly injured after a communal tension broke out in Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa, around 260 km from state capital Bhopal, late on Sunday.

According to the police, the tension prevailed after a group of Muslim youths thrashed a group of students (both Hindu and Muslim) while they were celebrating a birthday party at a restaurant late on Sunday.

Muslim girl, a school lab teacher and a Hindu male student for celebrating birthday in a restaurant on Sunday afternoon. The accused also took away the teacher and Hindu student with them.

Later in mid night, a large number of people of Muslim community led by corporator Ashfaq Sigad reached Moghat police station and Lal Chowk. They pelted stones at police accusing them of biased in action.

Police said that an FIR has been registered based on a complaint of the girl, who alleged that she was kidnapped and assaulted. Police claimed two accused were arrested, while two were still on the run.

On Monday, right-wing organisations also staged protest, which prompted the administration to impose Section 144 in the area.

20 students of Indore University fall ill due to food poisoning

Team Absolute | Indore

At least 20 female students staying in a hostel of a private university in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district fell ill due to alleged food poisoning, an official said on Monday.

The students complained of vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain late Sunday night, SAGE University registrar Manish Chowdhary told news agency. "Out of the affected students, the condition of eight is fine, while 10 to 12 students are undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Rau area," the official said.

Some videos of the students admitted to the hospital surfaced on social media, in which one of them was heard



saying they had dinner in the hostel mess late Sunday evening. The university management, however, has denied that the food prepared in the hostel's canteen was contaminated. "Many students of our hostel had gone to the city during the day and might have returned after consuming food from outside. We

have also found out that some students had non-vegetarian food cooked outside the hostel premises on Sunday," Chaudhary said.

There are around 290 students (both male and female) in the university's hostel, but the other students who had food in the mess on Sunday are absolutely fine, he added.

INDORE BUSINESSMAN FIRES IN AIR DURING FIGHT OVER GARBAGE

Team Absolute | Indore

An Indore-based businessman fired in the air and threatened to shoot sanitation workers -- all over garbage.

Mahesh Patel, a petrol pump owner and a relative of a former BJP MLA in Madhya Pradesh, now faces a police complaint filed by sanitation workers of the local civic body.

The episode, a video of which has now gone viral, took place on Saturday when sanitation workers were outside Patel's home to collect garbage. An altercation broke out between Patel's wife and the sanitation workers because dry and wet waste had not been segregated. The argument soon escalated and Patel and his son joined in.

At one point, the businessman went inside. He was then seen on the first floor, brandishing a gun and threatening the sanitation workers. Soon, he came downstairs and point-



ed the gun at them. The sanitation workers then fled the scene.

The video of the incident shows Patel pointing the gun at the sanitation workers as his son abuses them and threatens to bury them alive.

A police officer later reached the spot and brokered an understanding between the two sides. The matter, however, did not end there.

Members of an association of drivers operating garbage vans approached police with the sanitation workers who were threatened and filed a written complaint. Police have been accused of not taking action in the matter because the businessman is a relative of former BJP legislator Manoj Patel.

After the video circulated through social media, senior police officer Ashish Mishra assured action in the matter. "We are looking into the matter to understand what exactly happened. We are trying to contact the complainant," he said.

20-year-old nursing student held hostage, raped by two friends in Gwalior

Team Absolute | Gwalior

A 20-year-old girl, resident of Bhitwarwar was allegedly held hostage and repeatedly raped by two friends for last six months in Gwalior. Both the accused are absconding, the Kammu Police said on Monday. A 20-year-old nursing student of Gwalior's Bhitwarwar police station area has complained that she met Raghavendra alias Rahul alias Raghav Rawat in the year 2020. In conversation it was revealed that he is her distant relative. Contact numbers of both of them were exchanged.

Meanwhile, when the girl came to Gwalior to study nursing, Raghavendra start-



ed meeting her. In November 2022, Raghavendra took her to his friend Sandeep Rawat's house and allegedly raped her on pretext of marriage. Later, Raghavendra started coming to her rented room, on which the landlord made her vacate the room. After which, both of them started living in the Kammu area.

After a few days, Raghavendra and his friend Devraj both gangraped the girl. Raghavendra kept her hostage. This continued for some days till she found the chance to escape. She reached the police station and complained about the matter. On which the police have registered a case. Search is on for the accused.

CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN PLANTED SAPPLINGS IN SATPURA TIGER RESERVE



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of banyan, mango and peepal in Churna zone under Satpura Tiger Reserve. Field Director, Satpura Tiger Reserve, L. Krishnamurthy and other officers and employees participated in the plantation.

3 DIE AFTER CONSUMING TODDY IN DHAR

Team Absolute | Dhar

Two men and a woman died after consuming toddy in a tribal area of Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district, an official said on Monday. The incident took place on Sunday in Jhadamli village under Tanda police station limits, 90 km from the district headquarters, he said.

A pesticide bottle was also found at the spot, but it was yet not clear if it was mixed with the toddy, he said, adding a probe was on into the incident from all angles.



Dhar Superintendent of Police Manoj Kumar Singh said members of an extended family consumed "tadi" (palm wine), extracted from a tree in their agricultural field, following which one person died.

After getting information about the death of one person, Nasru (46), on Sunday afternoon, a police team reached the village and took others who had consumed the toddy to hospitals in Dhar and Bori town.

Out of them, a 45-year-old woman and a man aged 55 died during treatment in different hospitals on Sunday night, the official said.

A medical check-up of 13 others who consumed the drink was conducted and all of them were out of danger, he said.

Four of them are undergoing treatment in Dhar district hospital, the official said. A pesticide bottle was also found at the spot, but it was yet not clear if it was mixed with the toddy. Its excessive consumption could have also led to the deaths, he said.

All these facts will be clear after further probe into the incident, forensic investigation and from the post-mortem report, he said.

A detailed investigation was being conducted from all angles, the official said.

Man having lunch alongside CM in Sidhi revealed to be theft convict out on bail



Team Absolute | Sidhi

A photograph is going viral on social media, in which a man convicted of theft can be seen sitting near the Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, having lunch in Sidhi. Convict Arvind Gupta, resident of Gotra Bhadaur, had spent a jail-term for stealing wood and is currently out on bail.

According to a Daily, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had reached Gotra village in Sidhi district on Saturday for Ladli Behna Sammelan and distribution of land title deeds. He sat on the ground with locals for lunch. Right next to him, theft convict Arvind Gupta can be seen sitting. However, the administrative officers and public representatives are refraining

from speaking about this entire matter.

Arvind Gupta, who was sitting next to the Chief Minister, was arrested by the Forest Department team on April 7 on the charges of stealing seven pieces of wooden planks from a motorcycle. Against whom the case was registered and sent to jail. Arvind has been released on bail a few days ago.

Cattlemen of Madhya Pradesh have maximum credit cards in the country

Credit limit 3 lakh for KCC holder cattle rearers, Rs 2 lakh for Naveen

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Animal Husbandry and Dairy Minister Prem Singh Patel said that till March 2023, the maximum number of 2 lakh 36 thousand 331 Kisan Credit Cards in the country were made available to the cattle rearers of Madhya Pradesh. In the state, working capital up to Rs 2 lakh is being made available in KCC from primary agricultural credit co-operative societies for animal husbandry at zero percent interest rate. The state government provides 04 percent additional interest subsidy on regular and timely payment of 01 percent in the scheme.



Minister Patel informed that the Central Government has decided to extend the Kisan Credit Card facility for the working capital requirements of animal husbandry and fisheries farmers. Existing Kisan Credit Card holders will be given a credit limit of Rs 3 lakh and new Kisan Credit holders will be given a credit limit of Rs 2 lakh including animal husbandry activities. According to the instructions of the Union Ministry of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, all credit card holders will be given 2 percent annual interest subsidy and 3 percent additional interest subsidy on timely payment.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Yogi demolishes Atiq's empire in 50 days

Since February 24, when the Umesh Pal murder took place, the countdown had begun for Atiq Ahmad. In the past 50 days, Atiq's entire family has been on the run and his son Asad was killed in an encounter in Jhansi. The mafia don also lost his property and assets worth Rs 1,400 crore in Prayagraj and his several properties have been demolished by the government. A day before his death, the gangster claimed "Hum to mitti mein mil gaye (I have turned to dust)". The Enforcement Directorate has also dealt a severe blow by exposing assets worth over Rs 1,400 crore and discovering nearly 50 shell companies that Atiq and his gang used to convert their black money earned from extortion into white money. A day before he was killed in Prayagraj, the law enforcement agencies unearthed a huge cache of arms that belonged to him. Besides confiscating Atiq and his gang's property worth Rs 1,400 crore, 15 teams of the Enforcement Directorate have also expedited their money laundering probe against Atiq and exposed assets worth another Rs 108 crore. The crackdown on Atiq Ahmad has also 'destroyed' his family. Of his five sons, one has been killed, two are in jail and two minor sons are in juvenile home. His wife, Shaista is absconding and so is the wife of his slain brother Ashraf. His sister Noorie is in hiding and brother-in-law Akhlaq is in jail. His relatives are afraid of admitting to any kind of links with him and his family. Even his three Great Danes -- two of which died due to hunger -- are at the mercy of an animal shelter home. Said a senior official, "The government has truly destroyed Atiq's empire. It should be a lesson for all."

NITISH REPRISES ROLE PLAYED BY GEORGE FERNANDES IN FORMING NDA



Ajay Kumar

After the successful meeting with opposition leaders in Delhi, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar is turning out to be the biggest challenge for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. However, Nitish Kumar clarified that he is not a Prime Ministerial candidate of the opposition parties but he might play the role of UPA convener by following in the footsteps of his senior leader late George Fernandes.

Democratic Alliance (NDA) formation in 1998. At that time the Congress was ruling at the Centre and the opposition parties were scattered. After the Mandal Commission report, a large number of regional parties emerged in the country. The BJP had then asked George Fernandes who was the chief of the Samata Party and Nitish Kumar was a member of it, to play the role of convener of the NDA and he had managed to unite 24 parties against the Congress. Due to that unity, George Fernandes became instrumental in

the formation of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in 1999. The NDA government completed its tenure of 5 years. Now the way that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, Arvind Kejriwal and Sitaram Yechuri said that Nitish Kumar is doing great work in uniting the opposition parties and they are with him, there is a hint of Kumar following in the footsteps of George Fernandes. "Nitish Kumar has made it clear he wants to unite more and more opposition parties of the country and he is achieving success.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's tweet "Ham Desh Ke Liye Sath Me Ladege" is the most important thing in the current political situation of the country. "Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal also said publicly that whatever Nitish Kumar is doing in the country, he is with him. Left parties leaders also gave support to him. I don't know whether Nitish Kumar is following George Fernandes or not but he is heading in the right direction to unite the opposition parties," said Neeraj Kumar, JD-U MLC and chief spokesperson of the party. "Nitish Kumar on Friday said that the BJP has only two leaders who are acting like totalitarians. They have captured all constitutional institutions and are targeting their political opponents. They have done nothing in the interest of common people. Hence you vote for them, you will destroy yourselves and if you vote against them you will develop yourselves, state and the country. So, Nitish Kumar is clear in his mind to unite a large number of opposition parties of the country against the BJP," Kumar said. "The efforts of Nitish Kumar were appreciated by the leaders who met him recently but there is so much work to do. Bringing leaders like Mamata Banerjee and K Chandrashekar Rao on one platform with the Congress party will be a big achievement but it will take time. Once they sit together and finalize every aspect, followed by declaring the role of Nitish Kumar as convener, then we would say that all opposition parties agreed on one seat, one candidate formula," said Shivanand Tiwari, vice presi-

dent of the RJD. "When we talk about West Bengal having 42 Lok Sabha seats, the Congress party is no way near to the TMC. In Telangana, there are 17 Lok Sabha seats and the Congress has won three seats while the TRS won nine seats. So, the Congress has to drop some ego to minimize the division of votes. The same thing applies to the TRS and it will have to compromise with the Congress where the latter has sitting MPs. The key here is the opposition parties who would agree on one seat one candidate formula. This is the only way to defeat the BJP," Tiwari said. "Bihar CM Nitish Kumar is a desperate man and in a hurry. Nitish ji is daydreaming to become the Prime Minister but at the same time he should remember that his support base in Bihar has slipped. The political credibility of Nitish ji is based on the support and mercy of his grand alliance partners, especially the RJD. While Nitish is aspiring to realize his daydream, the RJD wants to use this opportunity to promote Tejashwi as the CM of Bihar," said Nikhil Anand, national general secretary of the BJP OBC wing. "There is no consensus in favour of Nitish ji and there are dozens of PM aspirants from different states. The opportunistic intention and motive of grand alliance parties, they will let down each other in course of time. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the undisputed leader of India and there is no one who can challenge him in 2024. The NDA will come back to power with more than 400 seats," Anand said.

international

INDIA-BORN ACADEMIC NAMED IN TASK FORCE TO EXPAND US-INDIA UNIV PARTNERSHIPS

New York | Agencies

Indian-origin academic Neeli Bendapudi has been appointed as one of five co-chairs of an Association of American Universities (AAU) task force focused on the expansion of research and academic partnerships among higher education institutions in the US and India. Seen as a "natural fit" for the task force, Bendapudi, who is the president of the Pennsylvania State University, comes with a 30-year career as a leader in higher education and business, a Pennsylvania State University release said. "I am honored to be selected to co-chair this talented and dedicated team -- tasked by the White House -- to strengthen interdisciplinary partnerships between American and Indian universities to advance innovations in areas such as semiconductor technology, nuclear energy, unmanned vehicles, space exploration, AI and digital infrastructure," Bendapudi said. "Our participation reflects the valuable role Penn State plays in American higher education, and I look forward to building on Penn State's existing partnerships with universities in India, and bringing our research and aca-



democratic expertise to the forefront to support this impactful collaboration," she said in a statement. AAU created the national task force in

coordination with the Biden administration's US-India initiative on critical and emerging technology, which seeks to grow technological and industrial collaboration between the two nations. The task force will meet monthly to determine focus areas for bilateral research and education cooperation, to identify existing programs that could provide blueprints for future partnerships, and to formulate strategies on how best to move forward. Given the growing population of college-age students in India, Penn State will be carefully considering how best to handle articulation agreements and transfer credits from Indian institutions in the months ahead, a University statement said. Bendapudi was president of the University of Louisville, where she oversaw a series of transformative efforts spanning academics; finance; the health enterprise, philanthropy; athletics; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and more. Born and raised in India, she received a bachelor's degree and MBA from Andhra University before earning her doctorate in marketing from the University of Kansas -- following her father's footsteps to advance her education at an American university.

40 killed in attack in Burkina Faso

Ouagadougou: At least 40 people were killed and 33 others wounded in an attack against a military detachment in northern Burkina Faso, said the government. According to a statement by the general secretary of the North region on Sunday, a military detachment based in the vicinity of the village of Aorema, located not far from the city of Ouahigouya, was attacked by unidentified gunmen on Saturday. The provisional toll is 40 dead, including six soldiers and 34 army auxiliaries, said the statement, adding that 33 wounded were also recorded, Xinhua news agency reported. A security source told Xinhua over the phone that "at least 50 terrorists were neutralised" during the attack. Since 2015, insecurity in the West African country has claimed many lives and displaced thousands more.

S.Korea, US begin large-scale combined air drills



Seoul | Agencies

South Korea and the US kicked off large-scale combined air drills on Monday, the South's Air Force said, amid joint efforts to sharpen deterrence against Pyongyang's military threats. About 110 aircraft and more than 1,400 troops were mobilised for this year's Korea Flying Training (KFT), which got underway earlier in the day for a 12-day run at Gwangju Air Base in Gwangju, 267 km south of Seoul, according to the armed service. More than 60 South Korean warplanes, including F-35A,

F-15K and KF-16 fighters, will join the drills, while the US will deploy some 40 aircraft, such as its Air Force's F-16 fighters, A-10 attack aircraft and the Marine Corps' F-35B and FA-18 jets, reports Yonhap News Agency. The exercise will focus on enhancing the inter-operability and combined operational capability of the allies' advanced fighters by conducting various drills, such as a strike package flight and close air support operations, according to the South's Air Force. KFT is one of the two regular large-scale exercises the allies hold every year.

IS militants gun down 32 truffle hunters in Syria

Damascus: Islamic State (IS) militants gunned down 32 truffle hunters in Syria's central Hama province, according to a report from the pro-government al-Watan online newspaper. The victims were collecting truffles in the Doizin area, located in a desert region to the east of Salamiyah city in the countryside of Hama, Xinhua news agency reported. The bodies of 26 of the slain workers have been taken to the hospital, the report said on Sunday. The attack is the latest of a string of IS attacks against Syrian truffle hunters in desert regions. In February, 53 civilians were killed by IS militants while collecting truffles in the central province of Homs. Despite the grave danger posed by IS, many Syrians, who are grappling with poverty after enduring 12 years of conflict, are risking their lives in pursuit of the expensive mushrooms and the lucrative profit they bring.

Death toll rises to 97 as fighting rages in Sudan

Khartoum | Agencies

Clashes in Sudan's capital Khartoum raged for a third day, raising the death toll to 97, a doctors' union said in a statement on Monday. Hundreds of civilians were wounded in the violence, Xinhua news agency quoted the statement as saying. The tense situation in Sudan has sparked broad concerns in the international community, with the UN, the African Union, the Arab League and other international organisations having called for an immediate ceasefire. Violent clashes erupted on April 15 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Khartoum and other cities, with the two sides accusing each other of initiating the conflict. The tension between the two military forces has escalated since April 12 in the



Merowe region in northern Sudan, after the RSF moved military vehicles to a location near the military air base there, a move that the army considered illegal. Deep differences have emerged between the Sudanese army and the RSF, particularly regarding the latter's integration into the army as stipulated in a

framework agreement signed between military and civilian leaders on December 5, 2022. The RSF was formed in 2013 and has its origins in the notorious Janjaweed militia that brutally fought off rebels in Darfur. Since then, RSF leader Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo has built a powerful force that has inter-

vened in conflicts in Yemen and Libya and controls some of Sudan's gold mines. It has also been accused of human rights abuses, including the massacre of more than 120 protesters in June 2019. This fighting is the latest episode in bouts of tension that followed the ousting of long-serving President Omar al-Bashir in 2019. There were huge street protests calling for an end to his near-three decade rule and the army mounted a coup to get rid of him. But the civilians continued to demand a role in the plan to move towards democratic rule. A joint military-civilian government was then established but that was overthrown in another coup in October 2021. And since then the rivalry between Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who is the head of the armed forces and in effect the country's president, and Gen Dagalo has intensified.

BANGLADESH CAPITAL RECORDS HOTTEST DAY IN DECADES

Dhaka: The heatwave has gripped many parts of Bangladesh, including the capital Dhaka, as the country enters the height of summer, the Meteorological Department said. According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, the highest temperature of the day, recorded in the country's Chuadanga district, nearly 215 km west of Dhaka, was 41.8 degrees Celsius, Xinhua news agency reported. It said the temperature in Dhaka on Sunday reached 40.5 degrees Celsius, which was the highest in 58 years. Dhaka streets had fewer pedestrians than usual on Sunday afternoon and work had stopped in some open-air construction sites. The bitumen on several roads in Dhaka had melted in the midday heat, further evidence of the blistering temperature. Abdul Alim, a meteorologist, predicted the temperature will continue to soar this week.





'THINK, YOU CAN TAKE COURT FOR A RIDE', SC PENALISES MUMBAI METRO ON TREE FELLING IN AAREY FOREST

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

The Supreme Court on Monday observed that the Mumbai Metro has made an attempt to overreach its jurisdiction and directed it to pay Rs 10 lakh fine within two weeks for attempting tree felling in Aarey forest, beyond permission granted. However, the apex court allowed Mumbai Metro to remove 177 trees from Aarey forest.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited's (MMRCL) was not correct in moving the tree authority for felling of any trees in excess of 84. Pulling up MMRCL, the Chief Justice told the counsel, "You people think, you can take the Supreme Court for a ride. You cannot overreach the court... Ask the CEO of MMRCL to be present in court."

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing MMRCL, submitted that while there was lacuna on the authorities' part, it was bona fide and there was no intention to override the court, and added that there should be an unconditional apology.

The bench, also comprising



Justices P.S. Narasimha and J.B. Pardiwala, said, "It would be necessary for the court to penalise MMRCL for its conduct... the issue is that the permission which has been granted on March 15, 2023, be stayed by this court at present stage..."

However, the bench permitted the company to remove 177 trees from Aarey forest, noting that bringing a public project to standstill is not desirable. It also directed MMRCL within a period of two weeks to deposit Rs 10 lakh with chief conser-

vator forest. It further added that the conservator should ensure all afforestation as directed is completed and also ensure that planting of trees direction is followed.

The top court asked the director of IIT Bombay to depute a team for the purpose of verifying compliance and report should be submitted to the apex court in three weeks.

Mehta contended that instead of monetary penalty, reforestation of 3,000 trees can be directed and added that this can serve a larger cause.

During the hearing, the bench questioned, how can the superintendent allow the felling of trees when there was a stay by this court and pointed that the court had allowed "to move tree authority for 84 trees felling". The MMRCL had sought permission to fell 185 trees instead of 84. The top court noted that moving to the authority to fell 185 trees and they give the permission without seeking court's permission, then both superintendent and authority are in contempt.

Senior advocate C.U. Singh, representing one of the petitioners, submitted that the permission to trim has been used to chop trees and claimed that the company is lying through its teeth. Senior Advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, representing one of the petitioners, said complete fraud had been played on the court.

The apex court had taken suo motu cognisance of the protests against the cutting of trees in the Aarey car shed plot in 2019. It had ordered status quo on October 7, 2019, after Mehta gave an undertaking that no fresh felling of trees would be done till the next date of hearing. The status quo order had been extended from time to time.

12 die of heat stroke after 'Maharashtra Bhushan' award ceremony

Team Absolute | Navi Mumbai

At least 12 persons succumbed to heat stroke and over four dozen hospitalised after a mammoth public event in which Union Home Minister Amit Shah conferred the 'Maharashtra Bhushan-2022' Award on social reformer Appasaheb Dharmadhikari.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and others rushed to the MGM Hospital in Navi Mumbai late Sunday evening to enquire after the well-being of the people admitted there.

Early on Monday, NCP's Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT) President and former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Congress leaders visited the hospital and interacted with the patients.

"After discussing with the victims, it appears that there was a stampede as people wanted to rush out after the event," Pawar said.

Thackeray said that the function, originally scheduled for 5 p.m. on Sunday, was postponed to morning 10.30 a.m. as Shah "had no time" and led to the loss of innocent lives.

State Congress President Nana Patole said this is the "most insensitive government" and demanded the resignation of the Chief Minister for the lapses leading to the tragedy.

Chief spokesperson Atul Londhe said that it was a government function and hence it was its duty to ensure the safety of all the participants.

"So many people have lost their lives. The government should be booked for culpable homicide and action should be taken against



those responsible," demanded Londhe. Aam Aadmi Party state President Preeti Sharma-Menon expressed shock at the huge loss of lives.

Others have questioned why the heat factor was not taken into account before organising a Rs 13 crore mega-event with so many speakers, including Appasaheb Dharmadhikari who delivered a lengthy speech while the people were visibly suffering in the raging sun. Londhe termed as "carelessness" to organised such a massive event in the open ground without any marquee or shelter at the height of the summer season.

In fact, during his speech, Amit Shah had lauded the people for sitting patiently in the 42 degrees Celsius temperatures as an example of their devotion to Appasaheb Dharmadhikari.

The organisers had claimed that nearly 20 lakh people had attended the mega-event and Shinde -- himself a disciple of the awardee -- had proudly proclaimed how the gathering had shattered previous records.

RDX used in Pulwama sent from Nagpur, why no probe done yet, asks Congress

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Making a sensational allegation, Congress' Maharashtra President Nana Patole on Sunday said that the RDX used in the 2019 Pulwama terror strike was sent from Nagpur.

"I want to inform you all... The 300 kgs used in that terror strike was despatched from Nagpur. Who sent it, from where was it sent?" he asked.

Addressing a massive rally of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), Patole said that even a CBI inquiry was also ordered into the matter, but almost four years later, there has been no outcome of its investigations.

Patole's statement came with reference to the recent revelations made by former Governor of Jammu & Kashmir Satya Pal Malik that has created a huge political row. At the rally, Shiv Sena-UBT President and former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray slammed the government of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis for duping the people of the state and diverting attention from the real issues confronting the masses. "They are accusing me of discarding



ing Hindutva... What is their brand of Hindutva, assaulting a woman and then threatening her with arrest, not lodging her police complaint," said Thackeray.

He was recalling the attack on party activist Sonali Pawar-Shinde in Thane on April 3, followed by a huge protest march taken out by the MVA to the city Police Commissionerate the next day.

Apple previews its 1st retail store in India, to open for public on Tuesday

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Apple on Monday previewed its first own-branded retail store here that will serve as a dynamic space for customers.

Located at Mumbai's bustling Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) financial, arts, and entertainment district, Apple BKC -- to be thrown open for public on Tuesday -- will help customers explore company products and services, enjoy exceptional service, and learn how to get more out of their devices through free Today at Apple sessions.

"Apple BKC is a reflection of Mumbai's vibrant culture and brings together the best of Apple in a beautiful, welcoming space for connection and community," said Deirdre O'Brien, Apple's senior vice president of Retail.



Apple BKC will offer a special Today at Apple series, "Mumbai Rising," running from Tuesday (April 18) through the summer.

Bringing visitors, local artists, and creatives together, these free sessions featuring Apple products and services

will offer hands-on activities that celebrate the local community and culture. Apple BKC is designed to be one of the most energy-efficient Apple Store locations in the world, with a dedicated solar array and zero reliance on fossil fuels for store opera-

tions. The store is operationally carbon neutral, running on 100 percent renewable energy.

It features a triangular handcrafted timber ceiling that extends beyond the glass facade to the underside of the exterior canopy, reflecting the unique geometry of the store.

Each tile is made from 408 pieces of timber, forming 31 modules per tile with a total of 1,000 tiles that make up the ceiling. There are over 450,000 individual timber elements, all of which were assembled in Delhi.

Upon entering the store, customers are greeted by two stone walls sourced from Rajasthan and a 14-meter-long stainless steel staircase connecting the ground level and the cantilevered mezzanine.

Apple BKC features more than 100 team members who collectively speak over 20 languages.

Sana Khan denies being 'dragged' by husband; says 'We lost contact with driver'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former actress Sana Khan, who recently attended Baba Siddique's Iftar party has reacted to the video going viral on social media in which her husband Mufti Anas Saiyad was seen holding her hand and she can be heard saying that she is tired and can't walk further.

However, Sana has clarified that there is nothing to worry about her or come to any conclusion as it was all because the couple lost contact with the driver.

Many netizens have expressed their concern and said that it is unjustified to drag a pregnant woman like this. She wrote on social media: "This



video just came to my notice. And I know it looks weird to all my lovely brothers and sisters and to me in fact. We lost contact with driver and car once we came out and I was standing for longer than usual and started sweating and was uncomfortable, so he quickly wanted to get me in so I could sit and have water and some air. I was the one to tell him let's go in quick as we didn't want to disturb the paps who were there clicking pics of all the guests. So just a request, plz don't think otherwise. Thank you all once again for my concern. Loads of love to everyone here."

In 2020 Sana got married to Gujarat-based businessman Anas, and in March this year, she announced her pregnancy.

Ugandan national held at Mumbai airport with heroin worth Rs 16.8 cr

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A Ugandan national was held at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, Mumbai, with 2.4 kg heroin worth Rs 16.8 crore, officials said on Monday.

A senior Customs official said that the accused was held based on specific intelligence. He had arrived from Entebbe, Uganda on Sunday.

"Drugs were concealed in a false cavity of carton," the official said.

The official said that the accused was found violating provisions of section 8 of the NDPS Act, and had committed an offence punishable under Section 21, Section 23 and Section 29 of NDPS Act. Accordingly, he was placed under arrest.



The said narcotic substance was seized along with concealing material under section 43(a) of NDPS Act. Further investigation is on.

MAN WITH CRIMINAL RECORD KILLED USING 'SHARP WEAPONS'

Mumbai: A 27-year-old man accused in some criminal cases was killed allegedly by unidentified persons in Maharashtra's Sangli district, police said on Monday.

The incident took place on Kupwad-Kavalapur road on Sunday night, they said.

The deceased, identified as Amar Jadhav, had been cornered by police from Sangli and he returned recently.

"Jadhav had cases registered against him and he was exterminated by the Sangli police. On Sunday night, when he was on his motorcycle, some unidentified assailants attacked him with sharp weapons near Bannoli on Kupwad-Kavalapur road," an official from Kupwad police station said. The man was taken to a hospital where he was declared dead, he said.

The reason behind the attack is still not known. Efforts are on to nab the assailants, the official said.

"Who Will Probe This?": Uddhav Thackeray on heatstroke deaths

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday said that the award ceremony held in Navi Mumbai's Kharghar was not properly planned for 11 people died due to heatstroke during the event.

After meeting the patients who suffered from heatstroke in the event, Uddhav Thackeray spoke to the media and said, "We have met the people who are undergoing treatment. I interacted with four to five patients. Two of them were in critical condition. The event was not planned properly. Who will investigate this incident?"

Uddhav Thackeray, his son Aditya Thackeray and NCP leader Ajit Pawar visited the MGM Kamothe Hospital to take stock of the situation after eleven patients died due to heatstroke in Maharashtra Bhushan Award ceremony Kharghar.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has declared Rs 5 lakh for the family members of the dead and further mentioned that the state government will bear the entire medical expenses for all those



undergoing treatment.

"During the Dr Appasaheb Dharmadhikari Maharashtra Bhushan awarding ceremony held at Kharghar today, some Shri members had to be shifted to the hospital due to heatstroke, unfortunately, 11 of them died while undergoing treatment, this is a very unexpected and painful incident and pay tribute to the deceased Shri members. We share in the grief of their families. As soon as I got the information about this incident, I immediately rushed to the MGM Hospital in Kamothe and spoke to the doctors as well as members who are undergoing treatment. The administration has instructed that the families of the members who died in this unfortunate incident will be given five lakh rupees each and the entire medical expenses of the members undergoing treatment will be borne by the government," Maharashtra CM Shinde tweeted.

Some people who suffered from heatstroke in the ceremony were also taken to Tata Hospital in Kharghar.



KENDALL JENNER'S BOYFRIEND BAD BUNNY TAKES A DIG AT HER EX HARRY STYLES

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kendall Jenner's new boyfriend Bad Bunny divided fans when he poked fun at her ex Harry Styles during his Coachella. The rapper performed his two-hour show which included surprise cameos from Post Malone and Jhayco, reports Mirror.co.uk. When the Puerto Rican rapper sang El Apagon from his most recent album, he couldn't resist taking a pot shot at Kendall's former lover.

A tweet was displayed on the screen behind him which implied that Bad Bunny is a better singer than Harry.

It read: "Goodnight Benito could do As It Was but Harry could never do El Apagon." Some fans agreed with him on Twitter, with one writing: "Lmao bad bunny throwing shade at Harry styles! But did he lie??? Not one bit (sic)."

As per Mirror.co.uk, others weren't so impressed, one said: "Not bad bunny going to a Harry styles concert as a supporter/fan and then trying to tear him down at Coachella Foh I don't like that attitude."

Another added: "Didn't Bad Bunny go to Harry Styles concert last year as a fan and now he's throwing shade to Harry. Get out of my face bye."

Back in February, Harry beat Bad Bunny for the Album of the Year category at the Grammys.



'UNFORGETTABLELY EPIC CROWDS'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Taylor Swift thanked her fans who attended her three Tampa, Florida shows

Taylor Swift thanks the 'unforgettably epic crowds' following three nights of sold out shows in Tampa in first social media post since Joe Alwyn split. The Grammy winner reached out on social media Sunday to

debrief her fans. 'Still buzzing from those 3 shows in Tampa!!!' the Shake It Off singer wrote.

"Thank you to the unforgettably epic crowds and to aarondessner for coming out to play twice with me, we've been dreaming about that for so long!! So grateful for the memories we're making on this tour" The superstar turned off comments on the post, which received more than 4.5 million likes after it was published. The chart-topper took to the stage in a sleek black and red body suit with one side of her body covered, by while of the other, her arm and leg were left bare. Her long blonde hair was styled in loose layers, and took on a tousled look in the heavy humidity. Taylor's performances received a glowing review from Kaycee Sloan at WFLA.com The music critic explained that the Anti-Hero artist separated the Eras with the help of 'its own set of outfit and microphone changes.' The special guest for the Tampa shows was Taylor's friend and songwriting collaborator Aaron Dessner. Together, they wowed the crowd with a soulful rendition of The Great War. The Billboard Music Award winner looked sweet but sexy in a tiered bougainvillea toned dress with a hip high slit in front, showing off her toned legs. Writing about the experience, the producer and songwriter said, 'Playing the Great War for the first time in Tampa....Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine getting to play a song for 80,000 people on acoustic guitar with Taylor Swift, eternally grateful for all the music we have made and your friendship.'



Bruce Springsteen contracts Covid, misses his archives' inaugural awards show

Los Angeles | Agencies

The inaugural American Music Honors awards show - a fundraiser for the Bruce Springsteen Archives and Center for American Music at Monmouth University - was without two very important presenters in attendance - Bruce Springsteen and Patti Scialfa.

Bob Santelli, the Archives' executive director, broke the news that the Springsteens were both diagnosed with Covid-19 just hours after Springsteen took a final bow Friday night at the Prudential Center, wrapping the first part of his 2023 tour with

the E Street Band, reports Variety. "It broke our hearts around 6 a.m. this morning when I got a call that two of the most important people who were supposed to be here, Bruce Springsteen and Patti Scialfa, unfortunately came down with Covid-19."

While the news was met with silence in the crowd, host Jon Stewart lightened the mood, joking: "They're alive. Don't overreact. You can still see them in concert. They're home sitting by the fire eating French onion soup."

As per Variety, despite his absence physically, Springsteen was feeling spry enough to tape two videos presenting awards to Darlene Love and fellow E Street Band member Steven Van

Zandt. Stewart joked that Springsteen "with Covid-19 looks better than me," adding that he appeared "eerily healthy." "Aren't you supposed to have sniffles or something?" he said, quoted by Variety. "We shut down the world for a year and a half."

Springsteen was supposed to receive a proclamation from New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, who was in attendance with his wife, Tammy. Murphy, who joked that some in the audience were hoping that he was the one with Covid, unveiled a proclamation declaring September 23, 2023, Springsteen's birthday, 'Bruce Springsteen Day' in the Garden State. "I can't believe it's taken this long," Murphy said.



LIZZO SAYS SHE IS 'GORGEOUS' & 'THE BEAUTY STANDARD' AS SHE CELEBRATES HER BODY

'I AM THE BEAUTY STANDARD'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Lizzo celebrated her body in a candid video she shared on Instagram. The American rapper was previously subject to malicious comments on social media over her weight but fans jumped to her defence, reports Mirror.co.uk. The Grammy winner has now showed herself some love in footage where she described herself as "God's favourite."

Lizzo said, quoted by Mirror.co.uk: "I just finished showering and doing my little routine, and you know what I realised, I am f***** gorgeous. I am the beauty standard. Catch up, b****!"

She wrote in the caption: "I'm sorry that my perfect face & rockin body offends you... I can't help that I'm God's favourite."

A tweet over her weight previously sparked discussion, with some fans interpreting it as fat-shaming and having since come to Lizzo's defence.

It comes after the singer addressed critics in a separate post on social media earlier this year, with her having said in a video: "The discourse around bodies is officially tired." She added: "Do we realise that artists are not here to fit into your beauty standards? Artists are here to make art and this body is art. And I'mma do whatever I want with this body."

Leonardo DiCaprio spotted with Bradley Cooper's ex Irina Shayk

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio was spotted enjoying the Coachella celebrity after parties with Bradley Cooper's ex Irina Shayk. The 'Wolf of Wall Street' star, which is a festival regular, was pictured in his inconspicuous black cap and facemask as he joked with friends, reports Mirror.co.uk.

Another image showed him talking to Irina alongside fashion model Stella Maxwell at the Levi's and Tequila Don Julio's Neon Carnival at the Desert International Horse Park in Thermal, California. Single Leo reportedly recently denied having a relationship with

'Love Island UK' presenter Maya Jama. As per Mirror.co.uk, model Irina was said to have split up with movie star Bradley last year and the pair share a five-year-old daughter Lea. Other celebs pictured at Coachella include Lil Nas X, Janelle Monae, Camila Cabello, Metro Boomin, Lil Baby and Yo Gotti. Earlier this month, Leo was said to have hit back at the romance rumours after a source claimed the pair had allegedly been enjoying time together on a number of dates across the globe.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Cara Delevingne



IPL 2023 CSK DEFEAT RCB BY 8 RUNS AFTER BATTING MASTERCLASS

Bengaluru | Agencies

Chennai Super Kings defeated Royal Challengers Bangalore by 8 runs on Monday at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium despite fifties from Faf du Plessis and Glenn Maxwell. Batting first, CSK had scored 226/6 after fifties from Devon Conway and Shivam Dube, Moeen Ali helped put the finishing touches on the total.

In reply, Royal Challengers Bangalore lost Virat Kohli and Mahipal Lomror early, Faf du Plessis and Glenn Maxwell nearly carried RCB to the most successful run-chase in IPL history, however, CSK bowlers came good and restricted the visitors to a total of 218/8, thus sealing a thrilling win.

Earlier, RCB captain Faf du Plessis had won the toss and elected to bowl first, knowing that it was going to be a run-fest in Bengaluru.

While Ruturaj Gaikwad suffered an early dismissal but Devon Conway smashed 83 runs in 45 balls, Ajinkya Rahane got a quickfire 37 off 20 balls, and Shivam Dube also scored 52 off 27 balls.



Dube in particular was impressive, showing great attacking intent as he got five sixes, including a monstrous 111m against Harshal Patel.

Ambati Rayudu also got 14 off 6, Moeen Ali returned unbeaten at 19, Ravindra Jadeja scored 10 off 8, while CSK skipper Dhoni also got just a solitary run.

It was a dramatic over, Jadeja smashed a six off Maxwell after Patel bowled two beamers and was not allowed to complete his over. Jadeja departed on the next ball after the six, on came Dhoni to bat but he couldn't send the ball over the boundary ropes.

In their chase, Royal Challengers Bangalore lost Kohli to a freak dismissal, Lomror couldn't open his account but Maxwell and Du Plessis kept their side in the game.

Boundaries continued to flow from the star duo's bats before they both departed after scoring fifties and the match turned on its head.

Dinesh Karthik got 28, and even Suyash Prabhudessai, the impact sub kept RCB alive till the last three balls, but with 11 needed from 3 balls, it was too much for the youngster.

Brazil Para-Badminton International

Pramod, Sukant clinch gold in men's doubles

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Acce shuttlers Pramod Bhagat and Sukant Kadam struck gold in the men's doubles at Brazil Para-Badminton International 2023.

Whereas in singles, Pramod had to settle for Silver, while Sukant secured Bronze.

Pramod and Sukant defeated the Korean pair of Joo Donggae and Shin Kyung Hwan in the men's doubles SL 3 - SL 4. The finals were a tight affair, but the India pair closed the game in straight sets. Both Pramod and Sukant played their best games of the tournament, the final score read 22-20 and 21-19, helping them to secure gold. Pramod was not able to repeat his performance in the singles SL3 category finals, as



he went down to fellow Indian Kuma Nitesh and had to settle for silver. The final score read 12-21 and 13-21.

Talking about the same Pramod Bhagat said, "I am happy with my performance, but there is still scope for improvement. I had a bad day in singles, and I would like to congratulate Nitesh for playing exceptionally well."

On the other hand, Sukant secured a bronze in his singles SL4 category. Talking about the same Sukant said, "I am happy with my double's performance, but I need to work harder on my singles game. I have identified my mistakes in this tournament and will work hard on them and not repeat them."

National Shooting

Shiva Narwal and Neha win Air Pistol trials

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Haryana teenager Shiva Narwal clinched the men's 10m air pistol T3 trial at the M.P. State Shooting Academy Range, even as Uttar Pradesh's (U.P) Neha emerged triumphant in the women's event on the penultimate day of the National Selection Trials for Group A Rifle and Pistol shooters.

Shiva Narwal outgunned Punjab's Arjun Singh Cheema 17-7 in the gold medal match while Neha overcame Rhythm Sangwan 17-9 in the women's title decider. Shiva also topped the qualification round by posting a score of 582. In the ranking round, he topped yet again with 252.9 after 25 shots. Arjun was second with 252.4 and eventually settled for the same overall spot. Neha took a tougher route to her victory. She qualified eighth with a score of 573. In fact, the top three were the bottom



three in qualifying with Haryana's Rhythm shooting 573 for seventh place and state-mate Yashaswini Deswal posting a 574 to claim the sixth qualifying spot. Rhythm then topped the ranking round with a 251.6, way ahead of Neha who followed her to the gold medal match with a 248.3 as Yashaswini came third with 246.9. In the decider, however, Neha managed to turn the tables on Rhythm to come out on top.

Premier League

TITLE RACE HOTS UP AS ARSENAL HELD WHILE MAN CITY CRUISE TO WIN

London | Agencies

Arsenal's lead at the top of the Premier League was cut to four points over Manchester City, who has a game in hand, after a dramatic afternoon saw them draw 2-2 at West Ham's London Stadium.

Arsenal looked to be cruising to a comfortable win when Gabriel Jesus put them ahead over David Moyes' strugglers after seven minutes, and Martin Odegaard doubled the lead three minutes later, reports Xinhua.

Erling Haaland scored his 46th and 47th goals of the season as Manchester City on Saturday increased the pressure on Arsenal with a comfortable 3-1 win at home to Leicester City to spoil Dean Smith's debut as Leicester coach.

The game was over by the 25th minute as first John Stones and then Haaland twice scored to make it 3-0, and although Kelechi Iheanacho pulled a goal back against his former



club with 15 minutes left to play, City were never in danger.

Manchester United moved above Newcastle into third, with a 2-0 win away to Nottingham Forest, thanks to goals from Antony, who slotted home

a rebound, and Diogo Dalot's first Premier League goal for the club.

Jacob Ramsey opened the scoring, and Ollie Watkins scored twice in the second half, as Aston Villa beat Newcastle 3-0 to extend their winning

run to five games and end Newcastle's five-game 100% record.

Diego Costa and Hwang Hee-chan both scored as Wolverhampton moved closer to safety with a 2-0 win at home to Brentford, while two second-half goals from Eberechi Eze gave Crystal Palace a 2-0 win away to Southampton to make it three wins in three games since Roy Hodgson returned.

Everton is in deep trouble after a 3-1 home defeat to Fulham, who ended a run of seven games without a win in all competitions with goals from Harrison Reed, Harry Wilson and Daniel James. Chelsea lost again, with Frank Lampard unable to inspire a reaction as they were outplayed 2-1 by Brighton, who dominated after Conor Gallagher's opener for Chelsea. Brighton had 10 shots on target and won the game with goals from Danny Welbeck and substitute Julio Enciso.

Bundesliga

FREIBURG SECURES 2-1 COMEBACK VICTORY AT WERDER BREMEN

Berlin | Agencies

Freiburg remain in the hunt for a top-four finish after securing a 2-1 comeback victory at Werder Bremen following the curtain closer of the 28th round.

Bremen took the reins from the starting whistle but couldn't do any damage to Freiburg's well-positioned defense in the final third. The hosts failed to create clear-cut opportunities for the remainder of the first half, whereas Freiburg came close only once when Vincenzo Grifo unleashed a 30-meter hammer to force Bremen goalkeeper Jiri Pavlenka into action in the 26th minute, reports Xinhua.

The Werderaner caught a fairy tale start in the second half as Leonardo Bittencourt shrugged off two defenders before finding unmarked Maximilian Philipp, who finished off the counterattack to break the deadlock.



Unimpressed, Freiburg responded with attacks and got rewarded in the 67th minute when Lucas Holer flicked on a goal kick, allowing Roland Sallai to restore parity and score Freiburg's

1000th Bundesliga goal. Freiburg wasn't done with the scoring and completed its comeback on the road five minutes later as Sallai's whipped cross into the box found Holer, who headed

past Pavlenka to make it 2-1 on the scoreboard. Bremen pressed for a share of spoils, but Freiburg's defense stood firm and extended Werder's winless run to six games.

Hockey

Chennai to host Asian Champions Trophy 2023 after 16 years

Chennai | Agencies

In a bid to take international hockey events to different cities across the country, Hockey India announced Chennai, Tamil Nadu as the venue for the forthcoming Asian Champions Trophy 2023.

This will be the seventh edition of the coveted tournament and it is scheduled to be held from August 3 to August 12, 2023 serving as a precursor to the Hangzhou Asian Games in September where teams will vie to win Gold and qualify for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

Chennai last hosted an international hockey event in 2007 when the prestigious



Asia Cup was held and the venue proved to be lucky for the home team who clinched the title beating Korea 7-2 in the Final.

The Indian Men's Team had won this Title in the inaugural edition held in

2011 and beat Pakistan in the Final to win the Title in 1961. In the following edition in 2018, India was joint winners with Pakistan after rain affected the proceedings of the Final held in Muscat.

Super Cup: David's goal ends Kolkata Goliaths, East Bengal's hopes

Manjeri (Kerala) | Agencies

David Lalhlansanga struck a late equaliser as East Bengal FC crashed out of the Hero Super Cup following a 2-2 draw against Aizawl FC in a Group B clash at the Payyanad stadium, here on Monday.

Naorem Mahesh Singh and Sumeet Passi put the Red and Golds in front, but two goals from Aizawl FC in quick succession knocked the Kolkata club out of the competition.

With East Bengal FC needing a big win to maintain their chances, head coach Stephen Constantine made several changes to the starting XI. Sumeet Passi, Tuhin Das, and Charalambos Kyriacos were all named on the team sheet for East Bengal. India International Naorem Mahesh Singh was the driving force of East



Bengal's attack for the majority of the match and it was he who found the opener in the 17th minute.

Brilliantly played through by Cleiton Silva, Mahesh cut inside the box before crossing the ball to the centre of the area. His cross caught a wicked deflection though, ending up in the Aizawl goal.

Moments later, midfielder Mobashir Rahman had a golden opportunity to extend the lead. He received a loose ball just outside the edge of the box but ended up shoot-

ing over the crossbar.

East Bengal dominated as the one-way traffic continued. Five minutes after the opener, the Kolkata giants doubled their lead. From a VP Suhair cross, Sumeet Passi rose highest to head it into an empty net after Aizawl FC goalkeeper Vanlalhratpuia got his angles wrong in an attempt to punch the ball clear. At the time, a rout looked in the offing.

However, things turned in the favour of Aizawl FC.

ATLETICO WIN AGAIN, DISASTER FOR VALENCIA IN LA LIGA

Madrid | Agencies

FC Barcelona saw their lead at the top of La Liga cut to 11 points when they were held 0-0 away to Getafe.

Barca was unable to break down a well-drilled rival and failed to score for their third consecutive match, following another flat performance, reports Xinhua.

Barca's injury prolems got worse in the 18th minute when Sergi Roberto had to limp off with a muscle injury and was replaced by Eric Garcia.

Their best chance came in the 26th minute when Raphinha hit the post when put clean through, and Alex Balde also sent the rebound against the woodwork, but overall, Barca disappointed once again and didn't do enough against a rival that dug deep for a vital point.

Real Madrid rested several key players ahead of their Champions League quarterfinal return leg in London next week but won with relative ease away to Cadiz.

Although Cadiz goalkeeper David Gil made several good saves, Nacho



Fernandez scored a powerful shot in the 72nd minute, and Marco Asensio made it 2-0 just three minutes later.

Two goals from Antoine Griezmann extended Atletico Madrid's run to 10 wins from 12 games as they defeated Almeria 2-1.

Atletico dominated the game, with Griezmann opening the scoring in the fifth minute, and although Leo Baptistao leveled with Almeria's only shot on target in the 39th minute, Griezmann popped up again four minutes later to win the match.

Inaki Williams scored twice as Athletic Bilbao won the Basque derby 2-0 at home to Real Sociedad. Williams' first goal came following a 33rd-minute corner, while his second came with a powerful shot to finish off a perfect counterattack with 20



Being
a badass is more
than just a state of mind:
**Radhika
Madan**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Radhika Madan spoke about how the show 'Saas Bahu aur Flamingo' pushed her limits as an actor and gave her creative freedom to experiment as an artist. She said that the show is all about giving a new dimension to a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, which has not been thought of before. She said: "Action has fascinated me ever since my first film 'Mard Ko Dard Nahi Hota', wherein I tried my hand at the genre. It is an exhilarating experience to feel the adrenaline rush that comes with action and the world that Homi Adajania has created with 'Saas Bahu aur Flamingo' really excite me." Radhika further shared that she enjoyed playing an unapologetic and audacious character on screen.

She added: "You know being a badass is more than just a state of mind; it means being totally unapologetic and uninhibited in all the choices in your life. I had a blast doing these action sequences and being a part of this gutsy and authentic mad world. It has truly been an empowering experience. Produced by Maddock Films, the series is directed by Homi Adajania and stars Dimple Kapadia, Radhika Madan, Angira Dhar, and Isha Talwar in pivotal roles along with Ashish Verma, Varun Mitra, Udit Arora, Deepak Dobriyal and Monica Dogra.

Big B all set to host 'KBC' Season 15, registration from April 29

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The popular show 'Kaun Banega Crorepati' with megastar Amitabh Bachchan is all set to return with its 15th season.

The makers have dropped the promo making an announcement that registration for the show will start from April 29.

In the promo, Big B can be seen sitting on the host's seat while a woman looks at the map to find a way to reach the hotseat. Finally, she reaches the hotseat by digging into the ground. She asks Big B to play the game to which he responds, "hotseat par pahuchne ke liye ulool-julool haathkande mat apnaayiye".

He says just pick up the phone as this is the only way with registration starting from 9 p.m. on April 29.

"Answer my question and your registration will begin," says the host.

The 14th season had started on August 7, 2022 which marked the celebration of 75 years of Independence. It was attended by Aamir Khan, sports icons including Mary Kom and Sunil Chhetri along with Mithali Madhumita, the first female officer to win the Gallantry Award and Major D.P. Singh, India's first blade runner.

It wrapped up on December 30, 2022. From Akshay Kumar and Padma Shree D.G. Prakash Singh, Vicky Kaushal, Kiara Advani, and the melodious Shilpa Rao among many others graced the show.

The show airs on Sony Entertainment Television.



Bhumika Chawla used to call Salman 'Bhai' during 'Tere Naam' shooting



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Bhumika Chawla, who won the audiences over with her portrayal of Nirjara in 'Tere Naam' opposite Salman Khan, has reunited with the Bollywood star after almost 2 decades since their last film together. The two will be seen in 'Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan' which is set to arrive in cinemas on April 21. The actress, who did her first Hindi film with Salman, is "very happy to reunite with him after 20 years." She mentioned: "The fans of 'Tere Naam' often ask when will Radhe and Nirjara come together. While 'Tere Naam 2' may take time, they can see me and Salman together in 'Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan'." Walking down the

memory lane, she shared an incident when she addressed the superstar as "Salman bhai" publicly. She said: "When we went to the audio launch of 'Tere Naam', I called him 'Salman bhai' on stage. I was later told I can't say because I was paired opposite him. The whole nation reveres him by this name so, initially I also called him Salman bhai and he used to tell me, 'You can call me Salman'. Even during the making of this film, till the time 70 per cent of the shoot was done, I used to address him as Salman sir. He again said, 'You can call me just Salman'." Speaking about a scene from 'Tere Naam' where her character was held hostage by Salman's character of Radhe, Bhumika said:

"We were losing the light during that scene as it was being shot after the golden hour. Industry people would know how crucial natural light is when you're shooting outdoors, and once you start losing the light that's when stress starts building up on the sets." "I was really nervous as the stakes were high and we had to wrap up the scene before darkness set in. I started fumbling and couldn't deliver my lines. That's when Salman walked upto Satish ji and told him, 'Let her take time as it's new for her. The more stress we put on her, the more it will turn out to be worse for the scene. That gave me a huge boost of confidence and I delivered my lines perfectly," she concluded.



Anshuman Jha shot his debut film on single 35mm lens

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Anshuman Jha, who is making his directorial debut with the upcoming film 'Lord Curzon Ki Haveli', has shot the entire film on single 35mm lens. The film stars Arjun Mathur and Rasika Dugal in the leads along with Marvel Girl Zoha Rahman, Paresh Pahuja, Tanmay Dhanania and Garrick Hagon.

Cinema legend Alfred Hitchcock used the single lens minimalist formula for his film 'Psycho' and that served as an inspiration to Jha as Hitchcock is his favourite filmmaker.

Talking about his decision to use just one lens, Anshuman said: "While I had lens options at my disposal - I chose a single lens narrative as I wanted it to be as close to the human vision as possible consistently. 35mm gave me that. A single lens film has a subconscious viewing effect. And I wanted the film to not just look but feel cohesive, a consistent point of view driving the finished piece. 'Lord Curzon Ki Haveli' is a contemporary homage to my favourite film maker - Alfred Hitchcock and his classic film 'The Rope'."

Writer Bikas Mishra, who has written the script of the film, said: "Anshuman had made the choice on the writing table itself that he will shoot the film on a single lens." 'Lord Curzon Ki Haveli' produced by Golden Ratio Films and Jha's First Ray Films, is scheduled for a release later this year.

Fashion that makes you feel comfortable is the key to looking good:

TINA DATTA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

'Uttaran' actress Tina Datta discusses in detail her look which is casual yet chic in the show 'Hum Rahe Na Rahe Hum'. She plays the role of Surilii and for that, Tina opted for oversized shirts, t-shirts, and baggy pants with funky pieces of jewelry and a half bun with coloured hair.

Speaking about her avatar, Tina shared: "I think fashion that makes you feel comfortable is the key to looking good. You will often see me wearing oversized t-shirts, and shirts teamed with baggy pants. To my luck, the makers of the show visualised Surilii the same way."

She said about her look in the show 'Hum Rahe Na Rahe Hum' and said that the makers liked the way she carried herself in reality. They in fact, in the first meeting thought of keeping Surilii's look like her.

Tina added: "I even remember going to one of the initial meetings of the show wearing similar attire and the team felt as if Surilii walked into the room. So, I am glad I have got the opportunity to play such a relatable character that mirrors my daily style."

'Hum Rahe Na Rahe Hum' airs on Sony Entertainment Television.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sonam Bajwa