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# HISTORIC GOLD

## Satwik and Chirag made history after winning in Asian Badminton Championships

***THIS WAS INDIA'S SECOND GOLD MEDAL IN THE ASIAN BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER DINESH KHANNA BAGGED THE MEN'S SINGLES GOLD IN 1965. THEY WERE ALSO THE FIRST INDIAN PAIR TO REACH THE FINAL OF THE ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP AND WENT ON TO WIN THE GOLD MEDAL.***

**DUBAI** | Agencies

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty made history on Sunday by winning India's second gold medal in the Badminton Asia Championships, beating Malaysia's eighth seeds Yew Sin Ong and Ee Yi Teo in the men's doubles final here.

Satwiksairaj and Chirag defeated the Malaysians Yew Sin Ong and Ee Yi Teo 16-21, 21-17, 21-19 in the final in the 2023 edition, coming back from losing the first game to win the next two games and win the historic gold medal.

Satwik and Chirag, who won the bronze medal in Men's Doubles at the 2022 World Championships in Tokyo, have claimed two bronze medals in the Asian Team Championships (2016, 2020).

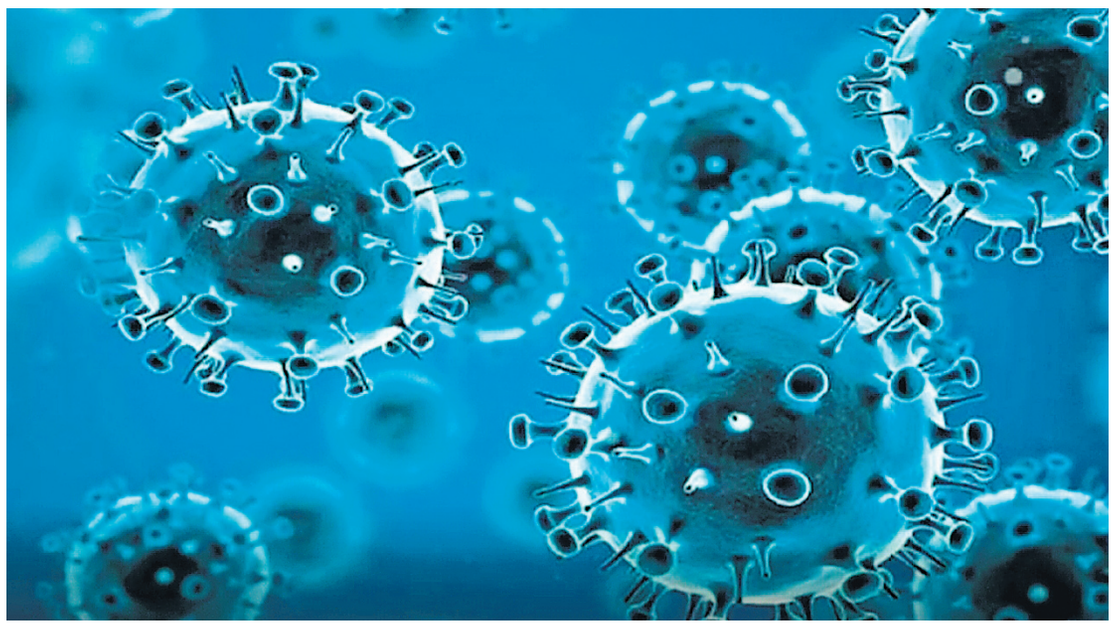
The gold on Sunday could be considered the biggest medal in their career thus far as the Indian duo has won five titles on the BWF World Tour and have twice finished runners-up.

# HOW DANGEROUS COVID VARIANTS EMERGE

# Decode

***ALL VIRUSES, INCLUDING THE SARS-COV-2 VIRUS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, CHANGE OVER TIME. THE LONGER A VIRUS CIRCULATES WITHIN THE POPULATION AND THE MORE INDIVIDUALS IT INFECTS, THE MORE CHANGES (MUTATIONS) IT ACCUMULATES. TYPICALLY, NEW STRAINS OF A VIRUS ARE SIMILAR TO THEIR PARENTAL STRAINS.***

***HOWEVER, IN SOME CASES, MUTATIONS MAY RESULT IN VARIANTS THAT ARE BETTER ADAPTED TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND POSE A HIGHER RISK TO HUMAN HEALTH. THESE VARIANTS TEND TO SPREAD MORE QUICKLY, MAY NOT RESPOND TO EXISTING VACCINES OR TREATMENTS, AND COULD BE MORE DIFFICULT TO DIAGNOSE.***



**MOSCOW** | Agencies

A team of Russian researchers has uncovered the mechanisms behind the emergence of new and dangerous coronavirus variants, such as Alpha, Delta, Omicron, and others.

The team, led by those from the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE), discovered that the likelihood of a substitution occurring at a specific site of the SARS-CoV-2 genome is dependent on concordant substitutions occurring at other sites.

This explains why new and more contagious variants of the virus can emerge unexpectedly and differ significantly from those that were previously circulating, they wrote in the paper published in the journal eLife.

"The evolution of a virus within a population can be likened to a journey across a vast terrain with ravines, valleys, and hills. The virus roams randomly through this landscape, dying quickly if it falls into a cavity, surviving longer in valleys, and thriving when on peaks," said Alexey Neverov, from the HSE International Laboratory of Statistical and Computational Genomics.

For the study, the team analysed over three million genome sequences of different strains of SARS-CoV-2. They identified particular sites on the surface protein of the coronavirus where amino acid substitutions occurred, differentiating the variants from both the original Wuhan strain and from one another.

Many of these sites appeared to be concordantly evolving, so that changes in amino acids at one site were rapidly followed by changes at another site. All the active and dangerous variants of the virus were distinguished from the previously prevalent variants by patterns of multiple substitutions.

"Individuals with long-term Covid-19 may potentially harbour an accumulation of variants which are poorly adapted for survival in the general population. However, over time, these variants can evolve into stronger forms that have the potential to spread widely and conquer the world," Neverov explained.

The team suggest an explanation as to why intermediate variants that differ from the original virus by only one or two substitutions may not be visible. It's possible that these 'weak' variants only become 'strong' when they gather the whole pattern of individually deleterious substitutions. As a result, predicting the emergence of a new highly adaptive strain is hard, the researchers said.

The statistical method employed by the study's authors is versatile and can be utilised to investigate the evolution of numerous other pathogens. In particular, this approach has been successfully applied to studying the evolution of influenza and tuberculosis.

# PM Modi addresses 100th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat'

**New Delhi** | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said his monthly radio broadcast 'Mann Ki Baat' has become a unique festival of goodness and positivity for the countrymen.

Addressing the 100th episode of his monthly radio broadcast, the Prime Minister said: "Friends, October 3, 2014 (the day when the first episode was aired) was the festival of Vijaya Dashami and all of us together started the journey of 'Mann Ki Baat' on that day. Vijaya Dashami is the festival of victory of good over evil. Mann Ki Baat has also become a unique festival of goodness and positivity of the countrymen," he said during the 100th episode of his monthly radio broadcast.

"Today is the hundredth episode of 'Mann Ki Baat'. I have received thousands of letters from all of you, lakhs of messages and I have tried to read as many letters as possible, have a look at them and try to understand the messages a bit," Modi added.

The prime minister went on to add that whether it is about education or culture, whether it is about its preservation or promotion, this has been an ancient tradition of India. "The work that the country is doing in this direction today is really commendable. Be it the National Education Policy or the option of studying in a regional language, or technology integration in education, you will notice many such efforts. Years ago, programmes like 'Gunotsav and Shala Praveshotsav' had become a wonderful example of public participation in Gujarat to providing better education and reducing dropout rates," he said.

Modi said that through the programme, he has tried to highlight the efforts of many such people, who are selflessly working for education.

# 11 dead after gas leak at Ludhiana factory

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

11 people have died after they fell unconscious due to a gas leak incident at a factory in the Giaspura area of Ludhiana in Punjab. Four more people, who were taken ill, are undergoing treatment at a hospital, police said. A rescue team was rushed to the spot, and doctors, an ambulance, and a fire brigade team have also been stationed at the spot. A 50-member team of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has also reached the site. The affected area has been cordoned off.

Police said the casualties comprise five women and six men. Two boys, aged 10 and 13, are among the 11 who died in the incident, police said.

"Definitely, it is a gas leak case. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team is present at the spot to evacuate the people and will conduct the rescue operation," Swati Tiwana, Sub Divisional Magistrate, Ludhiana, told news agency. The nature and sources of the gas are not known yet, and the NDRF team will investigate it, she said.

The immediate priority is to evacuate the area, which is densely populated, Tiwana added.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah expressed grief at the loss of lives and said the NDRF team is engaged in relief work. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Bhagwant Mann said the incident was very painful and added that all possible help is being provided.

"The incident of a gas leak at a factory in the Giaspura area of Ludhiana is very sad. Police, government and NDRF teams are present at the spot. All possible help is being provided. Rest details soon," he tweeted in Punjabi.

Punjab Health Minister Dr Balbir Singh on Sunday announced Rs2 lakhs compensation to the family members of the victims and Rs 50,000 for those injured and admitted to the hospital in the Ludhiana Gas leak incident.

# *Delhi Police provide security to 7 women wrestlers*

**New Delhi:** The Delhi Police on Sunday provided security to all seven women wrestlers who have lodged complaints against Brijbhushan Sharan Singh, the president of Wrestling Federation of India. The Supreme Court had asked the Delhi Police to provide appropriate security to the victims who have levelled allegations against Singh.

The Delhi Police have also called all the women wrestlers to join the probe and get their 161 CrPC statement recorded so that they could decide the future course of action.

Sources said that in a day or two the women wrestlers can come to Delhi Police's Connaught Place Police Station to get their statements recorded.

# *Heavy Rain, Hailstorm likely in several parts of India over next three days*

*In a tweet, IMD said, "Heavy rainfall very likely in isolated regions of North-West India, Central India, South India, East-India and North-East India Hailstorm very likely in isolated regions of North-West India, Central, Eastern and Western of India."*

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday issued an alert regarding heavy rainfall and hailstorm at isolated places in several parts of the country during the next three days.

Meanwhile, IMD issued a warning at 10 am regarding light to moderate spells of rain in several places in Maharashtra.

"Light to Moderate spells of rain is very likely to occur at isolated places in the districts of Mumbai, Thane and Palghar during the next 3-4 hours, said the India Meteorological Department, Mumbai.

The India Meteorological Department on Saturday also issued an orange alert in Shimla and some parts of Himachal Pradesh for increased rainfall activity after May 1 and 2.

This comes as a result of rainfall in the state over the past twenty-four hours. The temperatures in the capital city and the adjoining areas of Himachal Pradesh have also dipped by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius.

Earlier, While the country celebrated the Akshaya Tritiya festival on April 22, farmers in Maharashtra's Buldhana also staged a unique protest at Sangrampur tehsil office premises accusing the state government of inaction after unseasonal rains damaged their crops.

Workers and farmers of the Farmers' Organization staged the protest in the Sangrampur tehsil office premises demanding the opening of a government gram procurement centre and onion subsidy for summer onions.

The unseasonal rains across the state caused considerable damage to crops and caused huge losses to the farmers.

# Kashmiri Pandit organisations claim temple land in Srinagar used for 'illegal construction'

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

Despite building permission from the Srinagar municipal corporation (SMC) and a 'No Objection Certificate' from the revenue department, Kashmiri Pandit organisations allege that the piece of land over which a super specialty hospital is coming up in J&K's Srinagar city is temple property.

In its letter sent to the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah on April 24, Kashmiri Pandit Sangarash Samiti (KPSS), an organisation of Kashmiri Pandits, has said, "The usurping of temple land owned by Durga Nag Trust and after that construction of building illegally against the directions of the Hon'ble High Court, passed in one of the petitions filed / represented by the members of the KPSS, and which will be run as Paras Hospital is one of the glaring examples that how a system is used in very dignified way in order to strip down the property belonging to the temple and make it a third party concern and subsequently earn revenue out of it and use it against the Kashmiri Pandit settlements.

"KPSS have submitted a number of complaints about this construction and implementation of Hon'ble High Court directions which were passed from time to time but the concerned officers, acted deaf and dumb."

Another Kashmiri Pandit organisation called JK Peace Forum has also levelled allegations of illegal construction by vested interests on the Darga Nag temple property in Srinagar.

In a press statement, the forum said, "Since the last 33 years, no successive governments took any initiative to protect temple properties of minorities of Kashmir, despite repeated court orders, temple properties have been illegally given on lease.

# RSS-BACKED BODY TO HOLD MEGA RALLY IN KOLKATA AGAINST CORRUPTION

**Kolkata** | Agencies

The Citizen Empowerment Forum, reportedly enjoying the backing of the RSS and its affiliates, will be bringing out a mega rally in Kolkata next week on the issue of incidents of corruption in West Bengal.

The event will take place on May 5, on the occasion of Buddha Purnima. First there will be a rally which will start from in front of the ancestral house of Swami Vivekananda at Simla Street in north Kolkata.

The meeting will end in front of the Kolkata Metro station the five- point crossing of Shyambazar also in north Kolkata, where there will be a meeting on this issue.

Organisers said that they have already applied to the city police for permission to conduct this rally and meeting. "If the police deny permission, we will be moving to the court to get the same," an organiser said.

However, the organizers have decided to give this programme an apolitical shape as far as possible and hence none of the state leaders of BJP will be invited to attend the programme.

While the prime focus of the rally followed by the meeting on May 5 will be corruption, the organizers claimed, another highlighting point will be the continuous air of tension and political violence in West Bengal that started since the 2021 Assembly elections and has continued till date.

According to organiser, Sachindra Nath Singha, who is also in charge of the West Bengal unit of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the present situation in West Bengal calls for a unity of people from all walks of life and a joint protest against the issues of corruption and violence.

"Our initiative does not have any sort of political motive. Complete social disorder is going on in West Bengal now. We are just protesting against that by involving people from all walks of life," he said.

## UP YOUTH ENDS LIFE OVER EXCESS SALT IN FOOD

**Lucknow:** A youth ended his life after he was reportedly served food with excess salt in his house.The youth had an argument with his family members and shot himself on Saturday night.

The youth, identified as Puran Shanker Dubey, 22, of Neelmatha area was suffering from piles and avoided food with too much salt and spice. On Saturday night, he came home drunk and kicked up a row after tasting food that had excess salt.His family members shouted back at him for making a fuss, said the police. His father Uma Shanker, a priest at a temple in the locality, said "Puran went inside his room and shot himself. After hearing the gunshot, we found Puran lying in his blood and rushed him to the trauma centre of KGMU where he died during treatment."He said Puran had a gunshot wound on his chest. He failed to explain how and from where Puran got the country-made pistol.Puran's elder brother is under treatment at a drug rehabilitation centre.

# People of J&K can't be deprived of elected govt for long time: Azad

**Srinagar** | Agencies

Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) chairman Ghulam Nabi Azad on Sunday said that the time has come for the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir and it is undemocratic to deprive the people of an elected government for a long time.

The former Union minister said that DPAP is a party that believes in democratic values and will ensure that various pro-people initiatives are launched to benefit the weaker sections of people in our society if elected to power.

"If the DPAP is elected to power we will ensure the poor are provided free electricity and other benefits so that they won't face burden on their budget. We will also work to create diverse economic opportunities in various sectors including tourism, agriculture and horticulture so that the economy of common people improves," he said while addressing a public gathering at Bandipora. Azad said that when he was the Chief minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, he granted the district status to Bandipora, opened hospitals, colleges and set up a long network of roads to benefit the people.

However, it has been a long time since then and the development in the district seems at a halt now and successive governments have overlooked the growing infrastructural requirements of the district, he said.Azad said that unlike other people, he would not make false promises and keep people in the dark.

# Andhra CID arrests TDP leaders in chit fund company case

**Amaravati** | Agencies

The Andhra Pradesh Police's CID on Sunday arrested former Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MLC Adireddy Appa Rao and his son and TDP state Executive Secretary Adireddy Srinivasa Rao in a case relating to financial irregularities in a chit fund company.

The CID sleuths arrested the father-son duo from their residence in Rajamahendravaram and shifted them to the CID office. Appa Rao, who is the husband of TDP Rajahmundry MLA Adireddy Bhavani and their son Srinivasa Rao are said to be directors in Jagajjanani Chit Funds Private Ltd. The main opposition party condemned the arrests. Several party leaders and workers reached the party office in Rajamahendravaram and voiced their protest over the arrests. Meanwhile, TDP national President and former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu spoke to Bhavani over phone and expressed solidarity with her. Naidu said that the political harassment and vendetta by the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government is increasing by the day. He lamented that there is no change in the ruling party's behavior. The TDP President said the YSRCP government believed only in illegal cases and illegal arrests. He said the arrest of Appa Rao and Srinivasa Rao is another example of the YSRCP government's politics of vendetta.

Naidu alleged that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy does not want anybody to do business in the state. "Is CID a government investigation agency or YSRCP threatening agency," he asked

The TDP chief said despite courts reprimanding the government on many occasions, the Jagan government has not mend its ways.

TDP's Andhra Pradesh unit chief Atchanaidu said the party was not afraid of illegal cases and arrests.

He alleged that there is no difference between YSRCP 'goondas' and CID officials. The former minister said while on one hand, YSRCP leaders were resorting to physical attacks on TDP workers, the CID, on the other, is raiding the houses of TDP leaders in the name of searches.

## CLASH BETWEEN SPECTATORS DURING IPL MATCH IN DELHI

**New Delhi:** A few spectators clashed at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here even as an IPL match was being played between Delhi Capitals and Sunrisers Hyderabad.

The incident happened on Saturday. A senior police official said that the incident of scuffle between a few spectators sitting in the public enclosure at the Mohinder Amarnath Stand, occurred during the IPL match. The official said that during a match policemen always remain present in the public enclosure in uniform as well as plain clothes. An officer present in that enclosure immediately intervened and separated them. "All the spectators were pacified and no complaint was made by either party. They were warned and bound to sit peacefully. On inquiry, it was found that it was started with arguments between a few people on a petty issue of blocking the view," the official said.

The police said that no complaint was given by anyone with regard to the incident and that the matter was settled amicably.

# Nitish has gained some success, but goal post is quite far: Shivanand Tiwari

**Patna** | Agencies

With Nitish Kumar getting support from opposition leaders, a discussion is underway about who is the better Chanakya in the electoral battle -- Amit Shah, Nitish Kumar or Sharad Pawar.

All of them are special in their own way but their ability to formulate poll strategy will be tested during the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

"For now, if we talk in the perspective of Bihar, Nitish Kumar is getting initial success as big leaders of the country are supporting him in his initiative for opposition unity. The role of the Congress party is extremely crucial for opposition unity. Its leaders have to show big hearts and allow regional parties to flourish in their own strongholds. For example, the Congress party had contested the previous West Bengal assembly election and not won a single seat. It has won one seat in a bypoll. Similarly, it contested 403 seats in Uttar Pradesh and won only two seats in the 2022 assembly election. It faces an identical situation in Telangana too," said Shivanand Tiwari, vice president of the RJD.

"The role of Nitish Kumar as a matchmaker is crucial here. He came up with the 'one seat one candidate' formula which was accepted by the Congress party. This was the reason why Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had a conversation with Nitish Kumar followed by a meeting with Rahul Gandhi. The proposal of Nitish Kumar was also accepted by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Uttar Pradesh former CM Akhilesh Yadav. Still, the skills of Nitish Kumar will be tested when he manages to bring all these leaders on one platform. The political path of Nitish Kumar to bring all these leaders on one platform is not easy, followed by a unanimous decision on one seat, one candidate formula and most importantly a positive result in the 2024 Lok Sabha poll," Tiwari said.

# JUVENILE HELD FOR RAPING MINOR IN DELHI'S KALYANPURI

A juvenile was held for allegedly sexually assaulting a minor in the Kalyanpuri area, officials said.

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

A senior police official said that on Saturday night, an information was received at police station Kalyanpuri that a girl child was sexually assaulted by a boy.

Seeing the gravity of the incident a police team was sent to the spot.

During inquiry, the victim alleged that she was sexually assaulted by the boy.

The police team took the girl to a nearby government hospital where she was made to undergo a medical test which established sexual assault.

"The girl was medically examined at the LBS Hospital and was counselled by child care counsellor," the police said.

The official said that the victim was playing in the street in the evening when the accused took her to a vacant house in front of a park near his residence and sexually assaulted her. The victim somehow ran away from the spot raising an alarm. The accused too fled from there.

"The victim narrated the incident to her mother after which the police were informed. On medical examination, doctors confirmed the assault. A case under section 376 IPC and 6 POCSO Act has been registered and the accused has been apprehended. He was found to be a juvenile," said the police.

# Minor thief tied to pole, brutally thrashed in Bihar's Muzaffarpur

**Patna** | Agencies

Mob 'justice' has become frequent in Bihar and one such incident was reported from Muzaffarpur district on Sunday when a thief was tied to an electric pole and brutally beaten by local villagers before police rescued him.

The incident occurred at Madhopur Susta village under Sadar police station in the district.

A minor, who entered a shop by breaking through its asbestos roof, was spotted stealing by locals, who surrounded the shop and brought him outside.

They then tied the alleged thief to an electric pole and brutally assaulted him. The thief kept on pleading for mercy but no one paid any heed to him. Some of them even made a video of the incident and uploaded it on social media.

When local police learnt about the incident, they immediately went to Madhopur Susta village and rescued the minor.

"We have rescued the minor from the mob. The villagers have levelled allegations of stealing goods from a shop. We are investigating it," Sadar SHO Satyendra Mishra said.

# Mumbai woman shot dead in brawl between neighbours

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

In a shocking incident, a 30-year-old woman was shot dead by a neighbour after a heated quarrel among two women, a police officer said here late on Saturday.

The victim has been identified as Farzana Irfan Sheikh (30), and the incident took place in the Indira Nagar Mandal area in Mankhurd suburb, confirmed DCP Hemraj Rajput.

The matter came to light after a caller tipped off the PCR at around 7.15 p.m. about a gunfire in the area, following which a team from the Mankhurd police station reached the spot.

However, the area was almost deserted as the scared locals had scurried to hide in their homes. The police found the victim's body lying there in a pool of blood with a bullet injury on her chest.

Farzana's father, Mohammed Choudhary, who also reached the spot, later lodged a police complaint.

An official said that a huge fight broke out between the women of two neighbouring families for some unknown reasons.

The husband and son of one of them whipped out a pistol and allegedly fired at Farzana before fleeing from the spot. The police said that they have sent out teams to nab the absconding duo.

# 300 Assam Police officers to be given VRS for 'habitual drinking'

At least 300 Assam Police officers, who are "habitual drinkers", will be given the option of voluntary retirement, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Sunday.

**Guwahati** | Agencies

According to him, those police personnel drink too heavily and that is adversely affecting their service. People have serious complaints against such police personnel, he added.

Sarma said that the procedure has already started, and new hiring will be done to fill these 300 positions.

"Around 300 officers and staff in the state police department are habitual drinkers, and their bodies have suffered as a result. For them, the government maintains a voluntary retirement scheme (VRS). They will be given that," he said.

He further said that the rules were already there for such "offenders".

"It is an old rule, but we had not implemented it earlier," Sarma, who also holds the Home portfolio, told reporters on the sidelines of a programme here.

The Chief Minister further claimed that he is also trying to decentralise the government, and he has started the procedure for opening offices with power and responsibilities that were once held by the Deputy Commissioners' office in each of the state's 126 Assembly constituencies.

"We are working to make the Deputy Commissioners' office accessible in all areas in an assembly constituency so that people don't have to drive to the district headquarters for many official works," he said.

"The Deputy Commissioners will look after law and order, and they will be given different responsibilities," he added.

The Assam government is mulling a major overhaul of the administration and is set to convert each district in the state to administrative and economic units.

The massive alteration in the state administration will begin as the BJP government in the state led by Sarma is set to complete two years in May.

The Chief Minister has called for a three-day meeting with the District Commissioners to discuss the revamp issue. It has been scheduled to occur between May 12 and 14 in Tinsukia district.

# Madhya Pradesh witnesses unseasonal rain, hailstorm

**Team Absolute** | Bhopal

Unseasonal rainfall along with hailstorm were witnessed in several parts of Madhya Pradesh, including Bhopal and Indore on Sunday, the Met Office said.

According to the data received from the regional office of India Meteorological Department (IMD) here in Bhopal, till 5.30 p.m. (Sunday), Khajuraho received the highest 44.4 mm rainfall, while 35.1 mm rain was recorded in Bhopal.

In Bhopal, the sky was cloudy since morning and the city received light showers at different intervals. However, in the afternoon, the city received moderate rainfall.

Indore recorded 14.2 mm rain, while the only hill station in Madhya Pradesh, Pachmarhi, witnessed 14 mm rainfall.

The IMD has predicted that light to moderate rain with hailstorms and lightning are likely to continue till May 4 in several parts of the state.

The weather office in Bhopal said that due to moisture from the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and the activation of the Western Disturbance, rainy weather will prevail till the first week of May.

## 10 YEARS RECORD BROKEN IN BHOPAL

In Bhopal, the rain has broken the record of the last 10 years. It has rained about 1.25 inches in the last 24 hours. At the same time, about 2 inches of rain was recorded in Khajuraho. On April 20, 2013, Bhopal recorded the highest rainfall of 30.8 mm in 24 hours, but on Sunday it recorded more than 35.1 mm of rain. Similarly, in Khajuraho, it rained close to two inches i.e. 44 mm. Meteorologist Ashfaq Hussain said that due to the western disturbance being active, the rains are continuing across the state. The weather will remain like this till May 4.

# MP CONSUMER COURT ASKS BYJU'S, SRK TO RETURN FEES & PAY COMPENSATION

**Team Absolute** | Bhopal

A district consumer court in Madhya Pradesh has issued a notice to the Byju's manager and its promoter and Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan for alleged "fraudulent behaviour" and "unfair trade practice" on the complaint of a woman, and has asked them to return the fees besides paying compensation.

The action came on the basis of a complaint filed by an Indore-based woman Priyanka Dikshit.

The woman had complained that she was encouraged to take admission to Byju's coaching (course) for preparation of IAS in 2021 and had deposited Rs 1.8 lakh fees, but no coaching facility was provided to her.

She alleged that despite assurance of a refund of the amount, the fee amount was not refunded. Following which, the woman lodged a complaint alleging that she was encouraged to take admission in Byju's coaching (course) by placing false and misleading online advertisements on behalf of the opposition parties.The complainant had named actor Shah Rukh Khan as one of the respondents after claiming that she had enrolled for the firm's coaching course in order to prepare for the Union Public Service Commission's civic exams after being influenced by its advertisement issued on January 13, 2021.

Hearing the matter on Wednesday, Indore district consumer court directed that the amount payed by the complainant must be returned. "Rs 1.08 lakh in fees deposited by complainant Priyanka Dixit at the time of admission in 2021 must be returned along with 12 per cent annual interest, while Rs 5,000 must be given to her as litigation cost and Rs 50,000 as compensation for financial and mental agony," court said in it's order.

The court also said the local manager of Byju's and actor Khan must pay the amount "jointly or severally" to Dixit.

"Since the respondents (Byju's manager and actor Shah Rukh Khan) remained absent even after notices were served in the case and no reply was submitted on their behalf, unilateral action was taken against them," order copy read.

# With MP polls not far away, corona is the latest political abuse

**Sundeep Pouranik** | Bhopal

With elections in Madhya Pradesh just a few months away, the political temperature has started rising slowly in the state. The statements of the leaders are also increasing. Now a new remark 'coronavirus' has entered the political field for targeting each other.

Elections in the BJP-ruled state are scheduled to be held by the end of this year.

The effect of Covid has also started showing in politics. Many leaders are connecting each other to Covid.

Madhya Pradesh politics heated up again as the BJP and the Congress engaged in a war of words over Digvijaya Singh's recent 'Covid' remark. State Water Resources Minister Tulsi Ram Silawat took a jibe at the former CM and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh over his remark "Hey Mahakal, a second Jyotiraditya Scindia should not be born in the Congress."

Silawat said Digvijaya Singh is the coronavirus of the Congress, adding that Singh should be born in China in his next life.

Responding to Silawat's statement, Singh said, "Yes, I am a coronavirus for the BJP and the Sangh."Slamming the Congress leader for claiming that he is a coronavirus for the BJP and the RSS, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said, "Digvijaya Singh and Kamal Nath have done more harm to Madhya Pradesh than what coronavirus did to the state." As the elections approach, there is a flood of political statements and the attacks are also intensifying. Political analysts say that both the political parties are talking more on such topics instead of serious issues.

# Chief Minister Chouhan planted saplings of Peepal, Mango and Kachanar

**Team Absolute** | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Peepal, Mango and Kachnar in the garden located at Shyamala Hills. Journalist Vinod Dubey and his wife Maya Dubey planted saplings on their marriage anniversary. His daughters Kamya and Saumya Dubey and son Sanchit were also with him. Chetan Bhargava and Suresh Srivastava along with Chief Minister Chouhan planted saplings on their birthday. Kunal Srivastava, Ankit Srivastava, Nilesh Gupta, Tarun Sharma, Arjun Mewada, Amit Mishra, Avichal Bhargava, Priyansh and Vishal Jat also participated in plantation.

# *Daughters are a boon and sisters are empowered by the schemes of the government: Chief Minister Chouhan*

## Blessings to newly married couples and checks for the amount of the scheme, construction works worth more than Rs. 53 crores were gifted by the Chief Minister.

**Team Absolute** | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that due to the schemes of the state government, today the society has started considering daughters as a boon and along with women empowerment, social revolution is also taking place. On Sunday, Chief Minister attended the mass marriage ceremony of more than 425 couples of Gond and Korku communities at village Piplani in Bhairunda tehsil of Sehore district. He showered flowers on the newly-weds and blessed them and gave checks for the amount of Chief Minister Kanya-Vivah Yojana.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that it is a matter of good fortune that since the inception of the scheme, the state level mass marriage conference is going on continuously. He said that with the Ladli Laxmi Yojana, there has been a significant reduction in the sex ratio gap in the state. The result of the scheme was also that now daughters are being considered as a boon and not a curse in the state. Daughters are becoming self-dependent by getting educated and are participating in the development of the state. The Chief Minister said that the state government is taking care of the arrangements for the education of these daughters and also the expenses of their marriage. Due to the effective effect of Ladli Laxmi Yojana, daughters are no longer considered a burden. He said that the provision of reservation in local body elections and government jobs has empowered the women of the state.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that Mukhyamantri Ladli Bahna Yojana will also change the lives of poor sisters. Under the scheme, sisters of 23 to 60 years will now get an opportunity to live life with dignity in the society and family. He said that so far one crore 21 lakh sisters have filled the forms under the scheme. Each eligible sister will start getting the benefit of the scheme of Rs 1000 thousand from the month of June.

# Cheetah deaths at Kuno spur authorities to initiate a project review

**Praveen Dwivedi** | Bhopal

The deaths of two African cheetahs at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park (KNP) within one month has generated questions in government quarters and among wildlife enthusiasts on whether there were lapses in handling them at their new habitat where a total of 22 felines including four newly borne cubs are living.

Amid the questions, a team from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) -- the nodal agency for the "reintroduction of cheetahs" on Indian soil -- will be visiting KNP soon to review the implementation of the project with the officials of the Madhya Pradesh forest department and the scientists of the Wild Life Institute of India, the NTCA officials told correspondent.

In the meantime, the MP forest department pushed the recommendation for shifting some of the cheetahs to a new habitat, which is also part of the 'Cheetah Action Plan', as the officials claimed. Giving details of the 'Cheetah Reintroduction Action Plan', principal Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) Wildlife of Madhya Pradesh J. S. Chouhan wrote to the NTCA in the first week of April (soon after female Namibian cheetah Sasha died) to find an alternative enclosure to shift some cheetahs from KNP.

There has been considerable debate among conservationists on whether the cheetah, which needs vast tracts of land to run and hunt, can thrive in India where suitable land is limited unlike in the African reserves.

Even before 20 cheetahs were imported from Namibia and South Africa, some experts had raised questions over how the space shortage is likely to affect the cheetah reintroduction project at Madhya Pradesh's KNP, which has a core area of 748 sq km and a buffer zone of 487 sq km.

In such a situation, there are worries about the 11 South African cheetahs (one of the 12 South African cheetahs 'Uday' died a few days back) when they will be released into a larger area at KNP. As of now, the African cheetahs are in the acclimatisation enclosure.

The Cheetah Task Force Committee also pointed out this issue during it's last meeting. "African cheetahs are in the acclimatisation enclosure and they will be ready for release in 15-20 days. Releasing all of them at KNP will not be practical, therefore an alternative site is highly desirable," a member of the Cheetah Task Force Committee told correspondent on condition of anonymity.

At the same time, sources aware of the developments claimed that shifting some of the cheetahs has raised a political controversy as there is a possibility that the alternative site will be the Mukundra Tiger Reserve located near Kota in Rajasthan.

Amid all this buzz, correspondent sent some written queries to the NTCA. Responding on the shifting of the cheetahs, S. P. Yadav, a senior member of the NTCA said, "A cheetah action plan has been prepared in consultation with all experts in cheetah conservation. It is a long term project and should not be judged after a few months. Based on our experience at Kuno, further decisions on these issues will be taken."

## 2 MINOR SISTERS RAPED BY RELATIVE IN INDORE

**Indore:** Two minor sisters were allegedly raped by one of their relatives and his friend in Madhya Pradesh's Indore, the police said on Sunday.

According to police, the two accused who are also minors, raped the girls at a relative's place in the Bhanwarkuan area.

The girls stayed at their relatives' place for the past three years, and were allegedly raped on several occasions, the victims' parents alleged in a complaint to the police. The girls' family started staying at their relative's place in 2020 since it was nearby to their father's workplace.

"One of their relatives and his friend allegedly raped the two minor sisters. The accused had been exploiting the girls for the last three years. We have received a complaint from the girls' family, and on the basis of the same, a case was registered," said Bhawarkuan police station in-charge Shashikant Chaurasia said."A case has been registered and the two accused have been caught. They will be produced in a juvenile court," Chaurasia added.

EDITOR'S SPECS

## GLOBAL MARKETS TURN CAUTIOUS AGAIN AMID CONCERNS OF BANKING CRISIS

*Global economy was once again beginning to stare at the possibility of economic slowdown as fears re-emerged over the possibility of economic recession in the US owing to another banking crisis, a research note by Jahnavi Prabhakar, Economist, Bank of Baroda, said. US officials are already in talks of providing a possible FDIC receivership to First Republic. A lot is at stake for Fed now, as it considers the next rate action given the stubbornly high inflation, elevated wage growth, credit crunch scenario and uncertainty in global growth, the note said. Rupee has relatively performed better than the Asian peers and is expected to trade in the range of 81.5-82.25 to the dollar in the next fortnight. Markets will now wait for Fed's and ECB's rate decision next week. Global markets turned cautious once again amid renewed concerns of banking crisis looming for the second time in the last two-months along with the debt ceiling standoff in the US. Additionally, other major data releases including US GDP, PCE, jobless claims and employment cost index is expected to strengthen the case for a rate hike by Fed as inflation pressure remains stubbornly high. With this, the federal fund rate will be in the range of 5 per cent-5.25 per cent, thus making the credit crunch, a more realistic situation, the note said. Crude oil prices declined for the second straight week amidst uncertainty and subdued economic data print from US, thereby weighing in on the demand outlook.*

# INDIA'S SIGHT IS FIXED ON WTC FINAL. A WIN WOULD BE A CROWNING GLORY TO HONOUR THE 1971 SIDE

**Yajurvindra Singh**

The announcement of the Indian team to play in the World Test Championship (WTC) Final, starting on June 7 at the Kensington Oval in London, turned out to be an insipid affair.

The only surprise was the inclusion of Ajinkya Rahane, a middle-order batter with plenty of experience. Although a cricketer's performance in the Indian Premier League (IPL) is talked about as never one to be considered for an India selection, one can take that comment with a pinch of salt.

The recent parade of newly-crowned Indian players in the last decade has all emerged through their super performance in the IPL. Ajinkya, a seasoned performer at the highest level of the game, was languishing in the domestic circuit, after having been dropped from the Indian Test side, and this is a good example of his resurgence through the IPL.

The word "transformation" has taken the corporate world by storm. The famous word indicates that if a company does not transform and adapt to the fast-moving world of today, then its' future is in jeopardy. Ajinkya, an intelligent and serious-thinking cricketer, one that most franchisees ignored during the IPL auction, made clever changes and transformations to his game to get one and all to sit up in admiration.

One never doubted his technique and with his positive stroke play and mental approach, that he exhibited in his initial innings of the IPL, he catapulted himself into becoming the front-runner for the middle-order batting slot in the Test side from where he was dethroned.

Unfortunately, the cricketer who suffered was his Mumbai colleague, Sarfaraz Khan, who having scored oodles of runs in the domestic tournaments, failed to showcase his superlative form in the IPL and so came through a cropper.

In India, we boast of a cupboard full of talented cricketers. The bench strength is looked at as one that can quite easily have two international-quality sides. This definitely seems a misnomer, as the squad which was chosen in 2021, is more or less the same bunch of batters and bowlers that have been chosen in 2023.

The worrying aspect of Indian cricket is the regular occurrence of injuries. The irony of it is that once they get injured, most of the cricketers never seem to recover from it very soon. One is, therefore, happy to see Ravindra Jadeja looking fit and fast after his knee surgery. India have two International class all-rounders in Ravindra Jadeja and Hardik Pandya. Fortunately, the former has bounced back whereas the latter has already accepted his fate of not being fit to play the longer format of the game.

India, in their second attempt at the coveted trophy, having lost the last final against New Zealand in 2021, have their sights focused on winning it this time around.

India have in the last three Test series against Australia at home and away beaten them. The odds do favour the Indian side on paper, however, the grit and determination of an Australian side can never be underestimated.

India, one feels, has a formidable side which will take the field to play Australia in the WTC Final. Openers Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill are two of the finest stroke players in the world. The latter is developing into becoming a star batter in the mode of Sunil Gavaskar, Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli. The Oval Test would be just the platform for Gill to establish himself as the king in waiting.

Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane are a middle-order line-up that any side would be proud to have. One feels India will strengthen their batting line-up by including K.L. Rahul as the wicketkeeper and a batman who has proven to have the skill to match the best.

India's bowling is their strength. The weather in early June in London is normally cold and damp. India have the pace bowlers to exploit these conditions in the two Mohammeds --Shami and Siraj -- and the option of Umesh Yadav if required. The problem that may arise is whether India should go in with Axar Patel as the 3rd spinner or play Shardul Thakur as the only pace-bowling all-rounder. The latter to me will get the nod as the conditions will favour swing rather than spin. In England, especially in June, good close catching in the slip region is as essential a requirement as any. India have three outstanding slip fielders in their line-up -- the young Shubman Gill, who looks very comfortable standing there, and the proven Ajinkya Rahane and Virat Kohli. In Ravindra Jadeja, India boasts of the best outfielder in world cricket at present. Therefore, one feels that India have their fielding issues well covered.

The Oval in England has been a lucky venue for India in the past. The 1971 Test series win against England was one of India's grandest cricket moments. The balcony wave of India's match-winning bowler, B.S. Chandrashekar, and the captain Ajit Wadekar with thousands of Indian fans below was as proud a moment as when Kapil Dev lifted the World Cup in 1983 at the Lord's. India beating West Indies in the West Indies earlier and England beating Australia in Australia made India the unofficial Champion Test side then.

Rohit Sharma and his side have a big task to emulate the 1971 Indian side. The victory then was seen as the renaissance of Indian cricket and a victory now would be just the crowning glory to honour it.

***(Yajurvindra Singh is a former India cricketer. The views expressed are personal)***

# international

## Afghanistan's central bank sells $14 mn to keep local currency stable

**Kabul** | Agencies

Afghanistan's central bank Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) sold $14 million by auction on Sunday to stabilise the exchange rate of the national currency afghani, the bank said in a statement released here on Sunday.

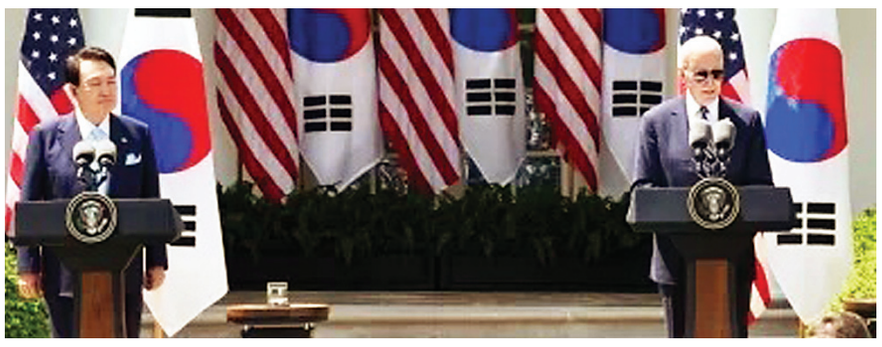
The local currency afghani has been tumbling against foreign currencies, especially the US dollar, over the past couple of months. The exchange rate of 1 US dollar increased from last week's 86 afghani to 87.15 afghani on Sunday, Xinhua news agency reported.

Afghanistan's central bank has injected millions of US dollars into the country's money-exchange market over the past month to prevent the fall of the afghani against foreign currencies.

Afghanistan has received more than 2 billion dollars in cash over the past 18 months as part of the international community's humanitarian aid to prevent the economic collapse of the cash-strapped country.

## *N.Korea vows to bolster 'military deterrence' in response to Washington Declaration*

**Seoul** | Agencies



North Korea will step up its "military deterrence" against South Korea and the US, state media said Sunday, blasting this week's summit agreement between the two sides on strengthening the US extended deterrence as a "product of heinous hostile policy" against Pyongyang.

The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) ran a commentary criticising President Yoon Suk Yeol's state visit to the US this week as "the most hostile, aggressive and provocative trip and a dangerous one for a nuclear war," Yonhap news agency reported.

In Washington, Yoon held a summit with US President Joe Biden and announced the adoption of the Washington Declaration, under which the US will share information on nuclear and strategic operations and planning and regularly deploy strategic assets to South Korea.

"The 'Washington Declaration' on raising the practicality of the 'extended deterrence' provided by the US is a typical product of the heinous hostile policy towards the DPRK," the KCNA said in an English-language commentary. DPRK refers to North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"Anyone can know well that they are making a nuclear war against the DPRK a fait accompli," it said.The KCNA also took issue with Biden's warning during a joint press conference that if the North uses nuclear weapons, it will result in the "end of regime." It was the first time that Biden has talked about ending the North's regime.

"What is more serious is that Biden, the president of the US, dared to make frantic and reckless remarks about 'the end of regime' towards the DPRK while becoming vociferous about a 'swift, overwhelming and decisive response' at the press conference after the talks," the KCNA said.

"Under such situation, it is quite natural for the DPRK to bolster up its military deterrence corresponding to the grave security environment of the present and the future," it said.

The state media said the joint statement that pledges stronger nuclear deterrence against North Korean threats and strengthening trilateral cooperation between the US, South Korea and Japan is identical with "a dangerous nuclear war plot putting up the signboard of security."

## Biden says US-Korea alliance born out of shared beliefs

**Seoul** | Agencies

US President Joe Biden tweeted that the alliance between the US and South Korea is based on shared beliefs on "democracy, liberty, security, and above all -- freedom," as President Yoon Suk Yeol headed home after a state visit to the US.

"The US and Republic of Korea alliance wasn't born out of shared borders, but shared beliefs: Democracy, liberty, security, and above all -- freedom," Biden wrote on Twitter, referring to South Korea's official name, Yonhap news agency reported.

Biden posted the comment as Yoon was on his way home from a six-day state visit to the US where the two held summit talks at the White House and agreed on measures to strengthen Washington's extended deterrence commitment to South Korea.

"Today, we celebrate the ironclad alliance, shared vision of our future, and the deep friendship that unites the Republic of Korea and the United States. Over the past seven decades, our alliance has grown stronger and more capable," Biden said in a video clip attached to the post.

Yoon is set to return home in the afternoon.

### *SYRIA'S AIR DEFENCES INTERCEPT FRESH ISRAELI MISSILE ATTACK*

**Damascus**: Syrian air defences intercepted a fresh Israeli missile attack in the central province of Homs, state media reported. The air defences were responding to hostile targets in the skies of Homs, said the report, spelling out no further details, state news agency SANA reported on Saturday.Three civilians were injured in the attack, according to the Syrian Defence Ministry, Xinhua news agency reported.Meanwhile, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor, said the missile destroyed a weapon depot for the Lebanese Hezbollah group in the Daba'a air base in Homs.

## 5 shot dead in Texas, gunman at loose

**Houston** | Agencies

Five people, including an eight-year-old, were killed in a shooting at a home in southeast Texas, authorities confirmed on Saturday.

A suspect armed with an AR-15 style rifle is still on the run, local media reported.

Police officers responded to the shooting at about 11:30 p.m. local time (0330 GMT Saturday) after receiving a call about harassment at the home in Cleveland, nearly 55 miles (89 km) north of Houston, according to the San Jacinto County Sheriff's Office.

All of the victims, ranging from eight to about 40-years-old, were from Honduras, said Sheriff Greg Capers of the San Jacinto County. At least 10 people were at the property when police arrived, Xinhua news agency reported.

Investigators said they believe the suspect was intoxicated and began shooting an AR-15 in his front yard. That's when neighbours asked him to be quiet because they had a baby who was trying to sleep, according to Capers.

"My understanding is that the victims, they came over to the fence and said 'Hey could (you not do your) shooting out in the yard? We have a young baby that's trying to go to sleep," and he had been drinking, and he says 'I'll do what I want to in my front yard,'" Capers told ABC News' Houston station KTRK.

The suspect then began shooting inside the home, he said.

"When we got here, the two females in the bedroom were laying on top of two of three younger children" that survived, said Capers, "Everybody that was shot was shot from the neck up almost execution style, basically in the head."Capers said the police have identified the shooter, a male from Mexico, and found two other weapons in his house following the shooting.

Veronica Pineda, a nearby resident, told KTRK that she has grown accustomed to neighbours shooting firearms in the area.

### *PHILIPPINES: MILITARY RAID KILLS SEVEN REBELS*

**Manila:** Seven suspected left-wing rebels were on Sunday killed in a raid by the military in the Philippines. Army Captain Jefferson Mariano said the troops assaulted a New People's Army (NPA) hideout in Northern Samar province after villagers reported the rebels' presence there, Xinhua news agency reported.

Mariano said the military used air and artillery to penetrate the lair heavily fortified with anti-personnel mines, resulting in 30-minute fighting. After the clash, Mariano said troops recovered seven bodies and several guns and ammunition.

NPA rebels have been fighting the government since 1969. They concentrate their attacks on rural areas and have skirmishes with the military.

Military data showed that the NPA is estimated to have 2,000 members, significantly lower than its peak strength in the 1980s.

# 6 DEAD, BUILDING OWNER DETAINED DAY AFTER IT COLLAPSED NEAR MUMBAI

**Team Absolute** | Thane

The death count in the collapse of a two-storey building in Bhiwandi in Maharashtra's Thane district reached six on Sunday after the body of a 40-year-old man was recovered from the debris, officials said.

The owner of the ill-fated building in Wardhaman Compound in Valpada in Mankoli has been detained, officials added.

The building, which housed godowns on the ground and first floors and four families on the top floor, collapsed into a heap of concrete at 1:45pm on Saturday.

Several people are still feared trapped and work of clearing the debris as part of the search and rescue operation helmed by the National Disaster Response Force, the State Disaster Response Force, fire brigade and civic teams continued, Thane Municipal Corporation regional disaster management cell chief Avinash Sawant said.

"Three bodies have been recovered since Sunday morning. They have been identified as Sudhakar Gavai, 22-year-old Pravin Chaudhary and Triveni Yadav (40), whose body was found in the evening," Mr Sawant said. Earlier, one person named Sunil Pisa (38) was rescued at around 8 am on Sunday from the debris and rushed to IGM Hospital in Bhiwandi, Narpoli police station's senior inspector Madan Ballal said.

A container and two tempos which had come to the godown for loading and unloading were also crushed.

Sawant said the rescue teams have cleared the upper floor, but the ground floor and the first floor where most of the workers were working in the godowns have not been cleared so far. The building belongs to a popular food products company, Sawant added. "Ten persons, including two siblings who lost their mother in the incident, are being treated for injuries. Ten fire engines, ambulances, trucks and earth-moving machines were also pressed into the relief and rescue operation," he added.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde termed the incident as "most unfortunate" and visited the collapse site as well as the injured persons undergoing treatment in Bhiwandi's IGM Hospital late Saturday night.

Bhiwandi Deputy Commissioner of Police Navnath Dhavle told media offences under various sections of the Indian Penal Code have been registered against the structure owner Indrapal Patil. Mr Patil has been detained for questioning in connection with the incident, the official said.

The building was about 10 years old and possibly could not take the load of a mobile tower recently installed on top of it, according to a civic official.

Chief Minister Shinde told reporters he has instructed Thane Collector Ashok Shingare and other authorities to immediately carry out a survey of the structures declared 'most dangerous' in the district and shift people living in them to safer places before the onset of monsoon.

Shinde said cluster development, where several buildings on a large area are developed to give people monetary advantage of scale, was the only solution to the problems arising on account of the dangerous buildings. At the IGM Hospital, Shinde enquired about the condition of the injured persons, including two minor brothers, Prem Ravikumar Mahato (7) and Prince Ravikumar Mahato (5), who lost their mother Lalita Devi (26) in the incident.Shinde has announced a compensation of ? 5 lakh each to the families of the dead, while medical expenses of the injured would be borne by the state government.

# Dancers' body chief, 7 others charged for cheating in Mumbai

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

The Mumbai Police has registered an FIR against the president of the Cine Dancer's Association (CDA) and seven other office-bearers on the charge of illegally collecting more than ? 1 crore from aspiring members, an official said on Sunday.

Along with the CDA president, its general secretary, treasurer, and five other office-bearers have been booked for alleged cheating.

Dancers registered with CDA are hired as background dancers for songs in Bollywood movies, serials, and live performances.

As per the complaint, the accused collected money to the tune of Rs 1-1.5 crore under the pretext of awarding CDA membership even though they didn't have permission to collect money from the court.

The complainant alleged the CDA president and others parked money in the bank accounts of their family members. They prepared fake invoices to release the amount but never gave the account of spend, as per the FIR. The accused persons used to collect money in the name of granting membership, donations, non-subscription etc., the FIR stated.

The complainant claimed he had paid ? 50,000 for a CDA membership.

Some members of the CDA also parked money in the bank accounts of their wives who did not have any connection with the association, the police official said quoting the FIR.

Police have registered a case under sections 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code against eight people but no arrest has been made so far, he added.

Further investigation is underway.

# Caught on CCTV: 6 men part of fresh strike by Maharashtra's 'Machete Gang'

**Team Absolute** | Pune

A group of six men carrying koytas or machetes attacked the staff of a medical shop in Maharashtra's Pimpri-Chinchwad on Saturday, the police said.

The video of the incident has gone viral on social media.The men enter the medical shop carrying machetes and attack a staff member, the video shows.

They are seen vandalising the shop and threatening the other staff member at the counter when he tries to intervene.They also vandalised some vehicles in Kamgar Nagar area before attacking the medical shop.

Similar attacks involving such gangs were reported in Pune too, officials said, adding that abut 100 such incidents have been reported in the state over the last four months. Incidents involving what the locals call 'koyta gangs' terrorising the public by brandishing machetes are on the rise in some districts of Maharashtra despite the recent uproar in the state assembly. Such groups of criminals are called 'koyta gangs' because of the weapons used by them, officials said.Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had in January instructed the police to take strict action against koyta gang members for unleashing terror in the state.

# 3 Auto drivers acquitted of social worker's attempted murder

**Team Absolute** | Thane

A court in Maharashtra's Thane district has acquitted three auto-rickshaw drivers accused of unlawful assembly, rioting and attempting to murder a social worker in 2012, giving them the benefit of doubt.

Additional Sessions Judge Amit M Shete in the order passed on April 27 said the prosecution has failed to prove beyond reasonable doubt the charges against the persons -- Anilkumar Anantram Nirmal (36), Shivbans aka Shivprasad Sitaram (57) and Sunil Ramswarup Sharma (46).

A copy of the order was made available on Sunday.

Additional Public Prosecutor Sanjay More told the court that the victim, Rakesh Saravegi, used to take up social issues in Mira Road area of Thane.

He had also taken up some of the issues of auto-rickshaw passengers and orders in that connection were passed by the regional transport office (RTO) including on auto fares.

This was not liked by the accused persons who allegedly attacked the victim with weapons and attempted to kill him on October 11, 2012, the prosecution told the court.

The defence counsels contested the case and argued that the accused were not involved in the crime. In his order, the judge said the victim has not identified any of the mentioned accused persons. His testimony goes to show that a mob had gathered at the scene of the offence. Due to a dash given by the mob, he fell down and received injuries, the court said.

The prosecution case is based upon the evidence of the victim, who is not supporting the case. Thus, the examination of rest of the witnesses by the prosecution is a futile exercise and the same need not be completed, the court said while acquitting the three accused.

# Man jumps off building to avoid arrest, dies

**Team Absolute** | Thane

The Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) and Thane Police busted a gang running a hoax telephone exchange in the Bhiwandi area of Maharashtra's Thane and detained many.According to officials, on receiving information about a fake telephone exchange on the fifth floor of a building in Gauri Pada in the Bhiwandi area of Thane district, the ATS reached the site late evening to raid it.

"One of the accused jumped from the roof of the building to avoid being caught by the ATS and died. The body was sent for postmortem," said Thane police officials.

The police are in search of the owner of the flat and have seized all goods and the raids are underway.

Further investigation is underway.

In July last year, Moradabad Police busted an illegal international telephone exchange and arrested two people for operating the fake telephone exchange.

The fake telephone exchange operator was converting international calls to local calls.

The accused used to convert VoIP calls into GSM calls through SIM boxes. "Moradabad police caught fake telephone exchange operators who were converting international calls to local calls Two people were arrested for operating telephone exchange. The accused used to convert VoIP calls into GSM calls through SIM boxes," said Moradabad Superintendent of Police Akhilesh Bhadauria. The accused used to convert international calls into local calls for Indians living in Saudi Arabia.

Around 550 sim cards and ? 63,000 were recovered from the accused.

The two accused have been identified as Mohammad Kaleem and his brother Mohammad Mehraj.

"They used to do this for Indians living in Saudi Arabia. With this, they were defrauding the government. Around 550 sim cards and ? 63,000 were recovered from the accused. A person from Saudi Arabia operating the fake telephone exchange used to send money to the accused," the Moradabad SP added.

Arrested Mohammad Kaleem said that in March 2022 he had gone to Saudi Arabia where a man taught him how to earn money by converting international calls into local calls.

# Villagers opposing Barsu refinery project meet Sharad Pawar

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

A delegation of people opposing a proposed oil refinery project at Barsu in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri district called on Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar in Mumbai on Sunday.

A section of residents in and around Barsu have been opposing the proposed refinery as they fear the mega project will adversely affect the fragile biodiversity of the coastal Konkan region and also hit their livelihood.

On Friday, as tempers ran high among protesters, the police used tear gas to disperse them.

Pawar tweeted that a delegation led by Satyajit Chavan called on him at the YB Chavan Centre here.

NCP leader and former state minister Jitendra Awhad was also present during the meeting. On Friday, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said the proposed refinery project will not be implemented without the local people's consent. Senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar on Saturday said one should ensure development projects do not cause any damage to the environment.

He urged the Maharashtra government to hold discussions with all the stakeholders and find the best possible way out. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut, whose party is supporting the protesters, on Saturday claimed there was no coordination between Chief Minister Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis on the proposed refinery project.

# Madhuri Dixit's husband enjoys "Vada Pav Moment" with Paytm CEO in Mumbai

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi/Mumbai

Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma recently enjoyed some vada pav with Madhuri Dixit's husband Dr Shriram Nene among others in Mumbai. Dr Nene shared a picture from the outing which prompted a hilarious response from the Paytm CEO.

In the picture, uploaded on Twitter, Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Dr Shriram Nene and others are seen sitting together at a restaurant and eating vada pav. "Our Vada Pav moment at Swati Snacks. The company was what made the experience," Dr Nene wrote.

Replying to him, Vijay Shekhar Sharma said, "I call it "poor men"'s vada-pao moment". Several users reacted to the post.

"Wonderful click," a user wrote. Another quipped, "One Vada Pav a day, is it the Doctor's way?" Earlier this month, Madhuri Dixit relished vada pav with Apple CEO Tim Cook at the same cafe in Mumbai. Tim Cook was in India for the inauguration of the company's first two official retail stores. Sharing a picture with Mr Cook having the popular Mumbai snack, Madhuri Dixit tweeted, "Can't think of a better welcome to Mumbai than Vada Pav!" The post was an instant hit on social media with users expressing their love for vada pav. "Anytime Anytime. Go across the globe nothing beats the deliciousness & craze of Vada Pav. Every Mumbaikar conforms the same," a comment read.

"I can see Panki and Vada pav that too in Swati," a person said.

Tim Cook later thanked Madhuri Dixit for introducing him to vada pav. "Thanks, Madhuri Dixit for introducing me to my very first Vada Pav - it was delicious!" he said in a tweet.

# *As Nitish tries to unite Oppn parties, Maha may be easier nut to crack*

**Quaid Najmi** | Mumbai

With the countdown for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections on, national Opposition parties are busy working on unity efforts on several fronts and at various levels in the states.

This time, Janata Dal (U) president and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is attempting to cobble together a 'united Opposition' against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance which completes nine years in power this April.

The challenge before Nitish is awesome though not insurmountable, despite a multi-rainbow scenario among the Opposition parties with their own pluses-and-minuses.

Barring the Congress, no other major Opposition party has much presence or influence or a pan-India credibility beyond their respective region or domains, including Nitish' own party, or the other states like Delhi, West Bengal, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala.

However, Maharashtra will be a crucial factor in any Opposition front -- with 48 LS seats, the second highest in India after Uttar Pradesh -- and a string of important parties like the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) of the Congress, Nationalist Congress Party, Shiv Sena (UBT), and Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) plus other smaller outfits.

The main Opposition parties here have their independent strongholds and dedicated voters, the VBA commands around 6-7 per cent, the socialist groups another 7-8 per cent, the Communists also powerful though in pockets, all of which could add up to a decently formidable challenge to the BJP here.

"The route to the Himalayas will be paved through the Sahyadris Maharashtra is a critical state and the BJP is on a downslide everywhere The MVA will bag a minimum of 40 LS seats The beginning will be made from Karnataka," claimed an optimistic state Congress chief spokesperson Atul Londhe. According to the NCP's chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase, the state Opposition is already firmly united under the MVA and only the nitty-gritties for the LS elections have to be worked out after the Karnataka election results are out.

"As always in the past, the winds of change will start blowing from this state. The MVA will be a part of the united Opposition forum to challenge the BJP for the much-needed change," said Tapase.

Shiv Sena (UBT)'s national spokesperson Kishore Tiwari said that not only Maharashtra, but the BJP is discredited all over the country with its communally divisive policies, anti-poor, anti-farmer approach and a blatantly pro-industrialist bias.

"The country has suffered quietly for 9 years and now it's time for the BJP to pack up, The public sentiments are strongly in favour of a change at the state and national level through a combined Opposition challenge," said Tiwari.

JD(U) national general secretary Kapil Patil said that Nitish will arrive in Maharashtra around mid-May and "meet the top leaders of all the Opposition parties" including Sharad Pawar, Uddhav Thackeray, Prakash Ambedkar, et al seeking their views and soliciting cooperation.

# FLORENCE PUGH HAD AN 'AMAZING EXPERIENCE' WORKING WITH HER EX

**Los Angeles** | Agencies

Actress Florence Pugh loved working with her ex-boyfriend Zach Braff on set of 'A Good Person'. The actress, who portrays a car crash survivor in the new drama movie, has revealed that she loved working with her ex-partner on the project, reports aceshowbiz.com.

"There were things in the original script that I'd be like, 'I don't think it would...' or 'That, I'd find a bit hard to say' or 'Do you mind if I give a stab at this?'" Florence - who dated the director between 2019 and 2022 - told Sky News' 'Backstage Podcast'.

"And (Zach) was completely cool with that and I think because he does know me so well and knows how I perform and knows what he wanted from me as a performer it meant that I could also then ask the same of him, and that was an amazing experience to have."

"It was very free for everybody on set, not just me - he wrote the film for me, but every actor and every character had the ability to show up on the day they were working and mean something, and if they needed to change something, they're more than welcome to bring it to light."

Florence confirmed her split from Zach last year. The actress also confessed that she was still feeling emotional about their break-up. She told Harper's Bazaar magazine, "We've been trying to do this separation without the world knowing, because it's been a relationship that everybody has an opinion on."

"We just felt something like this would really do us the benefit of not having millions of people telling us how happy they are that we're not together. So we've done that. I automatically get a lumpy throat when I talk about it."

# 'It broke my heart'

## *Denise Richards was 'heartbroken' after being trolled for her James Bond role*

**Los Angeles** | Agencies

Actress Denise Richards has admitted she was left "heartbroken" after being criticised for her sexualised James Bond role.

The actress played Dr Christmas Jones in 'The World Is Not Enough', but was "panned" for her performance after wearing a crop top and a tiny pair of shorts, reports mirror.co.uk.

Denise Richards starred as Dr Christmas Jones in the James Bond film The World Is Not Enough, but faced backlash for wearing a racy outfit while playing the scientist.

Denise, who starred alongside Pierce Brosnan in the film, said she received insults from people who would question why she wore shorts if her character was a nuclear scientist.

Speaking about the backlash in a new interview, she recalled: "It broke my heart that people were making fun of me."

Responding to the criticism, Denise added: "I'm playing a Bond girl. If I wore a lab coat and pants and a suit, then (fans) would have been upset."

A new star is needed to take on the iconic role of James Bond after Daniel Craig announced he would be retiring from the role of the sophisticated spy four years ago.

Speaking to Variety, Denise shared her thoughts on who should take over the role.

"Definitely a male Bond, I'm sorry. And I might get a lot of flack for this. But the fact of the matter is the Bond franchise was based off of a book franchise and Bond was male in the books," she explained.

She added: "I do, and people may s**t on me for it, but I believe it."

The Hollywood star suggested there could be a spin-off film with a female version of 007.

# Katy Perry to be temporarily replaced by 'big-time' star on 'American Idol'

**Los Angeles** | Agencies

Singer Katy Perry is expected to be temporarily replaced on 'American Idol' by a "big-time" star. The singer and her "American Idol" co-star Lionel Richie are both scheduled to perform at King Charles' coronation concert in May, and Luke Bryan has told fans to expect some big-name replacements on the TV show, reports aceshowbiz.com.

"It's big time. It's big time. The people that we have filling in, contestants have used their songs many, many times. A lot more than mine!" Luke - who has been a judge on the show since 2018 - told Entertainment Tonight.

Katy and Lionel will both perform at the much-anticipated concert on the grounds of Windsor Castle. And Katy recently revealed that she's "so grateful" to have been invited to sing at the upcoming event. The pop star is already an ambassador for one of the monarch's charities, and she's now looking forward to the concert.

Speaking about her invite, Katy told ExtraTV, "It was very regal, it was like a cursive I have never seen. I loved it. It was so beautiful and it was so grateful to get the honour because actually I am an ambassador for the British Asian Trust, which primarily focuses on ending child trafficking, which is a huge issue of our time and it just aligned with all my values."

"I'm also an ambassador for Unicef. And as a mother I know firsthand these innocent children need help, they need to be helped. So I'm just going there as an ambassador and they asked me to sing and it all aligned."

Meanwhile, Orlando Bloom thinks its "cool" that Katy will perform at the coronation concert. The actor - who has Daisy, two, with the pop star - is already looking forward to seeing Katy perform at the historic occasion.

# Annie Murphy tagged as 'cheap version' of "Margot Robbie"

**Los Angeles** | Agencies

'Schitt's Creek' star Annie Murphy was once labelled as a cheap version of Margot Robbie. The actress, who portrayed Alexis Rose in the CBC sitcom, has shared a troll who compared her to the bombshell Aussie actress if she was bought on the budget store Wish.

"I was told by a man on the internet that I look like Margot Robbie if she was ordered from Wish.com," she told Us Weekly magazine, reports aceshowbiz.com.

What's more, she's often been stopped by fans of the show on the street who tell her she looks like the actress that plays Alexis. She said, "The most common things fans ask me are, 'Has anyone told you that you kind of look like that girl from Schitt's Creek?'"

The Emmy-winning star also said she has Hollywood actress Kate Winslet's phone number.

She told the publication: "The most starstruck I've been was meeting Kate Winslet. I asked her for her number. She's the most famous person in my contacts."

Meanwhile, the actress previously said that she cried "12 times a day" before being diagnosed with depression.

The star said how she struggled during the pandemic after moving back into her family home in Canada when she went for a planned vacation and filming on new series "Kevin Can F*** Himself" was delayed.

She told The Zoe Report, "My mom was like, 'you're crying 12 times a day hysterically, to the point where your teeth are chattering. That's not normal.' "

She went to a therapist, who diagnosed her with depression, and she admitted she was worried about what people would think if they knew.



## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Camila Morrone

# MATTHEW LAWRENCE WAS FIRED BY AGENCY WHEN HE 'REFUSED TO STRIP'

**Los Angeles** | Agencies

Actor Matthew Lawrence is opening up about a horrible experience that involved an Oscar-winning film director. During the latest episode of his Brotherly Love podcast, Lawrence recalled being offered a role at a Marvel production but only if he stripped, reports 'Deadline'.

"There's been many times in my life where I've been propositioned to get a huge role," Lawrence said.

"I've lost my agency because I went to the hotel room, which I can't believe they would send me to, of a very prominent Oscar award-winning director who showed up in his robe, asked me to take my clothes off and said he needed to take Polaroids of me."

Lawrence added, "And then if I did X, Y and Z, I would be the next Marvel character. I didn't do that, and my agency fired me because I left this director's room."

The actor didn't reveal any names or give dates on when this encounter happened. Lawrence also mentioned the double standard that exists when male actors talk about sexual harassment versus female actors.

"Terry Crews comes out and says it; people are laughing at him. People don't support him," he said.

"They kick him out. Why? Because he's a man that represents masculinity, and I think our society is less ready to hear that situation going on with men than they are with women."

He continued, "Not a lot of guys in my opinion have come out and talked about this in the industry. There is also this same situation. Now granted, it's probably about a third of what women go through. The amount of men... Men go through this as well, whether it's another woman or another man in power."

IPL 2023

# SKY, DAVID CARRY MUMBAI TO SIX-WICKET WIN

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Yashasvi Jaiswal's magnificent 124 went in vain as Suryakumar Yadav (55) and Tim David (45 not out) carried five-time champions Mumbai Indians to six-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals in the 1000th match of the tournament in a run-fest at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday.

Mumbai looked in trouble when they were 104/3 in 12 overs. But Suryakumar smashed 20 runs off the 13th over from Kuldeep Sen and from there on, he never looked back, hitting eight fours and two sixes while David was brilliant in hitting two fours and five humongous sixes for Mumbai to go to seventh place at the points table.

Mumbai didn't have a great start to chasing 218 as captain Rohit Sharma was castled by a knuckleball from Sandeep Sharma in the second over. Cameron Green caught over deep backward square leg for.

After Ishan Kishan sliced to deep point off Ravichandran Ashwin, Suryakumar Yadav launched his first ball for six over backward square leg. He then slammed Jason Holder for a hat-trick of fours through the wristy flick, whip and a jaw-dropping ramp. Though Green holed out to the deep off Ashwin, Suryakumar ensured the tempo didn't drop.

The crowd roared more in the 13th over when Suryakumar nonchalantly flicked Kuldeep Sen for six into the second tier of deep backward square leg, followed by three consecutive fours -- a cut through deep point was followed by driving in the gap between mid-off and extra cover and dabbing over short third man.

Ironically all full tosses, to seal a dramatic win for Mumbai coming just ten minutes before Sunday got over.

**Brief scores:**

Rajasthan Royals 212/7 in 20 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 124; Arshad Khan 3-39, Piyush Chawla 2-34) lost to Mumbai Indians 214/4 in 19.3 overs (Suryakumar Yadav 55, Tim David 45 not out; Ravichandran Ashwin 2-27, Sandeep Sharma 1-35) by six wickets

# PBKS clinch last-ball thriller against CSK

**Chennai** | Agencies

After Prabhsimran Singh's 42 off 24, Liam Livingstone's (40 off 24) and Sam Curran's (29 off 20) cameos, Sikander Raza hit the winning runs off the final delivery to take Punjab Kings to a 4-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings at MA Chidambaram Stadium here on Sunday.

Sikander Raza provided a much-needed breakthrough as he dismissed Gaikwad for 37 in the 10 over and CSK were 90/1 halfway through the innings.

After the dismissal of Gaikwad, Shivam Dube joined Conway and added a 17-ball 28 to the total. In the process, Conway completed his 5th fifty of the season off 31 balls with a boundary through a reverse sweep. M.S. Dhoni came on to bat and dispatched the last couple of deliveries over the ropes and got Chennai to 200/4 in 20 overs.

Chasing 201, PBKS started in fine fashion with skipper Shikhar Dhawan and Prabhsimran going after the pacers and the pair added on 50 runs before Dhawan got out and King posted 62/1 at the end of the Power-play.

Livingstone and Curran held the fort and kept the scoreboard ticking to keep Punjab in the game. In the 16th over, Livingstone hammered Deshpande for

two consecutive sixes, followed by a boundary and another maximum but the bowler was quick to bounce back as he removed Livingstone on the last ball of the over.

When PBKS needed 9 runs off the final over, six came off the first five balls before Raza managed to get the winning runs off the final delivery, that too without hitting a boundary and ensuring victory for his side.

**Brief scores:**

Punjab Kings 201/6 in 20 overs (Prabhsimran Singh 42, Livingstone 40; Tushar Deshpande 3-49, Ravindra Jadeja 2-32) beat Chennai Super Kings 200/4 in 20 overs (Devon Conway 92, Ruturaj Gaikwad 37; Rahul Chahar 1-35, Arshdeep Singh 1-37) by four wickets.

## ROHIT IS GROWN AS A LEADER: POLLARD

**Mumbai| 2**4th April marked as the ten-year anniversary of Rohit Sharma captaining Mumbai Indians for the first time ever.

Kieron Pollard said, "He's grown as a leader. I mean he's grown into leadership. Obviously, it was entrusted onto him in 2013 in the middle of a season. He was still pretty young at that point in time."Pollard said that inspite of being young when he first took charge; Rohit was a quick learner and always showed leadership potential. "That shows you that a person has a great acumen of what he can accomplish and we are lucky to have him as a leader. He has a wealth of experience, so it's a matter of tapping into that and continuing to see him grow."

Cairo Shotgun World Cup

## MIARAJ KHAN AND GANEMAT SEKHON STRIKE GOLD

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

The seasoned Mairaj Ahmad Khan and the up-and-coming Ganemat Sekhon combined effectively to win gold in the Skeet Mixed Team event in the ongoing International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup Shotgun in Cairo, Egypt, giving India their first medal of the competition.

The Indian duo overcame Mexicans Luis Raul Gallardo Oliveros and Gabriela Rodriguez 6-0 in the gold medal match. Italy took bronze through their crack pair of two-time World Championship silver medallist Simona Scocchetti and Rio Olympic champion Gabrielle Rossetti.

Mairaj, who won his fifth senior ISSF medal on the day, was in brilliant form in the 30-team qualification round shooting 74/75 to help the Indian duo shoot a combined 143 out of 150. That helped them reach the title decider in the top position after they won a shoot-off with the Mexicans 4-3, as the latter had also finished with a score of 143. In the decider, Mairaj again set the ball rolling with a perfect four-hits which was complimented by Ganemat as the Mexicans missed three birds to give India a 2-0 lead. Mairaj repeated a perfect four in the second series and even though Ganemat missed a couple, the Mexicans again missed three as India pulled through 4-0. The final series became a bit more open when Mairaj missed two targets and Ganemat one, but the Mexicans missed four in all to hand India the gold by a comprehensive margin.

Ganemat also spoke of "redemption" after the Indians, including Mairaj and herself, had drawn a blank in the individual skeet competitions. It was a fourth senior world cup medal for Ganemat as well, including a second gold in the Mixed Team event.

Premier League

## BRIGHTON THRASH WOLVES, BRENTFORD BREAK FOREST'S HEARTS

**London** | Agencies

Brighton kept their hopes of qualifying for Europe next season alive with a comprehensive 6-0 thrashing of Wolverhampton.

Brighton threw aside any possible tired legs after their midweek defeat to Nottingham Forest to thrash a rival that has built a reputation for solid defensive organisation since Julen Lopetegui took over as coach, reports Xinhua.

The result was never in doubt after Deniz Unadov put Brighton ahead in the sixth minute and Pascal Gross doubled the lead after 13 minutes. Gross made it 3-0 in the 26th minute and Danny Welbeck added a fourth before halftime.

Udanov and Welbeck scored again after the break as Brighton

moved to just two points behind fifth place Tottenham, but with two games in hand.

There was late heartbreak for Nottingham Forest in their battle to avoid relegation as two late goals condemned them to a 2-1 defeat away to Brentford.West Ham still have work to do to stay up after losing a seven-goal thriller 4-3 away to Crystal Palace, who should now be safe on 40 points.

Tomas Soucek put West Ham ahead in the ninth minute but goals from Jordan Ayew and Wilfred Zaha ahead by the 20th minute and Jeffrey Schlupp made it 3-1 by the half hour.Michail Antonio got West Ham right back into things in the 35th minute, but a 66th minute penalty from Eberechi Eze put Palace, who had twice as many shots as their visitors in the game, two goals ahead, and although Nayef Aguerd made it 4-3 with 18 minutes left, Palace defended well to hold on for the points.

Bundesliga

# Ritsu Doan's goal helped Freiburg beat Cologne by 1-0

**Berlin** | Agencies

Ritsu Doan's goal helped Freiburg cement their fourth place in the table after moving 1-0 past Cologne at the 30th round in Bundesliga.

Cologne took the reins from the starting whistle and came close with 21 minutes played when Freiburg goalkeeper Mark Flekken had to be on guard to defuse Linton Maina's effort on target, reports Xinhua.

Flekken remained in the thick of things as he tipped Eric Martel's close-range header around the post with a great reflex two minutes later.

Freiburg showed signs of life at the half-hour mark when Lucas Holer forced Cologne goalkeeper Marvin Schwabe into action.

The visitors increased the pressure before the break, but Holer's long-range effort got palmed away by Schwabe. Freiburg eventually opened the scoring after the restart as Holer flicked on a corner into the path of Doan, who nodded home with a diving header at the far post in the 54th minute.The Breisgauer had the chance to extend their lead five minutes later but for all that Michael Gregoritsch couldn't beat Schwabe.

Cologne pressed frenetically for a draw, but Freiburg's defence stood firm and secured the third straight victory.Elsewhere, Union Berlin played out a goalless stalemate with in-form Bayer Leverkusen.

Leipzig remains in the hunt for a berth in Europa as the Red Bulls edged Hoffenheim on the sole goal from Christopher Nkunku.

Stuttgart secured vital points in the relegation battle after seeing off ten-men Borussia Monchengladbach 2-1 thanks to the goals from Serhou Guirassy and Tanguy Coulibaly.

Eintracht Frankfurt gave away a narrow lead and shared the spoils with Augsburg following a 1-1 while relegation threatened Schalke shocked Werder Bremen with a 2-1 injury time comeback.

La Liga

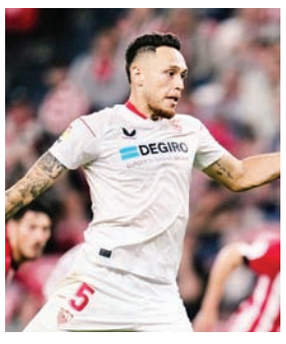
## Sevilla sneak late victory in Bilbao, Villarreal & Valencia score big wins

**Madrid** | Agencies

Lucas Ocampos scored a stoppage-time penalty to secure a 1-0 win for Sevilla away to Athletic Club Bilbao with their only shot of the game in La Liga on Thursday.

The penalty was awarded for a foul by Yeray Alvarez on the winger and confirmed by VAR, despite TV images showing the defender touched the ball as he challenged, reports Xinhua.

The penalty decided a tight match in which defenses dominated for the most part, but Athletic had two first-half goals disallowed for offside.Villarreal climbed



above Betis into fifth place after netting four second-half goals at home against Espanyol, who now find themselves deeper in trouble at second from the bottom of the table.

Javi Puado put Espanyol ahead just before halftime, but Etienne Capoue equalized in the 53rd minute and Dani Parejo put Villarreal in front 10 minutes later.

Espanyol's top scorer Joselu levelled in the 73rd minute, but Nicolas Jackson broke free of the offside trap to score a remarkable individual goal with 10 minutes remaining, and Capoue secured his second of the game in stoppage time to seal the win.

The 19-year-old Javi Guerra scored a stunning stoppage-time goal to complete Valencia's comeback at home against Valladolid, lifting them out of the bottom three.

La Liga

## Barca, Real Madrid both wins and retains 11-points lead

**Madrid** | Agencies

FC Barcelona and Real Madrid both won their respective matches in La Liga as Barca retained their 11-point lead at the top of the table.

Andreas Christensen returned to the Barca side after injury and he scored the opening goal in the 13th minute of a game that was over before halftime after Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha had put them 3-0 up, while Betis were reduced to 10 men after Edgar was shown two yellow cards, reports Xinhua. The central defender had come on earlier in the game after Luiz Felipe was forced out through injury. Veteran Betis winger Joaquin Sanchez was also injured late in the second half and went off, leaving his side with just nine men with 10 minutes left to play.

A minute later, Guido Rodriguez deflected a cross from Ansu Fati into his own net to make it 4-0, before Xavi Hernandez brought 15-year-old Lamine Yamal on as a substitute, making him the youngest Barca player in this century.Earlier in the day Karim Benzema scored a hat-trick as Real Madrid bounced back from their midweek 4-2 defeat in Girona, by defeating Almeria by

the same score.

Benzema scored after 5, 17 and 42 minutes, with the impressive Rodrygo adding a fourth early in the second half. Elche claimed just their third win of the season to stave off the confirmation of their relegation to the second division for a few more days with a 4-0 win at home to Rayo Vallecano.Rayo had beaten league leaders Barcelona in midweek, but were down to 10 men halfway through the first half, when Florien Lejeune was shown a direct red card for a wild challenge. Tete Morente put Elche ahead on the stroke of halftime and the bottom of the table side ran riot in the second half with goals from Lucas Boye, Fidel and Gerard Gumbau to give Coach Sebastian Beccacece his first win after five consecutive defeats.

PAK vs NZ 2nd ODI

# Fakhar's ton helped Pakistan to a record breaking 7-wicket victory

**Rawalpindi** | Agencies

Fakhar Zaman smashed his third consecutive ODI century to lead hosts Pakistan to a remarkable record-breaking seven-wicket victory over New Zealand.

The Pakistan opener hit 17 boundaries and six massive sixes during his unbeaten knock of 180* as the Asian side successfully chased down New Zealand's healthy total of 336/5 with 10 deliveries to spare.

A host of records fell during the match, as Fakhar became just the fourth Pakistan batter to hit three straight ODI centuries and also claimed the honour of being the fastest player from the country to bring up 3000 ODI runs, reports ICC.

Pakistan's total of 337/3 was also the fourth highest ODI score by Pakistan's men's team in an ODI and their second best run chase.

Skipper Babar Azam (68) and fellow experienced batter Mohammad Rizwan (54*) played their part in the exciting victory, but it was Fakhar that stole the show as the dynamic left-

hander continued his rich vein of form in devastating style.

Pakistan needed something special from Fakhar's in reply as New Zealand posted what looked to be a very decent score on the back of a brilliant century from Daryl Mitchell (129) and an equally important knock from captain Tom Latham (98).

Mitchell's innings included eight boundaries and three sixes and his score was the highest by an New Zealand batter in an ODI in Pakistan and took him past Ricky Ponting's 124* in 1998 for the highest by any No.3 from a visiting country. Pakistan looked to be cruising to victory in reply with Fakhar and Babar at the crease and the score at 200/1, but the hosts' skipper fell and Abdullah Shafique (7) was dismissed shortly after to provide New Zealand with a glimmer of hope.

But Rizwan joined Fakhar at the crease and the experienced duo successfully guided the home side to victory to ensure Pakistan opened up a 2-0 lead in the five-game ODI series.

# My love stories will go with me to the grave: Salman Khan

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan has admitted that he has been "unlucky in love", probably because of his own faults. Asked on the chat show 'Aap ki Adalat', whether he intended to write an autobiography on his love affairs, he replied: "My love stories will go with me to the grave."

When he intends to marry, he replied: "Jab aisa koi aayegi, toh ho jayega, Sir. Actually, sabhi achhe hain, the fault lies in me. When the first one left, it could have been her fault, when the second one and then the third one left, there could be faults with them, but with the fourth one, doubt creeps in whether fault lies with them or me.""In the fifth case, it could have been 60:40. But when more was left, it was then confirmed that it was my fault. None of them had any fault. It is only my fault. Probably a kind of fear in their mind that I may not be able to give them happiness in life. I am sure they are all happy wherever they are."

The host asked again: "The whole world wants to know when you will marry."

Salman replied: "Jab Ooper Walah chahega, Sir. Two individuals are needed for marriage. In the first case, marriage did not happen. When I said yes, somebody said, no. When somebody said yes, I said no. Now there is 'no' from both sides. When both sides say 'yes', the marriage will take place. There's still time. I am 57. I want this time to be the first and last. Matlab ek biwi honi chahiye."

And how many children does he want?

Salman replied: "As many as possible. Many. If I have one and another after 5-6 years, I can play with them for 20-25 years. This is called dedication, consistency, persistence."

He also revealed that he planned on being a parent to an adopted child. He said, "Abhi kya bolu woh toh plan tha. Plan tha. Bahu ka nahi tha, baccha ke tha.."

The actor said, "Lekin ab woh law ke hisaab se woh toh Hindustan mein ho nahi sakta. Toh ab dekhenge kya kare."

# 'SHE CERTAINLY DOESN'T NEED MY PERMISSION'

## Abhishek responds to Internet user who asked him to let Aishwarya 'sign more movies'a

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Abhishek Bachchan recently complimented his wife Aishwarya Rai Bachchan for her work in the recently released Mani Ratnam directorial 'Ponniyin Selvan: 2' on his Twitter.

However, one Internet user asked Abhishek to let Aishwarya sign more films on AB's tweet. Abhishek, who is known for his sense of humour didn't leave a chance to school the user.

Lavishing praise on his wife, Abhishek had tweeted, "PS2 is simply FANTASTIC!!! At a loss for words right now. So overwhelmed. Well done to the entire team ManiRatnam, chiyaan, trishtrashers actor jayamravi, Karthi Offl and the rest of the cast and crew. And so, so proud of the Mrs. Her best by far."

Replying to the same, the Internet user wrote, "As you should! Now let her sign more movies and you take care of Aaradhya."

Abhishek, who was recently seen in a cameo appearance in the Ajay Devgn-starrer 'Bholaa', responded, "Let her sign??? Sir, she certainly doesn't need my permission to do anything. Especially something she loves."

Abhishek is quite active on Twitter and takes a very dim view of things when someone crosses a line.

# 'It's about life & death': Adah Sharma on her upcoming film

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Actress Adah Sharma, who is gearing up for the release of her upcoming film 'The Kerala Story', has said that the movie is about life and death. She has also spoken about how this is not a propaganda film.

"I'm glad we can spread awareness with this film and people giving me so much love and support feels good always. As for performance, I'd credit the makers entirely. The director, the writer, the cinematographer," said the actress.

In 'The Kerala Story', actress Adah Sharma is playing the role of Fathima Ba, a Hindu Malayali nurse, who is among the 32,000 women who went missing from Kerala and were then recruited to the ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) after being forced to convert to Islam.

The film tells the story of four women and how from being regular college students in Kerala, they became part of a terror organisation.

The film has courted controversy for portraying itself as a real story and for making false claims that thousands of women from Kerala are being converted to Islam and recruited into ISIS, it faces allegations of promoting the Sangh Parivar's agenda.

About the controversy that surrounds the film Adah Says: Our film is about girls getting drugged, brainwashed, raped, human trafficking, forcefully impregnated and then raped again by multiple people sometimes, the child they deliver been taken away and them being made suicide bombers."

"It's about life and death! For the few who are saying its propaganda, I guess once they watch the film with all the facts they will say otherwise."

# Sara is 'Guardians of the Galaxy' fan; loves their sense of humor

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Sara Ali Khan is a fan of 'Guardians of the Galaxy' and is excited to watch the third volume of the Marvel film directed by James Gunn.

Sara Ali Khan shares, "I am super excited to watch Guardians of the Galaxy Volume 3. They are a super fun gang and I absolutely love their amazing sense of humour. It's always fun to watch them. Even though it's a goodbye for now, one can always hope for a comeback!"

A James Gunn directorial, The Guardians of Galaxy Volume 3 stars Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Karen Gillan, Pom Klementieff, featuring Vin Diesel as Groot and Bradley Cooper as Rocket, Sean Gunn, Chukwudi Iwuji, Will Poulter and Maria Bakalova. Marvel Studios' "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" releases in India on May 5 in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

# BAAGHI GAVE ME IDENTITY & A LIFE IN THE INDUSTRY: TIGER SHROFF

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

As his debut film 'Baaghi' completed seven years of its release, actor Tiger Shroff penned down a heartfelt note for the film, saying that the film gave him an identity and a life in the industry.

Taking to Instagram stories, Tiger shared a picture of him and also thanked his mentor Sajid Nadiadwala on the occasion.

He wrote: "7 years of a film that gave me an identity and a life in the industry. Thank you to all the audience and my fans that are like my family for accepting me. This franchise takes all my blood, sweat and tears but all worthwhile baaghi."

"And forever grateful to my godfather/mentor Sajid Nadiadwala... For giving me a platform to showcase myself best I can. And my first director and one of my favs...this wouldn't have been poss without you paaji lv u," he added.Meanwhile, Tiger is currently shooting for his upcoming action thriller 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan' in the UK along with the entire film team.

He is also gearing up for an interesting line-up of films including 'Ganapath', amongst many others unannounced.

# *Rashmika shares BTS pics & updates of her upcoming movie*

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

Wrapping up the first schedule of her upcoming film 'Rainbow', actress Rashmika Mandanna said the reason she went missing for a while was because she was in a "no network area".

Rashmika took to Instagram and shared a couple of BTS pictures and videos from the film sets.

The pictures feature a selfie with Dev Mohan, shoot location, time spent with her mother and sister.

The actress shared the pictures with the caption: "Guys sorry I went missing for a while. that's Cz we were mostly shooting in no network areas... but guyzzzz our first schedule wrap of rainbow Thankyou rainbow team for your hard workkkkk... you guys are awesome! (Ok now ps: it's a bit confusing... so it's for those who actually want to know)."

Sharing details of the photos, Rashmika wrote: "3rd place we shot in was Munnar - 1 - this was yesterday, before pack up picture... devmohanofficial and I took... 2- a group pictureeeeeee 3- the scenery we had from our location... man! It was dreamy... 4- this was a view from my room... I just haaaaad to show it to you... Munnar has some of the most beautiful views for sure."

She added: "2nd was Kodaikanal - 5- the flowers just looked too pretty... 6- the sun rise view from my balcony in Kodai..."

"And 1st was Chennai - 7- how can my day go without a workout, tell me, karansawhney11 video credit 8- mum came to pick my sister up to go back home... ladies hai toh matlab the photo session has to happen for sure... 9- my sister had come off to Chennai alone to watch me work and her lil mid shot hugs were THE BEST... kids are so tiny man... 10- my first selfie and I think the only solo selfie from the sets of rainbow All about my last few days. Ok worked too hard for this post... Bye," the actress wrote.

Rashmika will be next seen in the upcoming pan India film 'Pushpa 2' opposite actor Allu Arjun.





## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

Janhvi Kapoor

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