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'Delhi not similar to other UTs, LG can't have administration over all issues'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday said the Lt Governor (LG) cannot have administrative supervision over all issues relating to Union Territory of Delhi and the term "administration" cannot be understood as the entire administration of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD), otherwise, the purpose of giving powers to a constitutionally recognised, democratically elected government would be diluted.

A five-judge constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, said: "There does not exist a homogeneous class of Union Territories with similar governance structures; NCTD is not similar to other Union Territories. By virtue of Article 239AA, NCTD is accorded a 'sui generis' status, setting it apart from other Union Territories".

The bench said: "NCTD has legislative and executive power over 'Services', that is, Entry 41 of List II of the Seventh Schedule because: (I) The definition of State under Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act 1897 applies to the term 'State' in Part XIV of the Constitution. Thus, Part XIV is applicable to Union territories; and (II) The exercise of rule-making power under the proviso to Article 309 does not oust the legislative power of the appropriate authority to make laws over Entry 41 of the State List."

It noted that the executive administration by the LG, in his discretion, can only extend to matters which fall out-

Delhi CM hail big win in Supreme Court

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday thanked the Supreme Court for doing justice to the people of the national capital and said that the pace of development will increase manifold.

In a tweet in Hindi, Kejriwal said, "Heartfelt thanks to the Supreme Court for doing justice to the people of Delhi. With this decision, the pace of development of Delhi will increase manifold. Democracy won."

side the purview of the powers conferred on the Assembly but it extends to powers or functions entrusted or delegated to him by the President" or "in which he is required by or under any law to act in his discretion or to exercise any judicial or quasi-judicial functions".

The bench said: "We reiterate that in light of Article 239AA and the 2018 Constitution Bench judgment, the Lt Governor is bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers of NCTD in relation to matters within the legislative scope of NCTD. As we have held that NCTD has legislative power over 'services' (excluding 'public order', 'police', and 'land') under Entry 41 in List II, the Lieutenant Governor shall be bound by the decisions of GNCTD on services... To clarify, any reference to 'Lieutenant Governor' over services (excluding services related to 'public order', 'police', and 'land') in relevant



"The term 'administration' cannot be understood as the entire administration of GNCTD. Otherwise, the purpose of giving powers to a constitutionally recognised and democratically elected government would be diluted."

D.Y. Chandrachud, Chief Justice of India

"Mr. Thackeray did not face the floor test. Had Mr Thackeray refrained from resigning from the post of the Chief Minister, this court could have considered the grant of the remedy of reinstating the government headed by him."

Rules shall mean Lieutenant Governor acting on behalf of GNCTD".

The apex court verdict came on the dispute between the Centre and Delhi government over control of administrative services in the national capital.

'Uddhav Thackeray didn't face the floor test and resigned but Governor erred'

HOW COULD I SEEK CONFIDENCE VOTE FROM 'TRAITORS': UDDHAV THACKERAY

Mumbai: Soon after the Supreme Court verdict, former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday asked how he could "seek the vote of confidence from 'traitors' who had betrayed". To a pointed query on the SC's observations that if the then CM had not quit, the court could have reinstated him, Thackeray said: "Maybe my decision was erroneous... But how could I ask for the vote of confidence of the very same 'traitors' who had betrayed me?" The Shiv Sena (UBT) president added that they would now urge the Speaker Rahul Narwekar to take up the matter of the disqualification of the 16 MLAs, including Shinde, and decide on priority.

grant of the remedy of reinstating the government headed by him while also castigating then Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari for asking Thackeray to prove his majority in the Assembly. A five-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, said "The decision of the Speaker as communicated by the Deputy Secretary to the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly dated July 3, 2022 is contrary to law. The Speaker shall recognise the Whip and the Leader who are duly authorised by the Shiv Sena political party with reference to the provisions of the party constitution, after conducting an enquiry in this regard."

However, the top court refrained from declaring the current regime led by a rebel Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde as illegal. The apex court declared that the Governor was justified in inviting Shinde to form the government subsequently on June 30, 2022, since the BJP, with the highest 106 MLAs, and eight Independent MLAs extended support to him. Chief Justice Chandrachud, who authored the judgment on behalf of the bench, said: "The decision of the Speaker recognising Mr. Shinde as the leader is illegal. The

Speaker must recognise the Whip and the Leader who are duly authorised by the political party with reference to the provisions of the party constitution, after conducting an enquiry in this regard and in keeping with the principles discussed in this judgement." The top court declared as illegal a decision of the Speaker to appoint Bharat Gogawale as Chief Whip of Shiv Sena on nomination by Shinde group and refused to accept Shinde faction's contention that the Chief Whip is appointed by the legislature party and not the political party.

On the Governor's action after the rebellion by Shinde and his supporting MLAs, the bench concluded: "The Governor was not justified in calling upon Mr. Thackeray to prove his majority on the floor of the House because he did not have reasons based on objective material before him, to reach the conclusion that Mr. Thackeray had lost the confidence of the House. However, the status quo ante cannot be restored because Mr. Thackeray did not face the floor test and tendered his resignation; and The Governor was justified in inviting Mr. Shinde to form the government."

Manipur Police commando killed, 4 cops injured in militant attack

Team Absolute | Imphal

A Manipur Police commando was killed and four other policemen were injured when Kuki militants attacked a police patrol party at Tronglaobi in the state's Bishnupur district on Thursday, police said.



A police official in Imphal said commando Heisnam Jiten was killed and four other policemen sustained bullet injuries during an operation against Kuki militants.

Further details of the incidents are awaited.

Thursday's militant attack took place within less than 24 hours after Kuki extremists fired upon an Army and Assam Rifles team at Dolaitthabi in Imphal East district, injuring an Assam Rifles jawan, when the security personnel

were on an area domination patrolling.

Meanwhile, The Congress on Thursday dubbed the violence in Manipur 'pre-planned' and demanded immediate imposition of President's Rule in the state.

The Congress also compared the valley-based organisations Arambai Tengol and Meitei Leepun in Manipur to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh

(RSS) and the Bajrang Dal. Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, Congress leader Bhakta Charan Das said: "For decades all the communities have been living peacefully and no clashes had taken place in the past."

Das, who is also the in-charge of Manipur, said: "It seems that violence was pre-planned as no one from the Centre is monitoring the issue."



Pak SC orders immediate release of Imran Khan

Islamabad: The Pakistan Supreme Court on Thursday ordered "immediate release" of PTI Chairman Imran Khan after terming his arrest as unlawful, media reports said.

The top court also directed the former Prime Minister to approach the Islamabad High Court (IHC), Dawn reported.

The directives were issued by the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP), Umar Ata Bandial, as the court resumed hearing the former premier's plea against his arrest.

The CJP remarked that the country was on fire after the arrest of the PTI Chairman and the court wants peace to prevail in the country, Samaa TV reported. The apex court had ordered to produce Khan in the court within an hour, as it started hearing the former Prime Minister's petition challenging his arrest in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) case. A three-member bench took up the plea.

WHATSAPP CURBS INTERNATIONAL SPAM CALLS IN INDIA AFTER GOVT'S TOUGH CALL

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Meta-owned WhatsApp on Thursday said it has taken stern action on the growing menace of international scam calls in India, after the government took cognisance of the issue and announced to send a notice to the platform over the issue.

The platform, which has over 600 million users in the country, said it has ramped up its artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) systems to bring down such incidents significantly.

"Our new enforcement will reduce the current calling rate by at least 50 per cent and we expect to be able to control the current incidence effectively. We will continue to work relentlessly towards ensuring a safe experience for our users," a company spokesperson said in a statement.

Earlier in the day, Minister of State for Electronics and IT, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, said that the IT Ministry will send a notice to WhatsApp on the issue of spam



calls from unknown international numbers, stressing that social media platforms are responsible for ensuring the safety and trust of users.

These spam calls with international numbers, mostly from African and Southeast Asian countries, along with fake messages from unknown users, flooded WhatsApp users in India.

The spam calls showed country codes of Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Ethiopia, among others. Most of these calls started with +251 (Ethiopia), +62 (Indonesia), +254 (Kenya), +84 (Vietnam) and other countries.

UIDAI launches nationwide drive to update Aadhaar operators on policy changes

New Delhi:

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has initiated a nationwide capacity building drive to augment efficiency of Aadhaar operators across the country, which will sensitise them about the latest changes in policies and procedures in the Aadhaar ecosystem, and cut down errors at operator level during enrolment, updates and authentication processes. Electronics and IT Ministry sources said that the exercise will significantly improve the experience of residents. In fact, as part of the initiative, the UIDAI has already conducted around 20-odd training sessions in several states to enhance the expertise of operators. As operators work at the ground level and are responsible for the enrolment, update and authentications, it is imperative that they possess a sound understanding of processes, guidelines and policies, sources said.



Fake notice on CBSE Class 10, 12 exam results circulates

New Delhi: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Thursday said it would announce the results of Class 10 and 12 board exams soon amid a fake notice making rounds on social media, claiming "the results have been announced and uploaded on the web".

A notice with a fake CBSE letterhead stated that "results have been announced on Thursday". Both the CBSE and the Ministry of Education have termed the notice "fake".

The CBSE has also issued a formal information including results, students should collect information only from the official website.

Saying that the results would be declared soon, the board said it has also issued a six-digit DigiLocker security pin through which the students would be able to access and collect their marksheets and migration certificate online.

The CBSE has also issued a circular to all the schools regarding the security pin for DigiLocker.

WRESTLERS' SEXUAL HARASSMENT CASE

Minor records statement before magistrate

New Delhi | Agencies

The minor wrestler, who has accused Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh of sexual harassment, has given a statement before a magistrate under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), an official said on Thursday.

"The statement of the minor female wrestler was officially recorded before a magistrate under Section 164 of the CrPC on Wednesday," said a senior police official.

"In the near future, statements from the remaining six female wrestlers will also be taken before the magistrate," the official added.

Section 164 in CrPC, 1973 specifically deals with the recording of confessions or statements by a magistrate, who then forwards it to the relevant magistrate handling the inquiry or trial of the case. Currently, the police have already



recorded statements from all seven female wrestlers, including the minor, who have filed complaints in this case

under Section 161 of the CrPC. Section 161 focuses on witness examination conducted by the police.

Satta Bazar predicts 120-130 seats for Cong in Karnataka

Atul Krishan | New Delhi

Bookies who run the Satta Bazar have put their money on the Congress in Karnataka where polling for 224 Assembly seats were held on Wednesday, saying the grand old party is likely to achieve a "remarkable victory" by winning around 120-130 seats.

The bookies have predicted that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will win "a maximum of 80 seats" while the Janata Dal-Secular (JD-S) is expected to bag up to 37 seats.

A Satta Bazar source from Hapur told correspondent that the Congress might be getting 110 seats whereas the BJP is expected to bag maximum 75 seats. Meanwhile, people connected to Phalodi Satta Bazaar have stated that the Congress party is likely to win 137 seats, while the BJP is expected to secure only 55 seats.

The Phalodi Satta market has predicted that the Janata Dal-Secular will get 30 seats.

According to the Palanpur Satta Bazaar, the Congress is expected to secure 141 seats, while the BJP is projected to win 57 seats. The JD-S is likely

BJP Will Win Total Seats In Karnataka		
81	83	Min:100
100	100	Max:1L
Congress Will Win Total Seats In Karnataka		
116	118	Min:100
100	100	Max:1L
JD-S Will Win Total Seats In Karnataka		
21	22	Min:100
100	100	Max:1L

to bag 24 seats. These numbers indicate a favourable outcome for the Congress party, suggesting a significant lead over its rivals. Over all, the satta market has predicted 120 to 130 seats to the Congress in the 224-seat assembly. The bookies are anticipating that the BJP might secure around 70 to 80 seats.



NITISH, TEJASHWI MEET THACKERAY TO FORGE GRAND OPPOSITION ALLIANCE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, accompanied by his deputy Tejashwi Yadav, on Thursday met Shiv Sena-UBT President and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar and state Congress Working President Naseem Khan as part of his efforts to forge a grand alliance of all non-BJP parties.

After the meetings, Nitish Kumar said that if more and more opposition parties unitedly stand and work together, it can help achieve a better fight against the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

"When all opposition unites to fight, there will be a direct contest (against the BJP). We can get good success and the country can head in the right direction," remarked Nitish Kumar, who was accompanied by his Janata Dal-U's national Secretary Kapil Patil and others.



He observed that what the BJP is doing is not good for the country and its imperative for the opposition parties to work together and save democracy in India.

"There should not be any dispute. All must remain united with the same

objective to work in the best interests of the country, and provide an alternative in the next elections," he said.

To a query whether Pawar would be the main face of the opposition alliance, Nitish Kumar said that "nothing could be more delightful

than that", and he had requested him to work more vigorously both for his party and the entire country.

Khan welcomed the visiting dignitaries at Mumbai Airport and wished them the bet for their efforts to work out a united opposition front, saying Nitish Kumar had already met Congress top brass in New Delhi recently.

Earlier this morning, Nitish Kumar and Yadav, JD-U President Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh, Bihar Legislative Council Chairman Deveshchandra Thakur and Bihar Cooperation Minister Sanjay Kumar Jha, were accorded a grand welcome on their first visit to Mumbai with huge banners and posters heralding their trip, said a JD-U official.

The duo and others were accorded a traditional Maharashtra style welcome at the Thackeray residence 'Matoshri' in Bandra where they had lunch with Uddhav and Aditya Thackerays, with MP Sanjay Raut also present.

Crowd gathered in Pilot's Jan Sangharsh Pad Yatra

Lalit Sharma | Ajmer

Former Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan Sachin Pilot started his five-day public struggle journey from Ajmer to Jaipur today, in which a large number of people thronged.

Holding the tricolor in his hand, Pilot started a 125-kilometer mass struggle journey from Ajmer to Jaipur and raised his voice for the investigation of corruption and paper leak cases and demanded the arrest of the mastermind of the paper leak cases along with a fair investigation.

During the pad yatra Pilot said that while in the opposition, we had promised the public that we would do milk of milk, water of water by demanding an inquiry into the corruption that hap-



pened during the tenure of the Vasudhara Raje government. But even writing many letters and fasting had no effect. He said that we are worried about the future of our youth. To maintain their faith and to reveal the truth about the paper leak, a Jan Sangharsh Yatra is being taken out. He clarified that this yatra is not against any organization or individual but to bring the real culprits to the fore. Pilot said that his

family has been in politics for a long time but even our opponents cannot accuse our family of even a penny. He said that it is our responsibility to come among the people even in the scorching heat and take their sentiments to the government. On those who questioned his Jan Sangharsh Yatra, he said that politics is a river of fire and it has to be crossed by swimming.

He said that he will continue to come forward among the public and become their voice because the public is the biggest force in political life. Pilot will rest tonight near Tolamal bus station near the Kishangarh toll gate. Earlier, on reaching Ajmer railway station, a large number of Congress people welcomed him by raising slogans.

'Didn't discuss politics', says Odisha CM after meeting PM Modi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with sources saying that the meeting centred around certain demands related to the state.

The meeting took place just days after Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had met Patnaik in Bhubaneswar amid speculations of an Opposition front being cobbled up in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections.

Patnaik, however, ruled out any political intonation to the meeting. Speaking to the media after the meeting, Patnaik said: "I have not discussed anything with the Prime Minister in this con-



nection (politics). As far as I am concerned, there is no possibility of BJD joining a third front as of now.

"Going alone in the assembly and Parliamentary elections has always been our principle," he added. Giving some details about

the meeting, Patnaik said: "I have just met the Prime Minister. The topic of discussion was mainly about Odisha's demands, which include an international airport -- the Shree Jagannath International Airport, which we want to set up in Puri."

CARRY SURPRISE INSPECTIONS IN TIHAR JAIL, ORDERS DELHI HC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court formed a committee on Thursday to undertake surprise inspections in Tihar jail and asked a report on the specifics of the food being served to the inmates and the level of hygiene maintained in the sitting area and canteen.

A bench of Justice Prathiba M. Singh was hearing a plea by two inmates lodged in Tihar jail and seeking the court's direction to the authorities concerned to ensure proper food facilities are made available for all. The court has sought report on the nature of food served to all of them at all times and the details of food items provided in canteen.

The two inmates have contended that norms are not being followed in accordance with the Prison Rules in terms of quantity and nourishment.

Even though there is a prescribed diet, it is not being fulfilled leading to physical health problems.



It is their case that after 6 p.m. when the inmates are required stay inside their specific cells, no food is available to them.

Appearing for the petitioners, advocate Adit S. Pujari added that no fruits are being stored or sold now by the canteen for inmates to buy.

However, the jail superintendent's counsel claimed that when last month, a judge had visited, it was found that all the required norms were being complied with.

The court found it appropriate to direct surprise inspections to extract relevant details on the matter looking

at the type of allegations. Justice Singh said: "The committee is constituted for inspection. Let the committee conduct at least two inspections and submit a report by the next date of hearing." The matter was posted for next hearing on July 20.

Delhi HC reserves order on Sisodia's bail plea in excise policy case

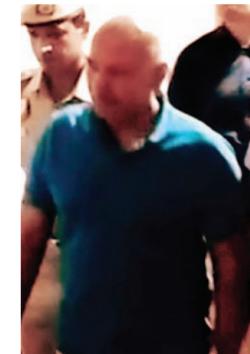
Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Thursday reserved its judgement on former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's bail plea in the 2021-22 excise policy case being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The senior AAP leader had moved to the high court on April 3, seeking interim bail in the case on the grounds of his wife's illness.

Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma directed the jail superintendent to provide Sisodia with video conferencing facility to speak to his wife every alternate day between 3-4 p.m. as per prison rules, till disposal of bail plea.

The CBI on Wednesday opposed the bail plea, arguing that the former Deputy Chief Minister was in a position of power and had political clout.



Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S.V. Raju, appearing for the probe agency, said that Sisodia controlled various departments including the excise and had wilfully destroyed evidence and a mobile phone on the day the

matter was referred by the Lieutenant Governor to the CBI.

Before the bench of Justice Sharma, the CBI also referred to a "missing file" relating to the policy documents and said that it went missing probably because it contained some notings which were not palatable.

The ASG said: "Our case is that the note was destroyed or it was made to disappear. We have evidence to show that he was the last person who was handed over this file which contained the cabinet note. He is capable of tampering with the evidence."

On Monday, a Delhi court extended Sisodia's judicial custody till May 23 in a case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

In the case being probed by the CBI, the Delhi court extended Sisodia's judicial custody till May 12.

HARYANA MINISTER INSPECTS HEALTH CENTRE, SUSPENDS STAFF ABSENT FROM DUTY

Chandigarh:

Haryana's Health and Family Welfare Minister Anil Vij on Thursday conducted a surprise inspection of the Community Health Centre in Mullana near Ambala town and suspended employees who were found absent from duty.

As he reached the health centre, Vij found doctors and staff missing, which made him angry.

He got the attendance register of doctors and staff, checked on the spot and directed to suspend five employees, including two women employees.

During the inspection, Anita Rani, Boti Devi, Vijay Kumar, Satbir Singh and Pawan Kumar were found absent. The directions to suspend them were given by the minister on the spot, an official statement said. During the inspection, the minister went to the general ward and interacted with patients admitted there.

He asked the patients "did the doctor come to check; at what time did the doctors come to examine them".



One of the BJP workers will become K'taka CM, says Shobha Karandlaje

Bengaluru | Agencies

Claiming that exit poll results will go wrong, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shobha Karandlaje on Thursday said one of the BJP workers will become the Chief Minister of Karnataka.

When asked whether she will become Chief Minister if BJP wins the state assembly polls, Karandlaje told reporters that there is no question of her returning to the state politics, adding that, "I have got the opportunity to work with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I am happier there."

"We are confident of forming a majority government. As per the reports of booth level workers, we are ahead in more than 120 seats. The road shows by Prime Minister Modi have lifted party's poll prospects."



Karandlaje said.

Talking about Congress being upbeat after exit poll predictions, she said, "Last time too Siddaramaiah got a suit for himself to become Chief Minister. But, H. D. Kumaraswamy became the Chief Minister through the backdoor. This time, we will form the government."

"I have stated earlier also that the exit poll outcomes

are wrong. I stand by my words now also. The report by former Chief Minister B. S. Yediyurappa has never turned out to be false," she said. She maintained that the low voter turnout in Bengaluru is saddening. "Even after declaration of holiday, people have not come out to vote. Let them come out of their houses at least in future," she said.

BJP puts up posters attacking RJD, supporting Dharendra Shastri

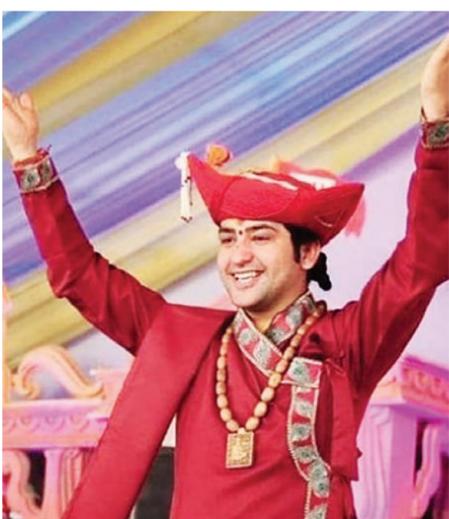
Patna | Agencies

Amid RJD leaders opposing self-styled godman Dharendra Shastri's visit to Patna for a religious event, the BJP on Thursday put up posters supporting the spiritual leader and attacking the RJD.

The poster, released by state BJP Minority Morcha Minister Nawab Ali, says: "The way RJD leaders are opposing Baba Bageshwar in Bihar, it's attributed to objections to Sanatan Dharma. The people of Bihar will give appropriate answers to the people opposing it in the upcoming election."

The poster says: "Vipakshiyo Me Machi Hai Khalbali, Aa rahe Hai Bajrangbali... Samarthan Me Khara Hai Nawab Ali."

Another poster says: "Those who are opposing Baba Bageshwar should go to Pakistan."



and others have been opposing Shastri's visit ever since it was announced by the organisers of the 'Hanumant Katha', a religious discourse

event in Patna. Shastri is scheduled to visit Tatar Math area in Naubatpur on May 13 for the five-day event.

ED MAKES 3RD ARREST IN RS 2000 CR LIQUOR SCAM IN CHHATTISGARH

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday arrested a third accused in the Rs 2,000 crore liquor scam in Chhattisgarh.

According to sources, the third accused has been identified as Pappu Dhillu, a liquor businessman.

Earlier, in the day, the ED had arrested one Nitesh Purohit.

Both will be produced before a Special PMLA Court later in the day. The ED is all set to seek their custodial remand.

The ED had on Monday said Anwar Dhebar, the brother of Raipur Mayor Ajaz Dhebar, is the kingpin in the liquor scam.

Anwar is currently in the custody of the ED. He was caught while trying to flee from the backdoor of a hotel in the early hours of May 6.

The ED alleged that Anwar was the main collection agent and frontman of this syndicate. He was allegedly extorting Rs 75 per case as commission from liquor businessmen.

The ED said that its investigation has established that in order to decide the quantum of commission on the sale of country liquor, a meeting was called by Anwar in March 2019, which was attended by the liquor businessmen where the dis-



tillers were asked to pay Rs 75 per case commission against its procurement by CSMCL. In return Anwar promised to raise their landing rates proportionately.

This system was agreed upon and the syndicate started collecting a huge amount of commission on the sale of accounted liquor cases. Each liquor case was purchased by MD CSMCL only, hence, all the data was

always available and till the commission was not paid, the dues of the distillers were not cleared.

The commission was reportedly shared with a political party by Anwar. Also, this commission was paid by the distillers from the enhanced landing rate received by them.

"This was a pre-planned agreement. Hence, in a way the entire

commission of PART-A has been sponsored by the Chhattisgarh state exchequer," the ED alleged.

The ED has alleged a criminal syndicate was operating in Chhattisgarh which indulged in the collection of bribes by controlling the government departments.

The ED has further alleged that this syndicate comprised senior state government officials, private persons and political executives of the state government.

"Anil Tuteja IAS, the joint secretary in the Department of Industry and Commerce, was managing the affairs and was the kingpin of this illegal syndicate along with Anwar Dhebar. They had close proximity to the political executive and were misusing them. They were running systematic extortion and corruption, particularly in the rich excise department," read the ED's documents.

"Liquor is a state subject and it is the duty of the state government to regulate its demand and supply for the purpose of public health and revenue generation. As per the findings of the I-T department, large amounts of bribes were being collected by the criminal syndicate from liquor suppliers. Money was also gathered from other departments like the food department," the ED paper read.



OUR ENDEAVOUR IS TO MACK DAUGHTERS LIVES SCARCITY FREE: CM CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that it is our endeavour that there should be no scarcity in the lives of daughters. Daughter should not be considered a burden but a boon. For this, many schemes are being run by the state government for the progress of daughters.



is his wish that all the newly-weds lead a happy life with success and prosperity comes in everyone's life. May the daughters going to their in-laws be happy and the newly wedded couples boost the honour and respect of both the families by their conduct and behaviour.

CM said that Urban Development and Housing Minister Shri Bhupendra Singh is a Vikas Purush, he is constantly active and dedicated for the development of the entire state including Khurai.

As many as 673 marriages and 26 nikahs were solemnised in the ceremony, which were conducted by 111 Pandits and 5 Qazis. Rs 49 thousand were transferred through RTGS into the account of each married couple.

CM Chouhan virtually participated in the mass marriage ceremony held at Khurai in Sagar district from his residence office. Urban Development and Housing Minister Shri Bhupendra Singh from Khurai was specially present in the ceremony.

While blessing 699 couples tying the nuptial knot, Chief Minister Chouhan said that it

Raj Bhavan is the responsibility of public welfare: Governor Patel

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that Raj Bhavan is the responsibility of public welfare. With this spirit, he visited all the 52 districts of the state and sought information about the pain and suffering of the common people and the deprived sections. We have done provided them solutions and development.

Patel was addressing a seminar organized by Madhavrao Sapre Memorial Newspaper Museum Institute in Bhopal today on Dwivedi-Sapre era trends and concerns at Pt. Jhabarmall Sharma Auditorium. The Governor presented Dr. Harikrishna Dutt Shiksha Samman to Dr. Kripashankar Choubey and Mahesh Gupta Srijan Samman to Shri Gaurav Awasthi. The book Gyan Tirth Sapre Museum and pictures were presented to the Governor in the programme.

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that nature has given wonderful powers like speech and intellect to humans only for the sake of being of service to others. The need is to make the youth aware of their responsibility towards the nation and the society. He said that development with every-



one, faith and efforts is the basis for the development of the nation. Appreciating the activities of the Sapre Museum during the Amrit period, he described it as a service project to connect future generations with the pride of the nation. He said that Acharya Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, Karmayogi Madhav Rao Sapre gave intellectual leadership to the society in the first three decades of the 20th century. The initiative to acquaint the

youth with his great contribution is a worthwhile effort. The seminar will accelerate the ideological flow of the role of Hindi as the thread of national integration.

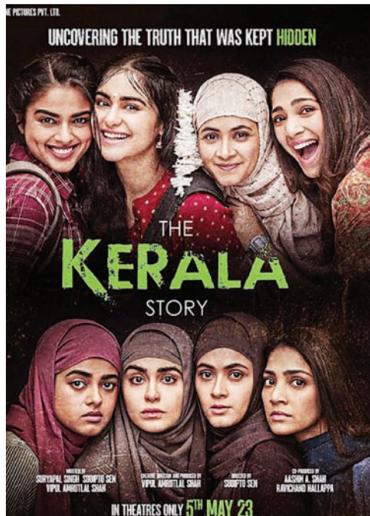
Professor K. G Suresh, Vice Chancellor of Makhlanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism and Communication, Bhopal said that Acharya Dwivedi and Madhav Rao Sapre were contemporaries and Versatile personalities. They have left

an indelible imprint on Indian culture. They have led the stream of contemporary literature. Their speciality was that they were the ideal of creativity of talents better than them in creative capacity. He said that such intellectual leadership is the need of the hour. He appreciated the efforts of Sapre Museum for connecting youth power with history and keeping alive the tradition of mutuality of literature and journalism.

'THE KERALA STORY' WILL REMAIN TAX-FREE IN MP: NAROTTAM MISHRA

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Amid a controversy over the Congress' claim that the Madhya Pradesh government has withdrawn the tax exemption to the movie 'The Kerala Story', state home minister and government spokesman Narottam Mishra on Thursday asserted that the film "was tax-free and will remain tax-free in the state".



"There is no confusion on the issue. I request all cinema hall owners not to remain in any confusion. 'The Kerala Story' film was made tax-free in the state and will remain tax-free in Madhya Pradesh. Therefore, they should not believe in any viral or fake order, as Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had announced it (making the film tax-free)," Mishra told reporters here. Amid a controversy over the Congress' claim that the Madhya Pradesh government has withdrawn the tax exemption to the movie 'The Kerala Story', state home minister and government spokesman Narottam Mishra on Thursday asserted that the film "was tax-free and will remain tax-free in the state".

"There is no confusion on the issue. I request all cinema hall owners not to remain in any confusion. 'The Kerala Story' film was made tax-free in the

state and will remain tax-free in Madhya Pradesh. Therefore, they should not believe in any viral or fake order, as Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had announced it (making the film tax-free)," Mishra told reporters here. State Congress media cell chairman KK Mishra said as per rules, films with an 'A' certificate from the Censor Board cannot be exempted from entertainment tax. This was the reason why the state government has withdrawn tax exemption to 'The Kerala Story', he claimed.

Meanwhile, a report from Indore said Congress Rajya Sabha MP Vivek Tankha has targeted the chief minister for exempting the film with an 'A' certificate from entertainment tax in Madhya Pradesh.

'The Kerala Story', directed by Sudipto Sen and produced by Vipul Amrutlal Shah, has received an 'A' certificate from the Central Board of Film Certification. This means the film can be watched by "Adults Only." The film has many violent and objectionable scenes, Tankha told reporters in Indore on Wednesday night. "How can you (the state government) give entertainment tax exemption to a film with 'A' certificate and you are inviting children to watch it (in theatres)," he asked. He said that Chouhan may not have seen the film and unknowingly made it tax-free.

CM Chouhan performs Bhoomi Poojan of pressurized mega irrigation project in Mandsaur district

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan unveiled the foundation stone plaque of the Kayampur-Sitamau Pressurized Major Irrigation Project to be constructed at a cost of Rs. 2374 crore at village Jawanpura in Mandsaur district. The Chief Minister also inaugurated the construction work of the irrigation project to be built on the Chambal River, Gandhi Sagar Reservoir by digging with a pickaxe. The Chief Minister performed rituals and worship to the Chambal River and also offered a chunni.



One lakh 12 thousand hectare land of 252 villages of the district will be irrigated with this irrigation project of Jawanpura village of Sitamau tehsil, 70 km away from

Mandsaur district headquarters. This will benefit 1 lakh 49 thousand 300 farmer beneficiaries of the area. Industrial Policy and Investment Promotion Minister and In-charge of Mandsaur district Rajvardhan Singh Dattigaon,

Renewable Energy Minister Hardeep Singh Dang, Water Resources Minister Tulsi Ram Silawat, MP Sudhir Gupta, former MLA Radheshyam Patidar along with public representatives, officials and the villagers were present.

Bus Carrying 'Ladli Behnas' Overturms in Mandsaur, Leaving Several Injured

Team Absolute | Indore

Bus carrying women beneficiaries of 'Ladli Behna Yojana' to the Chief Minister's programme overturned in Kuntalkhedhi village on Thursday morning. Several women have sustained injuries. Those who are injured include, Indermal Redas, 36, Karulal Patidar, 45, Bagdiram Patidar, 40, Satyanarayan Patidar, 55 and Govindram Patidar, 56, all residents of Chilodpipalya village.



They were travelling from Chilodpipalya to Sitamau when the bus overturned near Nahargarh Billod River.

Fortunately, the bus did not turtle and a major accident was averted. The women had skipped their work and wages to attend the CM's program

and now had to return home. Police rushed to the spot and further details are awaited. Notably, this is second bus

accident in Madhya Pradesh this week. On Tuesday, a bus fell off the bridge in Khargone, where 22 people died.

'CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE': KAMAL NATH

Mandsaur: Congress state president Kamal Nath hit out at BJP government after a bus carrying 'Ladli Behnas' overturned on way to CM's event in Mandsaur on Thursday. Nath alleged that women were forcibly being taken people to government programmes and even then, no arrangements were made. "This is government's sheer negligence."

"I wish a speedy recovery to all the injured. The sisters injured in the accident say that they were being taken to the Chief Minister's program. I humbly want to ask the Chief Minister that forcefully taking people to government programs and then not making any arrangements for their security is like criminal negligence." "This is not the first incident, earlier the bus returning from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's program and the bus returning from Home Minister Amit Shah's program has also met with an accident. Bringing the people to the program without any protection for political gains is not only a misuse of power but also an extremely inhuman act. This tradition of misuse of power should be stopped immediately," Nath said.

Efforts still on to trap tiger caught on camera on Army War College campus



Team Absolute | Mhow

A tiger that strayed into the Army War College (AWC) campus at Mhow in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district a few days back has again been caught on camera in the premises amid efforts to trap it, officials said on Thursday. A video clip of the tiger wandering on the AWC campus has gone viral on social

media platforms. The big cat was first captured in CCTV cameras while it was roaming near gate no. 3 of the campus on the intervening night of Sunday and Monday. It was also seen at the house of a retired senior Army officer on Mhow-Mandleshwar road on Monday, Deputy Forest Range Officer Pawan Joshi said. "The tiger was again

caught on camera on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday on the campus, two days after it was first sighted in the premises," he said. Forest rescue team is searching for the striped-animal in and outside the campus and two cages have been put up to trap it, officials said. "Our efforts have not been successful so far," Joshi said.

Lokayukta raids residence of contractual engineer earning Rs 30k a month, unearths Rs 7 crore

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Special police establishment (SPE) Lokayukta Bhopal raided house of a contractual engineer posted in MP police housing corporation, on Thursday morning. The sleuths have unveiled the property of more than Rs 7 crore-- highly disproportionate against the known income, said the officials. The engineer was getting the salary of Rs 30,000 per month and she had allegedly earned the money more than to 232 per cent to the known income through unfair means.



Bilkhriya. And on the land she was constructing the house worth more than Rs 1 crore.

She had purchased multiple properties in Bhopal, Raisen and in Vidisha. She had also purchased Rs 30 lakh TV, agriculture equipments like harvester, paddy sowing machine, tractor and other equipments worth in lakhs of rupees.

After the verification of the complaint, a search team was formed in the leadership of DSP Sanjay Shukla and conducted the raid on Thursday early morning at three places.

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia reaches Gwalior on 1-day-visit

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on a one-day-visit to Gwalior on Thursday, where he held a review meeting in the collectorate regarding development works.

Team Absolute | Gwalior

He said that the Bharatiya Janta Party government will be formed in Karnataka. He said that on the basis of public polls and not exit polls, entry polls and public polls, we have full faith that the Bharatiya Janata Party government will be formed on May 13, the day on which the results of Karnataka Assembly elections will be declared.

Scindia, angry over the officials, said that there is a disturbance in the 1000 beds hospital and reprimanded the officers themselves should go there and rectify the arrangements so that the patients do not face any problem. He talked to the officials regarding the deteriorating system in Gwalior district and during this time issued instructions to the officials to prepare a detailed plan to get relief from the traffic. Notably, after voting in Karnataka, exit polls have started coming, in which the



Congress is in majority. Therefore, many exit polls are talking about giving edge to BJP. Regarding this, BJP is claiming that they will form their government in Karnataka, on the other hand, Congress is claiming that their government is being formed.

Constable posts 'abusive' comments for senior on social media, booked

Team Absolute | Guna

In a bizarre incident, one sub-inspector posted at City Kotwali police station in Guna filed a complaint against a constable after he posted "abusive and derogatory" remarks against the former on social media. According to information, constable Saurabh Rajput who was dismissed from duty wrote that sub-inspector will be made to sit at home. Apart from this, he wrote many other abusive words on social media. On the complaint of SI, FIR was registered in City Kotwali.

The complainant sub-inspector in his complaint claimed that he came to know about what was going on the social media only through one of the officers posted at the SP Office. The officer informed that constable Saurabh Singh Rajput, who was dismissed from duty posted a post on his

Facebook ID in the morning, in which he deliberately wrote objectionable comments. The officer also showed the screenshot of the post, which read, "... (SI's name) Baniya ghar par bita denge jab jaye isko haath utha diya kaun hai yeh.... Apart from this, Saurabh Rajput posted many more posts on social. In another post he wrote, "... (SI's name) posted at City Kotwali Guna who takes part in every type of theft in Guna district having friendly relations with the parties gonna." Following the complaint of SI, a case was being registered against Rajput. Complainant SI also claimed that when he saw the social media profile of Rajput, he saw that he has written indecent language and objectionable comments against many other cops as well. Even after the FIR, he is continuously posting like this. At present, the police have started their investigation.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Congress, Left Front to join hands for Bengal panchayat polls

Barring extraordinary circumstances that might emerge later, it seems clear that the CPI-M-led Left Front and Congress will be having an understanding in the forthcoming West Bengal three-tier panchayat system polls this year, as top leaders of both parties have given clear indications on this count. The foundation of this understanding will be laid at a joint rally organised by Congress and Left Front at Suri in Birbhum district on Thursday, which is supposed to be addressed the CPI-M politburo member and state Secretary Mohammad Salim and the Congress' state chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury. The venue of the meeting will be the same ground at Suri, where Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressed a rally last month and said that if BJP wins 35 out of 32 Lok Sabha seats from West Bengal in 2024, then the Trinamool Congress state government might collapse even before 2025. According to Salim, if the people of all levels get united against the misrule of Trinamool Congress and the communal politics of BJP, then the leadership of neither Left Front nor Congress will stand as hurdles for that unity. According to Chowdhury, in the last panchayat polls in 2018, there was no situation for opposition parties to even field candidates in all the seats. As regards to the seat sharing formula, the state leadership of both the Left Front and CPI-M do not want to enforce any direction from the top and instead want the district leaderships of respective forces to discuss and finalise it.

Women switch back to cloth use as Project Uditā fades out

Pooja Yadav

Chanda (name changed) of Chimka Tola in Mandla skips school for four days in a month citing one reason or the other. A student of class 11, she is restless when she menstruates. The cloth piece that she uses these days adds to the irritability. When the state governments Project Uditā was up and running, things were much easier for adolescents like her.

"Walking to school is a problem. The constant rubbing of the cloth piece with the skin can cause rashes, followed by itching and burning sensation. It should be changed frequently, but is also difficult to wash and dry. I do not feel like studying. In fact, the first two days are mostly spent sleeping," said Chanda.

Launched by the Women and Child Development Department in 2016, Project Uditā offered a pack of six sanitary pads through anganwadi centres. It also sensitised women on the need to maintain menstrual hygiene, which made Chanda and others switch to sanitary pads.

Some centres sold the pack for Rs 12, while others priced it at Rs 15. As there was no government-fixed price, the vendors took the liberty to tweak prices after considering the cost of travel to a given village from the district headquarters.

Yet, the low rates of sanitary pads were helpful for village women and adolescents who mostly depend on the nominal income of their husbands or fathers. Sanitary pads are priced upward from Rs 35 per pack in shops, whereas good quality products cost anywhere between Rs 60 and 100.

Initially, the department helped coordinate the supply from pad-making agencies to anganwadi centres at the lowest possible price. Later, the agencies and anganwadis started dealing directly with each other. Vendors sell pads to distribu-

tors, who then get it to the centres through a commission-based channel. Anganwadi workers made the payments before or after the sales, as per the agreement they made with the vendor. However, this system did not work well in all centres.

In a tweet in April 2016, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had claimed that special corners were set up in 22,000 anganwadis under Project Uditā. In reality, only banners and posters provided by the government for the scheme's publicity adorn such corners. Forget villages, even anganwadis in cities do not have fully functional corners.

There was no government allocation to buy pads or install pad vending machines. The scheme envisaged installation of vending machines by the Women and Child Development Department, after taking help from private companies, NGOs and donors. But that too did not take off. Only very few centres got the machines under Corporate Social Responsibility activities of some companies.

As a result, Project Uditā came to an abrupt end in the early days of the COVID-19 spread, thereby forcing women and girls to return to cloth use. "There is no risk of leakage or no issue in moving around when using sanitary pads. Moreover, it lasts for more time than the cloth piece, which has to be changed twice or thrice a day. We are not allowed to wash the cloth in the area where men take baths. Washing in the open is another problem. Sun drying of the cloth is also difficult as male members of the family should not see it," said Chanda.

Poor record

According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015-16, rural Madhya Pradesh ranks worst in the country in menstrual health management, with only 26.4% women between the ages of 15 and

24 adopting hygienic practices.

A survey conducted in 2018 by Bhagidari Foundation on the menstrual behaviour of adolescent girls and women found that 88% women use cloth pieces during menstruation, while the rest use sanitary pads. As much as 42% of the surveyed women use the same cloth many times, while 29% use dirty cloth.

According to Bhopal-based Dr RK Badve, women who do not use sanitary napkins during menstruation are at 70% higher risk of contracting reproductive tract infection. White discharge, itching, burning sensation, swelling in the uterus and frequent urge to urinate can be other fallouts. If not taken care of, the infection can reach vagina and enter the umbilical cord. The possibility of bacteria reaching the vagina or urinary tract increases through defecation.

Rachna Dhingra, women's rights activist and member of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action, said there was a need to create awareness in rural areas about menstrual hygiene. "Village women and girls use the same cloth for a long time and do not wash and dry it properly, which can lead to many diseases."

Nobody has an answer

If handling sanitary pads were much easier, why was its supply stopped? Ask anyone, and the standard reply is "they stopped coming". An Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) supervisor from Betul district told 101Reporters that sometimes the demand was so high that they had to make calls for distribution of more pads. "Even in rural areas, most adolescent girls and women started using pads after Project Uditā was launched. Now, it is back to square one."

An anganwadi worker from



Narmadapuram district confirmed that the pads costing Rs 12 were much sought-after. Another from Narayananj in Mandla said she used to order as many pads as she thought would be necessary after gauging the demand. "We were told to buy for Rs 60 the sanitary pads that were earlier available at Rs 12. As women cannot afford it, we stopped giving orders," said another worker.

Along with lack of demand for sanitary pads, an anganwadi worker in Kilon Park area of Bhopal had to deal with the problem of rats. "The special corner has proved to be very popular here. In January last year, we had to close it down for two months as rats gnawed the pads stored there. As there was no scope of government help, I had to bear the cost of these unsold pads and pay the price to the vendor," she told 101Reporters on condition of anonymity.

She usually bought sanitary pads by keeping aside a part of her honorarium of Rs 10,000 and adjusted the amount later when buyers gave money. That had to be stopped as her honorarium was not paid for a few months. She has again started receiving the monthly pay on time now, but has no plans to buy pads as keeping them safe from rats is a big task. The pad-making units do not manufacture dispensing units.

Sukarma Foundation chairperson Maya Vishwakarma, better known as 'Padwoman of India', told 101Reporters that Project Uditā has remained only on paper. "In anganwadi centres, women did not get pads free of cost. Only a few centres, that too mostly in cities, had special corners. The pads can be cheaper, but 18% Goods and Services Tax (GST) is charged on the raw material. In

such a situation, how can anyone supply pads at low rates? If anyone still manages to sell cheap, its quality may not be good," she said.

Emphasising the need to provide concession, she added, "No government can distribute sanitary pads free of cost, it should not either. Rather, it should reduce the production cost by giving a GST exemption."

Despite repeated attempts, officials in the Women and Child Development Department were not ready to divulge any information regarding Project Uditā. On condition of anonymity, one of them told 101Reporters that not a single rupee was allocated for the scheme.

"The government says sanitary pads should be made available to women. From where and how will anganwadis get it done? We do not have an answer when anganwadi workers put forth these questions. Earlier, it could be made available at low rates. Now, the cost of raw materials and production charges have increased. How can any vendor make it available for Rs 12 or 15?"

Meanwhile, Shashi Shyam Uike, Joint Director, Women and Child Development Department, Jabalpur Division, told 101Reporters that pads were being made available in the anganwadi centres in his division. "We will take necessary steps if they are not available in any anganwadi." Irony is that Mandla falls under Jabalpur division and girls like Chanda are yet to see a renewed supply of sanitary pads.

(Pooja Yadav is a Bhopal-based freelance journalist and a member of 101Reporters, a pan-India network of grassroots reporters)

international

PTI WORKERS FRENZY CREATES HAVOC IN PAKISTAN

Islamabad | New York

Following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan, the party's supporters took to the streets across the country, engaging in violent protests and riots that have caused significant destruction of property and loss of life, the media reported.

During the unrest since Khan's arrest on Tuesday, demonstrators hurled stones, and set vehicles ablaze, resulting in suspended traffic and causing shopkeepers to shutter their stores, Samaa TV reported.

More than 150 officers and workers were injured during the violent incidents that took place throughout Punjab province.

At least 63 police officers and personnel were injured in Lahore, 29 in Rawalpindi, 25 in Faisalabad and 13 in Gujranwala.

Currently, the authorities are working to locate and arrest all of the individuals involved in the incidents, Samaa TV reported.

Peshawar experienced a particularly dire situation as the "city of flowers" transformed into a battlefield.

During an incident near Firdous Chowk, angry party workers looted a store that sold



weapons, and footage of the event quickly spread across various social media platforms.

In the video, the activists can be seen carrying firearms, including pistols and guns, Samaa TV reported.

The unrest in various regions has led to four fatalities and 41 injuries. Demonstrators also forcibly entered the

premises of Radio Pakistan, where they proceeded to ignite flames in both the newsroom and other sections of the building, as well as vehicles parked nearby.

The protesters even breached the Red Zone in Islamabad, prompting the police to respond with gunfire.

In the resulting chaos, multiple vehicles, including ambulances, were set ablaze.



Van parked in Italy's Milan explodes, fire engulfs several vehicles

Rome: Several vehicles were engulfed in fire after a van exploded in the Porta Romana area in Milan on Thursday morning, local media reported.

In the incident, five cars and four mopeds were reduced to ashes, Italian media reported.

The van was carrying gas cylinders when it exploded, leading to "domino explosions", it said. The affected area has been cordoned off.

After the incident, a nearby school and nursing home were evacuated.

FAMILY OF SLAIN INDIAN-AMERICAN WOMAN RAISE MONEY TO FIGHT GUN VIOLENCE

New York | Agencies

The family members of a 33-year-old Indian-American woman, who was allegedly shot at and killed by her husband last month, are raising money to help prevent gun violence.

Nabaruna Karmakar, an engineer by profession, was found with two gunshot wounds after officers arrived at her home in Morrisville, North Carolina, responding to a 911 call, police said.

Karmakar's husband Michael Aaron Matthews, who placed the 911 call to report a purported double suicide, was arrested and charged for shooting and killing his wife at their home on April 14.

Despite the report of a double suicide, Karmakar was the only person hit by gunfire at the scene, and police believe she was murdered, the People reported.

The fundraiser set up by the victim's family has so far raised close to \$10,882.

"We are all deeply saddened by the death of Nabaruna Karmakar, a beautiful girl with a smart mind whose life was claimed by gun violence. Hoping there will be no more victims, Naba's family is raising money to benefit Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund," the GoFundMe page read.



Formed in 2013, the non-profit organization advocates for gun violence prevention, according to its website.

Indians working and living in the US have not been spared from the scourge of gun violence, with Aishwarya Thatikonda from Telangana being the latest victim.

The first four months of gun violence in 2023 as of May 1, saw 5,971 deaths, 11,035 injuries, 184 mass shootings and 290 children shot, according to the non-profit Gun Violence Archive.

Prior to her death, Karmakar worked in research at the SAS Institute and earned master's and doctorate degrees in industrial engineering from North Carolina State University, the People reported.

Israeli airstrikes on Gaza kill 21 Palestinians: Health Ministry

Gaza | Agencies

At least 21 Palestinians were killed and 64 were injured in the continuing Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip, said the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza.

Ashraf Al-Qedra, the ministry's spokesman in Gaza, said in a press statement sent to reporters on Wednesday that 21 Palestinians were killed, including 12 civilians, and 64 others were injured by the shrapnel of the Israeli missiles, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Gaza-based joint chamber of military operations of Palestinian factions claimed firing a barrage of rockets to southern and cen-



tral Israel on Wednesday, in response to the surprising Israeli airstrikes on Tuesday predawn, which killed three senior members of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) movement's armed wing in the Gaza Strip and their wives and children.

"The chamber claims responsibility for launching hundreds of missiles on the enemy's sites, settlements, and targets, and even Tel Aviv, in response to the assassination of the PIJ leaders," the statement said.

The group comprises several armed wings of Palestinian factions, including the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), the PIJ movement, and other minor military factions and groups.

An Israeli army spokesman said in separate press statements on the same day that the Israeli army targeted dozens of military posts, sites, and operatives belonging to the PIJ military infrastructure by missiles.

Israeli Radio reported that more than 300 rockets and projectiles were fired from the Gaza Strip at southern and central Israel, adding that the Israeli army's Iron Dome intercepted most of the rockets and other rockets landed at empty areas.

Violent clashes renew in Sudan's capital after relative calm

Khartoum | Agencies

After days of relative calm, violent clashes have again erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in the capital Khartoum.

According to witnesses, fierce clashes took place on Wednesday in Khartoum and around the Al-Halfaya bridge, which links Bahri and Omdurman, the adjacent cities of the capital.

Video footage obtained by Xinhua news agency showed the army conducting intensive air bombardment against RSF military posts in the north of Bahri and deploying army convoys on the main streets.

The SAF confirmed in a statement that it "carried out a wide combing operation in Bahri", adding the operation resulted in "hundreds of deaths of rebel militia, destruction of dozens of armed vehicles and removal of



many enemy checkpoints in the area". According to the statement, the armed forces "also successfully ambushed a group of the rebel militia

in the south of Bahri, destroyed seven armed vehicles, and seized six others".

The army called on the citizens to

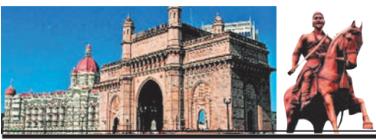
avoid areas of clashes, stay indoors, and take necessary precautions for their safety.

In response, the RSF published video clips showing their response to an army attack on their positions in Bahri.

It claimed shooting down two army planes in Bahri and the seizure of military vehicles which the RSF said belonged to the army.

"The support forces are advancing in their battles against the coup forces in all axes in Khartoum, inflicting heavy losses on them in lives and equipment," the RSF said in a statement late Wednesday.

The Khartoum State Security Committee has decided to submit urgent recommendations to SAF chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, which includes declaring a state of emergency, a curfew, and a general mobilisation, in addition to taking urgent measures to tackle shortages of food materials and services.



SHINDE-FADNAVIS HAIL SC VERDICT AS 'TRIUMPH OF TRUTH', SAY THEY ARE VINDICATED

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Soon after the Supreme Court verdict, the ruling Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party alliance on Thursday hailed the verdict as "a triumph of truth" which has "vindicated" their stance as the state government now has got a stamp of approval.

Speaking to the media, a visibly relieved Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and a beaming Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis said that all the doomsayers who predicted the downfall of the state government have been silenced by the SC judgement.

"We fully support the SC ruling... It was on expected lines. We are happy, our stand has been upheld by the highest court of the land," the duo said, 11 months after they toppled the Maha Vikas Aghadi government headed by former CM Uddhav Thackeray in June 2022.

Shinde added that for all these



months, the Opposition had been spreading canards that the government was illegal and unconstitutional and "would collapse anytime, but all their predictions were proved false".

"The majority is important in a

democracy and we enjoy the majority... There is a Constitution in this country and nobody can go beyond it, this is clear from the SC judgement. It is evident that the government we have established was within the

laws," Shinde pointed out.

On the resignation of former CM Uddhav Thackeray, Shinde took a potshot saying he (Thackeray) knew that he had lost the majority and had no options but to quit his office.

After resigning he attempted to prove it as a principled stand, "but we have preserved morality", and saved the Shiv Sena formed by Balasaheb Thackeray's ideals which he (Uddhav Thackeray) had mortgaged with the Congress and Nationalist Congress Party, Shinde averred.

Referring to the point of disqualification of the 16 MLAs, including himself, Shinde said that now the final decision on this would be taken by the Speaker (Rahul Narwekar) following the rule of law. "Today, our government has got the approval of the SC as a full majority government... We welcome the judgement," declared Shinde. Fadnavis termed it as a victory of the people and democracy, and the SC has "completely turned the tide against the MVA".

SC verdict has 'exposed' Governor, ECI role, govt; Shinde must quit: Thackeray

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) President and former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said that the Supreme Court verdict has exposed the role of the Governor, the Election Commission of India and the current regime, here on Thursday.

"In view of the judgement, if the present government has any morality left, then it should forthwith resign, just as I had tendered my resignation (in June 2022)," said Thackeray, in his first reaction to the much-awaited verdict.

He said that the apex court judgement has also laid bare the role of the (then) Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and how his office was misused, "which is what we have been saying all along".

On the ECI, he said that its not a 'divine body' and it cannot just "take away the name-symbol" of the (Shiv Sena) party founded by the late Balasaheb Thackeray.

He said that even the Shiv Sena decision on its Whip (Sunil Prabhu) was upheld and the Shinde faction's Whip (Bharat Gogawale) was upheld by the SC.

"We shall now request the Speaker (Rahul Narwekar) to take the decision on the dis-



qualification of the 16 MLAs as soon as possible," said Thackeray.

Senior leader Anil Parab said that as per the SC verdict, the Speaker must convene a session of the legislature and pronounce his decision on the disqualification of 16 MLAs, including Shinde, and said the government will collapse soon.

Earlier, the Sena (UBT) Chief Spokesperson Sanjay Raut, MP, said that this means that considering all aspects of the verdict, the present "illegal" Shinde government of Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party should immediately resign on moral grounds.

'Dangerous BJP' will stoop to any level for power: Maha Cong

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a strong reaction, the Maharashtra Congress on Thursday said that the Supreme Court verdict has proved that "the BJP is dangerous for democracy and can stoop to any levels to grab power".

"The Supreme Court has taken serious note of various things including how every action of the (then) Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari in bringing down the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was blatantly wrong. We have been saying this consistently that the BJP misused the Raj Bhavan to topple our government," Maharashtra unit Congress President Nana Patole said.

Termining the Supreme Court's verdict that the (cur-



rent) government is illegal and unconstitutional as a 'tight slap' on the ruling dispensation, Patole said that Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis and Speaker Rahul Narwekar should resign on moral grounds.

The state Congress chief said that not only did the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

abuse Raj Bhavan, but also other agencies to bring down the MVA government, and now all those decisions are proved wrong.

"The observations of the Supreme Court while delivering the verdict makes it obvious that the BJP has discarded democracy. It is dangerous and they will stoop down to any level to grab power," Patole said.

WHIP OF CM EKNATH SHINDE FACTION DECLINES COMMENT ON SC VERDICT

Mumbai: Soon after the Supreme Court's verdict with its tough observations, the ruling Shiv Sena on Thursday was at a loss for words.

Bharat Gogawale, the Whip of Shiv Sena headed by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said that he would first read the entire SC judgement before commenting.

On a specific query to his status, Gogawale said that the SC has only made an observation of his appointment as Whip, it's not the judgement. Earlier, the Opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) hailed the SC verdict and its stamp of approval on Sunil Prabhu as the party Whip.

Sena (UBT) Chief Spokesperson Sanjay Raut said that this means that the Whip of the Shinde faction (Bharat Gogawale) is also illegal.

Raut demanded that considering all aspects, the present 'illegal' Shinde government of Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party should immediately resign on moral grounds.

Governor Koshyari had waited for right time to help topple MVA govt, says NCP

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Nationalist Congress Party on Thursday said that though the government of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde "survives" after the Supreme Court verdict, it has lost all credibility and the moral right to continue in power.

The SC has shown clearly how all the decisions taken by the then Governor (Bhagat Singh Koshyari) turned out to be wrong, said state NCP President Jayant Patil.

He said though it is not proper to comment on the Governor's actions, previous Governor Koshyari was doing this round-the-clock from the day one after the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) of Congress-NCP-Shiv Sena came to power in November 2019.

"Since the Governor's decisions are wrong, the Shinde Shiv Sena's Whip Bharat Gogawale has also been invalidated, then all the deci-



sions taken by them in the Legislature shall also be nullified," said Patil.

Under these circumstances, the Speaker (Rahul Narwekar) will need to work without delays and within the Constitutional framework on various points while tak-

ing the decision on the disqualification of the 16 MLAs including CM Shinde, the NCP leader said.

"The Shinde government's survival can only be a brief joy for those who gathered around him for power. But it is illegal and unconstitutional, and the BJP's actions in Maharashtra have misfired. The SC has told the people of the state how that whole episode (toppling the MVA) went awry," he said.

Referring to the point that if former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had not resigned, the MVA could have got a chance to be reinstated by the court, Patil said that "this proves what is in the minds of the SC", and the Governor played a major role in destroying the MVA government.

Patil said that after the SC verdict, the BJP has been completely discredited and the people of the state "are firmly with the MVA".

'Taarak Mehta ...' actress Jennifer Mistry accuses Asit Modi of sexual harassment

Actress Jennifer Mistry, who is popularly known as Roshan Sodhi in the show 'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah', has accused its producer of sexual harassment.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The actress has been a part of the show for 15 years and has now taken a decision to quit, according to media reports.

According to a media report, Jennifer has filed a complaint against Modi, Project Head Sohail Ramani, and executive producer Jatin Bajaj of sexual misconduct at the workplace.

This is not the first time a complaint has been filed against Modi. Earlier, actor Shailesh Lodha, who essayed Mehta ji in the show, had filed a case against him for non-payment of dues.

According to the new report, it claims Jennifer stopped shooting for the show two months ago and had



her last shoot on March 7.

Mistry had said to a media outlet that she left the sets as she was "subjected to humiliation and insult at the hands of Mr Sohail Ramani and the other executive producer Jatin Bajaj."

She also shared that the producers did not make arrangement for her but they do for all the male actors. She said that the place is 'male chauvanistic'.

Jennifer also said that every person working on 'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah' is "bonded labour", according to a media report.

Apart from Jennifer and Shailesh, actors who have left the show include names such as Disha Vakani and Gurucharan.

NIA searches 6 places in 2021 Naupada fake currency case, suspects D-Company link

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has recovered incriminating material during searches at half-a-dozen locations in Mumbai in the 2021 Naupada case relating to seizure of high quality fake Indian currency notes (FICN), that points out the role of the D-Company.

The recovery included sharp-edged weapons, digital devices and documents, which is a strong corroboration of NIA's earlier probe findings that established a direct connection with the D-Company in the fake currency racket. Thus the role of the D-Company has been prima facie established in the circulation of FICN in India during the NIA investigation into the case.

The case related to the seizure of counterfeit Indian currency notes of Rs 2000/-



denomination.

Two persons were arrested in the case, originally registered at the Naupada police station, Thane City in Maharashtra on November 18, 2021, under relevant sections of IPC and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. The accused, identified as Riyaz and Nasir, both residents of Mumbai, are currently in

judicial custody. The Thane Police had carried out searches and also chargesheeted the accused in the high-profile case, which was taken over by the NIA on February 7, 2023.

On Wednesday, the NIA raided several properties of the accused and suspects, mostly houses and offices, as part of its continuing investigations in the case.

"Put morality in box for Chief Minister's cost": BJP counters Uddhav Thackeray

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray left his ideology for power while his successor Eknath Shinde chose ideology over power, said Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis today, welcoming the Supreme Court order on last year's Shiv Sena mutiny.

Eknath Shinde will not resign, he asserted after the Supreme Court refused to restore the Uddhav Thackeray government and said Shinde was rightfully invited to form government after Thackeray resigned.

His remarks came at a press conference after Thackeray called for Shinde's resignation like he did during the rebellion.

"Today Uddhav Thackeray said that he resigned on moral grounds. You got elected in an alliance with BJP and then formed government with NCP and Congress. In which box did you put your morality that time? You left ideology for power, Shinde left power and joined us in the opposition for ideology," he said.

"Thackeray didn't resign on moral grounds but due to fear over people deserting him," he said with Shinde by his side.

Citing the court order, he said the Speaker will decide on the disqualification of MLAs. "For the purpose of the 10th schedule (of Constitution), the Speaker will decide who the



political party is," he added.

The Supreme Court also said the Speaker's decision to recognise a Shinde camp member as the party whip was illegal, handing what Thackeray's faction has described as a "moral victory" for them. "We formed our government in a legal and constitutional manner and today the Supreme Court order proves it. Many people have been calling our government unconstitutional but today the Supreme Court gave them a lesson," he added.

He also responded to Thackeray's call for him to resign on "moral grounds", saying his predecessor resigned as he did not have the numbers to prove majority.

"Important To Work Together": Sharad Pawar after meeting Nitish Kumar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) national president Sharad Pawar on Thursday met with Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar in Mumbai and the two leaders stressed on the need for opposition parties to work together in the interest of the nation.

Addressing a joint press conference with Kumar the veteran NCP leader said, "In the wake of the situation in the country, to save democracy, it is important to work together. After looking at the condition of the country, it seems that if we work together, there will be support for the alternative that the country needs."

"Yesterday, there were polls in Karnataka. As per my information, people there will oust BJP and elect a secular government", Pawar said.

Addressing the joint press conference, the Bihar chief minister lashed out at the BJP.

"What the BJP is doing, is not in the country's interest. So, the more the



number of Opposition parties comes together, the better it is in the interest of the nation. We have spoken with several political parties. We will sit together and take further decisions," Kumar said.

Asked if Sharad Pawar will be the main face of an Opposition alliance, the Bihar CM said, "There will be nothing more delightful than that...I

have told him that he has to work strongly not only for his party but the entire country."

Nitish Kumar who is also the JD(U) leader accompanied by Bihar deputy chief minister and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav also met with Uddhav Thackeray at 'Matoshree' in Mumbai.

The JD(U) leader has been meeting Opposition leaders to strengthen the

bloc against the BJP ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Kumar had caught the national imagination with his pitch for a "united opposition" which, he believes, can take on and defeat the BJP in next year's Lok Sabha polls. The JD(U) supreme leader, who stunned the BJP last year when he snapped ties will visit Nationalist Congress Party Chief Sharad Pawar later in the day.

In his joint presser with Uddhav Thackeray today the Bihar chief minister speaking on a United Opposition candidate said, "This exercise is not done to advance their personal advance but for the good of the country and to give the people of India a good alternative to the present government." Kumar said that a decision on the candidate will be decided after the formation of the United Front and not before that.

"Those who are at the Centre are not working for the country...All political parties in the country need to unite to work together," the Bihar chief minister said.



'STUNNED'

JENNIFER GARNER STUNNED BY MEDIC'S WARNING THAT SHE MAY HAVE A 'VAGINAL COLLAPSE'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Jennifer Garner said she was left stunned when she "just learned" vagina "may collapse" after a meeting with her obstetrician. The actress, who was earlier married to Ben Affleck, said she "just learned" the shocking fact and thinks it means it leaves sufferers unable to have sex, reports femalefirst.co.uk. In an apparent reference to vaginal prolapsed, she told the new issue of Allure magazine: "I just learned that our vaginas may collapse. I saw my OB this week and she gave me a pamphlet about vaginal collapse. I'm like: 'When? Is it imminent? Do I need to put it in my calendar? What is happening? It's a thing.' When her female interviewer asked: 'Is it a thing that's going to happen to all of us?' Jennifer replied: 'No, it's just a possibility.'"

And when she was asked: "Is this the same thing that happens when you pee if you sneeze?" the actress responded: "No, that's not collapse. Collapse is like you can't have sex because you can't get in there because it's collapsed on itself." Jennifer, who was married to Ben between 2005 and 2018, also told the magazine she loves the challenge of motherhood. She added: "Being a mother was one thing I knew I was going to be. I really could have been a mother in any way. I could have adopted, I could have fostered, but there was no doubt I was going to be a mom. I mean, I was the kid with the doll everywhere I went. And I had a babysitting company with my friend Carrie - 'C and J's Babysitting' - from, like, seventh or eighth grade." And I had a babysitting company with my friend Carrie - 'C and J's Babysitting' - from, like, seventh or eighth grade."

Dolph Lundgren was told he had two years to live during battle with cancer

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Rocky IV' actor Dolph Lundgren has been secretly battling cancer for eight years. The actor has spoken up about his major health issue for the first time in a video interview on 'In Depth With Graham Bensinger', reports aceshowbiz.com. In the interview, the Swedish actor revealed that a tumour was found in his kidney and removed in 2015. "But then they did a biopsy - and it was cancerous," he said.

But in 2020, the 'Aquaman' star began suffering what he thought was acid reflux. After getting an MRI, it was revealed that there were more tumours in his kidney area and a tumour was also found in his liver.

"At that point, it started to hit me that this is kind of something serious," he said.

Dolph was preparing to have the tumour removed, but "the surgeon called me and said, 'No, it's grown now. It's too big. We can't take it out,'" he recounted. "It's like the size of like a small lemon."

He then underwent systemic therapy, which caused him to suffer awful side effects including diarrhoea and severe weight loss. "His mouth got really sore. His hands got sore, (his) feet, and he couldn't eat anything warm, anything cold or anything spicy," his fiancée Emma Krokdal said.

"So that was a struggle to get food down, so he kept losing weight."

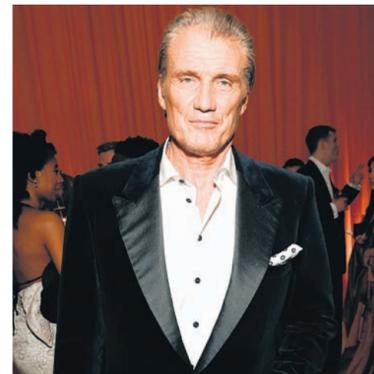
Dolph also complained of the lack of information he received from his medical team.

"The doctor over there wasn't really sharing information with us, so we didn't really know, didn't know what was going on," slammed the actor.

He added, "I think now, thinking back, they probably thought, 'Oh, I'm a lost case.'"

At the time, the doctor told him he only had two or three years to live and he was advised to "take a break and spend more time with your family."

But Dolph wasn't ready to give up, so he sought a second opinion. He then met Dr. Alexandra Drakaki,



who offered to do a second biopsy, uncovering a mutation that would allow the actor to heal through medication.

"She was like, 'this is really good news,' his fiancée recalled.

"There are so many medications that target this mutation. We're going to start with this one that seems to be the most effective."

Dolph's cancer has shrunk 90 per cent since he started taking the medicine and he is in the process of getting the scar tissue from the tumours removed.

"The prognosis is that, hopefully, when they take these out, there's no cancer activity and the medication that I'm taking is going to suppress everything else," he said.

The 'Creed II' star said his health journey has made him "appreciate life a lot more." He shared, "Somehow as an actor, you know, you try to put positive emotion and positive energy into the world. I've always tried to be nice to everybody I meet ... and maybe it came back to me somehow when I needed it the most."

LINDSAY LOHAN, JAMIE LEE CURTIS EXPECTED TO RETURN IN 'FREAKY FRIDAY' SEQUEL

Los Angeles | Agencies

After two decades, actresses Lindsay Lohan and Jamie Lee Curtis are in talks to reunite for a sequel to the hit body-swap comedy 'Freaky Friday'. The sequel is in the works at Disney, with Lohan and Curtis expected to reprise their roles as mother-daughter duo Anna and Tess Coleman. Elyse Hollander, whose work has been featured on the Black List, is penning the script, reports 'Variety'. Based on Mary Rodgers' 1972 novel of the same name, the story was adapted for the screen twice before the 2003 film - in 1976 starring Barbara Harris and Jodie Foster, and in 1995 with Shelley Long and Gaby Hoffman. But the Lohan-Curtis version found the most success, scoring over \$160 million at the box office.

Rumours started circulating about a potential sequel in February, when Curtis posted a photo of her and Lohan on Instagram with the caption, "It's Friday. I'm just sayin! Freaky fingers crossed!"

"It's going to happen," Curtis elaborated in an interview with Variety at the Producers Guild Awards on February 26. "Without saying there's anything officially happening, I'm looking at you in this moment and saying, 'Of course it's going to happen.' It's going to happen."

The news was revealed in a New York Times interview with Lohan and Curtis celebrating the 20th anniversary of the 2003 film, directed by Mark Waters, which follows a mom and daughter who wake up one Friday morning to find they've swapped bodies.

"As I went around the world with 'Halloween Ends', people wanted to know if there was going to be another 'Freaky Friday'," Curtis told the New York Times. "Something really touched a chord. When I came back, I called my friends at Disney and said, 'It feels like there's a movie to be made.'"

Lohan added, "Jamie and I are both open to that, so we're leaving it in the hands that be. We would only make something that people would absolutely adore."



Sia secretly gets married to boyfriend at luxury villa in Italy



Rome | Agencies

Singer Sia got married in a hush-hush ceremony to boyfriend Dan Bernard by candle-light in Portofino, Italy.

Only four guests were there to watch as the couple said their vows under a gazebo decorated with flowers, reports sun.com.

Sia had kept their romance under wraps, apart from sharing one picture of him on Instagram last October.

Photos show her saying "I do" after walking down the aisle at Villa Olivetta, a luxury residence owned by designers Dolce and Gabbana. It was the same house where Kourtney Kardashian and rocker Travis Barker exchanged their vows last May.

Sia has had a rollercoaster love life and was previously married to filmmaker Erik Anders Lang for two years, from 2014 to 2016. She was left devastated in 1997 when her boyfriend Dan Pontifex was killed in a car crash weeks after she moved to London to be with him.

Sia dated female singer Jd Samson from 2008 to 2011.

Talking about her sexuality, she said: "I've always dated boys and girls and anything in between. I don't care what gender you are, it's about people. I have always been, well, flexible is the word I would use."

She is also now a grandmother, after adopting two teenagers in 2019, one of whom welcomed twins the following year.



Seoul | Agencies

K-pop sensation Seventeen has claimed the second position on Billboard 200 with their 10th Mini Album 'FML'.

The entry marks Billboard's top-selling album of the week and fourth largest sales week of 2023. The act also set new records with 'FML' for the highest-selling K-pop album in its first day and week worldwide, with 3.99M+ copies and 4.55M+ copies sold respectively.

'FML' is Seventeen's fifth consecutive album to chart within the Billboard 200.

'FML' hit No.1 on 3 of Oricon's weekly charts including album rankings, digital

K-pop band Seventeen claims No. 2 spot on Billboard

album rankings, and total album rankings. The 13-piece act also charted No.1 on Billboard Japan's Artist 100, Hot Albums, Download Albums and Top Album Sales, while sweeping No.1 across real-time charts on streaming platforms in Korea, as well as on iTunes charts in 36 countries/regions including Brazil, the Philippines, India and Singapore.

The single captures a state of mind engulfed with negative thoughts, speaking to the everyday stories of everyone just making it through life. Instead of trying to comfort those in distress with words in vain.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Rita Ora



IPL 2023

YASHASVI POWERS RR TO 9 WICKET VICTORY OVER KKR

Kolkata | Agencies

Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal continued his red-hot form in IPL 2023 with an unbeaten 47-ball 98, including slamming the quickest fifty of the tournament's history in 13 balls, in powering Rajasthan Royals to an emphatic nine-wicket victory over Kolkata Knight Riders in an season 2023 match at the Eden Gardens, here on Thursday.

Jaiswal was sparkling in his stroke-play, combining bravado and fearless approach to hit 13 fours and five sixes at a strike-rate of 208.51. The left-handed opener reaching fifty in 13 balls was like a video game in fast-forward mode, leaving the fans in awe of the ability to clear the infield and pick gaps with immaculate ease and precise footwork.

Jaiswal also shared an unbroken 121-run stand off 69 balls for the second wicket with Sanju Samson, who finished at 48 not out off 29 balls, as Rajasthan got over the line with 41 balls to spare. The result also means



Rajasthan jumped to third place on the points table with 12 points from as many games. The 21-year old Jaiswal kick-start-

ed the chase of 150 in spectacular fashion, dancing down the pitch to loft Nitish Rana over long-on for six, followed by slog-sweeping for another maximum. His opening over onslaught continued when he danced down the pitch to drive past mid-off and cut fiercely twice to hit three fours, picking 26 runs off the over.

Though Jos Buttler was run-out for a duck, Jaiswal got a four thanks to an overthrow, and then hooked Harshit Rana for six. He went on to smash Shardul Thakur for three consecutive fours through mid-off, deep mid-wicket and cover, before taking a single to reach his fifty in 13 balls.

Post that, there was no stopping Jaiswal as he hammered a drive off Varun Chakaravathy for four, followed by cutting and heaving off Harshit for a brace of boundaries. There was no respite in store for Kolkata as Samson pulled and whipped off Chakaravathy for six and four respectively. Jaiswal brought out the shot of the

innings by backing away to loft inside-out over the extra-cover boundary off Sunil Narine in the sixth over, followed by pulling Suyash Sharma for another maximum.

Nothing went Kolkata's way as Samson was dropped by Narine off his own bowling, followed by the right-hander slapping Suyash for four and carting Anukul Roy for three sixes over the bowler's head.

While Samson thumped Chakaravathy for six, Jaiswal brought out sweep, reverse-sweep for two boundaries, before finishing off the chase with another sweep off Thakur for a four to be 98 not out.

Brief scores

Kolkata Knight Riders 149/7 in 20 overs (Venkatesh Iyer 57; Yuzvendra Chahal 4/25, Trent Boult 2/15) lost to Rajasthan Royals 151/1 in 13.1 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 98 not out, Sanju Samson 48 not out) by nine wickets.

IBA Men's World Boxing Championships 2023

Deepak, Hussamuddin, Nishant eye historic gold for India

Tashkent | Agencies

Gaining momentum from their extraordinary campaign, star Indian pugilists Deepak Kumar, Mohammed Hussamuddin, and Nishant Dev will be aiming to clinch a first-ever gold medal for the country as they gear up to compete in the semi-finals of the IBA Men's World Boxing Championship 2023 on Friday.

With three confirmed medals, India rank joint fourth in the medals tally at the prestigious tournament with hosts Uzbekistan (9), Cuba and Russia (6 each) and Kazakhstan (5) taking up the top three spots.

The 2019 Asian silver medalist Deepak Kumar (51kg) will get India's charge for the gold under way when he takes on the two-time Worlds bronze medalist Billal Bennama of France in his semi-finals bout. The 26-year-old Indian has had a scintillating campaign in his second World Championships appearance so far, recording three wins by unanimous decisions and also topping the Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Saken Bibossinov of Kazakhstan in the Round of 32. Looking to maintain his stellar form, Deepak will be giving it his all to reach the final where he will either face the Rio Olympics gold medalist Hasanboy Dusmatov or the reigning European champion Martin Molina of Spain. Competing in his debut World Championships campaign, Mohammed Hussamuddin (57kg) will be aiming to successfully reach the final in his maiden



appearance at the tournament when he takes to the ring against Saidel Horta of Cuba. The two-time Commonwealth Games bronze medalist has elevated his performance to the highest of levels to prevail in all of his bouts at the tournament so far.

The experienced campaigner hailing from Telangana will potentially go head to head against the 2021 World Championships silver medalist Abdumalik Khalokov of Uzbekistan or Munarbek Seitbek-Uulu of Kyrgyzstan upon reaching the final. One of India's upcoming pugilists Nishant Dev (71kg), who has converted his quarter-final finish at the last World Championships to a guaranteed medal at the current edition, will square off against the reigning Asian champion Aslanbek Shymbergenov of Kazakhstan in the semi-finals. The Kamal-born pugilist has displayed his supreme ability through his world class performances by notching three wins by unanimous decisions and one by referee stopping the contest (RSC) so far.

Badminton

Team India on the way to Suzhou, China for Sudirman Cup Finals

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With PV Sindhu and H.S Prannoy leading the charge, the 23-member Indian badminton team set off for Suzhou, China, where it will be competing in the highly-anticipated Sudirman Cup Finals scheduled from May 14-21.

The Sudirman Cup is also known as World Mixed Team Badminton Championship, the only mixed team event in the sport.

With a remarkable track record, India has emerged as a strong force in international badminton. Their victory in the Thomas Cup last year followed by their triumph in the Badminton Asia Championship earlier this year has solidified their position as one of the leading badminton powerhouses in the world.

Indian team:
Men's singles: HS Prannoy, Kidambi Srikanth (Reserve: Lakshya Sen)
Women's singles: PV Sindhu, Anupama



Upadhyaya (Reserve: Aakarshi Kashyap)
Men's doubles: Satwiksairaj Rankireddy/Chirag Shetty, MR Arjun/Dhruv Kapila
Women's doubles: Gayatri Gopichand/Treesa Jolly, Ashwini Ponnappa/Tanisha Crasto Mixed doubles: Tanisha Crasto/Sai Pratheek.

Shooting World Cup

DIVYA AND SARABJOT WIN MIXED TEAM PISTOL GOLD IN BAKU

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Divya T.S and Sarabjot Singh, emerged third-time lucky as a pair, winning gold in the 10m air pistol mixed team event at the ongoing International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup Rifle/Pistol in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Shooting on competition Day Two, the Indian pair who had finished fifth in two earlier World Cup stages in Cairo and Bhopal respectively, broke through with a fine 581 to top the 55-team qualification, thereby assuring them of a medal and a spot in the gold medal match.

In the final against Serbian legends Damir Mikec and Zorana Arunovic, the Indians held their own to pull off a nerve-racking 16-14 win.

It was the second ISSF World Cup gold for Sarabjot in back-to-back ISSF World Cups, having won the individual air pistol in Bhopal in March,



while for Divya it was a first senior World Cup medal. Ismail Keles and Simal Yilmaz of Turkey won bronze.

In qualification, Divya and Sarabjot were detailed in the second relay after India's second pair Esha Singh and Varun Tomar, had shot a combined 578 in the first, placing them third provisionally.

After Divya and Sarabjot's relay, however, they finished fifth overall, missing out on a shot at bronze by a point. Three pairs in fact finished on the same score of 581, but Divya and Sarabjot were classified as top with 24 inner-10s on their card. Damir and Zorana were second with 19 inner-10s while the Turkish player was third

with 16 inner-10s to their name. The Indians began the final on a strong note with two identical 10.5s in the first series of single shots to take a 2-0 lead.

However, 13-series later, in which there were two tied series as well as a series (fifth) where both men and both women shot identical shots, both teams stood tied at 14-14. With the 15th winner-takes-all-series on the line, Sarabjot came up with the goods to fire a 10.6 while Divya backed him up with a 9.9. However, even though Damir shot a 10.3, Zorana faltered with an 8.6 as the Indians pulled off a famous victory.

China 1-2 in the air rifle mixed team India currently are placed second in the medal tally with one gold and one bronze medal as China move to the top with one gold and one silver to their name so far. There are six more gold medals to be decided over the next three days of competition.

La Liga

Barca looks to confirm title in matchday 34

Madrid | Agencies

FC Barcelona could be confirmed as this season's La Liga champions in the 34th round of matches held over the weekend.

Xavi Hernandez's men will assure the title if they win the Barcelona derby away to relegation-threatened neighbors Espanyol on Sunday night, or if Real Madrid fail to win at home to Getafe on Saturday and Atletico Madrid don't beat already-relegated Elche.

The Barcelona derby is a tense affair at the best of times, between two clubs who may be neighbors but with a poor on and off field relationship, a Xinhua report said.

While a win would confirm Barca as champions, it would leave Espanyol staring at the reality of relegation. Luis Garcia's side are second from bottom, three points behind third from bottom Getafe and Valencia, who are in 17th position, and Barca fans would love to help



send them into the second division. The game comes days after Barca midfielder Sergio Busquets confirmed he would leave the club at the

end of the season and a win would give him the ninth league title of his 15-year career. The round of matches starts on

Friday night with Mallorca at home to Cadiz, who is just a point above the relegation zone and need to recover from a 5-1 defeat to Atletico Madrid in their last game.

Real Sociedad have a seven-point cushion over Villarreal in fourth and a win would take them another step closer to the Champions League when they entertain Girona.

Villarreal need to beat Athletic Club Bilbao in order to have a chance of finishing fourth, while Athletic have slipped to eighth taking one point from their last three games and travel without central defenders Yeray, Inigo Martinez or Dani Vivian.

Osasuna still have a chance of finishing seventh but must beat Almeria, another side battling against relegation, just two points above the drop zone. Atletico Madrid should have few problems with their visit to already-relegated Elche, although goalkeeper Jan Oblak is out with a back injury, with Ivo Grbic taking his place until the end of the season.

ICC Men's ODI Rankings

Australia back at top after annual update; Pak at 2nd spot, India are third

Dubai | Agencies

An annual update that drops results from the 2019-20 season has resulted in Australia regaining their position at the top of the ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings as the change now reflects all matches completed since May 2020.

Pakistan are in the second spot with India just a point away as the three teams look set to go into the year-end's ODI World Cup in India with a lot to play for.

Australia are two rating points clear of Pakistan at 118 points after the update, which weighs matches completed before May 2022 at 50 per cent and subsequent matches at 100 per cent.

Pakistan would have remained at the top of the ODI rankings even after the annual update had they com-



pleted a 5-0 sweep in the series against New Zealand. An interesting battle at the top of the rankings is imminent in the year of the World Cup as only three points separate Australia, Pakistan and

India, who are comfortably ahead of the others in the 20-team table.

New Zealand is in fourth position but 11 points behind India at 104 after losing four points over the cycle.

AFC Asian Cup 2023

INDIA CLUBBED WITH AUSTRALIA, UZBEKISTAN, SYRIA



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian men's football team has been drawn in Group B of the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023, after the draw ceremony was conducted at the Qatar Opera House, in Doha, Qatar, on Thursday.

The Blue Tigers, who are ranked 101 in the FIFA

Rankings, and will be playing the AFC Asian Cup for the fifth time, are set to meet Australia (ranked 29th), Uzbekistan (ranked 74th), and Syria (ranked 90th) in the tournament proper.

AIFF president Kalyan Chaube, senior men's national team head coach Igor Stimac, and women's national

coach Maymol Rocky were present at the Qatar Opera House for the official draw ceremony.

Beginning from Pot 4, India were the first team to be drawn into Group B, gaining B4, after which they were successively placed alongside Syria (B3), Uzbekistan (B2) and Australia (B1), respectively.

INDIA U-17 MEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM LOOKS TO END SPAIN CAMP ON HIGH

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The India U-17 men's national football team will look to end their camp in Spain on a high as they prepare to face Atletico de Madrid U-18 in their sixth and final training game, at the Alcala De Henares on Friday.

The Blue Colts have played five preparatory games in Spain, against Atletico de Madrid U-17s (4-1), CD Leganes U-18s (0-2), Atletico de Madrid U-16s (2-1), Real Madrid U-17s (3-3), and Getafe U-18 (1-3).

After a string of decent results, the team lost to Getafe U-18s 1-3 in their last game. They will play one last training game against Atletico de Madrid U-18s in the Iberian Peninsula, before travelling to Germany. "We've had a lot of positives and a lot of good results here in Spain, and I am sure the last match against Atletico Madrid U-18s will also be a good experience for the



boys. The match against Getafe was a tough one as the boys had to deal with a lot of physical players in the game. But it's matches like these that you really learn from, and we have

been stressing these lessons on the boys after the game," said head coach Bibiano Fernandes, ahead of the game. "Wins and losses are a part and parcel of football, and as a footballer,

you tend to learn more from the losses. So we will take this one in our stride and strive to dish out a better performance against Atletico in our last game here," he added.



DEEPIKA PADUKONE FEATURES ON TIME MAGAZINE COVER



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone has featured on the cover of TIME Magazine. With this, Deepika joins the elite club of global figures like Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey and several other personalities who've featured on the noted magazine.

It was in 2022, when Deepika was named in 'The Time100 Impact Award' for her achievements in cinema and work in mental health advocacy.

On the acting front, Deepika's latest release 'Pathaan' with Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan turned out to be a blockbuster. She is now gearing up for her next 'Fighter', where she will be seen starring alongside Hrithik Roshan and Anil Kapoor.

She will also be seen in 'Project K' starring Prabhas and Amitabh Bachchan.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ditching her long tresses, Bollywood actress Shraddha Kapoor has got a new short hairstyle.

Shraddha took to Instagram, where she showcased her new short bob, which barely reaches her shoulder. The actress is seen dressed in a powder pink top paired with light blue denims. Shraddha

Shraddha Kapoor cuts her hair, flaunts short hair in new pic

captioned the selfie: "Dil chota mat karo, baal karo."

It is not clear if her new look is for a role in a film as the actress did not share much about it. However, her fans could not stop gushing over her make over.

One wrote: "Too cute." Another said: "Beautiful". "Cute," said a user.

Looking at the picture, a netizen professed love for the actress by saying: "I love you." On the work front, Shraddha was recently seen sharing screen space with Ranbir Kapoor in the movie 'Tu Jhoothi Main Makkar' directed by Luv Ranjan.

She will next be seen in 'Stree 2', where she will be seen sharing screen space with Rajkummar Rao once again.

'Even now I step out for night rides': Sonakshi learnt biking for her series

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sonakshi Sinha, who is gearing up for her OTT debut with 'Dahaad', learnt biking for the thriller series. The Bollywood actress says riding has become her passion and even now she steps out for night rides.

Portraying the role of a super cop, Sonakshi nailed the look. According to the sources from the set, the actress learnt how to ride the bike during the shoot and in no time she became pro. Her dedication to the role was such that she was able to ride the bike better than her body double on the sets, impressing even the director, Reema Kagti.

Talking about her love for biking, the real and unapologetic actress shared, "I think I was born to do this role, as an actor we all want to do something beyond our limits and this role demanded the same from me. I had to go through a lot of preps for the role and riding the bike was one of them which were such a fun experience."

Sonakshi's passion for biking did not stop there - post the wrap up of the shoot she gifted herself a bike and since then has made it a part of her lifestyle and often goes for bike nights with her friends.

"Once I gained the skill to ride, there was no stopping for me, riding became a passion for me and it continued even after the shoot. Even now I step out for night rides often and my mother gets really worried, but I love every bit of it," she added.

'Dahaad' has been created by Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar, and is directed by Reema Kagti and Ruchika Oberoi. The upcoming series is slated to release on Amazon Prime Video on May 12.



MANUSHI CHHILLAR ALL SET TO MAKE HER DEBUT AT CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Miss World and actress Manushi Chhillar is all set to make her debut on the red carpet of the prestigious 2023 Cannes Film Festival.

The 76th edition will be held from May 16 to May 27 in France. She will be joining actress Anushka Sharma at the prestigious celebration.

Several Bollywood personalities such as Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Vidya Balan, Sharmila Tagore, and Deepika Padukone, among others, have been part of the jury for the French festival.

Priyanka Chopra, Sonam Kapoor, Mallika Sherawat, Pooja Hegde, Hina Khan, Tamannaah Bhatia, and Aditi Rao Hydari have also walked the red carpet.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Manushi will be seen in 'Tehran' next to John Abraham and 'Operation Valentine' with Varun Tej, among many others.



KJo, Guneet Monga come together to bring unique stories to the screen

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Filmmakers Karan Johar and Guneet Monga once again have come together to bring unique stories to the screen.

Their production houses Dharma Productions and Sikhya Entertainment have announced a strategic content partnership to deliver fresh and compelling content to the screens.

They will produce multiple projects across feature films and digital formats.

The alliance builds on the success of their previous collaboration on the critically acclaimed film, 'The Lunchbox', which was produced by Sikhya's founder Guneet Monga and presented by Dharma Productions.

"We are extremely excited to collaborate with Sikhya Entertainment," said Karan



Johar, founder of Dharma Productions.

"As a filmmaker, I have always believed in the power of storytelling to inspire, entertain, and challenge audiences. With this alliance, we have the opportunity to bring together our shared passion for creating innovative content and telling stories that resonate with people from all walks of life."

Added Karan: "This partnership repre-

sents a unique blend of two brands that have always supported diverse and unconventional talent, and I can't wait to see what we will create together.

"We are thrilled to collaborate with Dharma Productions, India's leading production house, and bring together our experience and expertise to create impactful and unforgettable cinema," said Guneet Monga, Founder of Sikhya Entertainment.

"This partnership is a first-of-its-kind collaboration between two distinct and unique brands in the industry, and we are excited to work together to create content that resonates with a wider audience.

She added: "We believe that by combining our respective strengths and perspectives, we can push boundaries and deliver innovative and compelling stories that will capture the hearts and minds of audiences everywhere."

'They will make us all proud!'

Ayushmann roped in to galvanise Indian team headed for Special Olympics in Berlin

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Ayushmann Khurrana has been roped in to galvanise the Indian team and cheer for the athletes headed to the Special Olympics for people with intellectual disabilities scheduled to be held in Berlin from June 16 to June 25.

The actor says he has been "fortunate" to meet many "outstanding people".

He said: "In my life and through my work, I have been fortunate to meet many outstanding people, who, with their grit and determination, have shown the world that the potential for human beings to achieve greatness is limitless."

He added: "These talismanic personalities have set the example for others to be inspired. The Special Olympics Bharat Team is one shining example.

"I wish all the participants of this team the very best for the World Summer Games being held in Berlin, Germany this year. I know they will make us all proud!"

On the work front, Ayushmann is gearing up for the release of his upcoming film 'Dream Girl 2', which also stars Ananya Pandey.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Rashi Khanna