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CAN'T GIVE INDEFINITE EXTENSION, SUBMIT REPORT ON ADANI-HINDENBURG PROBE BY AUG 14, SC TO SEBI

BE ON TIME, THAT'S IT

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked market regulator SEBI to submit an updated status report on August 14 on its probe into the Adani-Hindenburg controversy, while also directing that the copies of the report of the Justice A. M. Sapse panel will be given to the parties in the meantime to enable them assist in further deliberations.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing SEBI, that the court could have given time till end of September but on August 14, "tell us, what stage you are on... Give us an updated report".

Mehta contended that 6-months extension for the SEBI to complete its report was already compressed.

The bench told Mehta that "tell us what you have done and the court had initially granted 2 months and now extended it till August which makes it 5 months" as it stressed that it cannot give indefinite extension for completing the probe.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan submitted that in recent years, despite many complaints, SEBI did not do anything. The SEBI had told the Supreme Court that allegations that it has been investigating the Adani Group since 2016 are "factually baseless". It also cautioned that "any incorrect or premature conclusion of the case arrived at without full facts material on record would not serve the ends of justice and hence would be legally untenable".

It, in a written response in the top court filed on May 17, said that Minister of State for Finance in his



reply to the Parliament on July 19, 2021 had confirmed that SEBI is investigating some Adani Group companies with regard to compliance with SEBI Regulations.

It said it has also submitted to the apex court that in the context of investigation into MPS norms, SEBI has already approached eleven overseas Regulators under the Multilateral Memorandum of Understanding ('MMOU') with International Organisation of Securities Commissions (IOSCO). Various requests for information were made to these Regulators, it added.

"The first request to overseas Regulators was made as early as on

October 6, 2020... it is this investigation that had commenced in October 2020 that was referred to by the Hon'ble Minister of State for Finance in his reply to the Parliament," said SEBI, in its written response.

The SEBI said it is understanding that the root cause of the erroneous linkage of a 2016 matter to the Adani Group is as follows: "In 2016, SEBI passed an order pertaining to the issuance of Global Depository Receipts (GDRs) by 51 Indian listed companies. No listed company of Adani Group was part of the aforesaid list of 51 companies, which has been specifically stated in our rejoinder dated May 15, 2023 to the Hon'ble

The top court's order

"The Expert Committee is requested to continue to assist the Court. The Committee may hold further deliberations in the meantime. The Committee would be requested to take up any further aspects or suggestions as may be formulated by the Court, following the course of deliberations when the proceedings are next listed for hearing. Copies of the report of the Expert Committee shall be made available to the parties and their counsel to enable them to assist the Court in the course of further deliberations. The Registry shall take up steps accordingly. SEBI is granted an extension of time till 14 August 2023 to submit its report."

Supreme Court. However, there were some FPIs including Cresta Fund Ltd, Albul Fund Ltd and APMS Fund Ltd, the GDR relevant accounts of which, were frozen as a consequence of the 2016 order. It is hereby clarified that this action was purely a consequence of the GDR matter and not related to any examination into any Adani Group company."



AFTER MEETING RAHUL, KHARGE, SHIVAKUMAR CONFERS WITH MLAS, SURJEWALA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid suspense over the next Karnataka Chief Minister, state Congress chief D.K. Shivakumar on Wednesday held a meeting with his loyalist MLAs at his brother's residence here and also with the state in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala.

His meeting with the party MLAs came after he held a detailed meeting with Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and senior party leader Rahul Gandhi at their residences earlier in the day.

Shivakumar, who is one of the contenders for the chief ministerial post in the state, first met Gandhi at 10 Janpath and the meeting lasted for over an hour.

After this, the Kanakapura MLA arrived at the residence of Kharge and their meeting lasted for over one and half hours.

He then went to the residence of his brother D.K. Suresh, a party MP and held meeting the party MLAs. However, it is yet not known what all Shivakumar discussed with them.

During the meeting, Congress MLAS Beluru Gopalakrishna, Virendra Pappi, H.C. Balakrishna, Ranganath, and Iqbal Hussain were present. Subsequently surrounded by media, and asked if any discussion on the chief ministerial post took place at his meet-

ings with Rahul Gandhi and Kharge, Shivakumar said: "Nothing, no discussion, only pranaam."

To a question, if he will return to Bengaluru on Wednesday night, he said, "I don't know."

Shivakumar then headed to Surjewala's residence for a meeting with him.

Earlier in the day, speaking to media, Surjewala said: "Deliberations are currently underway by party President Mallikarjun Kharge. Whenever the party takes a decision, we will inform you. In the next 72 hours, there will be a new Cabinet in Karnataka."

He also urged the media not to speculate or spread rumours and stay away from fake news. "Don't pay heed to fake information and rumours being spread by the BJP," he said.

Targeting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Surjewala said the party takes around 10-15 days to decide on the chief ministerial post, "but here, the Congress President is holding deliberations to select the new chief minister".

Kharge is likely to make an announcement about the new Karnataka Chief Minister on Wednesday or Thursday after discussing the observers' report with UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

Congress won 135 seats out of 224 in Karnataka whereas the BJP managed to win only 66.

Tina Dabi trends on Twitter for getting land occupied by Pak Hindu migrants cleared

Jaipur | Agencies

IAS officer Tina Dabi, who is currently posted as District Collector, Jaisalmer in Rajasthan, trended on Twitter on Wednesday for issuing orders to vacate the government land on which the Pakistani Hindu migrants were residing.

Close on the heels of Jodhpur, where houses of Pakistani Hindu migrants were razed down, the houses of Pakistani Hindu migrants living in Amar Sagar area, about 4 km from Jaisalmer district headquarters, were demolished following the orders of Dabi.

Over 50 'kutcha' houses were razed using bulldozers that rendered more than 150 women, men and children homeless.

The Pakistani Hindu migrants staged 'dharana' by putting up tents outside the Collector's office.

"Our demand is we should be re-settled back to the same place or some other place," one of the protesters said.

Leader of the Opposition Rajendra Rathore has termed it as appeasement politics of the Congress government.

He said that bringing down the houses of Hindu refugees from Pakistan with bulldozers after Jodhpur, now in Jaisalmer, shows the



"cruel attitude of the Congress government".

He further said that Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot should stop playing politics of appeasement with the Hindu refugees who returned to their land after being harassed by Pakistan and there should be proper arrangements for their stay.

According to the administration, the displaced were living by constructing illegal houses on the banks of the Amar Sagar pond due to which the inflow of water to the pond was stopped.

Hinduja Group Chairman Srichand P. Hinduja passes away at 87

Chennai: British billionaire and Hinduja Group Chairman Srichand Parmanand Hinduja passed away in London on Wednesday, a family spokesperson said.

S.P. Hinduja (87) was the eldest of the four brothers.

A statement issued by the family spokesperson read: "Gopichand, Prakash, Ashok and the whole Hinduja family with a heavy heart regret to announce the passing away of our family patriarch, and Chairman of the Hinduja Group, S.P. Hinduja.

One of the richest persons in the UK, S.P. Hinduja began his business career at his father Parmanand Deepchand Hinduja's trading business that had merchant banking and trading operations in Iran.

Merchant banking and trade were the twin pillars of the Group's business. The Group remained headquartered in Iran till 1979 before moving to Europe.

CBI raids premises linked to ex-media advisor of Satya Pal Malik

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is currently conducting raids at 12 locations -- 10 in Delhi and two in Rajasthan -- in connection with the alleged corruption in the Kiru hydro-electric power project in Jammu and Kashmir.

The places belong to the former media advisor of ex-J&K Governor Satya Pal Malik, three Chartered Accountants, and others.

According to sources, the searches are being carried out as part of an investigation into corruption related to the power project.

The source said that the two locations being raided in Delhi are -- Defence Colony and West End area, and both belong to Sunak Bali.

In West Delhi's Nangloi, two places belonging to two other alleged suspects -- Virender Singh Rana and one belonging to Kanwar Singh Rana -- are also being raided.



Additionally, a raid is underway at the residence of Anita, a resident of Dwarka, also said to be involved in the scam. In Rajasthan, the raids are taking place at the premises of Dr. Priyanka Chaudhary in Jaipur and Barmer.

The CBI has gathered crucial information about their alleged involvement in the scam through their bank details and other documents. Sources state that a case was registered on April 20 based on a

request from Satya Pal Malik, the former Governor of erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state.

The case was filed against Navin Kumar Choudhary, IAS, who was the Chairman of Chenab Valley Power Projects Private Limited (CVPPPL) at the time, along with M.S. Babu (then MD, CVPPPL), M.K. Mittal (then Director, CVPPPL), Arun Kumar Mishra (then Director, CVPPPL), and Patel Engineering Ltd. It was alleged that they attempted to bribe Malik.

SEVERAL PASSENGERS INJURED AFTER AIR INDIA DELHI-SYDNEY FLIGHT ENCOUNTERS SEVERE TURBULENCE

New Delhi | Agencies

Passengers on board a routine Air India flight from Delhi to Sydney suffered injuries after the aircraft encountered severe turbulence.

Fortunately, none of the injured passengers required hospitalisation, and all of them received immediate medical attention upon landing at the Sydney airport.

The incident occurred on Tuesday when the flight AAI-302 suddenly encountered a zone of turbulent weather, a senior Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) official said here on Wednesday.

Several passengers suffered minor injuries, including cuts, bruises and sprains, as a result of the severe turbulence.



According to DGCA officials, cabin crew members swiftly responded to the situation, attending to the injured passengers and ensuring their safety.

"Basic medical assistance, including first aid, was promptly provided to those in need. However, due to the non-life-threatening nature of the injuries, no passengers required hospitalisation upon landing in Sydney," the officials added.

There was however, no immediate response from Air India.

Regrouping of Meghalaya militant outfit puts security forces on high alert

Shillong | Agencies

After reports of militant outfit Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) regrouping and recruiting cadres into its fold, the Meghalaya police have alerted the security forces in five districts in the western Garo hills region, officials said on Wednesday.

A senior police officer said that Meghalaya DGP L.R. Bishnoi has asked the district superintendents of police and other concerned officials of the five districts to verify the ground situation and confirm if GNLA is regrouping and recruiting new cadres.

The reports from the district SPs are expected within a week, the officer said, adding that directions have been given to the district police to keep a close watch on the activities of the surrendered GNLA cadres.

Various media reports quoting intelligence sources have said that over 500 youth from various dis-



tricts of Garo Hills region in western Meghalaya have joined GNLA, who have been sent to Nagaland and Myanmar for training.

Some big businessmen, who were close associates of the GNLA, are aiding the outfit to

regroup, the reports suggested.

The Meghalaya government had formed a 10-company-strong counter-insurgency force in 2014 to deal with the militants. Since then, it has neutralised several top insurgents in the region, including

GNLA's self-styled commander-in-chief Sohan D. Shira in February 2018.

Many GNLA cadres had surrendered in batches in 2017 and 2018.

GO FIRST CANCELS ALL FLIGHTS TILL MAY 26

New Delhi: Go First Airlines has cancelled all its flights till May 26, citing operational reasons.

Earlier, the airlines had cancelled flights till May 19.

"We regret to inform that due to operational reasons, Go First flights scheduled till 26th May, 2023, have been cancelled. We apologise for the inconvenience caused by flight cancellations," Go First stated.

The airline said a full refund would be issued to the original mode of payment shortly.

"We acknowledge the flight cancellations might have disrupted your travel plans and we are committed to providing all the assistance we can," it added.

The company has recently filed an application for immediate resolution under insolvency and revival of its operations.

"We will be able to resume bookings shortly. We thank you for your patience," the airline added.



WILL ENSURE POLITICAL EXECUTIVE DOESN'T TURN A BLIND EYE', SC ON MANIPUR VIOLENCE

Team Absolute | New delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it will ensure that the political executive does not turn a blind eye to the law-and-order situation in Manipur, while stressing that it won't enter into political arena, however asked the Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to ensure that constitutional authorities act with restraint and do not make provocative statements.

The apex court also asked the state government to file a fresh status report on measures taken for security and relief and rehabilitation of people affected by violence.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud directed the government authorities to ensure that law and order is maintained. The bench, also comprising Justices P.S. Narasimha and J.B. Pardiwala, said: "Let the state of Manipur apprise us of what steps have been taken. As a constitutional court we will ensure this..."

Senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, representing a party in the matter, submitted that illegal immigrants are coming from Myanmar and they are involved in poppy cultivation and that



is how these militant camps are growing there. Mehta, representing the Manipur government, said that illegal immigrants coming from Myanmar is a real issue. Advocate Nizam Pasha pointed out that the chief minister's official Twitter handle was publishing provocative tweets. Pasha said the CM is speaking about Kuki foreigners and that 'you destroyed

Manipur in the name of Christianity, etc... this is from the CM official handle".

The Chief Justice said the court would not enter into the political arena, and added that there must be restraint on part of the authorities, and asked Mehta to advise the constitutional authorities to act with restraint and not make such statements.

The Chief Justice made it clear that the bench will not allow the court to be dragged into areas which are politics and policy. "We know the remit of the constitutional court," he said. Mehta submitted that the state government is alive to the fact. The top court asked the state government to file a fresh status report on the rehabilitation, relief, and security measures for people affected by violence.

During the hearing, the bench said it will not deal with the legal issues arising out of the Manipur High Court's decision on reservation for majority Meiteis, as the pleas challenging the order were pending in the larger division bench at the high court. The top court said that tribunals can move the division bench of the high court with issues connected with the quota issue.

The bench said, "As the Supreme Court of India, we will ensure that the political executive does not turn a blind eye to the situation". In connection with security apprehensions of Kuki and other tribal communities, the bench ordered that the chief secretary and his security advisor will assess and take steps to ensure peace and tranquillity in the villages cited by tribals.

NIA raids hideouts of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and accomplices



Team Absolute | Jaipur

Among raids on hideouts of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and his accomplices in seven states, the NIA on Wednesday carried out searches in Jaipur and other cities of Rajasthan like Churu, Alwar,

Hanumangar, and Ganganagar, officials said.

Officials said that a large quantity of illegal weapons have also been recovered.

In Sadulshahar, the NIA team is interrogating a few people connected to the gangsters. Those detained are being interrogated in closed rooms.

The team has also reached the house of history-sheeter Vikram Laden - on the list of most wanted criminals - in Behror (Alwar).

Apart from Rajasthan, the NIA team is carrying out raids in Delhi-NCR, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Madhya Pradesh.

Aam Aadmi Party dissolves all Maharashtra units, save Mumbai

Bengaluru | Mumbai

In a surprise move, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has dissolved its state and regional committees in Maharashtra, barring Mumbai, a party official said here on Wednesday.

A terse announcement to the effect was made by AAP National General Secretary Dr. Sandeep Pathak, and said that new panels would be set up soon in the party, led by Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, and active in Maharashtra since nearly a decade.

Welcoming the developments, AAP National Executive



Committee Member and Mumbai President Preeti Sharma-Menon said that the party will strengthen the organisation at all levels starting from the grassroots and contest all forthcoming elections in the state.

"Maharashtra, the land of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Mahatma Phule, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Dr Babasaheb

Ambedkar and the cradle of progressive politics - is ready for AAP and several people from across the spectrum are prepared and willing to join the party," she said.

The AAP will be rebuilt in a robust manner, on the lines of other states, where it is playing an active political role, she added.

"We are confident that with the guidance of the Delhi leadership, the AAP Maharashtra will be able to provide the state with alternative politics, for the actual welfare rather than 'Khokha' (slang for crores of rupees) politics that we have seen so far," Sharma-Menon declared.

NIA, Punjab Police jointly conduct raids at 58 locations

Kolkata | Bhubaneswar

Punjab Police, in a joint operation with the National Investigation Agency (NIA), on Wednesday simultaneously carried out a massive cordon and search operation at hideouts of gangsters and anti-social elements in Punjab, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said.

The search operation was conducted in all 28 police districts. The NIA conducted raids at 58 locations with the support of Punjab Police, while the state police conducted the operation at 143 hideouts of the gangsters and anti-social elements.

At least 125 parties of Punjab Police, involving over 1,200 men, carried out the operation. DGP Yadav told the media here that

Commissioners of Police and Senior Superintendents of Police were directed to personally monitor these raids and make sufficient numbers of teams so that raids could be carried out simultaneously.

The raids were planned after the questioning of recently arrested gangsters and criminals, he said. Special DGP, Law and Order, Arpit Shukla said teams have conducted in-depth searches at houses and other premises, and also collected data from mobile phones and other electronic devices, which will be sent for forensic examinations. He said the teams were also asked to check the status of the criminals and gangsters to find out whether he is in jail, on bail, acquitted, or



absconding. The Special DGP said several people have also been detained for further verification and incriminating material has been seized from their possession, which is being further examined.

He said the teams have also checked arms licences and questioned people about the sourcing of ammunition, besides gathering travel details of foreign-based family members, bank transactions from abroad, and Western Union and property details for further examination.

The operation was aimed at disrupting the nexus of anti-social elements, which keep attempting to disturb the peace of the state, he added.

Varsity faculty arrested for impersonating Delhi LG

Team Absolute | New delhi

An Assistant Professor of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha (GGSIIP) University has been arrested for impersonating Delhi Lt Governor V.K. Saxena and calling the Vice Chancellor in September 2022 to appoint a particular candidate in the English Department, a Delhi Police official said on Wednesday.

The accused, identified as Rohit Singh, was arrested from IGI airport after he returned from UK on May 15. He had got his leave sanctioned after he called the VC on his landline phone in the guise of the LG.

According to police, Singh has admitted that he called the Vice Chancellor twice over the landline phone impersonating the LG.

"In the first instance, he got his leave sanctioned and in the second instance on September 30, he called the VC impersonating as LG to get his sister selected as Faculty in the



English Department," said a senior police official.

The official said that police had registered an FIR on November 2, 2022 at Dwarka North police station and begun investigations after a complaint was received regarding a call made to Vice Chancellor, Dr. Mahesh Verma by an unidentified person impersonating the LG.

"To ascertain the veracity of the call, the Vice Chancellor had

contacted the LG's Secretariat, which denied having made any such call and asked for the matter to be reported to police immediately," an official in LG office said.

"On his return from the UK, Rohit Singh was arrested at the IGI Airport and was produced before a court which sent him to police custody. On expiry on his police custody, he was produced before the court, which sent him into judicial custody. A look out circular was pending against him," said the official.

As per official, the LG had taken an extremely serious view in this matter of impersonation and emphasised that it has never been his style of functioning to make calls or entertain any request whatsoever, that involved out of turn favors, benefits or unethical practices. The LG has also cautioned all concerned to strictly check with his Secretariat in case of any such calls/messages received by them, from someone impersonating him or using his name.

BRS will retain power with 95-105 seats, says KCR

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Wednesday reiterated that his Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) will retain power in the state by winning 95-105 Assembly seats. The elections to the 119-member Assembly are scheduled to be held in November-December this year. "We will come to power in the state once again. No one should have any doubt about it. All the surveys are in our favour. We will definitely win 95 to 105 seats," KCR, as Rao is popularly known, told a meeting of ministers, state legislators, MPs and other top leaders. The BRS chief made it clear that the majority of sitting MLAs will get the

tickets again. He told them that if they work as per his direction, each of them will win with a majority of over 50,000 votes. KCR also remarked that with caste and religion, no party wins an election. "We treat all sections equally and that is the secret of our success," he said. He said the politics should be based on issues and not on petty matters. "We should not do politics with a discriminatory mind," he said. "Telangana people are our bosses. For us, they are Bhagavad Gita and Vedas." The BRS chief called for united efforts by the party leaders. He asked the MLAs to coordinate with MPs, MLCs, Zilla Parishad chairpersons and also heads of state-level corporations.

Stating that a qualitative change should come in the country, he said that the BRS was making efforts in this direction. He recalled that the country had five-year plans during Jawahar Lal Nehru's time which did at least something good but after Nehru, no Prime Minister had the vision to take the country forward in a planned manner. Terming the Gujarat model as 'bogus', KCR alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi cheated the country. "Now people of other states are saying that the country needs the Telangana model," he said. The BRS chief said since Telangana achieved amazing development in the last 10 years, the country wants the Telangana model.

Delhi HC refuses to pass interim order on Gambhir's defamation suit against Punjab Kesari

Team Absolute | New delhi

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to pass any interim injunction order in favour of former India cricketer and BJP MP Gautam Gambhir against Hindi daily Punjab Kesari seeking damages of Rs 2 crore.

Gambhir's advocate Jai Anant Dehadrai submitted before the court that the newspaper has been targeting Gambhir and that it is not the case of fair or objective reporting. "The articles are deeply malicious. This is perhaps at the behest of someone else," he said. Even though it has been held in various judgments that the opinions and views of the concerned person must be taken before publishing any article, Gambhir's opinions were not sought by Punjab Kesari newspaper or its reporters, Dehadrai argued.

Justice Chandra Dhari Singh, who was hearing the matter orally told Dehadrai: "You are a public servant, you need not be so sensitive." To which, the advocate said that it could possibly be that two reporters in the same style keep attacking me? "That he is busy with IPL, he is a useless politician who shouldn't be taken seriously. It's disturbing. Any innocent man's reputation is targeted in this fashion," Dehadrai said. "Any public person should be thick skinned...Nowadays, judges should also be thick skinned," Justice Singh said.

The judge, saying that that prima facie it was satisfied that the matter requires consideration and summons must be issued against the defendants, issued notice on Gambhir's application seeking interim relief and listed it for hearing in October.

Senior Advocate Rajshankar Rao, who appeared for the newspaper and its editor in chief, was also told by Justice Singh that "if you read the articles, in the prima facie opinion, the reporter is behind this person. Some of the words and sentences that he has used are not proper for your publication".

Gambhir has taken legal action against the paper, its edi-



tor Aditya Chopra, and correspondents Amit Kumar and Imran Khan, alleging that they abused their journalistic freedom by publishing a series of malicious and defamatory articles specifically aimed at him.

He has referred to several reports as evidence to support his claim that the paper "distorted" its stories in a "misleading" manner. One of the reports even went as far as drawing a comparison between him and the mythical demon 'Bhasmasur', as argued in the lawsuit.

Gambhir asserted that these reports construct a fabricated and highly-damaging narrative about his performance and integrity as a parliamentarian, misleading the readers and tarnishing his reputation.

Gambhir has demanded that a compensation of Rs 2 crore be awarded to charitable organisations as damages. Additionally, he has appealed for an unconditional apology from the defendants, which should be published in all newspapers, including digital versions, circulated by Punjab Kesari. Furthermore, the cricketer-turned-politician has urged for directives to be issued to the paper, mandating the retraction of every defamatory publication made against him.

Punjab to counter Pakistani drones with CCTVs, rewards

Kanpur | Punjab

Punjab to counter Pakistani drones with CCTVs, rewards Amritsar: To keep a tab on the movement of drones, a new emerging threat, and cross-border smuggling, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has sanctioned Rs 20 crore for the installation of CCTV cameras at strategic locations along the international border, Special Director General of Police (DGP), Arpit Shukla, said on Wednesday.

DGP Gaurav Yadav has also declared a reward of Rs 1 lakh for providing information about drone movements for the seizure of weapons and narcotics, he said.

The Special DGP, accompanied by BSF IG (Frontier Headquarters) Atul Fulzele, was in Khana in Amritsar district to hold a joint coordination-cum-review meeting to further strengthen the security along the border to prevent cross-border smuggling.

The meeting was held in the backdrop of seizure of 15 kg narcotics by the BSF on Tuesday after shooting down a drone near the international border in Amritsar sector.

DIG (Border Range) Naninder Bhargava and DIG (Ferozepur Range) Ranjit Singh Dhillon, along with four



DIGs and four Commandants of the BSF, were among the senior officials who attended the meeting.

Giving a call for greater synergy and teamwork between the BSF and Punjab Police, Special DGP Shukla said it is high time that both the elite forces work in tandem to counter the drone operations on the borders, which have emerged as the new threat.

He also stressed the need to carry out evidence-based and proactive policing to prevent smuggling of narcotics and weapons into Punjab from across the border.

The Special DGP asked the Senior

Superintendents of Police (SSPs) of the border districts to intensify the police force as a second line of defence which will help prevent the collection of contraband dropped by drones on the Indian side of the border.

He also discussed the strategic locations and hotspots in the border villages to install CCTV cameras to keep vigil on Indian nationals involved in

cross-border smuggling. Shukla asked the BSF officials to share inputs of movements of suspected persons with the police so that they can keep a sharp vigil on their activities and ensure penal action against those found involved in any criminal activity.

He also proposed to activate village defence committees in the border areas to counter the nexus between smugglers and criminals.

"These committees will work as eyes and ears of the police and supplement the efforts of the police to wipe out drugs, terrorists and gangsters from the border state," said Shukla.



AFTER JOINING CONGRESS MEGHA PARMAR LOSSES ALL GOVERNMENT ENDORSEMENT

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A week after Mountaineer Megha Parmar was removed as brand ambassador of 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign in Madhya Pradesh, she has now been dropped as the brand ambassador of State Cooperative Dairy Federation. The Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led BJP government took this step after she joined the Congress on May 9. Parmar, 28, had been associated with the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign since 2019 and was also made the brand ambassador of State Cooperative Dairy Federation Limited (MPCDF). Confirming the report, Parmar said that she received an order from MPCDF regarding termination of her contract as the brand ambassador for Sanchi brand products. "No reason has been given to me for terminating the contract, despite my dedicated work to perform the role as a brand ambassa-



dor for the Sanchi brand right to the level of individual dairy farmers. All this is happening since I joined Congress," she added. According to May 15 correspondence signed by the Federation's Deputy General Manager (Marketing), the August 2022 contract which assigned Megha the role of brand ambassador of the Sanchi brand is being terminated.

Earlier on May 10, the state women and child development department, had issued an order to relieve all previous brand ambassadors/gender champions of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, including Megha Parmar of their duties/responsibilities. "I am the proud daughter of a farmer father and have been helping him in dairy farming since childhood days. I know every nitty-gritty of it, due to which I was religiously working for the promotion of the Sanchi brand, right from encouraging farmers and small

dairies in individual villages to give their milk produce to the state cooperative federation only. "I had also worked with the Federation in re-starting a scheme (possibly from June) aimed at promoting the birth of girls, under which parents of every newborn girl child would be gifted the Sanchi Ghee, thus establishing an integral bond between the girl child and the Sanchi brand. Still, I don't know why the August 2022 contract, which was for a period of three years, has been terminated suddenly, possibly as I joined the Congress." Megha Parmar (who hails from CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan's home district Sehore) along with another Bhawna Deharia (from Chhindwara district) had successfully scaled Mount Everest in 2019. She was appointed the brand ambassador of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign by the Congress government-led by Kamal Nath in Madhya Pradesh in 2019.

Will contest LS polls from Guna if party asks, says Digvijaya Singh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Veteran Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh, who does not spare any opportunity to attack Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, has expressed his willingness to contest 2024 Lok Sabha elections against the latter, if asked by the party.

Digvijaya was responding to media queries during a press conference on Tuesday. Asked if he would contest the general election from Guna, Digvijaya responded saying he is a Rajya Sabha MP, but he would follow the party's instructions. "See, I will do anything the party orders me to," he said, adding that he was a Rajya Sabha member presently and there was no need for him to contest the general elections. "But, I am a soldier of the party and would do whatever the party directs me to," Digvijaya added.



Notably, Guna is the home district of Digvijaya Singh who holds command in the politics of Guna and Raghogarh. He is currently touring 66 Assembly segments identified as "vulnerable" by the Madhya Pradesh Congress on the basis of multiple electoral losses in the past. It would be pertinent to mention that both Scindia and Digvijaya Singh unsuccessfully contested the 1996 Lok Sabha elections as Congress candidates. While Scindia lost to one-time protégé-turned opponent K. P. Yadav, his first defeat in the stronghold of Guna, Singh lost to BJP's Pragya Singh Thakur. Ambitious politician, who served as Chief Minister from 1993 to 2003, was ready to contest for Congress' president. However, he withdrew his nomination at the last minute. Scindia's shifting into the BJP with 22 Congress MLAs in 2020 paved the way for BJP's return to power in the state.

Father takes teen's body home on bike after hospital denies ambulance

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A man was forced to carry the body of his 13-year-old daughter on a motorcycle after a government hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol allegedly refused him an ambulance.

Laxman Singh, a resident of Kota village, around 70 km from Shahdol, said his daughter, Madhuri, died of sickle cell anemia on Monday night. He said he had asked the hospital authorities for a vehicle but was told that vehicles are not available for places more than 15 km



away. "We had asked for a hearse in the hospital but

they said that it would not be available for more than 15

km," Singh said. "They asked us to arrange it ourselves. Due to lack of money, we took the dead body of our daughter on a motorcycle." Singh said he was about 20 km from his village when he was intercepted by Shahdol Collector Vandana Vaidya. Vaidya, who was on her way to another village, then ordered a vehicle to take the daughter's body to Singh's village. The vehicle arrived and Singh was able to take his daughter's body home for her last rites. The Shahdol Collector provided the family with some financial assistance and ordered an inquiry into the incident.

The welfare of mothers and daughters are the top-most priority of our government - CM Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the welfare of mothers, sisters and daughters is the topmost priority of our government. For this purpose, many welfare schemes are being run in the state. The state government has taken several steps to make life easier for the girl child. The Mukhya Mantri Kanya Vivah Yojana was started with the aim that the daughter, should not be considered a burden by the family and society and their marriage should take place with festivity and gaiety.



Chief Minister virtually participated in the mass marriage ceremony of Mukhya Mantri Kanya Vivah Yojana in Kusmi of Sidhi district from the office building located at Chief Minister Chouhan's residence. 132 couple tied the knot in the ceremony. Chief Minister Chouhan

gave his blessings, best wishes and congratulations to the newly married couples. The Chief Minister said that it is his prayer to God that happiness, prosperity and success should always prevail in the lives of the newly married couples. Marriage is considered a sanskar in Indian culture. It is the

basis of relationships. The newly wedded couple should lead a life with love, affection and intimacy, enhance the honour and prestige of both the families and fulfill their social responsibilities. Under the Mukhya Mantri Kanya Vivah Yojana, an amount of Rs 49 thousand is being provided to each newly married couple, so that they can get material according to their need and choice to start a household. Chief Minister Chouhan extended best wishes to the newly married daughters with the wish of 'Mama ki duayan leti ja ja tujhko sukhi sansar mile'.

3 kids drown to death in Neemuch district

Team Absolute | Neemuch

Pall of gloom prevailed in Bagh Pipliya village under Baghana police station limit in Neemuch district after three kids drowned to death. All three came from Kapasan village in Rajasthan to attend a marriage ceremony here in Baghana village.

Police informed that those who died include, Afzal Hussein, 13, Arbaaz Khan, 13, and Farhan Khan, 12 and at the time of the incident they were taking baths at a pond situated on the outskirts of the village.

It is being told while they were taking a bath, one child went into deep water and started drowning. Two other kids who were taking bath nearby attempted to save them, but in vain, as they drowned together.

During this, some passers-by saw the children drown-

ing and called people for help, they immediately attempted to save the trio, but that was too late. The crowd gathered on the spot pulled out the children and the family members took them to Neemuch district hospital, where doctors declared them dead on arrival.

On the information of the incident, City Superintendent of Police Phool Singh Paraste, Baghana police station in-charge Ajay Sarwan and the police force reached the district hospital.

CSP Paraste said that there was a wedding ceremony at Yasin Khan's place in Bagh Pipliya village and children came here with their families from Buddha Kheda railway station located in Kapasan village, Rajasthan. Meanwhile, a case has been registered under the relevant section of CRPC.

Terror funding case: NIA raids in MP's Bhind, man arrested

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday raided a house in Madhya Pradesh's Bhind in connection with the terror funding case and detained a person for interrogation, officials said here.

According to state Home Minister Narottam Mishra, NIA's raid was the part of investigation following the arrest of 11 members of radical Islamist group Hizb-Ut-Tahrir last week.

NIA has also carried out searches at more than 100 locations in six states, including Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand over alleged links to terror funding.

The arrested person has been identified as Narendra Singh, a resident of Bhind district. Police claimed action was taken after a series of foreign currency transactions were found in Narendra and his son Jitendra Singh's



bank accounts. During preliminary investigation, police claimed to have found that Narendra's nephew is working abroad and the money he received in his bank account was sent by

him. "NIA has detained one person for further interrogation. The arrested person is the driver and therefore trying to find out the sources of massive money received from foreign bank

accounts. Further investigation is underway," Mishra said.

The anti-terror agency in close coordination with state police forces conducted raids on the premises and other places linked to suspects. The raids are underway, he further added.

Notably, NIA has become highly active in the state since last month.

On Tuesday, the officials conducted searches at the residence of a former SIMI activist Abdul Raqib Qureshi, in Khandwa, on suspicion of his links to the terrorist organisation IS.

Similarly, last week, the probe agency conducted raids in Bhopal and Chhindwara and arrested 11 activists of radical Islamist group Hizb-Ut-Tahrir.

Provocative literature, electronic gadgets and cash were seized from their possession. During interrogation, it was revealed that the HuT members used 'Love Jihad' to recruit members.

Self-styled godman Dharendra Shastri is not new to controversy

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Religious story-teller and self-styled godman Dharendra Krishna Shastri (26), who is popularly addressed as 'Bageshwar Dham Sarkar', has grabbed the headlines once again for his so-called 'Darbar' in Patna, which was thronged by a large crowd to seek his blessings.

A political row has also erupted with several ruling alliance leaders, including Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, taking objection to the remarks made by Shastri at the event, wherein he reiterated his claim of making India a Hindu nation.

"Those (Bageshwar Baba) who are talking about such things (Hindu nation) were not born when the country became Independent and the Constitution was implemented. Would they change the name of the country? We have multiple communities in the country and everyone has equal right to believe in their respective religion," Nitish Kumar had said on Tuesday.

However, it was not the first time that the 'Darbar' of Shastri, the 'peethadhishi' of the Bageshwar Dham Sarkar, a religious pilgrimage site in Chhatrapur district in Madhya Pradesh, had triggered a political controversy. For the past one year, he has been grabbing headlines for making controversial statements.

Shastri made headlines after a Nagpur-based organisation challenged him to display his mystical powers at an event. Shastri, who reportedly



ran away from the challenge, has also been charged with promoting superstition.

In March this year, his visit to Chhattisgarh had sparked a row after Congress leader Kawasi Lakhma, a Cabinet minister in the Bhupesh Baghel-led government, had challenged the self-styled godman to prove his allegations that religious conversions were taking place in the state.

Shastri had shot to 'fame' through his televised 'Divya Darbars', which were attended by a large number of people where he claimed to tame the spirits, diagnose illnesses without any

medical tests, heal the sick, read minds and perform other 'miracles'. In Madhya Pradesh, he has made a strong base in the Bundelkhand region, which is the reason why not just some local leaders, but even heads of political parties in the state have made a beeline to seek blessings at his 'Darbars'.

Senior Congress leader Govind Singh, who belongs to Bhind, is perhaps the only politician in Madhya Pradesh to openly criticise Shastri, even as state Congress chief Kamal Nath along with some other party leaders visited the Bageshwar Dham to seek

Shastri's blessings for the upcoming Assembly polls.

Madhya Pradesh BJP President V.D. Sharma too attended Shastri's 'Darbar' within a week of Kamal Nath's visit, and was followed by some other state BJP leaders who either reached Chhatrapur or invited Shastri to hold his 'Darbar' in their respective areas.

In February this year, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had also visited the Bageshwar Dham during a mass-marriage ceremony organised by Shastri.

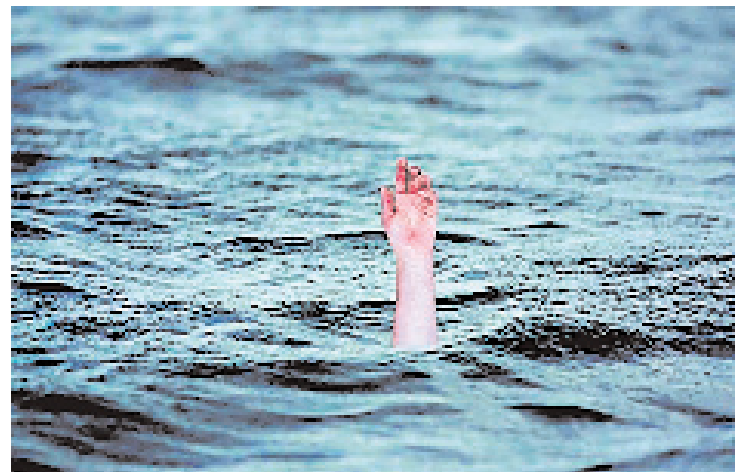
Madhya Pradesh bags "Best State" award for the work of management, conservation and promotion of water resources under fourth "National Water Awards"

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh has been selected by the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti for the first place in the best state category in the National Water Award, 2022, for its excellent work in management conservation and augmentation of water resources. The award ceremony will be held soon, in which the state will be honoured with trophy and citation.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has congratulated all the citizens, public representatives and officers of Madhya Pradesh for this achievement. The CM said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, today India is the leader of the world in moving ahead towards development in harmony with the environment. Protection, augmentation and proper management of water resources is an important component of environmental protection.

It is a matter of great pride that the entire Madhya Pradesh is making united efforts in this direction, this honour is a proof of this thinking of Madhya Pradesh. Chief Minister Chouhan has expressed gratitude towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh



Shekhawat. Under the 4th National Water Awards, states, organisations and individuals etc. in 11 different categories - Best State, Best District, Best Gram Panchayat, Best Urban Local Body, Best Media (Print & Electronic), Best School, Best Institution for Campus Use in the category of RWA/Religious/Higher Educational Institution, Best Industry, Best NGO, Best Water User Association and Best Industry for CSR activity being awarded.

The award winners in various cate-

gories will be presented with citations, trophies and cash prizes. The Integrated National Water Awards has been envisaged to motivate and encourage stakeholders and people to adopt a holistic approach towards water-resource management. The awards also strive to create awareness among the public towards the importance of water and motivate them to adopt best practices in effective water management. The first National Water Award was presented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in 2018.



EDITOR'S SPECS

SP to support Congress in 2024 LS polls

Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav has finally agreed to support the Congress in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. This is a major shift in the SP stand since the party, till now, had vehemently opposed the Congress, terming it as a "B-team of the BJP". Akhilesh has now backed West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress (TMC) Chief Mamata Banerjee's statement for opposition unity at the national level, saying the party which is strong in a state should contest elections there. The change in Akhilesh's stand is good news for the Congress which has been facing resistance from the SP and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh, and where the Congress remains in a dismal position. The SP Chief said Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and other parties also hold the same opinion. Incidentally, Akhilesh had met Kumar last month in Lucknow to discuss opposition unity but Akhilesh had maintained a studied silence on the inclusion of Congress in the platform. The West Bengal CM on Monday had said her party will support the Congress wherever it is strong. The TMC Chief, however, also sought support from the Congress in West Bengal, suggesting the grand old party should back regional parties wherever they are strong. Responding to a question on the Karnataka elections, Yadav said people are the winners in the state. The SP Chief claimed that thousands of fake Aadhaar cards were found in Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj. A woman legislator of the ruling BJP visited polling booths and got fake votes cast, he claimed, without naming anyone. In Chandauli, Yadav claimed, a transgender candidate won, but the result was changed. However, the actual result was restored after transgender people chased officials with sticks, he added.

AFTER K'TAKA, CAN POLL STRATEGIST NARESH ARORA DELIVER FOR GEHLOT IN RAJASTHAN?

Anand Singh

After delivering a thumping victory for the Congress in Karnataka while working closely with its state unit chief D.K. Shivakumar, poll strategist Naresh Arora is now eyeing a similar result in Rajasthan where he is busy formulating strategies for the upcoming Assembly elections in the desert state with Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. In a candid conversation with IANS amid the leadership tussle in Rajasthan, Arora opined that Gehlot is a "very popular leader" and the pro-people schemes launched in the last four and half years are working in favour of the grand old party veteran. Arora, the Director and the Founder of DesignBoxed -- a political campaign management company, said: "I think Rajasthan has a very popular Chief Minister. All the surveys indicate that Gehlot is the most popular politician or elected representative of Rajasthan. And the schemes which the government has launched over four and half years are quite popular on the ground, and the chief minister is working day and night to ensure that those schemes actually reach people and benefit them." Arora said this when he was asked about the Congress facing a crisis since 2020 after rebellion by party leader and former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot. "I am confident that these schemes and these popularity factors will take care of a lot of other issues around and the Congress will come back to power," he said.



When asked if people are really buying the claims of the Rajasthan government, Arora said: "Definitely, if you tell anyone in the country, then you're going to get a cylinder which is worth Rs 1150 for Rs 500. Do you think that people are going to be lapping up to it?" They are very good schemes which the government has announced over there. For example, health insurance worth Rs 25 lakh. He opined that many people do not have Rs 25 lakh as a health insurance cover in their families. "There are good schemes. And I am pretty sure that these schemes will be quite helpful for Congress to come back to power in the state," the DesignBoxed Founder said. When asked about his plans for the desert state, he said: "Our plans for Rajasthan are already on, there are certain things going on the ground, and we are also getting into

assessment more to see how, and what areas that need to be addressed by the Congress and soon you will see them on the ground." His remarks came on a day when Rajasthan Congress leader Sachin Pilot threatened to launch a statewide movement in the desert state if action on his demands is not taken by the month-end. When asked about what he feels about the prospects of Congress in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh assembly elections, Arora said: "I have worked in Chhattisgarh and I have not done any survey over there. But my sense from both sides is that the chances look right for Congress in both the states." When asked about comparison with "brand BJP", and what kind of impact "brand Congress" has in the mind of the people, and how he tries to convey people about brand Congress, he said: "Every state has different challenges and the dynamics are also different. So the brand Congress is nothing that needs to be sold to people. It is only that the Congress and the parties which are contesting elections need to connect with people in a better way because the format of connectivity have changed, people have less time. Digitalization has happened, newspapers and other things are secondary source of information, TV channels, people have all the information on their phone. "They need to speak to the voter in the voice that they want to be heard and not what the party wants to say," Arora added. Assembly elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are scheduled later this year in the month of November and December.

If diesel cars go, what about EVs? On course, but in slow gear

Nishant Arora

As India, which is the fourth largest car market globally, charts a new course for electric vehicles (EVs), the country still has EV penetration at only around 1 per cent (according to Moody's) - and that too dominated by electric two-wheelers. However, with the friendly government policies and new entrants arriving on the scene with cheaper EVs, the country is set to witness a plethora of options in the next 2-3 years. Industry experts expect that passenger car EV penetration will cross 21 per cent by 2027 from 1.3 per cent in 2022. Tata Motors is currently leading the Indian passenger electric vehicle (EV) market, followed by MG Motor, and Hyundai Motor. "MG Motor's recent launch of the Comet EV priced under Rs 10 lakh is expected to be a game-changer for urban EV adoption," senior analyst Soumen Mandal from Counterpoint Research told correspondent.



Comet EV offers a certified battery range of around 230 km on a single charge. According to the company, the new Comet EV has been evaluated to provide an encouraging and economical charging cost of Rs 519 per month. Maruti Suzuki is also working on developing its own battery technology before launching pure EV models. Tata Motors has already established an operational battery plant, which has helped

the company to reduce its EV price point. As per CyberMedia Research (CMR), the Indian electric vehicle (EV) market is growing rapidly, with a year-on-year growth rate of approximately 48 per cent in the first quarter of 2023. The electric 2-wheeler (E2W) market grew by 44 per cent YoY. The electric 3-wheeler (E3W) market grew steadily covering around 50 per cent share within the segment. "There is growing consumer awareness around connected vehicle technologies. For instance, connected vehicle tech has consistently increased its footprint in the industry," said John Martin, senior analyst, smart mobility practice, CMR. The electric passenger vehicle (EPV) segment grew over 114 per cent YoY in Q1 in India. By Q1 2025, the EV market share in India is expected to surpass 24 per cent. In its report, Moody's Investors Service said last month that various government incentives will drive an

increase in EV penetration. "These include consumer incentives, production-linked incentives for advanced battery storage to drive local cell manufacturing, goods and services tax (GST) rate cuts, and other state-level subsidies," the report said. With the demand for affordable transportation and the focus on reducing carbon emissions, electric vehicles will play a vital role in India's step towards a sustainable future. Consumers are increasingly picking EVs, understanding that the total cost of ownership (TCO) is more favourable than their petrol counterparts, over 50 per cent for high usage such as delivery, according to a latest RedSeer report. As of 2022, India's overall EV penetration, including 2W, is 3 per cent and although the electrification of mobility in India is still at a nascent stage, "there is massive headroom for growth", the report noted.

international

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS WORSENS IN SUDAN'S CAPITAL AS CLASHES CONTINUE

Seoul | Khartoum

The already dire humanitarian crisis in Khartoum is worsening as the violent armed clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have entered the second month. According to the latest report by the Sudanese Doctors Union, at least 822 people have died since the clashes broke out on April 15, reports Xinhua news agency. Residents in the conflict zones are facing acute shortages of basic services, food, electricity, and water supply, while the situation has been exacerbated by air bombardments and looting of major local markets. This has disrupted the supply of daily necessities, sent the prices of food commodities to skyrocket, and raised fears about an inflation surge that could push millions of Sudanese to the edge of starvation. Mohamed Nouredine Hashim, a Sudanese economist, told Xinhua



that "major food commodity factories and import companies of the country are in Khartoum, but most of those factories have now been vandalized to closure". He warned the number of citizens in need of urgent aid will likely increase "as millions of employees are currently unable to work because of the war." "Prices have increased dramatically for staple goods and there are shortages of imported goods such as wheat flour, oil, and tomato paste," said the

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, citing a report by the Mercy Corps. "In some areas, shops have closed because of insecurity or lack of goods. Access to cash remains a significant issue in Khartoum and South Darfur, while the increase in fuel prices and transportation costs has hindered both daily life and the ability of people to move out of insecure areas," the report said. Residents of Khartoum are suffer-

ing from frequent power outages for long hours due to the suspension of purchasing electricity through bank applications or direct sales windows, according to the National Electricity Corporation. "There is no electricity in the northern Al-Shabiya area (a neighbourhood north of Khartoum)," a resident told Xinhua. He said that some residents had to resort to other alternatives, such as generators, but failed to operate them due to a lack of fuel. The power outages also disrupted water supply. In addition, the disruption of the education system is causing deep concerns in the country, as observers said it could leave the future of thousands of students uncertain. Witnesses reported direct clashes between units of the Sudanese Army and RSF fighters in the Jabra area in the south of Khartoum, as well as Arkaweit, Al-Mamoura and El-Jeraif in the east of the capital.

Moldovan climber dies en route to Mt. Everest

Hyderabad | Kathmandu

A Moldovan climber died en route to summit Mount Everest on Wednesday morning, bringing the death toll in the region to six during the ongoing spring climbing season. Victor Brinza stopped breathing at Camp IV of the world's highest peak. "The climber fell sick while pushing for the peak. Efforts are being made to bring his body to the base camp and then airlift it to Kathmandu," Yubraj Khatiwada, director of the mountaineering section at Nepal's Department of Tourism, told Xinhua news agency. A Nepali climbing guide, who was working with a Nepal Army team tasked with collecting waste in the Mt. Everest region, died on Tuesday evening while



descending from the peak. "We unfortunately lost one of the Sherpa guides who are supporting our staff in the cleaning mission," Nepal Army spokesman Brig. Gen. Krishna Prasad Bhandari told Xinhua. An army captain involved in the cleaning mission has fallen ill, the spokesman said. On May 2, American doctor Jonathan Sugarman died on Camp II, while three Sherpa guides lost their lives in an avalanche close to Camp I on April 12. A record high of 478 climbers from 65 countries and regions have received the permits to climb the world highest peak, as this year marks the 70th anniversary of the first ascent of the mountain, according to the Department of Tourism.

QUAD MEET CANCELLED, PM MODI MAY STILL VISIT AUSTRALIA: ALBANESE

Sydney: Confirming the cancellation of next week's Quad meeting, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday said that it is still possible that his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi will visit Sydney next week. The development comes after US President Joe Biden pulled out from the meeting at the last minute citing the domestic debt ceiling crisis, and now all four leaders of the Quad grouping -- the US, Japan, India and Australia -- are likely to instead meet on the sidelines of the G7 meeting in Japan this weekend, the ABC News reported. The meeting was slated to take place on May 24. Modi is scheduled to travel to Japan, Papua New Guinea and Australia this month with the power-packed visit concluding "Down Under" where he will address the diaspora.

Child killed, 6 injured in Pakistan school firing

Islamabad | Islamabad

A school girl was killed and six others, including five students and a teacher, injured in firing inside a school in Pakistan's northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police said. A policeman deployed at the security of the school in Swat district opened fire at the children when they were returning home after attending classes, Divisional Police Officer of Swat Shafi Ullah Gandapur told media on Tuesday. The nine-year-old girl's body and the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital, and two of the students were in critical condition,

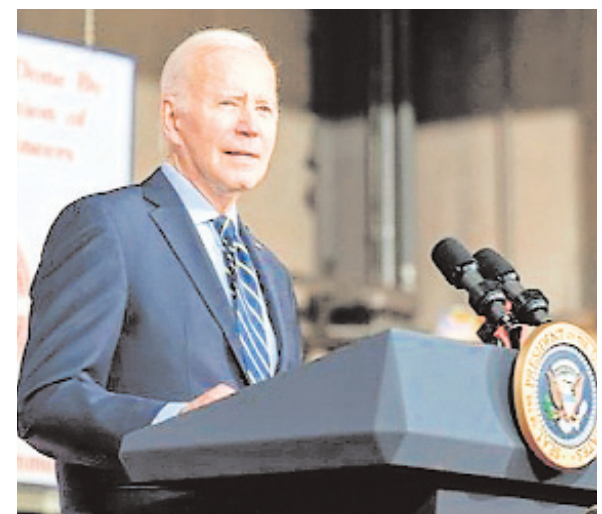


according to local media. The suspect was arrested and an investigation was underway, he said, adding that apparently, the policeman had some psychological problems which made him commit the crime, Xinhua news agency reported. Talking to police during the arrest, the culprit said that the firing was accidental and he did not intentionally target the children, school staff told media.

BIDEN TO CUT SHORT ASIA-PACIFIC TRIP DUE TO DEBT CEILING STALEMATE: MEDIA

Islamabad | Washington

US President Joe Biden will not travel to Papua New Guinea and Australia later this month as originally planned due to the ongoing stalemate in negotiations with Congressional leaders to address the debt ceiling, multiple US media outlets reported, citing sources familiar with the matter. Biden would have become the first sitting US President to visit the Pacific island country of Papua New Guinea, to be followed by a trip to Sydney for the leaders' summit of the Quad, which includes the US, Japan, India and Australia. Biden will still go to Hiroshima, Japan, to participate in the three-day G7 summit beginning from Friday, Xinhua news agency reported. Earlier on Tuesday, John Kirby, the National Security Council's coordinator for strategic communications, told the regular White House press briefing that the White House was "reevaluating" the



post-Japan part of Biden's trip. "What I can speak to is the G7 and going to Hiroshima. The president is looking forward to that. We are taking a look at the rest of the trip," Kirby told reporters.

News of the shortening of the presidential overseas trip came as Biden was meeting with Congressional leaders from both the Democratic and Republican parties in the Oval Office over the debt ceiling issue. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen reaffirmed on Monday that the US may default on its debt obligations as soon as June 1 if the partisan fight drags on without a settlement. Biden will depart Washington on Wednesday, stopping over Anchorage, Alaska, before arriving in Japan on Thursday, according to the travel guidance announced previously by the White House.



12 days after Pawar's 'resignation' jolt, NCP gears for intra-party elections

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Exactly 12 days after the Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar's 'resignation jolt', the party is now geared up for organisational elections, a top official said here on Wednesday.

Pawar presided over the NCP Core Committee meeting in which discussions focussed on the upcoming election, Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, besides intra-party polls, said chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase.

As he had promised on May 5 to re-jig the party and bring up youngsters in leadership roles, Pawar on Wednesday directed that the party's organisational elections must be conducted as soon as possible.

Accordingly, two senior leaders and ex-ministers Dilip Walse-Patil and Jaiprakash Dandegaonkar have been appointed as returning officers for Maharashtra and Mumbai, respectively.



They will discuss and soon announce the schedule for the NCP internal polls in Mumbai and entire Maharashtra, he said.

Additionally, senior leaders and former ministers like Anil Deshmukh, Rajendra Shingne, Dr. Jitendra Awhad, Dhananjay Munde, Shashikant Shinde, Sunil Shelke, Ashok Pawar, Anil Patil, and Aniket

Tatkare have been appointed Booth Committee heads for various regions.

Other senior leaders are named as in-charge of various districts to oversee the organisational affairs of the party for the respective Lok Sabha and assembly seats falling in their jurisdictions.

Within a couple of months, the party will appoint booth-level workers and coordinators for each constituency for the upcoming general elections, said Tapase.

The NCP has also planned a grand 24th anniversary celebration on June 10, this time in Ahmednagar.

The Core Committee took strong objections to the ruling Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party government

of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis' decision to revoke the suspension of former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh.

"Is the BJP expressing gratitude to Singh for having falsely framed Anil Deshmukh in a fake corruption case based only on 'hearsay and rumours' without having an iota of evidence to back his claims?" demanded Tapase.

He said that the NCP will raise this and other similar issues before the masses to expose Shinde-Fadnis who resorted to such tactics to topple the Maha Vikas Aghadi government in June 2022.

Top NCP leaders like Pawar, state President Jayant Patil, Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar, Fauzia Khan, Supriya Sule, Praful Patel, Chhagan Bhubhal, Sunil Tatkare and others attended the first Core Committee meet coming just three days after the BJP was trounced in Karnataka, gladdening Opposition circles in Maharashtra.

55 WILD ANIMALS RESCUED IN MUMBAI OVER 3 DAYS, SEVERAL DEHYDRATED: NGO

Team Absolute | Mumbai

At least 55 wildlife creatures including birds and reptiles, many of them suffering from dehydration, were rescued in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region in the last three days, an NGO claimed on Wednesday.

The Forest Department and Resqink Association for Wildlife Welfare (RAWW) were flooded with calls about dehydrated animals stranded in residential areas, said Pawan Sharma, founder of RAWW, an NGO, and an honorary wildlife warden.

An eight-foot-long Indian Rock Python was found in a housing society in suburban Mulund which is located on the edge of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, said Sharma.

Joaquim Naik of the RAWW rescued it and released it in the



wild, he added. In neighbouring Thane, a pregnant cobra was found severely dehydrated and distressed near a residential area.

It was treated by veterinary doctors and kept under observation. The reptile was in severe stress due to which it had abandoned its eggs which were unfertilized, according to

Chinmay Joshi, a zoologist attached to the RAWW.

It was later released in a natural habitat in coordination with the forest department, Sharma said.

Elsewhere, an adult spectacled cobra fallen into a 30-foot dry well was rescued at Saphale village in neighbouring Palghar district, a forest

Kangana claims to lose Rs 30-40 cr a year after speaking against 'anti-nationals'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Kangana Ranaut has claimed that she was dropped from over 25 brand endorsements and incurred Rs 30-40 crore loss every year as she spoke against 'politicians, anti-nationals, tukde-tukde gang'.

Kangana took to Instagram, where she shared an interview of Twitter head Elon Musk, which had the headline 'Elon Musk: I'll say what I want, and if the consequence of that is losing money, so be it.'

She captioned it: "This is a character, true freedom and success, speaking for Hinduism, against politicians/anti-nationals/tukde gang costed me 20-25 brand endorsements, they dropped me overnight and that amounted to a loss of Rs 30-40 crore per year..."

Kangana said that nothing can stop her from saying whatever she wants.

"But I am free and nothing should stop me from saying what I want definitely not agenda-driven multinational companies and their corporate brand heads who hate India it's cul-



ture and integrity... I appreciate Elon because everyone displays only weaknesses, at least rich person should not care for money...I see those more rich they get deprived they become..."

On the work front, Kangana will be seen in 'Emergency', 'Tejas', 'Chandramukhi 2', 'Manikarnika Returns: The Legend of Didda' and 'The Incarnation: Sita'.

CASE AGAINST MAN FOR THREATENING WITH TOY GUN IN ROAD-RAGE INCIDENT

Mumbai: Mumbai police has registered an FIR against a businessman for allegedly threatening two youths with a toy gun during a road-rage incident in Antop Hill area.

The incident took place on Sunday night, but a video of the same went viral later.

The man, who was travelling in a car with his wife, had a heated argument with two youths who were riding a motorbike, and threatened them with a toy gun, an official said.

After the video went viral, police registered a case against the man under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections including 506-II (punishment for criminal intimidation). No arrest has been made.

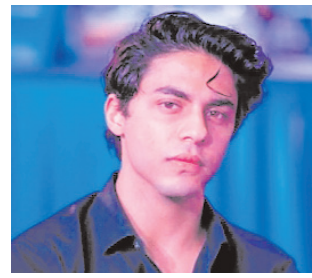
16 INJURED IN PUNE BUS ACCIDENT: POLICE

Pune: As many as 16 people sustained minor injuries after a state transport (ST) bus met with an accident near Patas Toll Plaza in Yavat town of Pune district, officials said. "16 passengers were injured after a state transport (ST) bus met with an accident near Patas toll naka in Yavat town of Pune district on Tuesday night," Pune District Administration said. "So far, no casualties have been reported," officials said. More details are awaited. Further investigation is underway.

CBI summons Sameer Wankhede in Aryan Khan case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former head of Mumbai Zone Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Sameer Wankhede, has been summoned by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)



in connection with an extortion case pertaining to Aryan Khan who was arrested along with others in a drugs case. Wankhede has been accused of trying to extort Rs 25 crore from Aryan

Khan's family, through other members of the NCB

basis of which the probe agency has lodged a case.

Singh had handed over the report to the CBI to file a case against Sameer Wankhede, VV. Singh, then Superintendent NCB and Ashish Ranjan, the then IO of the case.

Wankhede, an IRS officer who is currently in DGTS Chennai, will have to appear before the CBI's Mumbai zone office to get his statement recorded.

His cell phone was earlier seized by the CBI to retrieve data from it.

March in Vasai to seek justice for Shraddha Walkar, BJP leader Kirit Somaiya joins

Team Absolute | Vasai

A handful of people joined a peaceful march in Vasai, Maharashtra on Wednesday to seek justice for Shraddha Walkar, who was killed and mercilessly dismembered by her live-in partner Aftab Poonawala in the national capital last year.

The peaceful march was led by Shraddha's father Vikas and his friends, relatives as well as neighbours. People were seen carrying various placards.

Senior BJP leader Kirit Somaiya also joined the peaceful march holding a big placard.

Her father Vikas said, "We demand strict action against the police officers whose delayed action gave sufficient time to Poonawala to destroy vital pieces of evidence in this horrible case. It has been one



year, and I am yet to conduct the last rituals of my daughter."

The bones and her remains, recovered by Delhi police, are the case property and these have not been handed over to Walkar family to conduct last rites as per Hindu rituals. The couple first stayed together in a live-in relationship in Vasai near Mumbai before they moved to Delhi to live together in a rented accommodation. Poonawala had chopped

Shraddha's body into 35 pieces on May 18 last year. But the horrendous crime surfaced only after her father registered a missing person's complaint at Manikpur police station in August. The killer was arrested by Delhi police on November 11. The Delhi Police have managed to recover only 13 pieces of Shraddha's body parts which were scattered in the nearby forest area of Mehrauli in South Delhi.

Woman, son die as speeding car hits divider on Delhi-Mumbai expressway in Rajasthan

Team Absolute | Mumbai/Jaipur

A Women and her son died while five others were injured when an overspeeding car collided with a divider on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway and then landed on culvert in Rajasthan's Alwar district on Wednesday. Eyewitnesses said that the car was being driven at a speed of 150 km per hour. The mother-son, resident of Palanpur, Gujarat died while five others were seriously injured. The car passengers were all from Palanpur and were going from Gujarat to Deoband in Uttar Pradesh. The accident was so terrible that the car was totally mangled and getting tossed in air. The car was lifted with a crane in the morning. Police said that the accident was reported at around 6 a.m. When officials went to the spot, the car was found hanging from the culvert of the highway near Maujpur. People took out the seriously injured from the car and were later referred to Alwar. A woman died on the spot. The police said that the car was being driven at around 150 and the driver had dozed off while driving. 45-year-old woman Rashida died on the spot, and her son Ahmed, 25, died in hospital.



Mumbai citizens to get weather alerts on mobile phones during monsoon

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Citizens in Mumbai will receive weather updates on their mobile phones through SMS during monsoon, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has said.

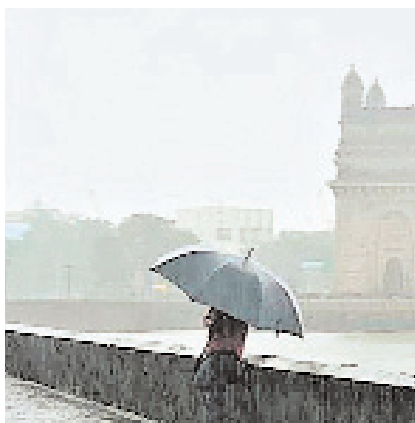
The District Disaster Management Department has set up a control room to provide timely alerts about weather conditions and it has a mechanism to provide real-time weather alerts, the BMC said in a release.

"An SMS alert will be sent to citizens during an emergency," it said. BMC Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal on Tuesday chaired a meeting with various agencies on disaster management and monsoon preparedness.

Officials of BEST, MMRDA, MSRDC, PWD, Mumbai Metro, Railways, NDRF, IMD, MHADA and other agencies along with civic officials attended the meeting.

Chahal directed all departments and agencies to expedite coordination to mitigate the possible challenges during the monsoon, the release said.

For the smooth operation of suburban trains, which are used by more than 70 lakh people daily, Chahal directed the BMC's



garden department to complete the trimming of trees in the railway premises by May-end.

De-watering pumps will be installed at 480 locations in Mumbai where waterlogging may occur during heavy rainfall and these pumps will also have CCTV camera surveillance.

After May 15, no permission will be given for the digging of roads in Mumbai except for emergencies, the civic body said.

The BMC has reserved 3,000 beds to accommodate patients with monsoon-

related diseases, it said, adding each ward will now have arrangements for five schools in case of emergencies like heavy rainfall to provide shelter to citizens.

Chahal said the occupants of dangerous buildings should be served notices to vacate, and alternative arrangements for their accommodation should be made.

As per the orders of the High Court, the water supply of such dangerous buildings should be discontinued.

"In accordance with this, Municipal Commissioner Chahal instructed to coordinate properly at the district collectorate level and to take necessary measures. He also asked to formulate the policy for the construction of protective walls," the civic body said.

The BMC was informed that the NDRF has formed three teams for monsoon-related emergencies in Mumbai. Additionally, an extra team will be stationed in the eastern suburbs.

"The Indian Navy has also informed about their teams and divers who will be ready for emergency response," the release said.

Chahal also instructed Mumbai Fire Brigade to remain vigilant for any emer-

TEAM UDDHAV'S FIRST EXECUTIVE MEETING IN MUMBAI ON JUNE 18: REPORT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Shiv Sena (UBT) will hold its first executive meeting since the split in the original Shiv Sena in Mumbai on June 18, a party source said on Wednesday.

Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray will speak at the meeting which will be held in Worli area, he said.

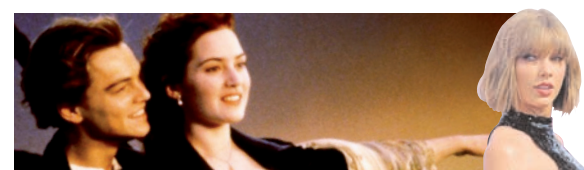
The decision was taken at a meeting of district chiefs of the party in Mumbai. Office-bearers from the taluka level upwards from across Maharashtra will participate in the meeting where the political path ahead and organisational strengthening will be discussed, the source said.

Thackeray will also address a gathering on June 19, the original Shiv Sena's foundation day, at the Shanmukhanand Hall in Mumbai. The party will also be organising the 'Chavdi Andolan' throughout the state in the next one month where its workers will apprise people of how the Supreme Court's recent judgement was in favour of the Thackeray-led group.



The Supreme Court, dealing with petitions regarding the split in the Sena in June 2022, held that the then governor should not have asked Thackeray to prove his major-

ity in the Assembly, but also said that the Thackeray government could not be reinstated as he resigned as chief minister before the floor test.



MADONNA'S PICS FROM 'SEX' BOOK TO GO UP FOR AUCTION



Los Angeles | Agencies

'Hung Up' hitmaker Madonna's nude photos from her controversial 'Sex' book, which was released in 1992, are set to be sold at auction.

The "titillating" pictures were taken when the star was 34 in New York and Miami and could fetch as much \$300,000, reports 'Mirror.co.uk'.

The steamy snaps will be sold at Christie's New York and will be signed by Madonna, now 64, and renowned photographer Steve Meisel.

Prices for the photos begin at a cool \$49,000 and feature the 'Material Girl' star in her birthday suit posing everywhere from burlesque hotels to the beach.

'Mirror.co.uk' further states that Madonna's 'Sex' book was released the day after the singer's fifth studio album Erotica.

Speaking about the aluminium-covered publication, which contains S&M images and softcore pornography and sold 1.5 million copies worldwide, Christie's deputy chairman Darius Himes told 'The Sun': "It was shocking and titillating. It captured so much white-hot energy coming off of Madonna in the early 1990s".

Madonna was slammed recently after she shared a racy throwback snap of herself posing topless.

Some of her fans thought the star should start 'acting her age', but despite their hurtful words, the star's pal Rosie O'Donnell says the queen of pop will take the dissing in her stride.



CHIWETEL EJIOFOR SIGNED FOR 'VENOM 3'

Los Angeles | Agencies

After matching wits with Doctor Strange, Chiwetel Ejiofor has found a new superhero to face off against.

Ejiofor has closed a deal to co-star opposite Tom Hardy in Sony and Marvel's 'Venom 3', reports Deadline.

Hardy is set to return as the titular character with the franchise's longtime writer Kelly Marcel taking over the directing reins. Juno Temple also is

on board.

As per 'Deadline', Sony had no comment on Ejiofor's casting.

Marcel and Hardy also will produce, with Marcel writing the screenplay from a story she and Hardy wrote. Avi Arad, Matt Tolmach, Amy Pascal and Hutch Parker also are producing.

Plot details are unknown other than Hardy is returning as the lethal protector Venom following the first two films grossing a combined \$1.36 billion worldwide. It also is unknown who will be joining Hardy from previous films or whether any characters from the Sony Pictures Universe of Marvel Characters will be joining the film.

Who Ejiofor will be playing is being kept under wraps.

The 12 Years a Slave Oscar nominee is no stranger to comic book world, having recently reprised his role as Baron Mordo in Marvel Studios' Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness, which bowed last summer. He most recently starred opposite Emilia Clarke in 'The Pod Generation', which premiered at Sundance.

Next up for Ejiofor is 'Rob Peace', which he also directed and is starring in. He also will return for Netflix's 'The Old Guard 2'.

'The Bachelor' announces first-ever season with only senior citizens

Los Angeles | Agencies

A spin-off for the show 'The Bachelor' has been announced and its contestants will be senior citizens.

'The Golden Bachelor', which will premiere this fall, will focus on one lucky older gentleman and age-appropriate female suitors who will compete for his love, reports pagesix.com.

In a press release obtained by Variety, the new reality series is described as a "whole new kind of love story - one for the golden years."

The network describes the - we imagine - salt and peppered hair, twinkly-eyed mature gentleman as a "hopeless romantic" who will be "given a second chance at love in the search for a partner with whom to share the sunset years of life."

Per the release, the group of women "arriving at the mansion have a lifetime of experience, living through love, loss and laughter, hoping for a spark that ignites a future full of endless possibilities." Despite its premiere date being just a few months away, the lucky older gentleman and his potential love interests have yet to be announced.

The brains behind 'The Bachelor' have reportedly been keen on the idea of a senior citizen season for "quite some time," reports 'Variety', "but the series has been waiting on the back burner for years."

Disney exec Rob Mills previously spoke to the entertainment trade journal about the series noting that they would be able to switch things with staples like the "hometown dates, which could feature visits homes to children

instead of parents."

"Some of the casting interviews we got, they were just so touching," Mills said. "It's such a different way of doing 'The Bachelor' because these people are just at a totally different place in their lives."

He continued, "There is an interesting thing about people who have hit the other end of the spectrum, who've lived their lives, they've raised their kids, some have been widowed or divorced and maybe some have never been in love. We thought that would be an interesting dynamic through the 'Bachelor' prism."

'The Bachelor' first debuted back in 2002 and has generated a host of shows, including 'The Bachelorette', 'Bachelor in Paradise' and 'Bachelor Pad'.



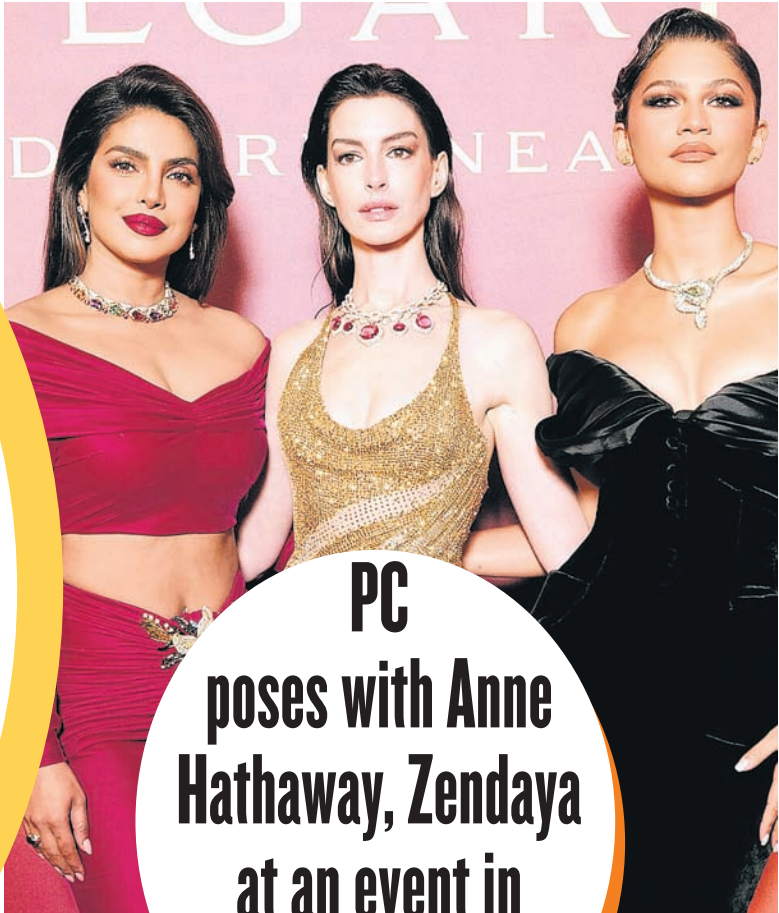
SYLVESTER STALLONE WANTS TO CHRONICLE HIS NOTORIETY WITH REALITY SHOW

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Sylvester Stallone was determined to shoot a reality show while he's "still relevant." The 76-year-old actor is the focal point of a new reality series called 'The Family Stallone', and the Hollywood icon has revealed his motivation for making the show, reports aceshowbiz.com. Stallone, who stars on the show alongside his wife Jennifer and daughters Sophia, 26, Sistine, 24, and Scarlet, 20, told 'Entertainment Tonight', "This would be great to share this notoriety with a reality show while you're still relevant. I love daughters, I love my wife and I wanted to share that. It's something that I think is entertaining." Jennifer always wanted the show to be an authentic look at their lives. She explained, "I didn't want it to be set up. I didn't want it to be, 'Oh, we all get drunk and we all throw fits and we're screaming at each other.' I wanted to show people real life things that happen."

Stallone hopes that fans will warm to his family as they watch the series. He said, "I think we all have such big personalities. We're very loud and funny. We come from love."

Meanwhile, Stallone previously promised that his marriage troubles would be a prominent part of the reality show. Jennifer filed a petition "for dissolution of marriage and other relief" at a court in Florida in August 2022, but they subsequently reconciled their differences.



PC poses with Anne Hathaway, Zendaya at an event in Venice

Los Angeles | Agencies

Indian actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas was pictured posing with Hollywood stars Anne Hathaway and Zendaya at the Bulgari Mediterranean High Jewellery event in Venice.

Dressed in a floor-sweeping, figure-hugging wine coloured ensemble in the event on Tuesday, Priyanka looked every-inch gorgeous.

A video of Priyanka posing with Zendaya and Anne have been doing the rounds on social media. The clip also

shows the three stars talking and bursting out in laughter.

In another clip, Priyanka is seen seated next to Zendaya and the two are having a conversation.

On the work front, Priyanka's web-series 'Citadel', which also stars Richard Madden, is airing on Prime Videos and her film 'Love Again' with Sam Heughan has hit the theatres.

Next, she will be working on Actor-director Farhan Akhtar's 'Jee Le Zaraa' with actresses Katrina Kaif and Alia Bhatt.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Sydney Sweeney



IPL 2023: DC DENTS PBKS' PLAYOFF CHANCES, WINS BY 15-RUNS

Dharamshala | Agencies

Riley Rossouw's blistering knock of unbeaten 82 off 37 and Prithvi Shaw fine fifty (54 off 38) followed by a collective bowling effort led Delhi Capitals (DC) to a thrilling 15-run win over Punjab Kings (PBKS) in an IPL 2023 match at Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association (HPCA) Stadium, here on Wednesday.

David Warner and Shaw stepped up and gave DC the perfect start. The skipper fell four short but Shaw scored a fine fifty. Then, Rossouw and Philip Salt (26) joined hands to give the perfect finish, scoring 51 runs off the last three overs as DC posted 213/2 in 20 overs.

In reply, after a shaky start, Atharva Taide (55 off 42) and Livingstone's blitzkrieg (94 off 48) brought PBKS back in the game. However, Delhi bowlers did well to keep taking wickets from one end despite fireworks from Livingstone as they dealt a hammer blow to Punjab's chances of qualifying for the play-offs with a 15-run win.

DC could have wrapped the game



early. They dropped a couple of catches, had a couple of run out chances missed and a few no-balls at the wrong time, which stretched the match to the end.

Chasing 214, PBKS had a poor start as they lost their skipper early in the Power-play. After a maiden opening over by Khaleel Ahmed, Ishant Sharma struck in the next over and

sent the skipper back to the hut for a duck.

PBKS recovered from a shaky start as Prabhshimran Singh and Atharva Taide took calculated risks to take the PowerPlay score to 47/1. In the next over, Axar Patel sent Prabhshimran back to the hut.

Livingstone got a lifeline in the eighth over as he slog-sweep it

Brief scores
Brief scores: Delhi Capitals 213/2 in 20 overs (Prithvi Shaw 54 off 38, Riley Rossouw 82 off 37; Sam Curran 2/36) beat Punjab Kings 198/8 (Liam Livingstone 94 off 48, Atharva Taide 55 off 42; Ishant Sharma 2/26, Anrich Nortje 2/36) by 15 runs

straight in the hands of Anrich Nortje at deep mid-wicket who dropped a sitter. An over later, Dhull dropped Taide.

When Punjab needed 86 runs in 30 balls, Nortje removed Jitesh Sharma. The next over Khaleel dismissed Shahrukh Khan. But Livingstone continued to fight from the other end as he collected 20 runs off the 17th over and 59 needed off 18 balls.

Livingstone and Sam Curran took Mukesh Kumar to cleaners, hitting three sixes in the 18th over to bring the equation down to 38 off 12 balls.

Earlier, batting first, DC scored 213/2 in 20 overs.

Sevilla looking forward to winning Europa League title

Madrid | Agencies

Spanish La Liga side Sevilla is aiming to take another step towards a seventh Europa League title when they entertain Juventus in their Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium on Thursday night.

Only a goal late in injury time denied Sevilla a 1-0 win in Turin a week ago and Juventus will have to deal with packed stands and an intense atmosphere in Sevilla's home ground.

The side coached by veteran Jose Luis Mendilibar used that atmosphere to good effect in the quarter-finals when they thrashed Manchester United 3-0 and they go into Thursday's match after a 3-0 La Liga win away to Valladolid at the weekend, a Xinhua report said.

Mendilibar has been key to the club's turnaround in recent weeks from relegation candidates to challengers in Europe, with the club losing just one in 11 games since he replaced Jorge Sampaoli as coach.



His move to Sevilla has seen the former Eibar coach reunited with midfielder Joan Jordan and winger Bryan Gil - both of whom worked with him at Eibar and although Jordan is an injury doubt for Thursday, Gil is delighted to be back at the club where he began his career and working with a man he knows well.

"I'm here because (Director of Sport) Monchi and Sampaoli wanted me, but when I saw that Mendilibar, a man who got the best from me at Eibar, was coming, I was really happy."

"He's getting the best out

of our team and we are seeing that on the pitch," said Gil in an interview with Spanish sports paper Diario AS.

The winger described the 62-year-old as "very demanding" but "what makes him special is that he likes things to be simple and he is very clear and easy to get along with in your day-to-day dealings with him and that makes things easy," he explained.

Winger Suso will miss out through injury today, while influential defender Pape Gueye wasn't included in Sevilla's squad for Europe and is ineligible to play.

SHAMI IS AN OUTSTANDING BOWLER, SAYS IAN BISHOP

New Delhi | Agencies

Former West Indies cricketer Ian Bishop commended Indian fast bowler Mohammed Shami for his exceptional performance in IPL 2023 and praised his ability to take wickets during the powerplay overs.

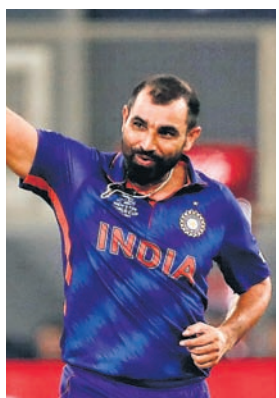
Bishop highlighted the significance of early breakthroughs in comparison to wickets taken towards the end of an inning, emphasizing Shami's effectiveness in getting crucial dismissals upfront.

Bishop hailed Shami's contributions in breaking the opposition's run chase and hailed him as an outstanding bowler, particularly in recent seasons.

Speaking to ESPNcricinfo, former West Indies cricketer Ian Bishop said, "He's got 15 powerplay wickets. It tells you the value of wickets up front versus wickets at the back

end. And you look at Bhuvu (Bhuvaneshwar Kumar), and no fault of Bhuvu's, Bhuvu was excellent with 4 wickets in the back end, but Shami bowls a test length, a test line, and length, very well, which is what Siraj, when he's been at his best this season has been able to bowl."

"Tight on the off-stump and a little bit of that away movement from that brilliant seam position and at a good pace. It seems to hustle off the wicket more than a lot of guys. So great credit, he broke the back of that run chase up front and he's just an outstanding bowler, particularly in the last three, four seasons."



INDIAN WOMEN'S TEAM READY TO TEST THEIR SKILLS AGAINST AUSTRALIA

New Delhi | Agencies

The Indian Women's Hockey Team is all geared up to take on hosts Australia today in the first game of their trip Down Under, where they will play five matches from May 18-27 at MATE Stadium in Adelaide.

The team led by ace goalkeeper Savita and Vice Captained by Deep Grace Ekka will play Australia in the first three games of the series, followed by two matches against Australia A. The tour is part of the Indian team's preparations for the upcoming Hangzhou Asian Games 2023, which will take place in September-October this year.

The Indian team will open their tour with a match against Australia on the 18th of May before playing back-to-back games on May 20 and May 21. The visitors will then com-



pete against Australia A on May 25 and May 27. The Australian Women's Hockey Team is currently ranked third in the world, while the Indian

team is ranked eighth. Notably, the Indian Women's Hockey Team left for Adelaide on May 14 and since then they have

been training there to get acclimatized to the conditions in Australia.

Interestingly, the Indian Women's Hockey Team defeated Australia 1-0 in the Semi-Finals of the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. It was a historic victory for the Indian team as they were competing in only their third Olympics and qualified for the Quarter-Finals for the first time, while Australia were three-time gold medalists.

The Indian team also fought hard against Australia in the Commonwealth Games 2022 Semi-Final match in Birmingham, tying the score at 1-1 at the end of regulation time. However, Australia won the penalty shoot-out 3-0 to make it to the Final, which they lost to England. Meanwhile, India won their 3rd/4th place match to take the Bronze medal home.

Kudermetova beats Zheng Qinwen for semis at Italian Open

Rome | Veronika

Kudermetova defeated China's Zheng Qinwen to advance to the semifinals of the Italian Open women's singles event.

No. 22 seed Zheng played steadily in the first set, winning 6-3 with a beautiful serve. The second set was more entertaining, with both players breaking serve in turn. Kudermetova held her nerve to level the match at 6-3, reports Xinhua.

In the final set, the Russian player broke serve again to lead 3-0. Although Zheng adjusted her tactics and successfully broke back, Kudermetova maintained the momentum and eventually won 6-4.

When discussing her recent performance on the court, Kudermetova said, "I was very depressed after losing to Schneider in Madrid. In fact, the key is not to win or lose, but how you feel on the court. It is the most important thing-feeling mentally healthy. That is the positive way to play tennis."



SAFF Championship 2023: India drawn against Kuwait, Nepal, and Pakistan in Group A

New Delhi | Agencies

Hosts India were drawn in Group A of the SAFF Championship 2023, along with Kuwait, Nepal, and Pakistan, in the official draw ceremony that was conducted on Wednesday.

The draw was conducted in the presence of All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Kalyan Chaubey, South Asian Football Federation General Secretary Anwarul Huq, and AIFF Secretary General Dr Shaji Prabhakaran.

Lebanon and Kuwait are the two teams from outside the South Asian region, who are participating by dint of special invitation. Eight teams are set to fight it out for South Asian



supremacy in Bengaluru, as the tournament is set to get underway on June 21, with the final

on July 4 in Bengaluru. India, being the hosts, was automatically placed atop

Group A, with Kuwait, Nepal, and Pakistan drawn into the group later. Over in Group B, Lebanon, being the highest-ranked team, was automatically placed at the top of the group, with the Maldives, Bhutan, and Bangladesh.

The SAFF Championship 2023 gets underway on June 21, with Kuwait taking on Nepal in Bengaluru, followed by the match between India and Pakistan later on the same day.

Group B action gets underway on June 22, with Lebanon taking on Bangladesh in the first match of the day, while Maldives play Bhutan after that. The two teams from each group will enter the semi-finals, which will be played on July 1, while the final will be played on July 4.

BCB announce schedule for Afghanistan's all-format tour in June

Dhaka | The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Wednesday announced the schedule for Afghanistan's all-format tour of Bangladesh, which is set to kick off on June 14 with the one-off Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Afghanistan will arrive on June 10 for the series and will travel to India while the Bangladesh tour breaks for Eid-ul-Adha. They are set to return to Bangladesh on July 1, four days before the commencement of the three-match ODI series, with all the games set to be played in Chattogram.

The tour also consists of a two-match T20I series in Sylhet that culminates on July 16.

Before arriving in Bangladesh, Afghanistan will face Sri Lanka in a three-match ODI series starting June 2.

Afghanistan have fond memories of the last time they travelled to Bangladesh to play Test cricket. In the only time, the two nations clashed in the longer format, Afghanistan recorded a thumping 224-run win against Bangladesh.

In ODIs, the Tigers hold a 7-4 win record head-to-head while Afghanistan enjoy a 6-3 record in the shortest format. While the squads are yet to be announced, Bangladesh ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is in a race against time to be fit for the one-off Test due to a finger injury he suffered during the ODI series against Ireland.

Picking Bairstow over Foakes is 'right call' for ENG: Michael Atherton

New Delhi | Agencies

Former England captain Michael Atherton believes picking Jonny Bairstow over Ben Foakes is the right call taken by the Test team think-tank for the one-off Test against Ireland and possibly, for the highly-anticipated Ashes.

Bairstow has been out of cricketing action for England since September last year after breaking his leg and dislocating his ankle in a freak incident at a golf course. In his absence, Foakes impressed as a wicketkeeper-batter in England's away Test series in Pakistan and New Zealand.

With young batter Harry Brook scoring 809 runs in 10 Test innings, including four centuries at an average of 80.9 and making himself undroppable, England's selectors chose Bairstow,



who scored four centuries in five Test innings last year against New Zealand and India, over Foakes.

"I think it is the right call and I think that is the minority view from testing the water on social media. The problem for wicketkeepers is only one person can do the job and Foakes, of course, is an outstanding wicketkeeper and he has done pretty well for England."

"But Jonny Bairstow, the way that he played last summer, Brendon McCullum had said that once he is fit he is going to get back into the team. He has proven himself to be an outstanding wicketkeeper-batter in the years he did it. He did it in 49 Test matches for England but hasn't done it really since 2019," Atherton was quoted as saying by Sky Sports.

Next Gen Cup: Stellenbosch FC begins title defense with 1-0 win over Bengaluru FC

Navi Mumbai | Agencies

South African Premier Soccer League (PSL) team Stellenbosch FC kicked off their title defence of the Reliance Foundation presents Premier League Next Generation Cup in style as they defeated Bengaluru FC 1-0 at the Reliance Corporate Park (RCP), here on Wednesday.

Fresh from their victory in the second season of the Reliance Foundation Development League (RFDL), Bengaluru struggled to build momentum going upfront at times. However, they were sturdy at the back and that in a way compelled Stellenbosch to push ahead quite early. That culminated well for them with the South African team's No. 10 Antonio Wan Vyck notching the opener with a stunning strike in the 13th minute of the game.

An interesting facet common for both teams was the fact that their



respective defences consistently prevented the other team's forwards

from finding a way through them. The backlines were instead insistent on building up offensive moves with an innate sense of composure.

This resulted in them passing and circulating the ball regularly amongst them, but there was an apparent lack of clear cut goal-scoring opportunities in the first-half of the game. Both sides gathered with renewed energy and passion in the second essay of the match.

Stellenbosch, in particular, began shifting a bit wide to create chances from the flanks and this even compelled the Blues to temporarily alter their strategy and game plan.

Bengaluru was challenged for pace which could have helped them get behind the Stellenbosch defence. This allowed the side from South Africa to recover possession higher up the field and prevent Bengaluru from making any constructive offensive endeavours in the final 35 minutes.



Urvashi's Cannes style Necklace with intertwined alligators, pink Tulle gown

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Urvashi Rautela recently attended the Cannes Film Festival as she put her best fashion foot forward. The actress was seen wearing a pink Tulle gown paired with statement jewellery. Her gown was designed by Sima Couture and the necklace was by Cartier.

Completing her look with a statement necklace featuring two intertwined alligators. The actress complemented the whole look with a high, neat bun and hoops of the same design. The gown featured intricate detailing and a silhouette that perfectly complemented Urvashi's beauty. The voluminous layers of tulle created a dreamy and ethereal effect.

The actress took to Instagram to share photos and videos of herself, which attracted all kinds of reactions. She wrote in her caption, "76th annual Cannes Film Festival red carpet opening..."

Urvashi will be reportedly presenting the Parveen Babi biopic at the French Riviera. Urvashi will be part of a photocall launch event, where she will have a platform to represent her character. It will give a glimpse of what lies ahead for the highly-anticipated film's release.

Anushka Kaushik is in love with aesthetics, culture of Rajasthan

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Anushka Kaushik, who is known for her work in 'Maharani 2', 'Ghar Waapsi', 'Crash Course' and 'Garmi' is quite excited to go back to her roots and work in a yet-to-be-titled short film. The actress started her journey with short-format content and coming back to the medium is a heartening experience for her.

The actress shot for the project in Rajasthan and she is enamoured by the beauty of the northwestern state.

Walking down the memory lane, she said, "I started my career by making short films and that was the time when I was doing a lot of short format content on YouTube but it was mainly rom-com. Then I started doing long formats on OTT platforms. In the last two-three years, I had said no to a lot of projects as I didn't find anything exciting in them. But this is the kind of script that I genuinely want to do."

Shedding light on the short film, Anushka revealed, "It's a friendship drama. After reading the script of the short film, I started crying since it's full of life and the message that it gives is very refreshing and personal, which will also make you emotional. I enjoyed every bit of playing the character."

Produced and directed by Dheeraj Jindal, the short film, written by Palak, also features Akashdeep Arora as Anushka's co-star.

Talking about the dynamics between the two characters, the actress shared, "In this short film, we are playing friends and as actors both of us are on the journey to explore how relations between a boy and a girl can be. The short film has been shot in Jaipur and I have previously shot in Udaipur. I am in love with Rajasthan; its aesthetics and culture."

She further mentioned, "When I



entered the resort (where we were staying), they welcomed me by putting teeka on my forehead and garland and gave me their traditional pagdi. This time, we shot at Pink city and it was a beautiful experience to shoot during nights."

Apart from Arbaaz Khan's 'Patna Shukla' where she will be seen alongside seasoned actors like Raveena Tandon and the late Satish Kaushik, Anushka is also doing an anthology for Netflix, followed by a feature film for Maddock Films.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Miss World and actress Manushi Chhillar recently walked the red carpet at the 76th Cannes Film Festival. For the occasion, she chose a lovely white dress by Fovari. The dramatic white dress had a lace bodice and trail that swept the floor behind her.

She completed her look with a statement neck piece. Speaking on the occasion, Manushi said, "As an artist, I know first-hand the importance of having a platform to showcase one's work and to be heard on a global stage. I am excited to be part of a movement that is empowering the next generation of creative talent."

The actress attended the prestigious film festival as a part of her association with Walkers & Co.

"I am honoured to represent Walkers & Co at the Cannes Film Festival and to be part of a community that is committed to supporting emerging talent from the creator community", she added.

The actress's white gown came with off-shoulder details, corset details, a plunging neckline and a white tulle long train featuring frill details throughout.

Manushi Chhillar makes her Cannes red carpet debut



Kajol shares AI image of herself, resembles her daughter Nysa



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Kajol has shared an AI-processed image of herself and said that she resembles her daughter Nysa Devgn.

Jumping on the trend of AI, Kajol took to Instagram, where she shared a picture of herself.

She captioned: "AI and me... any guesses who I look like (The answer is in the person who's tagged). There are too many eye rolls and not enough emojis..."

Kajol tagged her daughter Nysa Devgan in her post.

Kajol is married to actor and filmmaker Ajay Devgn. The two tied the knot in February 1999. The couple

has two children. Nysa was born in 2003, and son Yug was born in 2010.

Several pictures of celebrities have been re-created by the help of AI, which includes names such as Ranbir Kapoor, Shah Rukh Khan, Deepika Padukone, Priyanka Chopra and Hrithik Roshan, Ali Fazal, Vir Das and Akshay Kumar.

Jackie Shroff on 'Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania': 'Tadakta bhadakta adventure'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Jackie Shroff has become a fan of 'Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania' after watching the Marvel film.

The actor attempted to explain the story of 'Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania', saying, "Ek baar Quantum Realm ke andar gaya uske baad tadakta Bhadakta adventure shuru hojata hai aur pura picture mai daba daba ke action hai."

In this fun collaboration, he said that the movie has twisted turns and spooky structures.

He said: "Ab kya bolu? World ka

Youngest action hero apne ghar mein hi hai. Ye superhero log ka ladayi dekhke main toh bohot inspire hota hu, abhi wo haali mein dekha Ant-man and the Wasp: Quantumania, kya first class picture banaya hai, ekdum khidki tod action and alag hi experience!"

Starring Paul Rudd as Scott Lang/Ant-Man, Evangeline Lilly as Hope Van Dyne/The Wasp, Kathryn Newton as Cassie Lang, Michelle Pfeiffer as Janet Van Dyne, and Michael Douglas as Hank Pym, 'Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania' is streaming on Disney+ Hotstar in English, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu.

Sikandar Kher shares BTS pic with Sushmita

Team Absolute | Mumbai



Actor Sikandar Kher, who left a mark with his delectable performance in 'Monica, O My Darling', is currently shooting for season 3 of his streaming show 'Aarya' in which he essays the role of Daulat. The actor recently took to his Instagram to share a picture from the sets of the show in which he can be seen with the lead of the show - actress and former Miss Universe Sushmita Sen, who essays the titular role in 'Aarya 3'.

He captioned the picture, "Daulat always there to serve you, protect and lean on walls. Aarya 3, Dugga Dugga and Thank you (sic)".

The crew and cast recently resumed shooting in Mumbai of the series after wrapping up the schedule in Rajasthan. Sikandar has found immense love for the show helmed by Ram Madhvani and since the release of the show has become one of the most impressive actors in the OTT space.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Esha Gupta