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SC DISMISSES REVIEW PETITIONS AGAINST VERDICT UPHOLDING EWS QUOTA

The Supreme Court has dismissed the review petitions challenging its judgment upholding the validity of the 103rd Constitution Amendment, providing 10 per cent reservation to economically weaker sections (EWS) persons in admissions and government jobs.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India Chandrachud and comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari, S. Ravindra Bhat, Bela M. Trivedi, and J.B. Pardiwala, in order dated May 9, said: "Applications for permission to file the review petitions are allowed. Applications for listing the review petitions in open court are rejected. Delay condoned. Having perused the review petitions, there is no error apparent on the face of the record. No case for review under



'DON'T CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR': SC TO ED IN CHHATTISGARH LIQUOR SCAM

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday told the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to not create an atmosphere of fear, following allegations by the Chhattisgarh government that the agency was attempting to implicate the chief minister in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Rs 2,000 crore liquor scam in the state. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing

ing the Chhattisgarh government, submitted before a bench comprising justices S.K. Kaul and A. Mani, and observed that even a bonafide cause becomes suspect when the agency behaves like this. The state government has alleged that several state excise department officials have complained, the ED is threatening them and their family members with arrest and the

agency is trying to implicate Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. The state government, in its application, contended that its officers are being threatened by the agency officials with their arrest or arrest of their family members and also being implicated in cases if they do not make and sign the statement as desired by them and to implicate the chief minister and other senior officers.

not cause any damage to the basic structure of the Constitution. "Exclusion of the classes covered by Articles 15(4), 15(5) and 16(4) from getting the benefit of reservation as economically weaker sections, being in the nature of balancing the requirements of non-dis-

SC ALLOWS CORRUPTION AND ED PROBE AGAINST TAMIL NADU MINISTER IN CASH-FOR-JOB SCAM

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed the probe by both police and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against Tamil Nadu Electricity, Excise, and Prohibition Minister V. Senthil Balaji in the cash-for-job scam of 2011-15.

A bench of Justices Krishna Murari and V. Ramasubramanian said: "In the case of an offence of corruption, the criminal activity and the generation of the proceeds of crime are like Siamese twins".

"Even if an intangible property is derived as a result of criminal activity relating to a scheduled offence, it becomes proceeds of crime under Section 2(1)(u)... we are not impressed with the contention that the investigation by ED was triggered without any foundational/jurisditional facts."

Justice Ramasubramanian, who authored the 89-page judgment on behalf of the bench, said: "In our view, the allegations in the FIR point out to (i) involvement of persons in criminal activity relating to scheduled offences; (ii) the generation as well as (iii) laundering of the proceeds of crime within the meaning of Section 3. This is in view of the fact that wherever there are allegations of corruption, there is acquisition of proceeds of crime which itself tantamount to money-laundering."

The apex court set aside the Madras High Court's "shocking" orders for de novo investigation, which it said even went against the previous order by the top court saying.

The top court said: "The Investigation Officer shall proceed with further investigation in all cases by including the offences under the PC (Prevention of Corruption) Act. Any let up on the part of the Investigation Officer in this regard will pave the way for this Court to consider appointing a Special Investigation Team in future."

crimination and compensatory discrimination, does not violate Equality Code and does not in any manner cause damage to the basic structure of the Constitution," he said.

He added that reservation for economically weaker sections of citizens up to ten per cent in addition to the existing reservations does not result in violation of any

essential feature of the Constitution and does not cause any damage to the basic structure of the Constitution on account of breach of the ceiling limit of fifty per cent. "Because, that ceiling limit itself is not inflexible and in any case, applies only to the reservations envisaged by Articles 15(4), 15(5) and 16(4) of the Constitution," said Justice Maheshwari.



Death toll in Bengal fire-cracker factory blast rises to nine

Team Absolute | Kolkata

The death toll in the explosion at an 'illegal' fire-cracker factory at Egra in East Midnapore district on Tuesday has risen to nine.

Thirteen other critically injured persons are currently undergoing treatment at a local hospital.

Meanwhile, the local people staged a protest after some senior police officers of the district reached the spot on Tuesday evening. There were heated exchange of words and even scuffles between the protesters and the cops. The protesters alleged that it was because of the indulgence of the local police that such illegal fire-cracker factories were mushrooming in the area, which is close to the Bengal-Odisha border. However, the large police contingent present there quickly brought the situation under control.

Meanwhile, West Bengal BJP President Sukanta Majumdar has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah seeking a probe into the matter by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has also said that she has no objections to an NIA probe into the matter.

Majumdar has claimed that the impact of the blast shows that it was not an explosion of ordinary fire-crackers.

"We suspect that crude bombs were being manufactured in the factory," he said.

As the police suspect that the owner of the illegal fire-cracker factory, Krishnapada Bag, might have escaped to adjacent Odisha, the officers of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of West Bengal police have contacted their counterparts in Odisha, alerting them about the absconding suspect.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Chief Minister said that Bag was arrested on charges of running an illegal fire-cracker factory in October last year.

"The police even filed a charge sheet against him. But the court granted him bail. After that he again started this illegal fire-cracker factory in the area which is close to Bengal-Odisha border," Banerjee said.

Make me Karnataka CM or will continue as MLA, DK Shivakumar tells Kharge: Sources

Karnataka | Agencies

Karnataka Congress chief DK Shivakumar, who is in the race to become the next state chief minister, met party president Mallikarjun Kharge in New Delhi on Tuesday. According to sources, Shivakumar expressed his desire to become the next CM to Kharge, saying that he helped the party rebuild in the state after their government collapsed in 2019. Both Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah landed in New Delhi to meet the Congress leadership to discuss government formation in Karnataka after the

party's resounding victory in the May 10 Assembly election.

In his meeting with Kharge, Shivakumar told the Congress chief that Siddaramaiah had already been given a chance to become the CM and now it was his turn, sources said. He also said that if he is denied the CM chair, he would prefer working only as an MLA in the party.

Shivakumar also told Kharge that Siddaramaiah's tenure as CM was "misrule" and that the Lingayats, a prominent community in Karnataka, were against the former chief minister. Party sources had said that the

Congress chief will decide on the next CM of Karnataka after discussing the result of the secret ballot voting with UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and former party chief Rahul Gandhi. Sonia Gandhi is currently in Shimla. On Monday, all three observers for Karnataka submitted their report to Kharge and the meeting of the party leaders lasted for over five hours.

The Congress won 135 seats in Karnataka whereas the ruling BJP managed to win only 66 seats. The JD(S), which was hoping to play the role of kingmaker, was reduced to 19 seats in the state.

Multiple events, including Russia-Ukraine war, disrupted supply chains: IAF Chief

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian Air Force (IAF) relies heavily on global supply chains for delivery of critical components, equipment and services to maintain its combat potential at optimum level, Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhuri said on Tuesday.

"In recent times, the world has witnessed multiple and varied disruptions like the Covid-19 pandemic, Russia-Ukraine conflict, trade barriers, tariff wars, environmental compliance policies etc. Such events have highlighted the vulnerability of supply chains to disruptions," the



IAF Chief said at the national logistics management seminar, LOGISEM-23, on the theme 'Leverage Emerging Global Supply Chain to Enhance Logistics Capabilities While Absorbing

Disruptions'. The event organised by the IAF was held at the Air Force Auditorium in the national capital, where Air Chief Marshal Chaudhuri inaugurated the seminar and

delivered the key-note address.

In his address, the IAF Chief said, "Global supply chains have become increasingly complex and interconnected, driven by the manuscripts of international trade and advances in technology. The defence sector is not an exception to this trend. The IAF relies heavily on global supply chains for delivery of critical components, equipment and services to maintain its combat potential at optimum level. In recent times, the world has witnessed multiple and varied disruptions. "To mitigate such disrup-

tions, leveraging the emerging trends such as digitisation, automation and data analytics should be exploited to enhance IAF's logistics capabilities. I am confident that the deliberations, discussions and ideas generated in the seminar would help better understand the dynamics of disruptive environment." According to the Indian Air Force, the seminar provided an ideal platform for exchange of ideas between civil and military logisticians and is expected to assist IAF to tailor its supply-chain needs based on modern technologies and global trends.

WRESTLERS' ROW: KHAP DELEGATION SUBMITS MEMORANDUM TO PREZ, SEEKS JUSTICE

New Delhi | Agencies

A delegation of representatives from the Palam 360 Khap on Tuesday submitted a memorandum to President Droupadi Murmu in support of the wrestlers, who have accused Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh of sexual harassment, and are sitting on a protest at Jantar Mantar for last 24 days. "We have submitted a memorandum to the President, appealing to her to resolve this matter as soon as possible and ensure justice to these girls," said the chief of Palam khap, Surendra Solanki.

"We hope that the President will expedite the resolution of this matter and assist in delivering justice to the wrestlers. This fight is not just for these girls, but for the 70 crore women of the country," said Solanki. Solanki further said that in the coming days, all the repre-

sentatives of Palam 360 will also submit memorandums to the district magistrates.

On May 12, Delhi Police had informed a court here that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been formed to investigate the sexual harassment allegations against Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh by prominent Indian wrestlers.

Before Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Harjeet Singh Jaspal of Rouse Avenue Court, Public Prosecutor Atul Srivastava submitted that a status report has been filed in the case in a sealed cover and that it must not be disclosed as the case involves sexual offences.

The SIT team has 10 officials including a woman Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP). "The team has been set up to collect inputs from different states based on complaints filed by female wrestlers," the official had said.

Hypertension a silent killer, lifestyle modification key to manage: Experts

New Delhi | Agencies

Hypertension or high blood pressure (BP) is a silent killer as it usually does not cause noticeable symptoms, yet a major reason behind a host of conditions that can also turn fatal, said health experts stressing on the need for making lifestyle modification to manage the condition.

Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, is a chronic medical condition characterised by elevated blood pressure in the arteries. Blood pressure is a measure of the force exerted by the blood against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps it throughout the body. It is usually expressed as two values: systolic pressure over diastolic pressure (e.g., 120/80 mmHg).

"The brain continuously depends on nourishment from blood supply to it to work properly. Hypertension can quietly damage our arteries (blood vessels) for years before a person develops symptoms," Dr Manish Chhabria, Consultant Neurologist at Reliance Foundation Hospital, Mumbai, said.

"Hypertension is a common health problem worldwide and often referred to as the 'silent killer' because it usually does not cause noticeable symptoms. However, if left



uncontrolled or untreated, hypertension can lead to serious complications such as heart disease, stroke, kidney damage, and other health issues," added Dr Shuchin Bajaj, Founder & Director Ujala Cygnus group of Hospitals.

There are two main types of hypertension. Primary or essential hypertension is the most common type of hypertension,

accounting for about 90-95 per cent of cases. The exact cause is unknown, but it is believed to develop gradually over time due to a combination of genetic and environmental factors, including lifestyle habits such as poor diet, lack of exercise, obesity, smoking, and stress.

Secondary type of hypertension is caused by an underlying health condition or med-

ication. It usually appears suddenly and causes higher blood pressure levels than primary hypertension. Underlying causes can include kidney disease, hormonal disorders, certain medications (e.g., oral contraceptives, decongestants), sleep apnea, and alcohol abuse.

According to Dr. Ashutosh Shukla, Senior Director and medical advisor, Max Hospital, Gurugram, the prevalence of lifestyle diseases such as high blood pressure has significantly increased in the post-Covid pandemic era.

Managing hypertension often involves a combination of lifestyle modifications, the doctors said.

To avoid becoming a patient with high blood pressure, it is recommended to eat a healthy diet and avoid food items with excessive salt, while also maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Limiting alcohol consumption, avoiding tobacco and secondhand smoke, getting 7-8 hours of uninterrupted sleep, cutting down stress, and practising meditation and yoga regularly can be beneficial.

Regular checkups with a physician to monitor blood pressure levels are also important since high blood pressure can be subtle and asymptomatic in its early stages.



CALCUTTA HC REFUSES STAY ON TERMINATION OF 36,000 PRIMARY TEACHERS

Team Absolute | Kolkata

The Calcutta High Court on Tuesday refused to put an interim stay on the earlier order of its single-judge bench terminating the services of 36,000 primary teachers in West Bengal.

The hearing in the matter will continue in the second half on Wednesday.

A division bench of Justice Subrata Talukdar and Justice Supratim Bhattacharya observed that the single-judge bench order by Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay has highlighted certain hard realities in his verdict.

"The single-judge bench has not thrown the terminated primary teachers in front of wolves. Rather it has kept them within a system, so that they can get jobs in future. What is the problem with getting jobs after appearing in a recruitment examination?" Justice Talukdar questioned.

The WBBPE had challenged the single-judge bench's observation that these primary teachers were recruited without proper training. According to



it, all the primary teachers recruited in 2016 received post-job training in the open and distance learning (ODL) mode.

In his order on Friday, Justice Gangopadhyay also directed the WBBPE to fill up the vacancies arising from the termination of services within the next three months.

He had held Trinamool Congress

legislator and former WBBPE President Manik Bhattacharya responsible for the irregularity and observed that if the WBBPE wants, it can recover the cost of the process of filling up the vacancies from Bhattacharya, who is currently in judicial custody because of his alleged involvement in the scam.

However, Justice Gangopadhyay directed that these 36,000 primary

teachers will be able to attend their respective schools for the next four months and during which they will be paid the salary of para-teachers instead of that for regular teachers.

If any candidate among these 36,000 completes the requisite training in the interim period, he/she will be eligible for appearing for examinations in the next recruitment phase.

Lawyers' vandalise public properties, assault media persons in Ghaziabad

Agencies | Ghaziabad

Lawyers' protest over the arrest of an advocate took an ugly turn in Ghaziabad court premises on Tuesday. The protestors vandalised the public properties in the court premises, assaulted media personnel and also damaged their cameras and mobile phones.

The lawyers broke windows in the court premises, raised slogans against the police and blocked the main road leading to the court.

On May 14, a lawyer was taken into custody for alleged assault of a policeman. The lawyers demand that the fellow lawyer be released and the fake trial be ended, threatening to continue the strike.

On May 14, Golu, a resident of Bhanera village of Niwadi police station, called the police and informed that he had been robbed.

Advocate Pawan Tyagi and Shanki, a resident of the village, were named as suspect accused.

Niwari police station in-charge Surendra Singh said that after getting information, sub-

inspector Gaurav Kumar and three constables reached the spot. They took lawyer Pawan Tyagi, Golu and Shanki into custody for giving false information about the loot, in the meantime the villagers gathered and attacked the policeman. The uniform of the inspector was also torn. After this, the police arrested advocate Pawan Tyagi and registered a case.

On Monday, the Bar Association Ghaziabad held a meeting. In this regard, a resolution was passed condemning the police. In protest against the action, the lawyers were on strike throughout the day on Monday.

As soon as the lawyer reached the court on Tuesday morning, they again started the protest. At present, the lawyers have just



Leader of Oppn in Raj supports Pilot's demand for RPSC reconstitution

Agencies | Jaipur

The Leader of Opposition in Rajasthan Assembly, Rajendra Singh Rathore, on Tuesday backed Congress leader Sachin Pilot's demand for reconstitution of the Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC).

On Monday, Pilot had given a 15-day ultimatum to his own party's government in the state to act on his three demands on corruption or face a state-wide agitation. One of the demands was the "corruption-ridden" Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC) be dis-

solved, reconstituted and backed by a new law.

Rathore claimed on Tuesday that the RPSC paper leak case, in which people like Babulal Katara were caught, shows that the body is like a dirty pond. In such a situation, the RPSC should be dissolved, he said, adding that lakhs of youth who were affected by the paper leak should also be compensated. Rathore targeted the Congress government and Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot by holding a press conference at the BJP headquarters here on Tuesday. Supporting Pilot's demand, Rathore said that he also wants the RPSC to be dis-

solved. Stating that the Congress government is looting the people of Rajasthan, Rathore said that Chief Minister Gehlot is buying coal at expensive rates even as complaints of coal theft keep coming from different parts of the state.

He also said that institutional corruption is taking place in the electricity department. "The capacity of our thermal power project is more than 8.5 MW. But they are being deliberately kept closed in the name of maintenance because of which electricity is being purchased at an expensive rate. The power companies in Rajasthan are moving

Three held for sharing OTPs with Pak agents; Odisha STF plans to take them on remand

Agencies | Bhubaneswar

The Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha police has arrested three cyber criminals for sharing OTP of pre-activated SIMs to some criminals and suspected Pakistani agents, a police official said on Tuesday. Based on intelligence inputs, the STF has arrested Pathani Samant Lenka (35), Saroj Kumar Nayak alias (26) and Soumya Pattanaik (19) on charges of fraudulently procuring a large number of pre-activated SIM cards in others' names and selling the OTPs to some Pakistani Intelligence Operatives (PIO) and ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) agents in Pakistan and in India, the official said. J.N. Pankaj, Inspector General of Police, STF, said that the three procured a large number of activated SIM cards in others' names and sold the OTPs to various clients, including some Pakistani intelligence operatives and ISI agents, for large sums of money.

They were also in touch with a female PIO agent who was arrested last year in an Official Secrets



Act/honey-trap case in Rajasthan, he informed.

"The OTPs were misused to open online bank accounts and social media handles in WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, Instagram etc. and also on online shopping sites like Amazon, Flipkart etc.," Pankaj said.

He suspected that these social media platforms would then be used in various kinds of anti-India

activities like spying, communicating with terrorists, radicalisation, running anti-India propaganda, fuelling anti-India/divisive sentiments on social media, sextortion, honey-trapping etc.

As these accounts are registered/linked on Indian mobile numbers, people would find them trustworthy.

The OTPs also might have been used in opening email accounts. People will think that these accounts are owned by an Indian but actually they are operated from Pakistan, he said.

"We have found that the accused had done all the financial transactions through UPIs. So, we have requested the National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) to provide the details of the UPI accounts," the IGP said.

After receiving details from the NPCI and scientific examination of the seized mobile phones and other gadgets, the accused will be taken on remand for further investigation into the sensitive case, he said. Pankaj also informed that an investigation is on to nab other persons involved in this case.

TWO HIZB MEN INVOLVED IN MIRWAIZ MUHAMMAD FAROOQ'S MURDER ARRESTED

Team Absolute | Srinagar

In a major breakthrough, the J&K Police's State Investigation Agency (SIA) on Tuesday arrested two Hizbul Mujahideen militants reportedly involved in the murder of Mirwaiz Muhammad Farooq on May 21, 1990.

Special Director General of Police, CID, R.R. Swain told a media conference here that of the two persons arrested by the SIA, identified as Javid Bhat and Zahoor Ahmed Bhat, one had entered the bedroom of late Mirwaiz and opened fire at him.

He said that on May 21, 1990, a case regarding the killing of the Mirwaiz was lodged in police station Nigeen under FIR 61/1990.

"Then the case was transferred to the CBI. The CBI had presented a charge sheet against one accused after arresting him before the TADA court after which the court awarded a life sentence to him," Swain said.

He said that investigations into the



case revealed that Hizbul Mujahideen commander Abdullah Bangroo had hatched a conspiracy to kill the Mirwaiz. "Bangroo and his associate, another Hizb commander were killed in encounters while one accused was serving life sentence.

"Two more accused, Javid Bhat and Zahoor Ahmed Bhat, both residents of Srinagar, were arrested by the SIA.

"They were evading arrest as they were hiding in Pakistan and Nepal over these years. Both have been

arrested and handed over to the CBI as proclaimed offenders.

"One of the two arrested Hizb militants, Zahoor Ahmed Bhat was the one who had entered into the bedroom of Mirwaiz and opened fire at him," the Special DG said.

'What is the need?': Nitish Kumar reacts sharply to Bageshwar Baba's Hindu nation remark

Team Absolute | Patna

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday reacted sharply to self-styled godman Baba Bageshwar's comments on making India a "Hindu nation", saying these comments had no value as they were made by those who had no knowledge of the country's freedom struggle or the Constitution.

"Those (Bageshwar Baba) who are talking about such things (Hindu nation) were not born when the country became independent and the Constitution was implemented. Would they change the name of the country? We have 7 communities in the country and everyone has the equal right to believe in their respective religions. We never make any obstructions to any. We respect every reli-

gion and they are free to worship their gods," he said after the inauguration of the Transport Department's new building here. "People like him (Baba Bageshwar) are talking on his own and it has no value. We believe in the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi and leaders who worked with him. I was not born at that time, my father who participated in the freedom struggle told me about everything and we are doing development on the basis of their ideology. It is surprising that some people are speaking for Hindu nation. What is the need of it? Everyone has the right to follow their respective religions, there is no hurdle in it," he added.

"We have seven communities in the country - Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, Buddhists and Jains and people of these commu-

nities have equal rights as per the constitution. The number of Parsis in the country is small, they mainly live in the Mumbai region but they have equal rights and we respect it. We always ensure that no one would feel any inconvenience in any community in Bihar. It is not allowed to say anything beyond the Constitution," Nitish Kumar said.

"If anyone wants to amend the Constitution, it needs two-third majority in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Amendment happened only with the decision of all parties," he said.

Reacting to the allegations that his government working against "Sanatan Dharma", he said: "They are talking against me to get some weight in the party. Hence, they are making wild allega-

3 days after Mumbai Police probe, DoT cuts 30,000 illegal mobile SIMs

Team Absolute | Mumbai

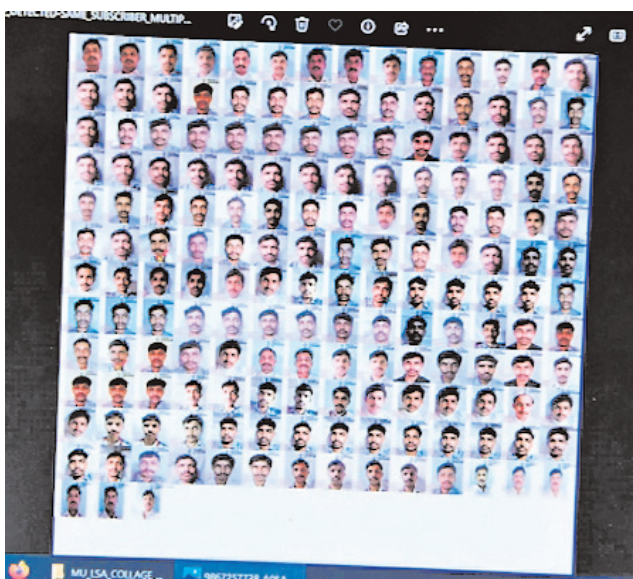
Three days after the Mumbai Police's major expose of a racket of fake multiple SIM cards issued on single names, the Department of Telecom swung into action and has deactivated 30,000 such SIMs in Mumbai, an official said on Tuesday.

The SIM cards, issued by telephone service providers, were analysed by DoT Mumbai LSA on its subscriber database and 62 groups identified where similar images were detected for different names.

With a threshold of 50 or more subscribers in a group, there were a total of 8,247 subscribers identified in these 62 groups.

"There appears to be connivance of point of sale (PoS) i.e. mobile SIM sellers, especially those whose contribution of fake SIMs in a group is abnormally high, in issuing the suspected fake SIMs," said a top DoT official.

In one such case, a total of 684 numbers (SIMs) were issued against one face, said H.S. Jakhar, the Additional Director General, Telecom, DoT Mumbai, while launching the Sanchar Sathi Portal, in the presence of DDGs Nandlal Suchdev, Kishore Ekka, and Ajay Kamal.



He said that DoT has used an innovative, indigenous, Next Gen Platform (using SuperComputer) ASTR-AAI and facial recognition powered Solution for Telecom SIM Subscriber Verification for this work.

"It has been designed and implemented by DoT with a vision to analyse, identify and weed out fake/forged, non bonafide mobile connections for curbing the menace of cyber crimes, it compares subscriber photos and database provided by TSPs, and the output is generated in groups of similar photos of subscriber with different names," Jakhar said.

He admitted that such is the expertise level of fraudsters that they have created fake proof of identity/address documents, which can never be detected by human beings by analysing a single case in isolation. As mobile connections subscribed on fake/forged documents may be used in cyber-crime, financial frauds, anti-national activities etc, the DoT took up the challenge for preventing cyber-crimes using ASTR - the NextGen platform for detecting and weeding out fake/forged SIMs.

Meanwhile, a total of 6 FIRs have been lodged by the Malabar Hill, V. P. Marg, D. B. Marg, D. N. Nagar, Sahar and Bangumargar police stations in Mumbai.

Bengaluru violence: HC rejects petition by accused seeking quashing of charge sheet



Agencies | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court on Tuesday rejected a petition by the accused in the infamous DJ Halli-KG Halli violence in Bengaluru in August 2020, seeking quashing of charge sheet against them.

A bench, headed by Justice M. Nagarasanna, rejected the petition submitted by accused Mohammad Khaleel Ahmad and others in the violence case which rocked Bengaluru on August 11, 2020.

The accused also sought to quash the investigation by the Special NIA (National Investigation Agency) court.

The petition maintained that the statements recorded by the CCB and the NIA are different. It also alleged that the investigation by NIA is just for the sake of it.

The bench opined that if the allegations are true, the investigation is very much needed. At this stage, the court can't investigate witnesses. If allegations are made that investigation is not proper, it can't be concluded that the investigation is inappropriate, it held.

Counsel for accused maintained that the NIA sleuths have concealed certain matters and conducted the investigation. As a result, there is no opportunity for the accused to prove their inno-

cence.

It was also submitted that the act of accused only attract IPC sections and do not attract the UAPA and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act and hence the charges must be dropped, counsel submitted.

NIA counsel had submitted that the petitioner had approached the High Court, though the jurisdiction lies with NIA Special court. The charge sheet is going to prove the involvement of accused in offences under the UAPA act and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act. It was also submitted that at least four persons had lost their lives in the incident.



"WILL NEVER BE...": DEVENDRA FADNAVIS TAKES DIG AT MAHARASHTRA OPPOSITION

Team Absolute | Pune

Amid the opposition unity bid to oust the Bharatiya Janata Party from the national picture on the back of Congress' astounding victory in Karnataka, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that the party will win all seats from the southern state in next year's general elections. Fadnavis took a jibe at Maha Vikas Aghadi parties including Nationalist Congress Party and Shiv Sena (UBT) for hailing Congress' victory in Karnataka and said that this is all they can do.



Monday.

"I fail to understand in Congress why the NCP and Sena (UBT) celebrating. This is all they can do. Maha Vikas Aghadi's dream of forming the government (in Maharashtra) will never be fulfilled as BJP-Sena will be re-elected," he added.

Various political parties lauded Congress after it defeated the ruling BJP in Karnataka in the recently concluded state Assembly elections. Amid opposition efforts to forge a joint front

against the BJP for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Monday that the parties which are strong in a particular region should fight together and if she is supporting Congress in states such as Karnataka, "it should not fight against me in Bengal". Talking to media persons at Nabanna, Banerjee, who is Trinamool Congress chief, said wherever a regional political party is strong there BJP cannot fight.

Trimbakeshwar Temple row: No trespass bid, say 'Urs' organisers as SIT probe ordered

Team Absolute | Nashik

The organisers of an annual 'Urs' procession from a mausoleum on Tuesday denied allegations that they had made any attempts to barge inside the Trimbakeshwar Temple in Maharashtra's Nashik on Saturday which triggered violence between two groups.

Organiser and cleric Matin Syed said that as has been the past traditions for decades, the devotees participating in 'Urs' procession had gone near the steps of the northern entrance of Trimbakeshwar Temple to respectfully offer incense.

"We have been doing this for years... We never attempted to enter the sanctum sanctorum of the temple and there have been no objections to our incense offering. Then why this objection now?" he asked.

Earlier on Tuesday, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who holds the Home portfolio, ordered



lodging a FIR and a high-level SIT probe into the riots that rocked this famed temple town over the weekend.

Nashik Superintendent of Police Shahaji Umap said that after the pur-

ported dispute, a conciliation meeting was held between the two groups and matter had been sorted out amicably.

He said that the dispute arose owing to certain misunderstandings, which were duly clarified after the meeting, though the 'Urs' organisers also made their stand clear.

There are also reports on social media that some

persons allegedly tried to offer a 'chadar' at the temple premises, though there has been no official word on these.

The Shree Trimbakeshwar Devasthan Trust, Nashik has filed a

police complaint and the temple's 'Mahant' Aniket Shastrri thanked the government for ordering a probe into the "trespass" attempts.

Fadnavis said that the SIT will probe not only the latest incident, but also a similar one last year in which some mob had allegedly barged inside the Trimbakeshwar Temple through the main gate.

The local police have said that the rumours of the alleged unauthorized entry into the temple were baseless and the incident happened owing to some misunderstandings.

Early on Saturday, tension gripped this pilgrimage town when a mob of people gathered outside the Trimbakeshwar Temple and then allegedly attempted to forcibly enter the premises.

This resulted in huge tension culminating in violent clashes even as the temple authorities summoned the police to control the situation and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde directed suitable action in the matter.

After Congress, Pawars slam high, variant Haj fees; urge PM, CM, Irani for relief

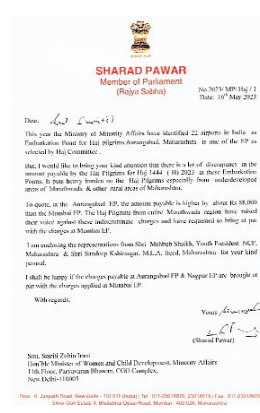
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar on Tuesday urged Union Minority Affairs Minister Smriti Z. Irani to remove the discrepancies in the charges payable at the embarkation points for Haj pilgrims at different locations in Maharashtra.

In a letter to Irani, Pawar said that this year, of the 22 airports in India, Mumbai, Aurangabad, and Nagpur have been selected as EPs for the Haj 2023 pilgrimage season.

However, there are a lot of discrepancies in the EP charges payable at Aurangabad which is around Rs 88,000 higher than what is payable in Mumbai.

"It puts a heavy burden on the Haj pilgrims, especially from the underdeveloped regions of Marathwada and other rural areas of



Sharad Pawar, Member of Parliament, Maharashtra, speaking at a podium.

Maharashtra," said Pawar. He added that the people of entire Marathwada have raised their voice against these indiscriminate charges and requested that it should be made at par with Mumbai EP charges. The issue was first highlighted by state Congress Working President M. A. Naseem Khan who not only slammed the Central government's move to reduce this year's quotas for Haj pilgrimage but also slapped higher charges to the pilgrims at various EPs. On May 15, Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar wrote to

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde pointing out the hefty EP charges being levied on Haj 2023 pilgrims from Nagpur which is over Rs 63,000 higher than Mumbai.

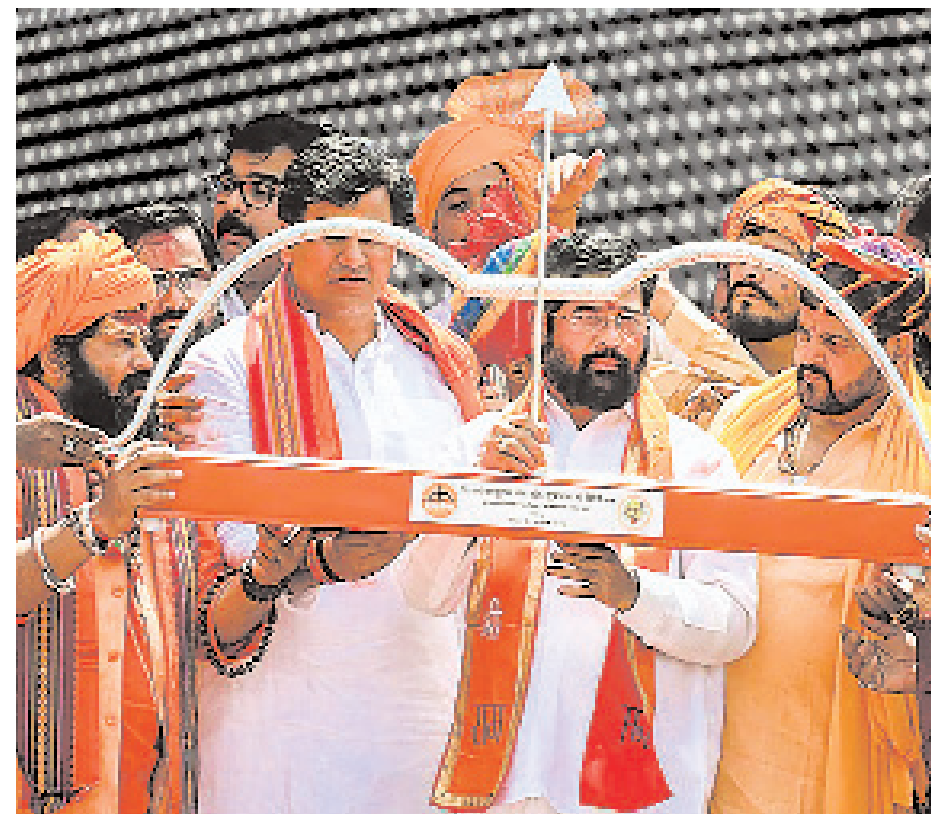
Ajit Pawar demanded that "either the pilgrims should be given a discount on these high charges, or they should be re-allotted Mumbai as their EP".

COOPERATIVES SOCIETY OFFICIAL HELD FOR TAKING RS 30 LAKH BRIBE

Nashik: The Anti-Corruption Bureau has caught a 57-year-old deputy registrar of cooperative societies in Maharashtra's Nashik district while allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 30 lakh from the director of an Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC), the ACB said on Tuesday. As per the ACB sources, the 40-year-old complainant was elected the APMC director in a recently held election. But, his election was later challenged, they said.

To conduct a hearing into the matter and give a result in favour of the complainant, the deputy registrar of co-operative societies allegedly demanded Rs 30 lakh as bribe him, the anti-graft agency said. The APMC director complained to the ACB, which laid a trap and caught the official along with other person red-handed at his residence on Monday while taking the amount from the complainant, the ACB said.

"Prospective Decision": Maharashtra Speaker on 'Shiv Sena' Name And Symbol



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar on Tuesday said the Election Commission's decision to allot the 'Shiv Sena' name and its symbol to the faction led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde is a "prospective" decision and not retrospective.

Speaking to reporters here after a meeting with some officials in the Vidhan Bhavan, Mr Narwekar also said the decision on disqualification of 16 MLAs including Chief Minister Shinde will start from the point of which faction was representing the actual Shiv Sena in July 2022.

The Speaker on Monday also said that after the Supreme Court's May 11 ver-

dict, he will have to first recognise in the House which faction of the Shiv Sena is the political party before going ahead with any other decision.

In its verdict on the Shiv Sena-centric tussle that led to the fall of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra last year, the Supreme Court said it can't reinstate the then chief minister Uddhav Thackeray as he chose to resign without facing the floor test.

Refusing to disqualify the 16 rebel Shiv Sena MLAs, including Chief Minister Shinde, the Supreme Court said it cannot ordinarily adjudicate disqualification petitions under the anti-defection law and directed Speaker Narwekar to take a decision on the pending

matter within a "reasonable period".

The Election Commission in February this year allotted the name 'Shiv Sena' and its poll symbol 'bow and arrow' to the group led by Chief Minister Shinde.

Narwekar on Tuesday said, "As per the SC verdict, the starting point of the pleas would be deciding on which faction was representing the Shiv Sena in July 2022. Although the Election Commission of India has allotted the name Shiv Sena and its symbol to the Shinde faction, the decision is not retrospective. It is a prospective decision." "The Supreme Court has noted that the decision on which faction was representing Shiv Sena has to be decided by the Speaker," he added.

Ahead of G20 meet in Mumbai; police bans use of drones, other flying objects in city

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Police on Tuesday issued a special preventive order for the city ahead of the third G20 meet in Mumbai. Mumbai Police in its order said that the use of drones and other flying objects in the city was prohibited till May 25.

In the order, the police said, whereas report has been received that due to the situation prevailing in the areas under control of the Commissioner of Police, Mumbai, it is apprehended that during the third G20 meeting on 16/05/2023 25/05/2023, terrorist/anti-social elements may attack using drone, para gliders, remote control micro-light aircraft and there is every likelihood breach of peace and disturbance of public tranquility and also there is grave danger to the human life, health, safety and injury to public



property. The order further said, the third G20 meeting will be held on 16/05/2023 to 25/05/2023 and a large number of VIPs and officers are expected to attend the summit. It is necessary that some checks should be put on activities around Mumbai, so that the terrorist/anti-social elements may not attack through drone, para gliders, remote control micro-light aircraft, all types of balloons, kites and immediate action is necessary for the prevention of the same. The order was issued by Vishal

Thakur, DCP (Operations), Mumbai Police. "This order shall remain in force with effect from the date mentioned above unless withdrawn earlier. Any person contravening this order shall be punishable under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

A warning notice (NO DRONE ZONE) prohibiting flying of drones within 2 kms of the venue, should be prominently displayed around the perimeter wall of the sensitive venue/vital installations," the order said.

THREE MEN BRUTALLY KILL STRAY DOG OUTSIDE HOUSING SOCIETY IN MIRA ROAD, BOOKED



Thane: Three men allegedly beat a stray dog to death outside a housing society in Mira Road area in Thane district of Maharashtra, following which a criminal case was registered, police said on Tuesday. Police said the incident occurred on May 11 night in front of a housing society when a man lifted the dog and banged it on the ground, while another man strangled the canine with a rope and a third one beat it with a stick. The brutal incident was captured on the CCTV camera, a police official said. A case was registered against the trio under section 429 (Mischievous killing or maiming cattle etc.) of the Indian Penal Code, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, and the Maharashtra Police Act on a complaint lodged by a resident of the housing society. Nobody is arrested so far.

Women's commission seeks setting up of panel to find missing women

Team Absolute | Maharashtra

State Commission for Woman (MSCW) chairperson Rupali Chakankar has asked the state home department to set up a panel to find out women missing from the state and submit a report every fortnight on its progress. Between January 1 and March 31 this year, 3,594 women went missing and some of them were traced. It is a serious matter that women and girls were going missing from the state, Chakankar said.

She was speaking to reporters after a meeting with Special Inspector General of Police (women and child crime prevention) Deepak Pandey, state home department's assistant secretary Rahul Kulkarni, MSCW deputy chairperson Deepa Thakur and legal expert Virendra Neve.

A statement issued by the MSCW said Chakankar has instructed the home department to set up a search committee for the missing women and the department should submit its report every fortnight about the panel's progress.

She said no police officials are part of the existing search committees for missing women.



"Between January 1 and March 31 this year, 3,594 women went missing and some of them were traced. It is still a serious matter. Two agents from Sakinaka area of Mumbai have been booked for luring women and sending them abroad. However, the cartel is huge and strong action is needed," Chakankar said. The bhariosa cell and missing cell are active only on paper, she said. "It is a serious matter that women and

girls are going missing from the state. Among the missing girls and women, a sizeable number is of those in the age group of 16 to 35 years," Chakankar said.

There have been instances where missing women, if not tracked immediately, were found in West Asian countries, she said. Women from 82 families in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad areas have gone abroad and are non traceable. There is no contact with them, she added.

"SHINDE'S GOVERNMENT WON'T FALL EVEN IF 16 MLAS ARE DISQUALIFIED": AJIT PAWAR

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Soon after a delegation of the Shiv Sena (UBT) handed over a 79-page letter to the Maharashtra Deputy Speaker seeking expedited action in the disqualification of 16 MLAs of the Shinde camp, NCP leader Ajit Pawar made it clear that the action would not actually topple the government.

"Even if 16 MLAs are disqualified, the government of Shinde and Fadnavis will not fall. There is no threat to the government," he said on Monday while addressing a press conference here in Mumbai.

Attaching an argument to his opinion, he said that in a 288-member assembly, the government will not lose its majority mark, even if 16 MLAs are disqualified. Notably, a delegation of the Shiv Sena (UBT) handed over a letter seeking expedited action in the disqualification of 16 Shinde camp MLAs following the Supreme Court's recent verdict during their meeting with Maharashtra's deputy Speaker Narhari Zirwal and Assembly secretary Jitendra Bhole.

The Whip of Shiv Sena (UBT), Sunil Prabhu, said that the UBT Sena's delegation submitted a letter



to the Speaker following the apex court's order that ruled that the Speaker can adjudicate the disqualification of 16 Shinde camp MLAs. "Since the Speaker is yet to return from his foreign tour, we submitted the letter to his deputy," Prabhu said. The ruling coalition of Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) currently has 145 MLAs while the overall coalition has 162 MLAs, 17 more than the required number to form government in Maharashtra. The Supreme Court's verdict has

given fresh impetus to the Shiv Sena crisis, with former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray calling for an early decision on the disqualification of 16 party MLAs. The top court also pulled up then Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and said he did not have reasons based on objective material before him to reach the conclusion that then chief minister Uddhav Thackeray had lost the confidence of the House. The court said that relief was due for Thackeray if he had not resigned before facing the floor test.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Congress to provide plum position to Jagadish Shettar

The Congress would provide a plum position to former Karnataka Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar, who had left the BJP and joined it on the eve of the Assembly elections but could not win his seat, as per party leaders. The powerful leader has been a six-term MLA and a former state President of the BJP. In the recent assembly elections, he, however, lost his Hubballi-Central Dharwad Assembly seat by a margin of 34,289 votes to Mahesh Tenginakai of the BJP. While Shettar could not win his turf, his clout in the Lingayat-dominated areas of north Karnataka has led to the Congress winning many of these seats, thus crushing the BJP. The Congress think tanks have already reported to the party state leadership that Shettar parting ways with the BJP was a major catalyst for the Congress to win the polls in Lingayat-dominated areas and hence he should be properly rewarded. Shettar had not joined the previous BJP government of Basavaraj Bommai citing that Bommai was much junior to him. The Congress is trying hard to accommodate Shettar in the Congress government that would be sworn in within a few days. Sources in the Congress party said that senior party national leaders are in touch with the former Chief Minister and he is staying back in Bengaluru. Shettar said over telephone: "I have joined the Congress unconditionally and I don't have an answer regarding posts." Senior Congress leaders, however, told in private that the former Chief Minister would be given a berth in the new Cabinet or he could even be considered for the post of party's Working President. Shettar, according to sources in Congress, enjoys an excellent rapport with its senior state leaders, including D.K. Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah, and others.

PRIORITISING THE ROAD AHEAD FOR THE INDIAN INDUSTRY

Asad Mirza

The last nine years have proved to be a period of immense economic and commercial gains for India businesses, partly helped by the governments new policy initiatives and also the charged-up Indian businessmen ready to take-up new challenges and claim their due place under the sun.

Seventy-five years after independence, becoming the fifth largest economy in the world and poised to be the third largest economy by 2030, India has indeed surpassed many significant milestones. But the moot question here is what has fuelled India's growth, the services or the manufacturing sector, and what should be its future plan of action.

The economic reforms ushered-in by the Narasimha Rao government in 1990s, and the subsequent unshackling of chains bounding the private sector ill then, proved to be a boon for the Indian businessmen. But more or less these economic reforms ushered in the groundwork for future transformation of the Indian businesses, which were able to lead the growth curve with the services sector.

Currently G-20 Sherpa and former head of the Niti Aayog, Amitabh Kant in his book, 'Made in India: 75 Years of Business and Enterprise', offers an insiders peep in to the second-generation reforms which began in 2014 and delves deep into the policies and people behind the new age start-ups and their novel business versions that are unleashing the entrepreneurial zeal among the Indian youth.

Kant's ringside view as a top policy maker has added immensely to the book, besides highlighting his out of the box campaigns such as Make In India, Start-up India, God's Own Country, and policy changes like Performance-Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI), Aspirational Districts, e-Mobility, Green Hydrogen, and Ease of Doing Business reforms.

However, the book has also given an opportunity to the top business leaders and policy makers to air their views about the future course to be taken by the Indian government and the businesses to lead this economic growth trajectory.

Speaking at the book release function of the book, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made a strong pitch for the country to refocus its economic growth strategy on manufacturing. While Kant emphasised that the growth of MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) in India is also desirable but is contingent upon having very large companies.

On the other hand N Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Sons expounded that there are three transitions coupled with moving geopolitical situations. From the transition's point of view, the first is digital and AI, second one is energy and third one is supply chain. In all the three transitions, India is probably the best placed country in the world, to maximise on the opportunities offered and further propelling the Indian growth story.



Uday Kotak highlighted the resilience and stability of the Indian banking system and financial systems in the world today. He felt that the Indian banking industry has got something right in comparison to the US and European banks. He said we have got our act together, we have created a stable financial system, well capitalised and it's a goldilocks time -- lowest non-performing assets, clean credit, reasonable growth in the book, and none of these risk issues like we are seeing in the developed nations. Thus assuring the stability and the solidity of the Indian financial sector, in the future too.

Taking the debate further on services sector v/s manufacturing sector, Jaishankar opined that this focus on services was actually an elegant excuse for being incompetent. He further emphasised that India will never be a great country if it is not a great manufacturer. He also batted for the Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) scheme, which provides incentives for domestic manufacturers.

In his opening remarks, Kant, distinguished India's economic growth challenge from that of other countries like China and South Korea. He stressed on the need for India to foray into sunrise sectors of growth like mobile manufacturing and electric mobility, industrialising further without carbonising.

While pushing for a refocus on manufacturing, Jaishankar remarked correctly that India need to stop looking for a China fix. Indian growth cannot be built on the pattern of Chinese efficiency and planned inputs and outputs.

India surely lost on the count of efficiency, when during the Covid period, with lockdowns affecting Chinese production capabilities and the order books getting bulky, Chinese companies preferred to spread base in countries like Vietnam instead of India.

Jaishankar also touched on the gap of comprehensive national power between India and China, which he described as a big concern in the diplomatic arena.

Comprehensive national power is a common parlance in foreign policy to refer to a totality of a country's economic, military and political power.

The foreign minister went as far as to say that improvements in Ease of Doing Business (EDB) have helped grow India's "global stature", and proves that India is finally moving towards

"a politics of delivery".

Without directly referring to the Ukraine war, the Indian foreign minister remarked that the current "global polarisation" is an opportunity for India.

"Global polarisation has made diplomacy far more complex but it is also a window of opportunity for many nations. Smart business moves can really open up many possibilities," he said.

Unambiguously all the participants were unanimous in highlighting and appreciating India's robust economic growth since 2014, increase in its global stature besides expanding its wings in those sectors which were hitherto considered unapproachable or unfeasible for the Indian businesses to manage, but Indian businessmen have proved the critics and naysayers wrong, majorly due to the support and guidance provided by the government. As most of the panellists at the book launch agreed we indeed have to take a clarion call to move our industries to the manufacturing paradigm but additionally we also have to focus more on building-up the infrastructure ecosystem, which could sustain these large scale manufacturing activities, which in turn will give a boost to the MSMEs, only then we could be safe and proud in proclaiming that India's development story after 2014 has been a successful one, based on its performance levels.

international

YEMENI GOVT REINSTATES OVER 52,000 DISMISSED EMPLOYEES

Agencies | Aden

The Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) announced that it will reinstate over 52,000 civil, security and military employees who were dismissed from their jobs nearly 30 years ago in the country's southern provinces.

The state-run Saba news agency reported that Rashad Al-Alimi, chief of the PLC, signed decisions approving the reinstatement, promotions, settlements, and wage increases for the 52,766 employees who were forcibly dismissed from their jobs after the 1994 civil war.

"The decisions involve the approval of procedures for a previously formed committee dedicated to dealing with the grievances of the employees who were forcibly dismissed from their positions in southern Yemen," Xinhua news agency quoted the Saba report as saying.



It clarified that "the committee included procedures for reinstating and compensating personnel who had been dismissed from their jobs in the armed forces, interior forces, and political security (intelligence) services".

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a retired military official told Xinhua that "it is a positive sign that our grievances are being acknowledged, and it reaffirms the PLC's commitment to healing the wounds of the past injustices and building an equitable society".

In 1994, a civil war erupted in the Arab nation, four years after the unification of North and South Yemen to form the Republic of Yemen.

One of the consequences of the war was the mass dismissal of thousands of employees in the southern part of Yemen, who had previously held positions within various sectors, including government, security, and the military.

Pakistan's risk of default rises as bond yields spike

Agencies | Karachi

The yield on Pakistan's US dollar-denominated bond experienced a significant surge, climbing 73 basis points to 106.37 per cent in the international market on Monday.

This spike suggests an elevated risk of default on foreign debt repayment for the country, The Express Tribune reported.

The increase in bond yields reflects the return of volatility in Pakistan's global bond market. Uncertainty looms over whether Islamabad will succeed in reviving the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) \$6.7 billion loan programme and meet international payment obligations beyond June 2023, The Express Tribune reported.

The yield on the 10-year Pakistan Government



International Bond, valued at \$1 billion and maturing on April 15, 2024, has seen a cumulative increase of 30.60 percentage points in the past five months. Similarly, the yields on six other Pakistani global bonds, maturing at different times until April 2051, also experienced surges ranging from 10 to 39 basis points. One bond, maturing in January 2029, saw a recovery of 6 basis points.

Prior to the outbreak of Covid-19 in Pakistan in

February 2020, bond yields were around 8-10 per cent.

Pakistan's Finance Minister Ishaq Dar's assurance last week that the country had made arrangements to repay foreign debt worth \$3.7 billion until the end of June 2023 did not alleviate concerns. Moody's Investors Service raised the alarm, stating that Pakistan could default without the IMF loan programme after June 2023 given its weak reserves, The Express Tribune reported.

IRAQ INVITES INT'L COMPANIES TO DEVELOP 13 OIL, GAS FIELDS

Baghdad: Iraqi Oil Minister Hayan Abdul Ghani invited international energy companies to develop the country's 13 oil and gas fields and exploration blocks.

The announced 13 sites are located in the provinces of Basra, Maysan, Wasit, Baghdad, Salahuddin, and Nineveh, Abdul Ghani said in a statement.

Oil Ministry spokesman Asim Jihad said international companies interested in the projects could submit their requests no later than June 15, 2023, Xinhua news agency reported.

Iraq opened its oil and gas sector for foreign investment in 2009. Last week, Abdul Ghani said the country's oil reserves increased by 10 billion barrels and its natural gas reserves by eight trillion cubic feet.

Iran, Saudi Arabia discuss facilitating Haj pilgrimage

Agencies | Tehran

Iran's Finance Minister Ehsan Khandouzi said that his country and Saudi Arabia have discussed ways to facilitate the Haj pilgrimage for Iranians and boost economic cooperation between the two nations.

Khandouzi made the remarks when elaborating on the outcomes of the meeting with his Saudi counterpart Mohammed Aljadaan in the Saudi city of Jeddah last week on the sidelines of the Annual Meetings of the Islamic Development Bank Group, Xinhua news agency reported.

Khandouzi said they discussed facilitating the

process of the Haj pilgrimage for Iranians in terms of the banking issues and flights, as well as trips to

Saudi Arabia by Iranian traders, stressing that the Saudi side welcomed holding talks on the topics.

The two ministers also discussed the resumption of bilateral political relations, said Khandouzi, adding that the Saudi side called for preparing the ground as soon as possible for improving the economic ties.

They agreed on cooperation in making joint investments in the areas of technology-based product manufacturing, medicine, nanobiotechnology, power



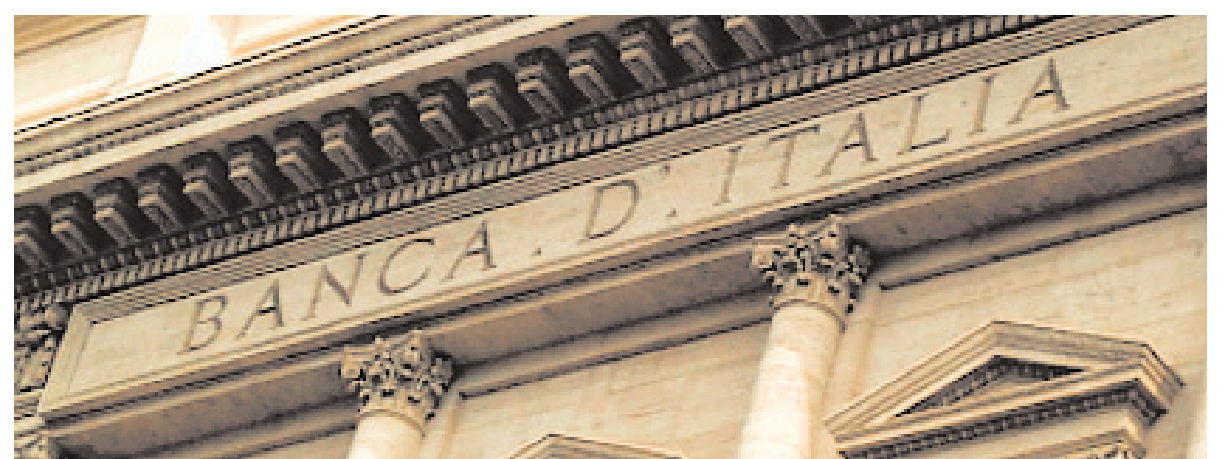
plant construction, transportation, and road construction.

The Iranian minister said it was decided that within three months, Iranian and Saudi private delegations as well as managing directors of the two countries' leading companies should hold "constructive" meetings to enhance cooperation.

In March, Saudi Arabia and Iran reached in Beijing a groundbreaking agreement to resume diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies and missions within two months.

On April 6, the two countries officially announced in China the resumption of diplomatic relations with immediate effect.

ITALY'S PUBLIC DEBT TOPS \$3 TRILLION FOR 1ST TIME



Agencies | Rome

The Bank of Italy said that the country's public debt climbed above \$3 trillion in the latest reporting

period. In its latest report on Monday, the central bank said that the government's debt was 2.790 trillion euros (\$3.022 trillion) in March, up from 2.762 trillion euros in the previous

month, reports Xinhua news agency.

It was the third consecutive month that the country's public debt went up and it is the first time that the figure crossed the \$3 trillion level.

Despite the increase in public debt, Italy's ratio of debt to gross domestic product (GDP) has fallen since reaching an all-time high of around 155 per cent during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

The Italian economy afterwards has grown, and the debt-to-GDP ratio has declined to 144 per cent.

Nevertheless, this still makes Italy one of the most highly-indebted countries in the world.

The Bank of Italy said the main factor pushing government debt higher was an increase in the public sector's borrowing requirement, equivalent to 31.3 billion euros.



SALKANPURS DEVI LOK WILL EMERGE AS CENTER OF ATTRACTION AS SHRI MAHAKAL LOK: CM CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Salkanpur

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the holy land of Madhya Pradesh has always been blessed by the Mata. Sri Mahakal Lok was developed with the blessings of Lord Shiva in Ujjain. Now Devi Lok will be constructed at Salkanpur in Sehore district.



Minister Chouhan handed over the "Charan Padukas" from his head to Rath Yatra vehicle.

Minister Chouhan handed over the "Charan Padukas" from his head to Rath Yatra vehicle.

Shila collection, Chunri Yatras, Bhajan competition for men and women Chief Minister Chouhan also informed about the village and city level programmes to be held on May 28, 29 and 30 for Devi Lok Mahotsav.

Boy's Head Smashed, Throat Slit, Body Stuffed In Plastic Bag

Team Absolute | Seoni:

Three minor boys, the youngest of them 11 years old, allegedly strangled their 12-year-old friend with a cycle chain, smashed his head with a stone and slit his throat with a sharp knife in a village in Seoni district of Madhya Pradesh, police said on Monday.



Later, they stuffed the body in a polythene bag and dumped it on a pile of pebbles near their house. The crime came to light after a woman spotted the blood-stained bag and informed the police.

"The trio, aged 16, 14 and 11 respectively including two brothers, called the 12-year-old boy to a deserted place in Magarkatha village, about 28 km from the Seoni district headquarters, on Sunday," Barghat police station Inspector Prasanna Sharma said.

He said the three boys executed the murder like habitual killers. "They planned the crime and called their 12-year-old friend to a secluded place. They caught hold of him and strangled him with a cycle chain.

As the boy cried in pain, they smashed his head with a big stone, and slit his throat with a sharp knife which is used for slaughtering goats," Sharma said.

Man Kills Son, 7, After Dispute With Second wife: Cops

Team Absolute | Indore

A man allegedly killed his 7-year-old son allegedly after a dispute with his second wife in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district, a police official said on Monday.

The incident occurred at Limbodi locality under Tejaji Nagar police station limits in the district. The child was identified as Prateek Munde.

Munde (elder father) said, "Mother of my nephew, Prateek Munde, passed away a few years ago. After which Prateek's father Shashipal Munde had married another woman. The woman used to have a dispute with Shashipal regarding Prateek."

"On Monday morning, the grandmother saw Prateek in an unconscious state, after which we took him to the hospital where the doctors declared Prateek brought dead. Prateek was killed by his father Shashipal," Rajesh Munde claimed.

Tanwar, a sub-inspector with Tejaji Nagar police, said, "In the preliminary investigation, it came to notice that Prateek died due to beating and strangulation. The relatives said in their statement that Prateek was murdered by his father, Shashipal."

Based on the statements of the relatives, the police registered a case into the matter and launched a search to arrest the accused father, Tanwar added. Notably, Tejaji Nagar police have appealed to locals of the area to inform on getting any information about the accused.

KATNI MAN AXES WIFE AND TODDLER, LATER HANGS SELF

Katni. A man attacked his wife and a toddler with an axe and later hanged himself in Bandari village limits of Badwara in Katni on Tuesday. The wife died on the spot while the two and a half year girl is struggling between life and death.

The reason behind the incident is said to be family discord.

Superintendent of Police, Abhijeet Ranjan said, that Deep Singh Kol, a resident of Vidisha district, had come to his in-laws' house in village Bandari with his wife Roopa Kol and two-and-a-half-year-old girl. That day, he had a dispute with his family, in which he attacked daughter and wife. The wife died during the treatment.

Further investigations are underway.

15 people injured as truck overturns in Betul



Team Absolute | Betul

Fifteen people were injured when a truck carrying members of a marriage party overturned on Betul-Paratwada highway in Madhya Pradesh, a police official said on Tuesday. Five women were among those injured in the accident which took place on Monday night, sub divisional officer of police (SDOP) AC Mohit

said. The truck overturned while negotiating a blind turn, he said.

After being alerted, personnel from the nearby Bhainsdehi police station rushed to the spot and shifted the injured persons to a community health centre.

Four persons who were in a serious condition were referred to the Betul district hospital, the official said. A probe was on into the incident, he added.

CM Chouhan plants Moulshri, Amla and Mango saplings

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan

planted saplings of Moulshri, Amla and Mango in the garden located at Shyamla Hills. Along with CM Chouhan, Balshree Awardee Aadhy Dixit of Gwalior also planted saplings. Kamal Bhandari and Ashok Pariyani planted saplings on their birthdays. Kamal Bhandari is active in motivating people for body donation, eye donation and blood donation. Five members of his family have donated bodies. Pramila Bhandari and Mayuri Pariyani participated in the plantation. Along with the Chief Minister, Harsh Choudhary, Harshit Khandelwal, Shivam Khandelwal of Ratlam, Vivek Bhaskar and Raj Singh of Niwari also planted saplings.

No stone should be left unturned for corruption, take strictest action: CM Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the vicious cycle of religious conversion and terrorist activities in the state will not be allowed to succeed at any cost. There is a policy of zero tolerance on corruption in the state. Corruption will not be tolerated under any circumstances. In this sequence, a class one officer has been dismissed from service only yesterday. No stone should be left unturned in the matter of corruption, strictest action should be taken without delay. Ministers should be vigilant in their departments and ensure immediate action against corruption. Chief Minister Chouhan was addressing the ministers before the Cabinet meeting at

Mantralaya. The meeting, chaired by CM Chouhan, started with recitation of Vande-Mataram.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that the Mukhya Mantri Jan Seva Abhiyan is being run with the aim of providing facilities to the general public. It should be ensured that all the works marked for the campaign are completed within the time limit and no one should face any problem. Ministers should keep on continuously reviewing the campaign in their areas and districts of charge. There will be regular review at the state level as well. Be it Vikas Yatra or Jan Seva Abhiyan, public welfare and development activities will continue. Chief Minister Chouhan said that a special Cabinet will be held on May 17 regarding schemes for the youth.

Radical Islamic Group Converted Hindus In Madhya Pradesh: Sources

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The first Indian module of radical Islamic outfit Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT), which was busted by the Madhya Pradesh Police anti-terrorist squad (ATS) on May 9, has a religious conversion angle, sources have said.

Five suspects had married Hindu girls, with two of these men having converted to Islam only a few years prior.

ATS sources said two key accused of the busted module, including Bhopal-based gym trainer Yasir Khan and Hyderabad-based Mohd Salim, who till a few years back was known as Saurabh Rajvaidya, the son of Bhopal-based retired Ayurveda doctor Dr Ashok Jain.

Mohd Salim is a senior staff at the faculty of pharmacy at a college in Hyderabad, reportedly run by a politician's family.

ATS sources said five of the accused were converted from Hinduism to Islam, including Mohd Salim (earlier Saurabh Raj Vaidya), Abdur Rehman (earlier Devi Narayan Panda)



and Mohd Abbas Ali (earlier Benu Kumar).

Mohd Salim's parents in Bhopal's Berasiya area alleged that Dr Kamal, a senior colleague of their son when he was teaching at a private college in Bhopal in the early 2000, brainwashed him and converted him into "Salim".

"He is our only son among our five children.

It was Dr Kamal only who brainwashed him to switch to Islam and the videos of controversial fundamentalist Islamic preacher Dr Zakir Naik further contributed to our son's conversion to

Islam," his father said. "We're in no way against Islam, but are proud of our religion and culture first and totally against that form of Islam which brainwashes people against our country. Since 2010, he started talking against our religion and culture and was never ready to hear anything about the Nabi (prophet). He even threatened to assault me once for opposing the beliefs of Nabi. Possibly, it was in 2011 or 2012 that an Islamist preacher from Barabanki made my son and daughter-in-law read the Islamic Kalima at an event in Bhopal and pronounced them later as converts to Islam," his father said. He said their son was possibly planning to go to Syria in 2010-11.

After leaving home, the M.Pharma-degree holder Saurabh turned Salim and lived with his wife and two children first in Bhopal for a few years, and later shifted to Hyderabad after getting a job at a prominent college there in 2019-20.

"Madhya Pradesh Police is a pesticide for jihadi cockroaches. A probe has revealed religious conversion of seven people (arrested in the case). And those who brainwashed these

men to convert to Islam, included a gym trainer, a professor, a software engineer, a software technician and a private coaching operator. They first brainwashed youngsters to change their religion. After changing religion, the same youths who converted to the other religion, convinced their wives also to embrace the same religion. We won't allow such developments in Madhya Pradesh," state Home Minister Narottam Mishra said.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, while talking about the busting of the alleged HuT module by the state police, had said "The Kerala Story" won't be allowed to happen in Madhya Pradesh.

HuT is a radical Islamic group banned in 16 nations, including China, Germany, Russia, Bangladesh and Turkey. The outfit's aim is re-establishment of the Islamic caliphate to unite Muslims and implement the Sharia globally.

Sixteen men allegedly associated with the outfit were arrested by the ATS from Bhopal, Chhindwara and Hyderabad with the Telangana Police's help on May 9. They are in ATS remand till May 19.

Married Woman, 'Lover' Garlanded With Shoes, Probe On: Cops

Team Absolute | Katni

Madhya Pradesh Police initiated a probe after a purported video showed a 27-year-old man and a woman were seen garlanded with shoes and paraded by villagers in Sleemanabad of the State's Katni district, accusing the pair of having an affair, police said.



The incident took place under Sleemanabad police station limits in the district. A video of the incident has gone viral on social media in which the married woman and the man who is alleged to be her paramour were seen being paraded with a garland of shoes around their necks.

"On May 10 afternoon, information was received on Dial 100 from deputy sarpanch of Salarpur, Vishwanath Singh that a youth Rahul Kumar, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, came to Pipariya village and was seen in conversation with a married woman of the village and locals had caught him." Sleemanabad police station in-charge Vipin Singh said on Sunday. Acting on the information, the police team reached the village where the sarpanch, deputy sarpanch, husband of the woman, family members of the woman, the youth and others were pres-

ent. They already had participated in a panchayat meeting and told police that the woman Geeta Singh and Rahul wanted to live together and they wanted to send both of them together by performing all the formalities, he added.

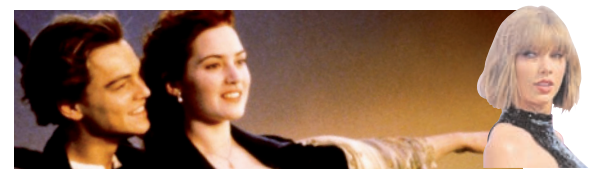
"The police had asked the woman and the youth on the spot whether they were assaulted or not, but they said that nothing had happened. After which the villagers released the woman and the youth from the village. After that there was not any information in this regard but on May 13, we received a photograph and a video in which the youth and the woman were seen with garland of shoes," the police station in charge said. He added that no complaints were received but on the basis of video and photographs which the

police received, an investigation into the matter was going on and action would be taken against those who were found guilty.

Katni Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhijeet Kumar Ranjan said, "The incident has come to our notice via social media. The incident occurred under Sleemanabad police station limits in the district. In the preliminary investigation, it came to fore that the incident took place due to a quarrel between a woman, her lover and her husband. Local police were investigating the matter."

"We have not received any complaint in the matter yet but we are taking Suo Motu action in it. Those who will be found guilty, action will be taken against them," he added.

Financial statement for WE WIN LIMITED. Includes sections for REGISTERED OFFICE, EXTRACT OF STANDALONE/CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 2023. Table with columns for Particulars, Standalone (Quarter and Year), and Consolidated (Quarter and Year).



Shania signs intimate part of fan

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Shania Twain has said that "there's a first time for everything" after she signed a fan's thigh while on-stage during a gig in Canada.

Performing her Queen of Me tour, Shania made a permanent mark on one dedicated fan, reports mirror.co.uk.

Taking to Instagram, Shania shared a clip from her sold-out show which had around 15,000 fans in attendance.

The country icon, 57, shared a video that saw a fan standing on-stage, with the singer crouched down and armed with a permanent marker.

With his thigh on full display and in eye-line with the Canadian star, the fan hitched up his shorts to show off even more flesh.

Shania is seen scribbling her signature above a tattoo that the fan already had, which was of a bed with some boots underneath it.

The fan's tattoo was probably a nod to Shania's 1995 track 'Whose Bed Have Your Boots Been Under?', which played in the background of the video she shared.

Shania crouched down, donning a cobalt blue chiffon dress and some knee-high cowboy boots. While her fan donned shorts, a black t-shirt with Shania on the front of it, and a beige cowboy hat.

Leaving her fans gobsmacked - as well as the crowd that watched on, and her fans online - Shania autographed the top of her fan's thigh while grinning in the process.

"There's a first time for everything," Shania exclaimed in the caption alongside the video clip.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Taylor Swift pauses 'Bad Blood' to tell security to lay off fan at show

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Taylor Swift took a pause in singing "Bad Blood" to repeatedly ask a guard or guards to lay off a fan as a confrontation developed in Philadelphia. As usual with anything at a Swift show, there were tens of thousands of cameras trained on her, and one 25-second clip of the singer's interjections on Twitter had amassed more than 3 million views by Sunday morning, reports Variety.

Video of what happened between the fan and security guard was harder to come by; attendees at the Lincoln Financial Field show offered reports saying alternately that the fan was being confronted for being too close to a barricade or was being pulled away for taking photos (which are not disallowed on the tour). Swift is not known for breaking character to comment on what's going on with an audience mid-song on the Eras Tour, so the interchange stood out and quickly picked up steam among international Swifties. "She's fine," Swift is first seen telling security during the number. Then: "She wasn't doing anything." The singer shouts: "Hey! Stop!" And then again, after the next scheduled use of the word "hey!" in the lyrics, she once again orders security to "stop," before resuming her singing and choreography.

Reaction on social media was enormously supportive of the singer, for being attentive to what was happening in the audience during her performance. The news also drew the attention of a far smaller number of commenters chiming in to say a performer should not be second-guessing security during a show.

The performance otherwise proceeded without incident at what Swift has called her "hometown" shows on the tour.

The "surprise songs" at Saturday's show, played for the first and possibly only time on the tour, were "Forever & Always," which she said was a Lena Dunham request, and "This Love," the former song played acoustically on guitar, the latter on piano. The previous night, at her Philadelphia opening, the surprises were "Gold Rush" and "Come Back... Be Here."

The former song had never been performed before live, and the latter was getting only its second concert appearance, after having been played once in Toronto in 2018.

The Eras tour began March 17 in Glendale, Arizona and will wrap up in the U.S. with the last night of a five-night stand at L.A.'s SoFi Stadium on August 9.

Halle Bailey of 'The Little Mermaid' shares Beyonce's advice to deal with racism



Rising Hollywood star Halle Bailey said that she is glad to have a bonafide Hollywood superstar like Beyonce on her side as she continues to find fame.

The 23-year-old actress and singer will soon be taking over the box-office as Ariel in a live version adaptation of Disney's "The Little Mermaid", reports mirror.co.uk.

The lavish adaptation is set to hit screens later this month when fans will finally be able to see Halle swim, splash and sing her way through the iconic musical. When her casting was announced back in July 2019, vile racist comments were directed towards Halle via social media.

Halle revealed that she was able to turn to a mega star for advice on how to handle the situation.

She said: "I had a private conversation with Beyonce who told me not to read the comments on any social media I post. It's kind of sad - but very good advice for your mental health."

"I started in the industry so young that mental health has always been something I have tried to prioritise."

Halle and her older sister Chloe have a special friendship with 41-year-old Beyonce who offered them a record deal after seeing them cover one of her songs on YouTube.

The sisters subsequently signed a six album deal with Beyonce's Parkwood Entertainment record label - with Chloe releasing her debut album, In Pieces, earlier this year.

AMID RUMOURS OF DATING TOM CRUISE, SHAKIRA IS FOCUSING ON HER FAMILY

Los Angeles | Agencies

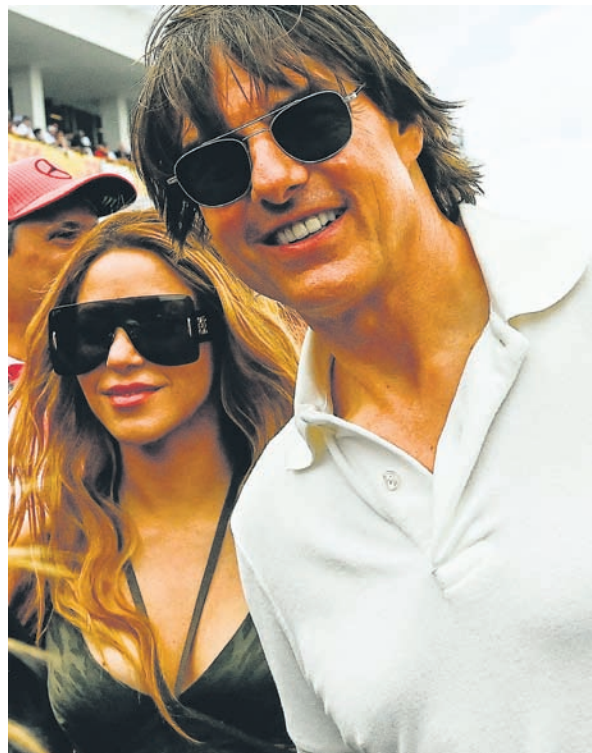
Los Angeles: Shakira is busy "focusing on her family" after being forced to deny rumours that she is dating Tom Cruise.

The pair sparked romance rumours earlier as they were spotted together in Miami at the Formula 1 Grand Prix, reports Mirror.co.uk.

A source said there was "chemistry" between Shakira and Hollywood star Tom, 60, following the singer's painful split from football star Gerard Pique. The 46-year-old singer and Barcelona defender, 36, announced their breakup in June last year after 12 years together. Gerard has since moved on with Clara Chia Marti, 24.

Mirror.co.uk further states that while "Top Gun" star Tom was said to be "extremely interested in pursuing Shakira," a family friend has revealed the pair are just friends and said that Shakira has other priorities.

"When friends are in Miami, they get together. The press wants to create a romance, but she's known Tom for a long time. She's



focused on her family," Ana Lourdes Martinez told Page Six.

A source had previously told the publication: "Shakira needs a soft pillow to fall on, and that could be Tom,"

before adding that he is "a nice-looking guy, and he is talented."

But it seems as though it's not meant to be, with Shakira reportedly having "a lot on her plate" right now.



Dwayne Johnson quit school during his earliest battle with depression

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Dwayne Johnson has discussed his struggles with depression. The star is one of the biggest names in Hollywood and explains how he suffered mental turmoil at various points during his life, from his college football days at the University of Miami to the height of his fame, reports aceshowbiz.com.

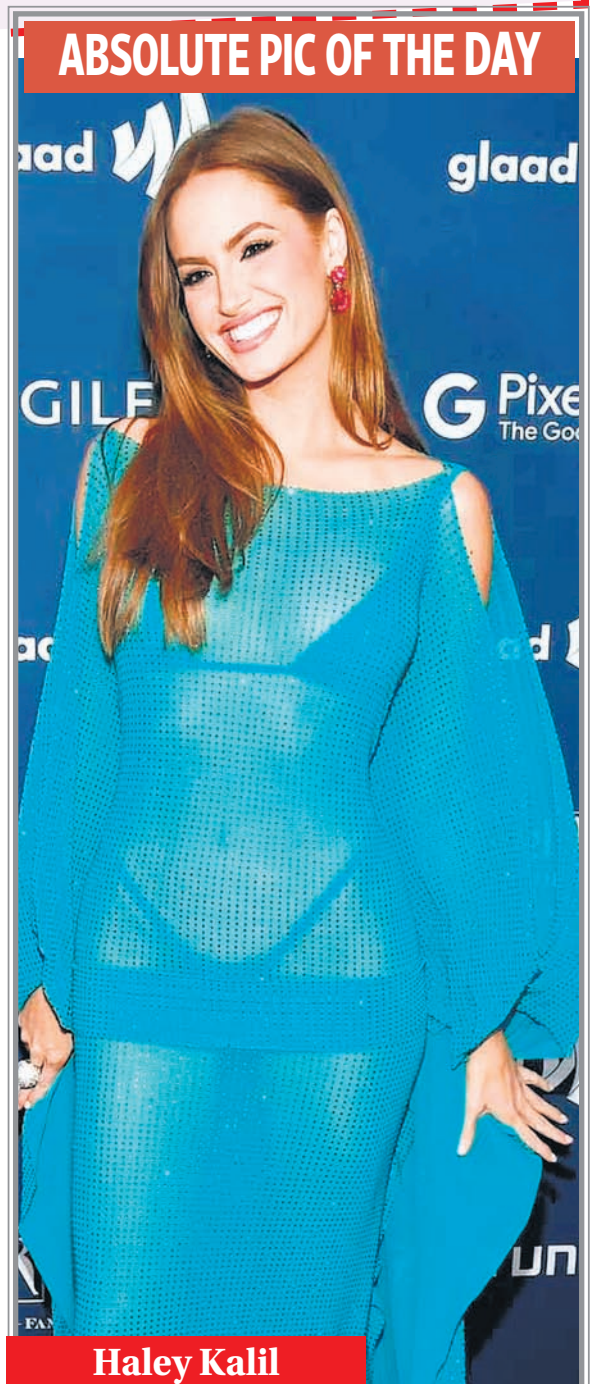
"My first battle with depression was down there in Miami. I didn't want to go to school, I was ready to leave. I left school. I didn't take any midterms and I just left."

"But the interesting thing at that time is, I just didn't know what it was, I didn't know what depression was. I just knew I didn't wanna be there," Johnson recalled on The Pivot Podcast.

He added: "I wasn't going to any of the team meetings, wasn't participating in anything, wasn't working out. And you know for us, as athletes, just any kind of sweat and getting it in will get that s*** out of you."

"I couldn't do it because of my shoulder. So at that time, that was a tough one for me and again, I didn't know what it was."

The former WWE star explained that depression has resurfaced at various points of his life despite success in both wrestling and movies, although his "saving grace" is time spent with his daughters Simone, 21, Jasmine, seven, and Tiana, five.



Haley Kalil





IPL 2023

STOINIS' UNBEATEN 89, MOHSIN'S FINAL OVER SHOW KEEP LSG IN PLAYOFF RACE

Lucknow | Agencies

Marcus Stoinis' unbeaten 89 off 47 balls and Mohsin Khan's brilliant bowling display in the final over helped Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) register a thrilling 5-run win over Mumbai Indians (MI) in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023 at the Ekana Stadium, here on Tuesday.

With this win, Lucknow jumped to the third spot in the points table with 15 points and edged closer to sealing their playoff berth with one league match to go.

Riding on Marcus Stoinis' unbeaten 89 off 47 along with skipper Krunal Pandya's 49 off 42 LSG put up a good total of 177 runs on the board.

In response, MI were off to a flying start. Skipper Rohit Sharma and Ishan Kishan were scoring runs at a brisk pace on a slow track and set a solid platform with their 92-



run opening stand. Then, LSG turned the tables in the middle overs and MI struggled in the second half of their chase.

Tim David tried his best to get them over the line, but could not get the job done as Mohsin successfully defended 10 runs in the final over to hand his side two crucial points.

Chasing 178, Ishan and Rohit provided a strong start to MI, hitting four maximums and three boundaries as MI

scored 58/0 in the Power-play.

When Ishan was continuing with his strokeplay, Ravi Bishnoi and Krunal Pandya brilliantly kept MI's run rate in check and LSG came back in the match in 10-15 overs.

In the 10th over, Rohit picked up Bishnoi's quicker googly and paddle-scooped it over a short fine with supreme ease for four. The spinner quickly bounced back and removed the MI skipper to break the 90-run

Brief scores

Lucknow Super Giants 177/3 in 20 overs (Marcus Stoinis 89, Krunal Pandya 49; Jason Behrendorff 2-30) beat Mumbai Indians 156/5 in 20 overs (Ishan Kishan 59, Rohit Sharma 37, Tim David 32 not out; Ravi Bishnoi 2-26, Yash Thakur 2-40) by 5 runs

opening stand and also completed his 50 IPL wickets.

Soon Ishan brought up his fifty with a boundary and followed that up with another four. But Bishnoi didn't let him stay

longer at the crease and trapped him with a googly. Ishan went for the pull shot. It flew off the edge and went to deep square leg where Naveen-ul-Haq settled under it and took a sharp catch.

David almost turned the tables in the penultimate over, hitting Naveen-ul-haq for two sixes and a four as the equation came down to 11 runs from the final over.

Then, Mohsin held his nerves and defended 11 runs with his well-executed

Yorkers, giving just 5 runs off the over as LSG wrapped the win by 5 runs.

Earlier, batting first, LSH had a torrid start as Jason Behrendorff's double strike in the second over sent the opener Deepak Hooda and Prerak Mankad on two successive deliveries to reduce LSH to 12/2. With Quinton de Kock's couple of sixes and Krunal Pandya's boundary, LSG were 35/2 at the end of the Power-play.

Piyush came into the attack on the next over and picked up a wicket on the first ball of his spell. While the MI bowlers dominated the proceedings, Stoinis and Krunal steadied the innings with their 82-run stand.

Krunal was experiencing cramps while running and retired himself in the 16th over, falling one short of his half-century. Then, Stoinis took MI Bowlers to cleaner, taking 54 runs off the last 3 overs to take LSG to 177/3 in 20 overs.

ASIAN POWERLIFTING CHAMPIONSHIP

Shaik Sadiya Almasa stars for India; sets new Asian Record

Vijayawada | Agencies

Shaik Sadiya Almasa, a student of KL Deemed to be University, has set a new Asian Record on her way to bagging three gold and one bronze medal in the Asian Equipped Powerlifting Championship held in Alappuzha, Kerala.

Sadiya achieved a stunning feat earning the gold medal in Squat with a record-breaking lift of 190kg, a Deadlift of an impressive 160kg, and an overall total of 427.5kg.

Additionally, she secured the bronze medal in bench press with a remarkable 77.5kg lift. Her performance not only earned her well-deserved recognition but also set a new standard in the sport.

Shaik Sadiya Almasa is presently pursuing a BA (IAS) from KL Deemed to be University. She is an International Powerlifting player from Andhra Pradesh, and her consistent performances have won her many laurels at the state and national levels. She is now



one of the most successful women Powerlifters in India. The Asian Equipped Powerlifting Championships Open Sub-Junior, Junior, and Master's Women and Men 2022, held in Coimbatore, India. She also won one gold, one bronze, and overall silver in the Junior World Powerlifting Championship in Turkey from August 26 to September 4, 2022. Her recent achievement in the Commonwealth Junior Powerlifting Championship is worth mentioning. She secured four gold medals and created three new records in Auckland, New Zealand, from November 24 to December 4, 2022.

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'No plan to bring Messi back', says Barca president

Madrid (Spain) | Agencies

FC Barcelona President Joan Laporta said on Monday that the club has re-established good relationships with Argentine legend Lionel Messi, but it would not pay any price to bring him back to the Camp Nou Stadium.

Speaking on Catalan TV network, TV3 after Barca claimed this season's La Liga title late on Sunday night, Laporta explained he had tried to build bridges with Messi in the wake of the Argentinean's move to Paris Saint Germain after being unable to fit his wages into the club's tight wage ceiling.

"I have spoken with Leo to somehow redirect the situation that occurred when I had to put the institution ahead of everything, including him, the best player in the world," said Laporta in a Monday morning TV show.

Messi will be out of contract with PSG at the end of the season, reports Xinhua.

"We have sent messages lately. The truth is that the conversation was affectionate and pleasant. We have known each other for many



years. There is a relationship," Laporta said. "He (Messi) is the best player in the world, and any coach would like to have him and with all due respect to Saudi Arabia (cited as a possible destination for Messi), where they are doing a very good job, Barca is Barca. And Barcelona is his home."

"We love Leo, but we will not move in high numbers to bring him in. The club is in an austerity plan," added Laporta.

Champions League

ALL ON THE LINE AS REAL MADRID PREPARE TO FACE MAN CITY IN SEMIS

Madrid (Spain) | Agencies

Real Madrid travelled to Manchester on Tuesday for their season-defining Champions League semifinal return leg away to Manchester City.

The 1-1 draw from the first leg leaves the tie finely balanced, with City perhaps slight favourites, but Real Madrid's skill and pace on the break means they will step onto the pitch at the Etihad Stadium on Wednesday night thinking they have every chance of reaching yet another final. Carlo Ancelotti's side may have won the European Supercup and the World Club Cup this season and then followed those tournaments up with the Copa del Rey after beating Osasuna in the final. However, they were well beaten in the Spanish Supercup by FC Barcelona and on Sunday saw how Barca assured La Liga with four games left to play, reports Xinhua.

Ancelotti will probably be safe



whatever Wednesday's result is and he has done a good job to build a side that has a clear style of play, which is able to dominate smaller teams and hit others on the break with the pace of Vinicius Jr, Fede Valverde and Rodrigo. However, Madrid President, Florentino Perez is notoriously capricious and at a club where second

place is seen as a failure, a bad defeat on Wednesday would ask a few questions of Ancelotti's future.

Last season was a campaign of miracle fightbacks for Real Madrid as they came back from the dead in the last-16 to beat Paris Saint Germain with three late goals when 2-0 down on aggregate and being outplayed.

They were also struggling in the quarterfinal against Chelsea before battling through, while last season's semifinal saw them on the ropes against Manchester City in the last minute before two goals from Rodrygo in injury time took their semifinal into extra time against a rival who probably still can't believe what happened.

All three of those fightbacks came in the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, with 80,000 fans behind them, which was a big advantage for Madrid, but this time they are away from home and it is Manchester City who will have a wall of sound behind them.

Pep Guardiola's side has the disadvantage of not playing their Premier League game away to Everton until Sunday and although he rested Kevin de Bruyne, Jack Grealish, Bernardo Silva and John Stones, Guardiola made no secret of his unhappiness at having 24 hours less recovery time than Madrid, due to the Eurovision song contest.

India set for Round 2 draw for AFC Women's Olympic Qualifying Tournament

New Delhi | Agencies

The Indian women's football team has been placed in Pot 4 along with Iran and North Korea for the final draw of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Women's Olympic Qualifying Tournament Round 2 which will be played from October 23 to November 1 this year.

A total of 12 teams will be part of the draw and will be divided into three groups in the draw that will be conducted at AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Thursday (May 18).

The field comprises seven group winners from Round 1

of qualifying and the five highest-seeded teams, who received automatic byes into Round 2.

Uzbekistan (Group A), Islamic Republic of Iran (Group B), Vietnam (Group C), Thailand (Group D), Philippines (Group E), Chinese Taipei (Group F) and India (Group G) came through in Round 1, which took place between April 1 and 11, 2023, to join big guns Australia, China, DPR Korea, Japan and South Korea in their quest to make it to Paris, the AFC said in a release on Tuesday.

Each group will play a single round-robin league for-



mat in one of three centralised venues - Australia, China or Uzbekistan. These three Host Member Associations (MAs) will be drawn into separate groups.

Four teams -- the three group winners and the best-ranked runners-up -- will then progress to Round 3 to play two pairs of home and away matches, slated for February

24 and 28, 2024, with the eventual winners taking the two spots reserved for Asia in the Women's Olympic Football Tournament Paris 2024. The 2020 Olympic edition in Tokyo saw hosts Japan exit the quarter-final stage against Sweden, while Australia finished fourth after losing a close bronze medal encounter to the USA.

How they are grouped for the draw: Pot 1: Australia, Japan, China Pot 2: Korea Republic, Vietnam, Chinese Taipei Pot 3: Thailand, Philippines, Uzbekistan Pot 4: India, IR Iran, DPR Korea

London | Agencies

England on Tuesday named their 15-man squad for the one-off Test against Ireland, starting 1 June at Lord's with Ben Stokes leading the side and Ollie Pope is the vice-captain.

England will be bolstered with the return of wicket-keeper-batter Jonny Bairstow, who was out of action since August last year after a golf accident left him with a broken left leg and dislocated ankle.

With Bairstow back in the side, Ben Foakes has been left out of the squad. Also missing will be Jofra Archer after being ruled out for the remaining summer with a recurrence of a stress fracture



to his right elbow. Making a return are fast bowlers Mark Wood and Chris Woakes, the latter coming back in the Test squad for the first time since March 2022 and if selected, it will be his first Test on home soil in the last two years.

Another positive for England is the inclusion of

James Anderson, who picked up an injury while bowling on the opening day of Lancashire's County clash against Somerset.

With the home Ashes against Australia beginning on June 16, England will be looking forward to getting some game time before facing their arch-rivals.

Reyan, Dondapati selected for Asian Junior Athletics Championship camp

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Talented sprinters Reyan Basha and Dondapati Mrutyam Jayaram have been selected to take part in the 2023 Asian Junior Athletics Championship camp, which will be held in NSSC, Bengaluru.

Both Reyan and Dondapati train at the Odisha Reliance Foundation High Performance Centre.

Reyan represents Odisha U-18 Boys and India U-18 Boys. He has one gold (100m sprint), two silver (one each in 200m sprint and 1000m medley relay) medals at the 18th National Youth Athletics U-18 Championship, which was held in Udupi in March 2023. He also made a successful international debut by



winning the boys medley relay silver medal at the 5th Asian Youth U-18 Athletics Championship, which was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in April 2023.

On the other hand, Dondapati Mrutyam Jayaram won the gold in 100m sprint at the Khelo India Youth Games with timings of 10:53 seconds. He also secured first position in the Junior Fed Cup Championship 2023 and

at the National Junior Championship 2022 in the 100m category.

He was also selected for the relay squad for the Asian U-20 Championship camp. In February 2023, Dondapati was also awarded Rs 1 lakh for winning the gold medal in 100m sprint with an impeccable timing of 10.96 seconds at the Khelo India Youth Games, which was held in February this year.

Italian open

Alcaraz's loss against Marozsan changes the battle for World No. 1

Rome | Agencies

Carlos Alcaraz's early exit from the Italian Open with loss against Fabian Marozsan has repercussions beyond the Rome ATP Masters 1000 event and it also could have a big effect on the battle for No. 1 in the ATP Rankings.

The Spaniard will return to World No. 1 next Monday, but instead of departing the Foro Italico with a sizable advantage, Alcaraz may be left with only a narrow lead if Novak Djokovic and Daniil Medvedev push on to have deep runs in the Italian capital.

If Djokovic and Medvedev both lose in the fourth round on Tuesday, Alcaraz will lead Djokovic by 950 points and



Medvedev by 1,395 points. But both stars can claim plenty of points on the Italian clay. Djokovic, a six-time Rome champion, can reach 6,775 points by the end of the tournament, which would bring him

within 40 of Alcaraz's 6,815. Since both men lost in the quarter-finals at Roland Garros last year and will therefore drop the same number of points (360), that would set up an epic World No. 1 battle in Paris.

RYBAKINA ADVANCES TO QUARTERFINALS



Rome | World No. 6 Elena Rybakina advanced to her first Italian open quarter-final after defeating Marketa Vondrousova 6-3, 6-3.

The reigning Wimbledon champion will face either two-time defending

champion Iga Swiatek or No.24 Donna Vekic in the quarterfinals today.

Rybakina now awaits the winner between No.1 Swiatek and Vekic. A match against Swiatek would be the third between the pair this season, with Rybakina having won all four sets they played. Those wins came on the hard courts at the Australian Open and Indian Wells



Jacqueline Fernandes

GROOVES TO BLACKPINK JISOO'S 'FLOWER'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandes jumped on the trending song 'Flower' bandwagon and shared a video on social media. 'Flower' is a viral track by singer Jisoo, who is a part of the K-Pop all girls super band BLACKPINK.

Taking to Instagram, Jacqueline shared a transition video from her 'Dabangg' tour, where she was seen doing the hook step of the track which is currently all over social media.

In the first half of the clip, Jacqueline sported a casual look and then the video transitioned to her wearing her stage outfits.

She captioned the video: "Dabangg the Tour Reloaded KOLKATA. Thank you for so much love!"

On the professional front, Jacqueline will be next seen opposite Sonu Sood in 'Fateh'.

SARA ALI KHAN EXPLAINS WHY SHE ENJOYS BEING 'AN INDIAN DESI GIRL'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sara Ali Khan believes that the relatability of her characters comes from the fact that she strongly relates with the pulse of her country and enjoys being "an Indian desi girl."

Her girl-next-door avatar has always been a

fan favourite and once again she will be seen playing a young middle-class woman opposite Vicky Kaushal in the forthcoming Laxman Utekar directorial 'Zara Hatke Zara Bachke'. When asked if she opts for such roles only to gain an edge over other actors, Sara Ali Khan said: "I don't know if it's about gaining an edge, but the truth is that I think I really relate very strongly with the pulse of my country. I have grown up thinking of myself as just another Indian desi girl from Juhu, who lives with her mama, and doesn't really have any frills and fancies, and filmy friends, to be honest with you."

Continuing in the same vein, Sara said: "So, one has always grown up being very proud of one's Indian-ness. I think that is a more personal thing; I think it is (Abhishek Kapoor) Gatto sir's vision or (Anand L. Rai) Anand Sir's guidance, or Laxman Sir's instructions that make me feel like a character you can relate to, I think that is what this really is all about, at least for me."

Abhishek Kapoor helmed Sara in the much-acclaimed 'Kedarnath' and Anand L. Rai in the Dhanush-Akshay Kumar-starrer 'Atrangi Re'.

A small-town love story about two warring partners, 'Zara Hatke Zara Bachke' is backed by Dinesh Vijan under the Maddock Films banner. The film, slated for a June 2 release, also stars Rakesh Bedi, Sharib Hashmi and Neeraj Sood.

BHUVAN BAM TO BACK NEW TALENTS FROM SMALL TOWNS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

YouTube sensation and actor Bhuvan Bam is planning to use his own production house as a medium to support new talent and hire people from smaller towns who might not get the exposure in the department of scripting, editing, lyrics, and in other technical departments. Rohit Raj, the co-founder of BB Ki Vines, said: "We as a production house wants to do our bit by giving a chance to all the aspiring talents in writing and technical departments who lack information from where to start in the entertainment world. Like them we had our share of journey in the industry hence we understand the process and its struggles and want to become a medium for such budding talents by giving them fair opportunity in our production house."

Bhuvan says: "I know what a life of a struggle is and what it's like to be someone who is an outsider, with no contacts in the industry. Today, whatever I am, it's because of all the love I got from people across the country. Now, in a way to say thank you, I am going to use my own production house as a medium to hire talented people from smaller towns who might not get the exposure that some of their other counterparts from big cities. It is a small idea which I hope will make a big impact on someone's life. Bhuvan's last release was 'Taaza Khabar', a fantasy thriller, which is out on Disney+ Hotstar and is considered as one of the most popular series of the year."



NIMRAT KAUR TO STAR IN THRILLER OTT SERIES 'SCHOOL OF LIES'

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Actress Nimrat Kaur, who is known for films such as 'The Lunchbox', 'Airlift' and 'Dasvi', will soon be seen in the upcoming drama-thriller streaming series 'School of Lies'.

The series is a drama thriller set in the fictional Dalton Town, surrounded by hills. The story follows a young 12-year-old boy, who goes missing from a private boarding school RISE, and how the subsequent domino effect it causes as the truth is only as complex, as simple.

The series also stars Aamir Bashir, Geetika Vidya Ohlyan, Sonali Kulkarni, Jitendra Joshi, Vir Pachisia, Shakti Anand, Mohan Kapur, Varin Roopani, Divyansh Dwivedi, Aryan Singh Ahlawat, Hemant Kher, Parthiv Shetty, Adrija Sinha and Alekh Kapoor.

Gautam Gulati

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Bigg Boss 8' winner and actor Gautam Gulati was recently spotted in



IS DOING 'SOMETHING REALLY BIG ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL'

London,

reportedly shooting for a new project. He said that he is doing something "really big" on an international level there.

Gautam, who is currently a co-judge on MTV Roadies season 19 alongside Rhea Chakraborty, Prince Narula and Sonu Sood, is shooting for an international project, marking a significant milestone in his career.

While details about the project remain under wraps, the actor is set to captivate audiences globally with his upcoming international project for a web-series.

Speaking of his upcoming project, Gautam said: "I am doing something really big on an international level in London."

He added: "It's something really exciting for an equally big and valued channel there. It's a web series, and I'm the only Indian actor on the cast. I am really excited and looking forward to it."



Ruhi opens up about battling homesickness

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As television actress Ruhi Chaturvedi gears up for the upcoming season of 'Khatron Ke Khiladi', she opened up about the challenges of staying away from home for a prolonged period and feeling homesick.

The actress, who has never been away from her husband Shivendra Saainiyol after marriage, said that being a homebody, the thought of being all by herself for the show is daunting.

Speaking from Cape Town, where she is currently shooting for 'Khatron Ke Khiladi 13', Ruhi said: "I am missing my husband and home terribly. Any challenge seems tougher when you are away from your loved ones. But I am trying to stay positive and focused on the task at hand."

She added: "Before leaving for the show, I spent quality time with my family and friends, who are all huge fans of Khatron Ke Khiladi. Their support and advice have been invaluable. And of course, my husband has been my rock throughout this journey, constantly motivating and encouraging me to face my fears and do my best."



Sonal Chouhan