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'BHAGAT SINGH FAN CLUB' LINK SUGGESTS METICULOUSLY PLANNED OPERATION, SUSPECTED EXTERNAL DIRECTION: POLICE

PARLIAMENT SECURITY BREACHED AGAIN

There was a major security breach during Zero Hour in Parliament on Wednesday afternoon after two men, both carrying canisters emitting a yellow smoke, jumped from the visitors' gallery and ran into the Lok Sabha chamber. Incredible footage from the CCTV system showed one man, wearing a dark blue shirt, leaping across desks to evade capture, while the second was in the visitors' gallery spraying smoke. Both were overpowered by MPs and security staff.

- ▶ THE FIVE ACCUSED ARRESTED HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS MANORANJAN D, A RESIDENT OF MYSURU, SAGAR SHARMA, A RESIDENT OF LUCKNOW, NEELAM, A RESIDENT OF HARYANA'S JIND, AMOL SHINDE, A RESIDENT OF MAHARASHTRA'S LATUR AND VIKRAM A.K.A VICKY SHARMA, A RESIDENT OF GURUGRAM SECTOR-7 AND NATIVE OF HISAR.
- ▶ ONE OF THE ACCUSED, IDENTIFIED AS LALIT JHA, IS STILL ABSCONDING AND POLICE SAID THAT A MAN-HUNT HAS BEEN INITIATED TO NAB HIM.
- ▶ THE POLICE TEAMS FROM SPECIAL CELL ARE STILL INTERROGATING THE ACCUSED, TO ASCERTAIN THE REASON BEHIND THE ACT.
- ▶ CONGRESS MP GURJEET SINGH AUJLA, WHO CAUGHT HOLD OF THE TWO MEN, SAYS 'HE HAD SOMETHING IN HIS HAND WHICH WAS EMITTING YELLOW-COLOURED SMOKE. I SNATCHED IT AWAY AND CONTINUED THROWING IT OUTSIDE.'



Shekhar Singh | New Delhi

The six accused involved in the breach of Parliament security on Wednesday were connected through the "Bhagat Singh Fan Club" page on social media sites Facebook and Instagram, police said. Sources privy to the probe also told correspondent that the investigators suspect that they were being directed by someone both before and during the act. Several questions have left investigators puzzled. "Why did they not throw the flare canister and instead kept it in their hands in the Lok Sabha house? They were surely directed to do so by someone," a source said. "The four accused, apprehended both outside and inside the Parliament, had handed over their mobile phones to Lalit Jha, a resident of Bihar. He was also located outside the Parliament and fled with the bag containing the phones when his associates were nabbed. It appears that he too received directions to do so from another person to flee from their with phones," the source added. The youth who jumped into the well of the Lok Sabha was shouting, "Kaala Kanoon Nah Chalega, Tanasahi nah chalegi". As per initial probe, it was also revealed that Manoranjan and Sharma had visitors' passes for 45 minutes but they stayed in the visitors' gallery for close to two hours. The two had entered the Lok Sabha Hall from the visitors' gallery. Manoranjan, an Engineering student from Karnataka and Sharma, got his visi-

Accused conducted recce beforehand, were in touch through Instagram

New Delhi: The breach of Parliament security on Wednesday was a meticulously-planned and coordinated operation executed by a group of six individuals who maintained communication through Instagram and other social media platforms to devise the plan, Delhi Police sources said. "The suspects formulated the plan several days prior and conducted reconnaissance before entering Parliament on Wednesday and had selected the date of December 13 to execute their act," a source said. "Unified by a shared ideology, they collectively aimed to convey a message to the government. They were in touch with each other through social media site Instagram for over a year," the source added. Security agencies are currently investigating whether they received instructions from any individual or organisation.

tor's pass issued on the reference of Karnataka's Mysuru BJP MP, Pratap Simha. Neelam and Shinde were protesting with coloured flares outside Parliament and were detained by Delhi Police.

NEELAM WAS DETAINED IN WRESTLERS' PROTEST

New Delhi: One of the accused, 42-year-old Neelam Azad, who was arrested while protesting outside Parliament on Wednesday, had been previously detained during the wrestlers' agitation in Delhi in May, a source said. Sources added that she had actively participated in farmers' agitation and had been part of several protests in Haryana. She was one of the two individuals responsible for throwing the smoke flares outside the Parliament building. Neelam, a resident of Jind district in Haryana, was preparing for Haryana Civil Services and had been staying as a paying guest in Hisar. Meanwhile, as a part of the probe, a police team has reached Gurugram. As per sources, one Vicky Sharma, also a native of Hisar and his wife, Rakhi, have also been detained from Sector-7, Housing Board Colony, Gurugram while a search for one man named Lalit Jha is going on. It is suspected that all the accused had given their mobile phones to Lalit, who was also at Parliament and later fled the scene.

LS SPEAKER BANS VISITOR'S PASS

New Delhi: Following the massive security lapse in Lok Sabha on Wednesday, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has banned the visitor's pass and also called for an all party floor leaders meeting later in the day. Following the massive security breach, the Lok Sabha has banned the entry of the Personal Assistants (PAs) of the MPs in the House, sources said. Meanwhile, Speaker Om Birla before adjourning the House for the day dubbed the security breach as a "serious issue". Birla also said that action would be taken as per the probe report.

Suspect a habitual alcoholic, claims neighbour

Gurugram: A neighbour of one of the suspects -- Vicky Sharma, apprehended on Wednesday in connection with the security breach in Parliament, has claimed that Sharma was a habitual alcoholic. A team of Delhi Police has detained Sharma and his wife, Rakhi, from Sector 7, Housing Board Colony here. Vijay Parmar, a resident of the same residential society, told reporters the couple had been living in the locality for the last 15 years, and Sharma, a resident of Hisar, was a habitual alcoholic. It's being said that the couple had left their house around 8 a.m. on Wednesday to proceed to the national capital.

MAN USED PASS ISSUED ON BJP MP PRATAP SIMHA'S REFERENCE

New Delhi: After the shocking security breach in the Lok Sabha, where two individuals jumped inside the House, sources said that one of the accused, identified as Sagar Sharma, entered the Lok Sabha on Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Pratap Simha's reference. According to Delhi Police sources, the two persons, who created a lapse from the visitor's gallery of Lok Sabha causing a big security scare in the House on the 22nd anniversary of 2001 Parliament Attack, have been identified as Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan. Sharma's pass was issued on the reference of Pratap Simha, the BJP MP from Karnataka's Mysuru. According to Delhi Police sources, Manoranjan is a resident of Karnataka while the police is trying to get more details on Sagar Sharma. The incident came in the backdrop of the banned terror group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun's threat of attacking the Indian Parliament on or before December 13 following an alleged foiled plot to kill him. Khalistani terrorist Pannun had on December 6 released a video in which he said he would attack the Indian Parliament on or before December 13 following an alleged foiled plot to kill him. The questioning of the two people is currently going on by the police. With the massive security lapse in Lok Sabha following two men jumping in the House from the visitor's gallery, the visitors' entry to the Lower House has been restricted for the time being. One of the two men, who were present in the visitors' gallery jumped inside the Lok Sabha while the second one was about to jump. At the time the proceeding in the House was on. One of the persons wearing a blue jacket was seen climbing on the tables as he ran inside the House spraying yellow gas spreading fear. All the galleries of the Lok Sabha had two security officials present during the proceedings.

Mohan Yadav: 19th Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh

Bhopal: Mohan Yadav, a minister in the previous Shivraj Chouhan government, took charge as the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister in a grand event that was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled states. Mohan Yadav is considered to be close to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and hails from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) community which accounts for more than 48 per cent of the state's population. The 58-year-old political career began with his first election as an MLA in 2013. He was re-elected in the subsequent 2018 elections. The MLA's third win came in the just concluded Madhya Pradesh polls. Mohan Yadav successfully defended his seat in the Ujjain South constituency, winning by a margin of 12,941 votes against Congress candidate Chetan Premnarayan Yadav.



BNS-Second Bill does not include provisions criminalising adultery, non-consensual gay sex

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union government has not included the parliamentary panel's recommendation to include a "gender-neutral" provision criminalising adultery and a clause to separately criminalise non-consensual gay sex. Meanwhile, in the revised Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023 two new provisions to define "cruelty" against women in a marital relationship and to penalise the publication of court proceedings that may disclose the identity of a rape victim have been added. The revised Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023, Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Sanhita, and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita were tabled by Union home minister Amit Shah in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday to replace the colonial-era Indian Penal Code (IPC). Shah withdrew the three criminal Bills



which were introduced in August this year. The Bills were then referred to the Parliamentary Panel. As per the BNS-Second Bill, it does not include the Parliamentary panel's suggestions for adultery which was added under 497 which was ended by the Supreme Court. The BNS-Second Bill also does not have Section 377 which is related to unnatural sex against the order of the nature. Once the Bill is passed, these two sections 377 and 497 will cease to exist.

CJI agrees to look into urgent listing of Mahua Moitra's plea against LS expulsion

New Delhi: Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud on Wednesday agreed to look into the urgent listing of a plea filed by Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra against her expulsion from the Lok Sabha. "Please send an email. I would look at it right away," CJI Chandrachud told senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who appeared on Moitra's behalf and made a mentioning seeking directions for urgent listing of the matter. Earlier in the day, Justice S.K. Kaul, the senior-most puisne judge of the top court, refused to pass any directions relating to listing of the plea and asked Singhvi to mention the matter before the Chief Justice after the Constitution Bench hearing is over. Moitra has moved the apex court under Article 32 of the Constitution challenging her expulsion from the Lower House of Parliament on December 8. In her plea, the MP from West Bengal's Krishnanagar parliamentary constituency has called the decision of her expulsion as "unfair, unjust and arbitrary". The action against her was taken following the Ethics Committee probe on 'cash for Parliament questions' charge.

UP BJP MLA convicted for rape of minor girl

Sonbhadra | Agencies

A special court in Uttar Pradesh's Sonbhadra district has held BJP MLA Ramdular Gond guilty of raping a 15-year-old girl in 2014, a crime for which punishment under the POCSO Act usually ranges between a seven-year jail term and life imprisonment. The court will pronounce the quantum of punishment on December 15. Gond, a first-time MLA who won the Duddhi seat in 2022, had been out on bail. He was taken into custody and sent to jail soon after his conviction by additional district judge (first) Ehsan Ullah Khan of the MP-MLA court. Gond stands to automatically lose his Assembly membership in accordance with the Supreme Court's 2013 ruling that any MP or MLA convicted of a crime and handed a minimum two-year jail term ceases to be an elected representative with immediate effect. Advocate Vikas Shakya, the survivor's counsel, said the MLA was held

guilty under Sections 376 (rape) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC, besides the POCSO Act. The verdict came after the court heard eight prosecution and three defence witnesses. The survivor's brother said he was hoping the court would pronounce a jail term of not less than 20 years against Gond, whom he accused of harassing his family repeatedly after becoming an MLA and pressurising them to withdraw the case. The MLA had waylaid the survivor and tried to sexually assault her in a village field on the evening of November 4, 2014, a member of the prosecution said. Gond's wife was the village pradhan at the time of the crime. The survivor returned home and narrated her ordeal to her elder brother, a farmer. She said the politician raped her multiple times in the preceding months by using threats and intimidation. Myorpur police registered a case against Gond based on a complaint by the girl's brother.



NIA searches six locations in LeT prisoners radicalisation case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday carried out searches at multiple locations across Bengaluru in a case relating to radicalisation of prisoners by a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist.

NIA spokesperson said that it carried out searches at six locations, including the houses of four accused, one of whom is still absconding, as part of NIA's continuing investigations into the case. The other locations that were searched were premises connected with two other suspects.

The official said that its teams have seized a host of digital devices, various incriminating documents, and cash amounting Rs 7.3 lakh during the searches, conducted at the premises of Mohammed Umar, Mohammed Faisal Rabbani, Tanveer Ahmed and Mohammed Farooq, as well as absconder Junaid Ahmed. The three accused



are currently absconding in the case, registered under various sections of IPC, UA(P) Act, 1967 and Explosive Substances Act, 1884.

The official said that its probe has revealed that the Umar, Rabbani, Ahmed, Farooq and Junaid Ahmed had come in contact with LeT member and life convict, T. Naseer, during their

imprisonment at Central Prison, Parappana Agrahara in Bengaluru.

"It was further found that T. Naseer had radicalised and recruited these individuals for committing violent terror acts. And after their release from the Central Prison, these five accused, all of them habitual offenders, had conspired to commit terror acts under the leader-

ship of Junaid Ahmed and on directions from T. Naseer," the official said.

The official said that Junaid Ahmed, who was absconding after being accused in a case relating to smuggling of red sandal wood in 2021, was in regular touch with the other accused through encrypted communication platforms.

"Junaid Ahmed had also provided funding to the others for collecting arms and ammunition and kept them in their safe custody," the official said.

The Bengaluru City Police had originally registered the case following seizure of arms and ammunition, including seven Pistols, four hand grenades, one magazine and 45 live rounds, along with four walkie-talkies.

Five persons were initially arrested and their interrogation had led to the arrest of one more, taking the total arrests so far in the case to six.

The NIA had taken over the custody of all the six arrested accused on taking over the case on October 25 this year.

PM, HM & Nadda to attend swearing-in ceremony of Rajasthan Chief Minister

Lalit Sharma | Jaipur

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and BJP President J.P. Nadda will attend the oath-taking ceremony of Bhajan Lal Sharma as Rajasthan Chief Minister on December 15.

A meeting was organized in the state BJP office on Wednesday to discuss arrangements for the ceremony with the Chief Minister-designate, BJP state President C.P. Joshi and other BJP leaders present.

The swearing-in ceremony will take place outside the Albert Hall at 11.15 a.m.

Apart from the BJP top leaders, invitations have also been sent to central leaders and Chief Ministers for the ceremony.

Along with Sharma, both Deputy Chief Ministers-designate Diya Kumari and Dr Premchand Bairwa will also take oath.

The BJP has also sent invita-



tions to lakhs of party workers in the state to attend the swearing-in ceremony.

A meeting of district presidents and other officials was called at the BJP state office on Wednesday in which Joshi gave guidelines related to the

programme. Special decoration will be done on the main roads of the city. Posters and banners with various public welfare schemes of the Modi government as well as BJP flags and hoardings will also be put up.

Nagaland Police busts one of largest drug trafficking network involving NE states, Punjab

Kohima | Agencies

The Nagaland Police have busted one of the largest drug-trafficking networks spreading across northeastern states and Punjab, Director General of Police Rupin Sharma said on Wednesday.

The DGP said that two drug peddlers from Manipur were arrested from Sechu Zubza in Kohima district on Wednesday and some heroin was recovered from their possession. "Upon interrogation, it was revealed that the two accused are suspected to have trafficked around 60 kg of heroin worth about Rs 400 crore within one year," the police chief told the media at the police headquarters.

Sharma said the police have so far nabbed 12 persons who are part of this multi-state drugs network and the traffickers belong to Nagaland, Manipur, and Assam.

The drug trafficking networks is mainly active in Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Punjab as well as possibly other states of the country, he added.

He said that the case is under thorough investigation and added that there might be



many other people involved in this multiple states' network, which would be unearthed soon. Sharma said that since January, a total of 318 cases have been registered and 456 persons have so far been arrested in connection with the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Nagaland has a 215-km unfenced international border with Myanmar and has inter-state borders with Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and both are being used by the drug peddlers for illegal trade of various drugs and other contrabands besides arms and ammunition.

'Ill informed and ill intended', India slams OIC's remarks on Article 370

New Delhi | Agencies

In a strongly-worded statement, the Ministry of External Affairs on Wednesday slammed the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for criticising the Supreme Court's verdict on Article 370, calling it "ill informed and ill intended".

A day after India's top court unanimously upheld the Presidential order scrapping Article 370 of the Constitution, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, the OIC expressed "concern" over the verdict.

The international grouping of Muslim nations called the reversal of Article 370 "illegal and unilateral", and demanded its recall.

"India rejects the statement issued by the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on a judgement of the Indian Supreme Court. It is both ill informed and ill intended," External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said in a statement on Wednesday.



In a veiled reference to Pakistan, the spokesperson said: "That the OIC does so at the behest of a serial violator of human rights and an unrepentant pro-

motor of cross-border terrorism makes its action even more questionable. Such statements only undermine OIC's credibility."

In its statement, the OIC's General Secretariat had said that it reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their quest for the right of self-determination.

Further, the grouping called on the international community to enhance its efforts to resolve the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

The abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 ended the special status conferred to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Central government then moved to reorganise it into two Union Territories -- Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

The Chief Justice of India (CJI), D.Y. Chandrachud, said that Jammu and Kashmir held no internal sovereignty after accession to India.

He added that there was no prima facie case that the President's 2019 orders were in bad faith or extraneous exercise of power.

'UNSTAMPED ARBITRATION AGREEMENTS ARE VALID IN LAW', SAYS SC'S LATEST RULING

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday overruled its earlier decision laying down that an arbitration agreement would be invalid or void ab initio if the underlying contract was not stamped as per the relevant Stamp Act.

In an unanimous decision, a 7-judge Constitution Bench headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud said that non-stamping or insufficient stamping does not render an agreement void but merely makes it inadmissible in evidence.

The Constitution Bench held that non-stamping or insufficient stamping of an



agreement is a curable defect under Indian Stamp Act, 1899.

It added that to obligate courts to determine the issue

of stamping of arbitration agreement at the pre-referral stage will defeat the objectives of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.

In his separate concurring opinion, Justice Sanjiv Khanna held that inadequate or non-stamping of an arbitration agreement will not make it invalid.

In September this year, the Supreme Court had agreed to refer the issue to a 7-judge bench having regard to the larger ramifications of the decision rendered in the case of NN Global Mercantile Pvt Ltd vs. Indo Unique Flame Ltd & Ors.

In that case, a five-judge Constitution Bench in April

this year had laid down by a ratio of 3:2 that non-stamped or insufficiently-stamped arbitration agreements are not enforceable in the eyes of law.

The majority opinion delivered had held that arbitration agreements not validated by Stamp Act would stand non est in law rendering them void or unenforceable in law.

On the other hand, two judges in their distinct minority judgments, had opined that stamp deficiency may be cured and unstamped arbitration agreements are valid at the pre-referral stage.

In view of the verdict delivered on Wednesday by the 7-judge bench, the above ratio stands overruled.

AAP faces setback as Gujarat MLA resigns, intends to join BJP

Ahmedabad | Agencies

Bhupendra Bhayani, one of the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) five MLAs in Gujarat, announced his resignation on Wednesday and declared his intention to join the BJP shortly. With Bhayani's departure, the AAP's representation in the 182-member Gujarat Assembly now stands at just four MLAs.

In his statement following the resignation, he said: "Today, there is no post of even Leader of Opposition. And therefore, nobody to raise pending issues in Gujarat. I want to do development work for the people and my constituency. And therefore, I have resigned."

Bhayani, elected from the Visavadar constituency in Junagarh district, made the surprising move barely a year after the Assembly elections.

In December 2022, he organised a public



meeting in his native village of Bhesan, Junagadh, to dispel rumors of his defection to the BJP. Bhayani formally tendered his resignation to Speaker Shankar Chaudhary within the premises of the Gujarat Assembly.

Liquor worth Rs 50 lakh seized in dry Bihar's Gopalganj



Patna: The Excise Department has arrested a container driver for smuggling liquor in Bihar, which is under prohibition, in the wee hours of Wednesday.

The liquor was smuggled from Punjab and the driver was assigned the job to deliver the consignment in Chupra. The cost of the liquor is estimated to be around Rs 50 lakh.

The accused has been identified as Hemraj, a native of Barmed district in Rajasthan.

He confessed that he had taken Rs 40,000 to smuggle liquor in the dry state Bihar.

"We learnt about a container truck carrying a huge amount of liquor in Bihar. We began checking vehicles at the Manjhi check post and nabbed the accused with liquor bottles kept in 140 packets," said Rajnish Kumar, excise Superintendent of Saran. "The accused has been booked under the liquor prohibition Act. We are making efforts to trace the actual recipient of the consignment," Kumar said.

Centre proposes to expand definition of 'terrorist act'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre has revised the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023, which was tabled by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the Lok Sabha on December 12, to replace the colonial-era Indian Penal Code (IPC) and proposed to expand the definition of "terrorist act" under the penal law by bringing within its fold threats to "economic security" and "monetary stability" of the country.

Shah, on Tuesday, also introduced the two other updated criminal law bills -- Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Sanhita, and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, which are set to replace the Indian Evidence Act and Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) respectively.

The bills will be debated on Thursday, the home minister informed the House.

As per the second BNS Bill, whoever does any act with the intent to threaten or likely to threaten the unity, integrity, sovereignty, security, or economic security of India or with the intent to strike



terror or likely to strike terror in the people or any section of the people in India or in any foreign country by using bombs, dynamite or other explosive substance or inflammable substance or firearms or other lethal weapons or poisons or noxious gases or other chemicals or by any other substance

(whether biological, radioactive, nuclear or otherwise) of a hazardous nature or by any other means of whatever nature to cause or likely to cause, death of, or injury to, any person or persons or loss of, or damage to, or destruction of, property; or disruption of any supplies or services essential to

the life of the community in India or in any foreign country; or damage to, the monetary stability of India by way of production or smuggling or circulation of counterfeit Indian paper currency, coin or of any damage or destruction of any property in India or in a foreign country used or intended to be used for the defence of India or in connection with any other purposes of the Government of India, any State Government or any of their agencies; or overawes by means of criminal force or the show of criminal force or attempts to do so or causes death of any public functionary or attempts to cause death of any public functionary; or detains, kidnaps or abducts any person and threatening to kill or injure such person or does any other act in order to compel the Government of India, any State Government or the Government of a foreign country or an international or inter-governmental organisation or any other person to do or abstain from doing any act.

It said that whoever commits a terrorist act shall -- if such offence has resulted in the death of any person be

punished with death or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine. It said that in any other case, be punished with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than five years but which may extend to imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine.

The government in the BNS Second Bill said that whoever conspires or attempts to commit, or advocates, abets, advises or incites directly or knowingly facilitates the commission of a terrorist act or any act preparatory to the commission of a terrorist act, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than five years but which may extend to imprisonment for life. The government also said that whoever organises or causes to be organised any camp or camps for imparting training in terrorist act, or recruits or causes to be recruited any person or persons for commission of a terrorist act, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than five years but which may extend to imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.



Mohan Yadav sworn in as MP CM with 2 Deputies Shukla and Devda



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Mohan Yadav -- three-time BJP MLA from Ujjain South, was sworn in as the new chief minister of Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday. BJP legislators Jagdish Devda and Rajendra Shukla were also sworn in as the Deputy Chief Minister. The oath taking ceremony was conducted by Governor Mangubhai Patel at Bhopal's Motilal Nehru stadium. Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the BJP's national president J. P. Nadda attended the occasion. Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Uttar Pradesh

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde, Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami and some other senior BJP leaders were also present on the occasion. With this, Yadav became the 19th CM of Madhya Pradesh, who replaced former CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who ruled the state for over 16 years. The BJP won 163 out of 230 assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh, while the Congress which had emerged as winner with 114 seats in 2018, reduced to 66. Barring a 15-month stint of Congress in 2018-2020, the BJP has ruled MP since 2003 without interruption. Much of that was under the leadership of Shivraj Singh Chouhan, whose time as a CM also came to an end, for now, with Yadav's elevation.

OFFERS PRAYERS AT UJJAIN'S MAHAKALESHWAR TEMPLE



Bhopal: After taking oath as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday, Mohan Yadav drove to Ujjain to offer prayers at Mahakaleshwar temple. Yadav became the 19th Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and fifth BJP leader to be sworn in for the top post.

The first four BJP chief ministers were: Sunderlal Patwa was the first BJP Chief Minister, followed by Uma Bharti, Babulal Gaur and Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Of these, Chouhan served as chief minister

for more than 16 years. Yadav (58) -- a wrestler turned politician -- hails from Ujjain has won three consecutive assembly elections, including in 2023 from Ujjain South seats.

On Wednesday, the Chief Minister reached his home district with a convoy of supporters, where he was welcomed by large number supporters and family members. The roads and highways of Ujjain city were decorated with saffron colors and posters/banners congratulating the Chief Minister.

Yadav, who served as Higher Education Minister in ex-CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan's cabinet, has been associated with the RSS for a long time and he has been known as a proponent of Hindutva.

A PhD in political science, Yadav began his career from student politics when he started off as the co-secretary of the student union of Madhav Science College in 1982, becoming the president of the college in 1984.

"Ab Vida": Shivraj Chouhan's "Farewell" ahead of oath ceremony

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A few hours before the swearing-in ceremony of newly designated Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that the new Chief Minister would take the state to new heights. It was an emotional moment for the former CM who leaves the post after serving four terms as he bid goodbye saying, "Ab vida, jas ki tas rakh deni chadariya (now goodbye and leave it as it is)."

The Former Chief Minister Shivraj Chouhan made the remark while talking to reporters in state capital Bhopal ahead of the swearing-in ceremony on Wednesday.

The swearing-in ceremony was scheduled to be held at Motilal Nehru Stadium, Lal Parade ground in the state capital Bhopal on Wednesday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister Amit Shah, BJP National President JP Nadda and others were present at the ceremony.

Chouhan has also said that he is confident that the new Chief Minister will take the prosperity, development and public welfare in the state to new heights.

"The new Chief Minister of the state will take oath today at 11:30 am and I am confident that he (new CM) will take the prosperity, development and public welfare in the state to new heights. Many congratulations to him. Today, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and our national president JP Nadda are arriving here. I welcome all of them," Chouhan said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Mr Chouhan took stock of preparations for the oath ceremony in Bhopal saying that it was his duty and responsibility to ensure proper arrangements for the "dignified ceremony."



"I am the acting Chief Minister right now. So, it is my responsibility to ensure that proper arrangements are made and that our Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Ministers take oath in a dignified ceremony. It is my duty to ensure that all the arrangements are proper. So, I have come to see this," Mr Chouhan told reporters on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day on Tuesday, Chouhan said that he would rather die than go and ask something for himself adding that Madhya Pradesh will achieve new heights under the CM-designate of the state Mohan Yadav.

Addressing a press conference in Bhopal, Former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said, "I am confident that under the leadership of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, the BJP govt will complete the ongoing projects in the state. In terms of progress and development, Madhya Pradesh will achieve new heights. I will keep supporting him."

"I want to express one thing very openly and humbly, 'Apne liye kuch maangne jaane se behtar, main marna samjhunga, isliye meine kaha tha main dilli nahi jaunga (I would rather die than go and ask something for myself, that is why I said I won't go to Delhi)," he added.

Dr. Kusumaria assumed charge of the State Commission for Backward Classes

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Dr. Ramakrishna Kusumaria reached the Shyamalahills Hills Madhya Pradesh State Commission for Backward Classes in Bhopal today and took charge of the post of President. People's representatives from backward classes were also present on this occasion.

Dr. Kusumaria was appointed as the Chairman of the Madhya Pradesh State Backward Classes Commission by the state government. After taking charge Dr. Kusumaria received information about the activities of the commission. The Commission mainly acts as a watchdog for the backward classes in the region. Along with this, the commission sends recommendations to



the state government for addition and deletion of castes in the lists of socially and educationally backward castes of the state. A large proportion of the total population in the state belongs to backward classes. After taking charge Dr. Kusumaria said that he will

soon visit these districts and review the schemes related to the welfare of the backward classes. Along with this, they will discuss with the local people-representatives related to the backward classes and understand their problems and get suggestions.

Sound amplifiers (loudspeakers/DJs) can be used in religious places or other places as per the prescribed standards

Chief Minister Dr. After assuming charge, Yadav signed the first memorandum stating that flying squads will be formed in all districts to check noise pollution.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The state government has decided that sound amplifiers (loud speakers/DJ) etc. can be used in any kind of religious place or other place as per the prescribed standards. The state government will form patrols in all districts to check noise pollution and illegal use of loud speakers etc. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav today signed the first notification related to this after taking charge in the Ministry. The state government has taken this decision in accordance with the provisions of the Madhya Pradesh Noise Control Act, Noise Pollution (Regulation and



Control) Rules 2000 at religious places and other places in Madhya Pradesh and the guidelines issued by the Supreme Court and the High Court from time to time. Under this, unauthorized use of loudspeakers and other sound

amplifying devices in loud voice against the rules is completely prohibited. In order to check noise pollution and illegal use of loud speakers etc., Air Force in all districts will conduct regular and random inspections of religious and

public places where sound amplifiers are used and in case of violation of rules, check within maximum 3 days. The tax report will be submitted to the concerned authorities. Officers nominated by the district administration, in-charge of the respective police stations and officers nominated by the Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board will be members of the flying squad. The nodal officer for all the police forces in the district will be a district additional district magistrate level officer, who will be nominated by the district collector. Efforts will be made to remove loud speakers based on communication and coordination with religious leaders. By mak-

ing a list of such religious places where these rules and instructions are not being complied with, instructions have been given to make the weekly review and compliance report available to the Home Department by December 31 at that level. Additional Director General of Police (Criminal Investigation Department) has been appointed as Nodal Officer at Police Headquarters for continuous monitoring of noise pollution cases. The nodal officer will submit a report to the government from time to time regarding the illegal use of loud speakers, DJ etc. Detailed guidelines have been issued by the Home Department in this regard.

PRIME MINISTER MODI WELCOMED BY GOVERNOR PATEL AT RAJ BHAVAN

Bhopal: Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached Raj Bhavan in Bhopal this morning. Prime Minister Modi discussed various subjects with Governor Mangubhai Patel at Raj Bhavan. On the arrival of Prime Minister Modi at Raj Bhavan, Governor Patel greeted him by presenting him a bouquet, welcoming him cordially and covering him with a shawl. Governor Patel presented a replica of Ayodhya Ram Temple as a symbol to Prime Minister Modi. The Prime Minister left Raj Bhavan in the afternoon.

Dr Pankaj Prasad of AIIMS Bhopal honoured with the prestigious "Mittal Oration Award"

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Dr. Pankaj Prasad, Associate Professor of the CFM Department of AIIMS Bhopal, has been awarded the esteemed "Mittal Oration Award" at the recently concluded "CSZIAPSCON 2023 - 9th Central South Zone, Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine Conference." The conference was organized by the Department of Community Medicine at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Govt. Medical College Vidisha.

The "Mittal Oration Award" is the highest honour conferred upon a faculty member within the Central South Zone of the



Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine (IAPSM). Dr. Pankaj Prasad's exceptional oration, titled "Inclusiveness of Persons with Disability in Mainstream," captivated the audience and garnered widespread acclaim from all conference delegates. In

addition to receiving the prestigious oration award, Dr. Pankaj Prasad actively contributed to the conference by presenting a scholarly paper and chairing a session. His comprehensive and insightful presentation on promoting inclusiveness for persons with disabilities in

mainstream society showcased his commitment to advancing knowledge and fostering a more inclusive community. His dedication to the field of Preventive and Social Medicine and his outstanding contributions to the conference have undoubtedly elevated the standards of academic and professional excellence within the region. Dr. Pankaj Prasad continues to inspire his colleagues, students, and the medical community at large with his unwavering commitment to advancing public health and promoting inclusivity. Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director, AIIMS Bhopal has congratulated Dr. Pankaj for his achievement.

ONE YEAR RIGOROUS IMPRISONMENT TO 4 ACCUSED IN CASE OF ELECTRICITY THEFT

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Central Sector Power Distribution Company's Pichor, Shivpuri's Bamor Feeder's Bamor Damraun Village Residential Self. The Additional Sessions Court sentenced the accused Sabi, Arjun, Mulayam and Lalaram to one year rigorous imprisonment for assaulting the electricity workers and obstructing government work during the inspection of unauthorized electricity usage at Asaram.

It is significant that the accused himself. On the instructions of Asaram's complainant Junior Engineer Sumit Verma, on 12 February 2021 at 11:30 PM, Junior Engineer Central Sector Electricity Distribution Company Bhaunti,

Line Staff Nathuram Dhaulpuria, Rameshwar Sharma, Reader Vijay Koli, Neeraj Kushwaha and others. On inspection with the staff, it was found that one connection key motor to another motor is being stolen by the consumer. On being caught, the accused Sabi, Arjun, Mulayam and Lalaram assaulted the employees after registering a case under the Electricity Act-2003 and removing the electric wire and seizing the motor.

The case was presented by the company before Additional Sessions Judge Pichor (Shivpuri). Sabi, Arjun, Mulayam and Lalaram were convicted and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment of one year each by the Hon'ble Additional Sessions Judge, Pichor in the case.

Congress should also fulfill the expectations of the workers: Laxman Singh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In Madhya Pradesh, BJP has made a new beginning by making Mohan Yadav the Chief Minister, Congress has also appreciated this.

Former Chief Minister Digvijay Singh's brother and former MLA Laxman Singh has expressed his expectation that the expectations of the workers in Congress will also be fulfilled.

Laxman Singh, brother of Congress leader and former Chief Minister Digvijay Singh, has written on Twitter, "BJP has started a new tradition by making grassroots workers the Chief Minister. Congress workers have also been waiting with hope for years. His



morale can be boosted by giving him the highest post in the opposition, as Kharge ji has been appointed."

Let it be known that Laxman Singh has been continuously targeting the Congress and after the party's defeat, he had raised questions on the issue of EVMs and directly blamed the party's in-fighting for the defeat.

REDUCE THE LEVEL OF ENERGY LOSSES: MANAGING DIRECTOR

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Energy is an essential requirement of our life. Energy in various forms has played an important role in our life-style. Electricity, in its various forms, is the form of energy that is readily available. This is the reason that various sources of energy are also being converted into electricity and used for basic needs like lighting, transport, housing, health, education, industry, agriculture and also for entertainment, telecommunication and tourism. This message has been issued by Ganesh Shankar Mishra, Managing Director of Madhya Pradesh Madhya Kshetra Vidyut Vitratan Co. to make consumers aware of the National Energy Conservation Week (December 14 to 21).

The thesis director has said that keeping in mind the benefits of energy saving and energy vigilance, the state government has issued guidelines for implementing various energy conservation measures in Madhya Pradesh. Bureau of



Energy Vigilance, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Energy, Government of India, has launched

schemes keeping in view energy savings in various sectors. BEE Star Labels are issued by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency

to rate the energy efficiency of various appliances. These star labels are designed to standardize energy efficiency ratings and indicate energy consumption under standard test conditions. When buying refrigerators, air conditioners and other energy appliances, you must look at the BEE star label, 5 stars mean the most energy efficient appliances and less stars mean the least efficient appliances. More energy efficient appliances can save more money by reducing energy consumption.

The Central Sector Electricity Distribution Company has said that according to an estimate, with quality use and proper management and curbing unnecessary use of electricity, 20 to 25 percent in the industrial sector, 25 to 30 percent in the agricultural sector and 15 to 20 percent in the domestic and commercial sector. Percent electricity can be saved. If we can reduce energy losses and motivate consumers to conserve energy, we can further benefit the region in the energy sector.



EDITOR'S SPECS

BSP will field its cadres in polls

To ward off allegations of seeking money for tickets, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh is planning to field more candidates from its cadre than outsiders in the next year's Lok Sabha elections. BSP president Mayawati had asked leaders to select candidates from among the cadre and committed workforce of the party. The move stems from the fact that outsiders have often accused BSP of demanding money in exchange of tickets. The most recent example was BSP's import from Congress, Imran Masood, who alleged that he was expelled from the party because he could not cough up Rs 5 crore from Saharanpur and give it to the party as was demanded from him. "To keep such allegations at bay, Behenji wants our own people to be given the chance to contest elections. When people from the community are given tickets, it will reinforce the message that BSP is the party for Dalits," said a party functionary. The party wants to keep Jatavs on its side and get back the non-Jatav Dalits that have moved away from it. One of the easiest ways to do it is to give the old loyalists and committed workers a chance to contest elections. The BSP has also realised that not many Muslims are coming to its fold. "In ULB polls 2023, Muslim vote got split. The BSP, which fielded Muslim candidates on 11 of the 17 mayoral seats, lost even the two seats that it had won in 2017," said the functionary. In another development, the party has revived the practice of organising cadre camps, wherein workers will reach out to Dalits with the works been done for them. Such camps were held on a regular basis during the time of Kanshi Ram.

Story of Bhajan Lal Sharma's elevation scripted long ago

Archana Sharma

If sources in the BJP are to be believed, the party leadership scripted the story of Bhajan Lal Sharma's elevation a few months ago. While the Rajasthan BJP leaders were clueless, the central leadership was taking major strides towards putting its strategy in place. Many leaders confirmed that the high command had decided upon Sharma way back in 2018 soon after the Assembly polls because he was a grassroots worker who concentrated on his job without getting into politics. Sharma served as party General Secretary under the leadership of four BJP state presidents namely Ashok Parmari, Madanlal Saini, Satish Poonia and CP Joshi. Sharma wanted to stand for the recent Assembly elections from his native place Bharatpur, however the party insisted that he contest from the safe seat of Sanganer, in Jaipur. Sharma has old ties with JP Nadda, as before becoming the BJP National President he used to go often to Bharatpur for the Govardhan Parikrama and Sharma was the district president of Bharatpur then. Sharma is also close to Nimbaram as when he was the



co-province pracharak of the RSS, his centre was Bharatpur. In 1990, Sharma was actively involved in the ABVP's Kashmir march and went till Udhampur. During this period he was also arrested. Plus, Sharma also went to jail in the Janmabhoomi movement in 1992. Due to his previous association with the ABVP and the support of the Sangh, Sharma got opportunities to move ahead in the organisation and came in direct contact with Shah in 2021. Amit Shah took charge of the West Bengal Assembly elections in 2021 and Sharma had gone there as his associate. Since then Sharma was part of Amit Shah's core team. It was on Shah's instructions that Sharma was given a ticket from the safe seat of the party. Those seeking a ticket from Sanganer raised objections to this but were told that Sharma had been given the ticket on the instructions of Shah. After this all protests stopped. Meanwhile Sharma, after winning from the seat was silent and did not do any lobbying like the other CM hopefuls. Eventually he emerged as a dark horse at the eleventh hour and surprised everyone.

UK Climate Minister leaves COP28 as climate talks reach final phase

Vishal Gulati

UK Climate Minister Graham Stewart, who was attending the final phase of the two-week-long negotiations in the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) here, has left the talks midway and returned to Westminster to attend the Rwanda vote, a critical vote on immigration policy back home. Media reports said that Stewart has returned to London from the climate summit in Dubai for the second reading of the contentious Rwanda Bill in the UK Parliament on Tuesday night. A source told the BBC: "The UK's chief negotiator Alison Campbell continues to lead negotiations for the UK, and the UK government continues to be represented at a ministerial level at COP28 by Lord Benyon." The source added: "Lord Benyon and Alison Campbell remain in constant contact with minister Stuart, who is responsible for the final decision on key issues and retains responsibility for UK negotiations overall." Responding to reports that the UK Climate Minister has left the COP28 talks, Christian Aid's Head of UK



Advocacy, Jennifer Larbie, told correspondent: "It's shocking to see the UK Climate Minister leaving the COP28 talks early, just as crucial negotiations about a global fossil fuel phase-out reach crunch point. The UK has a proud history of being a key player at previous talks. "Only last night Graham Stewart was describing the UK as a climate champion and today he's not even here during the most important hours of the summit. Considering Rishi Sunak's push for more oil and gas drilling in the North Sea, it's very sad to see the UK soiling its credentials on climate change." Chiara Liguori, Oxfam's Senior Climate Change Policy Advisor, said: "There can be no more tragic outcome for UK climate diplomacy than this -- flying home from talks to avert a climate catastrophe at the most critical moment in an attempt to salvage a cruel and impractical policy."

international

133 Palestinians killed by Israel's attacks in Gaza in 24 hours: Source

Gaza | Agencies
At least 133 Palestinians were killed and dozens of others were injured on Sunday, as Israel's air and artillery attacks continued on the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian medical source said. The source told Xinhua news agency that over Sunday, the bodies of at least 133 Palestinians who died in Israeli strikes were brought to hospitals across the Gaza Strip, 45 of whom were confirmed in Al-Aqsa hospital in central Gaza. Security sources and eyewitnesses told Xinhua that Israeli warplanes launched simultaneous raids on the Nuseirat, Al-Maghazi and Al-Zawaida refugee camps in the central Gaza Strip, Xinhua news agency reported. The sources added that intense raids also took place in the neighbourhoods of Al-Tuffah, Al-Shuja'iya, and Sheikh Radwan in Gaza City



and several areas in the northern Gaza Strip. There was also heavy artillery shelling targeting east of Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, amid loud explosions heard in the area, they noted. Israeli aircraft carried out a series of violent raids on a

stretch of areas south of Khan Younis, with dozens of raids targeting the road between Khan Younis and Rafah, according to the sources. Meanwhile, fierce battles continued between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces penetrating from several directions in Khan Younis and Jabalia camp. On the other hand, the Israeli army published photos of an arrest campaign showing dozens of Palestinians handcuffed and stripped of their clothes during its incursions on the outskirts of the northern Gaza Strip. Since October 7, Israel has been launching a large-scale war against the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the Gaza Strip under the name "Iron Swords," which has left more than 17,700 Palestinians dead, including thousands of women and children, according to the latest figure released by the Gaza-based Health Ministry on Saturday. The war began after Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on southern Israel, which claimed the lives of more than 1,200 Israelis, according to the Israeli authorities.

10 Israeli soldiers killed in northern Gaza ambush

Tel Aviv | Agencies
The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on Wednesday said that 10 soldiers were killed in an ambush in northern Gaza, the highest single-day fatalities since the ground offensive was launched in the Hamas-controlled enclave on October 27. With this, the total number of Israeli troops killed in the operation has increased to 115. The victims were identified as Colonel Yitzhak Ben Bassat (44) of the 11th Reserve Commando Brigade; Lt Col Tomer Grinberg (35), a commander of 13th



Battalion Gollani Brigade; Major Roei Meldasi (23), company commander in the 13th Battalion, Gollani Brigade; Major Moshe Avram Bar-On (23), company commander of the 51st Battalion, Gollani Brigade; Sergeant Achia Daskal (19), 51st Gollani Brigade; Captain Liel Hayo (22), Platoon Commander of the 51st Gollani Brigade; Major Shelly (26), Commander of Special Rescue Tactical Unit, 669; Major Rom Hecht (20) of the Special Rescue Tactical Unit 669; Sergeant Oriya Yaakov, (19) of Battalion 614, of the School of Combat Engineering; and Sergeant Eran Aloni (19) of the 51st Battalion, Gollani Brigade. The circumstances surrounding the incident remain unknown.

Major Russian missile attack in Kiev injures 53 people

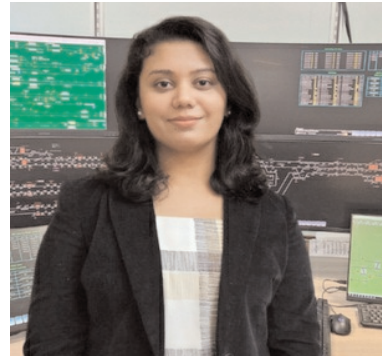
Kiev | Agencies
At least 53 people were injured in a major Russian missile attack on Kiev on Wednesday, the Ukrainian capital's Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. Eighteen adults and two children were hospitalised, while the rest received medical treatment on the site, Xinhua news agency quoted Klitschko as saying in a Telegram post. A children's hospital, an apartment building, private houses and cars were damaged by the airstrike in eastern Dniprovskiy and southeastern Darnytskyi districts, the Mayor confirmed. The Ukrainian Air Force said in a statement that it had intercepted all 10 ballistic missiles fired against Kiev.



The air strike marked the second attack on the Ukrainian capital this week. Wednesday's attack comes as President Volodymyr Zelensky wrapped up his third visit to Washington in a last-ditch effort to win new military aid from the US Congress before the currently approved amount runs dry. On Tuesday, he had a session with US senators behind closed doors and sat down with Republican Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, who did not even make a public appearance with the Ukrainian President. His welcome at the White House was decidedly low-key, with minimal pomp and ceremony. While Democrats have been willing to spend more money on border security as part of a \$110 billion package of military aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, Republicans want fundamental reform to the way undocumented migrants claiming political asylum are processed by the US government.

Indian-origin data scientist wins UK's top rail award

London | Agencies
An Indian-origin data scientist has been named 'Newcomer of the Year' in the 2023 RailStaff Awards in the UK for displaying "exceptional skill, tenacity and professional achievement" in her field of work. Maharashtra-born Smital Dhake, 26, who joined the rail industry in July 2022, is the first and only data scientist at Alstom, the UK and Ireland's leading supplier of new trains and train services. "This award means so much to me. It will inspire me to keep up the hard work, and I hope it also inspires others who are new to the industry. I am truly grateful for everyone who has helped me through my journey. I've had wonderful mentors, colleagues and managers. I am truly honoured," she was quoted as saying in railuk.com. This award, announced at a recent ceremony in Birmingham, is intended to recognise the outstanding contributions of individuals who are new to rail or who have



chosen to take a career change and become an apprentice. According to Lorna Richardson, Head of Customer Engagement at Alstom, Dhake established collaborative relationships, achieved IRSE (Institution of Railway Signal Engineers) competence and delivered safety-related works in record time. "Smital Dhake rapidly applied her Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) expertise and has solely made an enor-

mous impact already in a highly professional manner," Richardson said. Smital joined the railway specifically to work on the innovative Modular Advanced Route Setting (M-ARS) System. The UK railway's first M-ARS system with machine learning techniques is applied to use real-time data to predict future events to enable quicker decision-making to resolve conflicting train movements and thereby increasing the efficiency of the railway. But with no previous rail industry knowledge, Smital had to undergo extensive as well as intensive knowledge transfer processes in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the rail sector and signalling systems. "Smital achieved these business-critical objectives in under six months, a task which would normally be expected to take up to three years," Richardson added. Smital attended Watford Grammar School in England, followed by university at King's College London.

Boost for Rishi Sunak as he wins immigration debate in UK Parliament

London | Agencies
In a boost for Britain's Indian-origin Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, MPs in the House of Commons approved by 313 votes to 269 what is called a second reading of a House of Commons Bill, which aims to deport to Rwanda asylum seekers arriving in the UK, who in the British government's assessment are ineligible. Sunak said: "The British people should decide who gets to come to this country -- not criminal gangs or foreign courts. That's what this Bill delivers." Mark Francois, representing a significant number of Right-wing Conservative MPs, told the press that this group could not support the Bill in the third reading, expected to be introduced in the New Year.



The Guardian reported he "is believed to have killed himself". The Times headlined 'Migrant dies in "suicide" on Bibby Stockholm barge'. The UK Home Secretary (Minister), James Cleverly, opened the debate by saying: "The actions that we are taking whilst novel, whilst very much pushing at the edge of the envelope, are within the framework of international law." His former deputy - Immigration Minister - Robert Jenrick, who was entrusted with the task of piloting the Bill, but resigned last week on the grounds that the wording did not go far enough to guarantee deportation of asylum seekers to Rwanda, contradicted Cleverly. For the moment, they refrained from pulling the rug on Sunak on the basis that he had indicated to them that he was willing to accept amendments that would tighten the Bill. A seven hour debate occurred on a day when news broke of an asylum seeker housed on a barge off the southern English coast -- whose application was being processed -- being found dead on the ves-





Parliament 'attack' fallout: Security tightened at Maharashtra Legislature in Nagpur

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Soon after the Parliament "attack" by four persons - including one from Maharashtra's Latur - on Wednesday stunned the country, the Nagpur police beefed up security within and outside the Legislature complex, where the Winter Session is currently underway.

As an immediate measure, additional police forces were deployed, checks and searches of people entering the complex were intensified and close watch was kept on the roads around the legislature.

Besides the legislature complex, similar security measures are likely to be implemented at other sensitive locations, government offices, homes or offices to top VIPs from the ruling and Opposition side, and other



important dignitaries, not only in Nagpur, but other cities like Mumbai, Pune, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and other important cities.

Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who holds the home portfolio, called up Director General of Police Rajnish Sheth and directed him to probe the antecedents of one of the accused - Amol Shinde of Zari

village in Latur - nabbed by the Delhi Police for the 'assault' on parliament.

Simultaneously, two teams of Latur police swooped on the dwelling of Shinde, 25, and launched a probe into his background. The police thoroughly searched his home for documents, literature or any other evidence that could give pointers pertaining to the Parliament incident.

The apparently dazed father and mother told the police that their son had left home two weeks ago saying he was going to New Delhi. However, he did not provide any more information on his trip, they claimed.

More details are awaited on the background of Shinde - who is currently held by the Delhi Police along with the others - his motives, friends, relatives or acquaintances, any past criminal records, his possible connections with any questionable groups or organisations, or links with any political or non-political outfits, etc.

Meanwhile, a large crowd of curious but confused villagers, men, women and children, gathered a few metres away to watch the security operations outside the Shinde home that was cordoned off.

Court asks poll body to hold key election to Pune Lok Sabha seat immediately

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday asked the Election Commission of India to immediately hold the bypoll for the Pune Lok Sabha seat, stressing that people from the constituency cannot be left unrepresented for a long time. A division bench of Justices Gautam Patel and Kamal Khata ripped into the EC's stand on not holding the elections as it was busy with other polls, including preparation for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, calling it "bizarre and wholly unreasonable". The Pune Lok Sabha seat has been vacant since the death of sitting BJP Member of Parliament (MP) Girish Bapat on March 29 this year. "In any parliamentary democracy, governance is done by elected representatives who are the voices of people. If the representative is no more, another must be put in place. People cannot go unrepresented. That is wholly unconstitutional and is a fundamental anathema to our constitutional structure," the court said. The court passed its order on a plea filed by Pune resident Sughosh Joshi against a certificate issued by the EC to not hold the bye election to the constituency. The EC had said it would not be holding the bypoll on two grounds - one that it was busy with other polls including the preparatory activities for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and second that even if the Pune bypoll was held the elected representative would get a very short tenure. The bench, however, refused to accept these



grounds and said both are not valid concerns. They are, in fact, an "abdication" of constitutional duties and obligations which cannot be accepted, it said. "The ECI is not only vested but charged with the duty and obligation to hold elections and see to it that any vacancy is filled in. The ECI cannot let a constituency remain unrepresented. Voters cannot be denied this right," the court said. It noted that the term of the Lok Sabha ends in June 2024 while the Pune constituency seat has been lying vacant since March this year. "The ground that the entire machinery of the ECI was busy with the preparatory activities for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections borders on the bizarre," the court said. The court said these are not genuine difficulties expressed by the ECI to not hold the Pune bye election and hence they are wholly unacceptable. "No amount of inconvenience can undermine the statutory and constitutional obligations and duties cast upon the ECI. This is something unthinkable and would amount to sabotaging the constitutional framework," the court said in its order. The court noted that the poll body's powers and direc-

tions are not exempt from judicial review, especially when the same affects public law and interest. Allowing the petition, the bench quashed the EC's certificate and directed it to hold the Pune bypoll immediately. Joshi's advocate Dayaar Singla welcomed the order and said this would not only pave the way for the bypoll but also crystallise the right of the electorate to be represented. Joshi in his plea filed through advocates Singla and Shradha Swarup, said as per section 151A of the Representation of People Act, the vacancy should be filled through bypoll within six months.

The petitioner claimed that over the past few months, the constituents had no voice in Parliament, especially for issues related to significant delays in several developmental projects in Pune.

The petitioner claimed that not conducting the bypoll was in violation of the right of the electorate.

Bapat passed away at 72 in Pune on March 29. He had served as the MLA five times from the Kasba Peth constituency in the city. He was elected to Lok Sabha from the Pune constituency in 2019.

Fire erupts in Mumbai Lokmanya Tilak Terminus platform, no casualties

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A massive fire broke out in an eatery on the premises of Lokmanya Tilak Terminus railway station in Mumbai on Wednesday afternoon, officials said.

The blaze erupted in the Jan Aahar canteen on platform number 1 of the LTT station at 2.45 pm, a Central Railway official said. "So far, there is no report of injury to anyone," he said.

The incident is likely to cause a delay in the operation of some trains as the power supply of overhead wires along platform number 1, near which the incident took place, was temporarily switched off as a precautionary measure, they said.

There was no passenger train on platform number 1 when the incident occurred, newswire PTI reported quoting an official.

"The Jan Aahar canteen is located on the first floor above the main ticket booking counter in the concourse



area of the station. After the fire, the booking counters and announcement centres were immediately vacated,"

he said. Apart from the fire brigade, the personnel of various agencies,

including the Mumbai police, Central Railway, civic ward officer, traffic police and Railway Protection Force were mobilised at the spot.

The Mumbai fire brigade later declared it as level 2 (major) fire, a civic official said, adding that nobody was injured in the incident.

Chief public relations officer of the Central Railway, Dr Shivraj Manaspure, said the fire was brought under control by 3.30 pm.

"The Central Railway switched off the power supply of overhead wires at the LTT station as a precautionary measure after the fire broke out in the canteen. This could lead to delay in arrival and departure of trains," an official said. Located in Kurla suburb, the LTT train terminus is a busy railway station from where a number of long-distance express trains as well as suburban trains are operated.

A video of the fire incident went viral on social media, in which black smoke rising above the roof of the railway station could be seen.

Women in ladies compartment shut doors to block entry near Mumbai

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A ruckus broke out at the Badlapur railway station, 70 km from Mumbai, on Tuesday morning after women passengers travelling on a local train closed the doors of a ladies' compartment from inside to keep new passengers out, an official said.

The issue was resolved after Railway Protection Force (RPF) officials intervened, but stern action would be taken against the women passengers who bolted the door as it could set the wrong precedent, he added.

Fights breaking out over passengers not allowing others to board a compartment during rush hour are common on the Mumbai suburban railway networks of both the Central Railway and



Western Railway.

Passengers in the north-end ladies' compartment of the 7.19 am CSMT-bound fast local bolted the doors from inside before it reached the Badlapur railway station on the Central Railway route around 8 am, said a commuter rights activist.

As a result, women commuters waiting on the platform could not get in, and

someone in the adjoining male compartment pulled the alarm chain.

A purported video of the incident showed several passengers thumping on the doors of the ladies' compartment as the train stood stationary.

The doors were finally opened after the RPF intervened, said a senior RPF official.

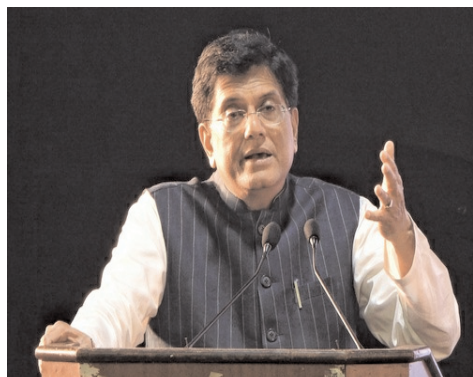
Piyush Goyal, 3 others to get 26th SIES-Kanchi seer national eminence awards

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will be among four who shall be conferred the prestigious 26th 'SIES-Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi National Eminence Award' in different categories, here on December 16, an official said here on Wednesday.

The other three distinguished winners for 2023 are: academican and Vice-Chancellor of Azim Premji University Prof. Anurag Behar, the British-born scientist and researcher in Quantum Technology Prof. Urbasi Sinha, and film director, author and preacher Dushyanth Sridhar.

The prizes -- comprising a cash reward of Rs 2.50 lakhs, a 5-feet tall gold-plated auspicious brass lamp, a citation, a shawl and other articles to each of the distinguished winners -- shall be given



away at a special event to be held at the Sri Shanmukhananda Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi Auditorium on Saturday, said the SIES President

Dr. V. Shankar.

The awards are named in honour of the 68th Seer of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, and the ceremony is part of the Sri Kanchi Mahaswami festival, he added.

Dr. Shankar said that in the past 25 years, the awards have gone to a 100 eminent personalities across fields including three ex-Presidents of India, two former Vice-Presidents, three Prime Ministers, two former Lok Sabha Speakers, four Governors, five Chief Ministers and five Bharat Ratnas, besides seven foreigners and others.

While Goyal has been selected for Public Leadership, Behar was chosen for Community Leadership, Sinha selected for Science & Technology, and Sridhar named for Social Leadership & Spiritualism for the 2023 edition of the awards.

Maharashtra to create integrated cyber platform to tackle online crime: Fadnavis



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government was working to create a "cyber platform" for the detection of cyber crime, state Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis told the Legislative Council here on Wednesday.

He was responding to a calling attention motion moved by Congress's Satej Patil about the rising cyber crime and cyber security issues.

"We are creating a huge cyber platform, and a tender has been recently floated.

This will be a very dynamic platform. All financial institutions including banks, NBFCs, all social media sites will be brought together on this platform. All these will be put onboard and integrated with the latest software which will create a very fast response time," Fadnavis said. The outline of the proposed platform was presented before Union home minister Amit Shah during a meeting of state home ministers and the Union home ministry asked all the states to create such integrated platforms, he said.

Opposition protests against Dharavi redevelopment project; urges govt to save its industries, people

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Opposition parties' member of Maharashtra legislative assembly on Wednesday attacked the Eknath Shinde-led state government over the Dharavi redevelopment issue, accusing it of favouring the Adani Group but leaving the residents of the slum colony in the lurch.

Mumbai Congress chief Varsha Gaikwad, who represents the Dharavi assembly constituency, Leader of Opposition in the legislative council Ambadas Danve from the Shiv Sena (UBT), and other legislators from the opposition parties raised slogans over the issue on the steps of the Vidhan Bhavan, the state legislature complex in Nagpur during the winter session of the assembly.

'Dharavi vachva, laghu udyog vachva' (Save Dharavi, save small-scale industries) was one of the slogans raised by them. Dharavi, located in central parts of the country's financial capital, is a hub for several small-scale, unorganised industries that manufacture medicines, leather, footwear, clothes among other things. It is known as



one of Asia's biggest slum clusters. After emerging as the highest bidder for the 259-hectare Dharavi redevelopment project, Adani Properties was handed the project in November last year through a competitive bidding. The project, which reportedly has a revenue potential of Rs 20,000 crore, involves rebuilding the Dharavi slum. Danve said, "The government is gifting Dharavi land to Adani. But many people running small-scale industries in the slum are getting affected in the process." Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has signed all the agreements

and tender of Adani's Dharavi project. There is a doubt whether more than 70,000 people in Dharavi will get houses there or not. Similarly, the ownership of TDR is also being given to the Adani Group," he said.

Danve asked the government whether it was working for the Adani Group or for the people in Dharavi.

"In order to draw the government's attention to this issue, we staged demonstrations on the steps of Vidhan Bhavan. The opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) will raise this issue in both Houses of the legislature," he said.

Thane Police nab 5 men who killed minor boy after brawl, buried his body

Team Absolute | Thane

The Narpoli Police Station in Bhiwandi town nabbed five youth for the sensational killing of a minor boy after a brawl, burying his body and then absconding for nearly three weeks, an official said here on Wednesday.

The accused are: Ayush Virendra Jha, Manoj Narayan Tope, both 19, Santosh Satyanarain Tatipamul, 21, Aniket Tukaram Kharat and Shivaji Dhanraj Mane, both 23 years old, said Narpoli Police Station Senior Police Inspector Bharat Kamat.

The five have been charged for the killing of Yogesh Ravi Sharma, 16, who had a brawl with some of them and they plotted a conspiracy to eliminate him.

On Nov. 25 evening around 7.30 pm, the boy told his mother that he was going near the Thane Creek nearby, but never returned, and his mobile was switched off.

After looking for him at all possible places, the mother finally lodged a missing and suspected kidnaping complaint with the local police on November 28. The police set up multiple



teams which rushed to several locations to trace the boy, but did not get any success.

The teams also quietly tracked the movements of his friends Jha, Tope and Kharat and learnt that the boy had got into a scuffle with Jha a few days ago.

Deploying tech-intel and local network of informers, the police found that on Nov. 25, the five accused had allegedly invited the boy for a beer party at Retibunder area of the Thane Creek.

Unaware of their diabolical plan to kill him, the boy went to the site where he enjoyed beers with Jha and Tope, who later called the other three - Kharat, Tatipamul and Mane, and others to the isolated spot.

They came and all ganged up against the lone boy, caught and overpowered him and then repeatedly stabbed him with a knife, killing him on the spot.

Under cover of darkness, they dug up a hole nearby and buried him before decamping from there, as per the confessions of Jha and Tope.

The police later exhumed the partly decomposed body of the boy and sent it for an autopsy, even as the incident created shockwaves in Thane, the home district of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Kamat said the police teams are on the lookout for the other absconding associates of the five accused and hope to track them soon.



Tom Cruise getting close to woman 25 years younger to him

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Tom Cruise has been spotted getting close with a new love interest who is 25 years younger to him. The 'Mission Impossible' actor, 61, has according to reports in the Daily Mail, been getting close to socialite Elsin Khayrova, 36, who is the daughter of a Russian MP and ex-wife of a successful diamond trading oligarch, reports 'Mirror.co.uk'. The couple were seen dancing and getting close at a London Mayfair party, with onlookers describing Tom as 'besotted' with his dance partner. Another onlooker described the pair as 'inseparable'. As per 'Mirror.co.uk', Elsin, who is a former model, was previously married to Russian tycoon Dmitry Tsetkov with their bitter split hitting headlines in the summer. Yet it seems the model has

now found love with Top Gun actor Tom, and the feeling appears to be mutual. A source told Mail Online: "They were inseparable, clearly a couple. He seemed to be besotted with her." "He spent most of the night dancing with Khayrova, but at one point he was just throwing himself around in the middle of a group of women." The source added that Tom was asked by party guests for pictures and kept politely declining before the DJ reportedly had to announce that he didn't want to have photos taken. Elsin previously shared a \$27 million home on the Wentworth estate in Surrey with her ex-husband as well as homes in London.

Bradley Cooper, Lady Gaga reunite at 'Maestro' premiere

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress-singer Lady Gaga stepped out to celebrate her former co-star Bradley Cooper at the writer-director's 'Maestro' premiere. The 13-time Grammy winner, 37, posed with Bradley, 48, and his 'Maestro' co-star, Carey Mulligan, before the screening at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, reports People magazine. Bradley's daughter, Lea De Seine, 6, also posed with the stars. The two collaborated on 'A Star Is Born' in 2018, which starred Bradley as a hard-drinking musician who discovers and falls in love with a young singer, played by Gaga. As per People, the film earned eight Oscar nominations, including Best Actor for Bradley and Best Actress for Gaga. She earned the film's only Oscar victory, taking home the award for Best Original Song for 'Shallow'. The song also earned three Grammys. During the 2019 Oscars ceremony, the pair performed an intimate duet of the song, which had fans convinced the stars might have feelings for each other in real life. In November 2021, Bradley told 'The Hollywood Reporter' that they had simply chosen to stay in character to curb his nerves while singing live at the awards show. "Just from a personal standpoint, it reduces the anxiety level", Bradley said.



Sleep is Dakota Johnson's 'number one priority in life'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actress Dakota Johnson said if she gets less than 10 hours of sleep a night she can't function properly.

The actress also shared that she can easily sleep for 14 hours straight, reports People magazine. The 'Fifty Shades of Grey' actress told the 'Wall Street Journal', "Sleep is my number one priority in life." She also explained that she doesn't have a scheduled wake-up time every day. Instead, she plans her sleep routine on a day-by-day basis. "If I'm not working, if I have a day off on a Monday, then I will sleep as long as I can," she said, quoted by People. In addition to getting enough sleep, Dakota said she works out five days a week -- a mix of hot yoga, pilates and body weight training. The actress also meditates twice every day. "I do transcendental meditation," she continued. "I've been really into breathwork recently and that's been helping me a lot with anxiety." Mental health is something that the actress has not shied away from talking about. In a 2020 interview with Marie Claire, Dakota opened up about dealing with depression since her teenage years. "That was when, with the help of professionals, I was like, 'Oh, this is a thing I can fall into.' But I've learned to find it beautiful because I feel the world. I guess I have a lot of complexities, but they don't pour out of me. I don't make it anyone else's problem," she told the outlet.



It's 'a lucky thing' her Barbie movie didn't get made: Anne Hathaway

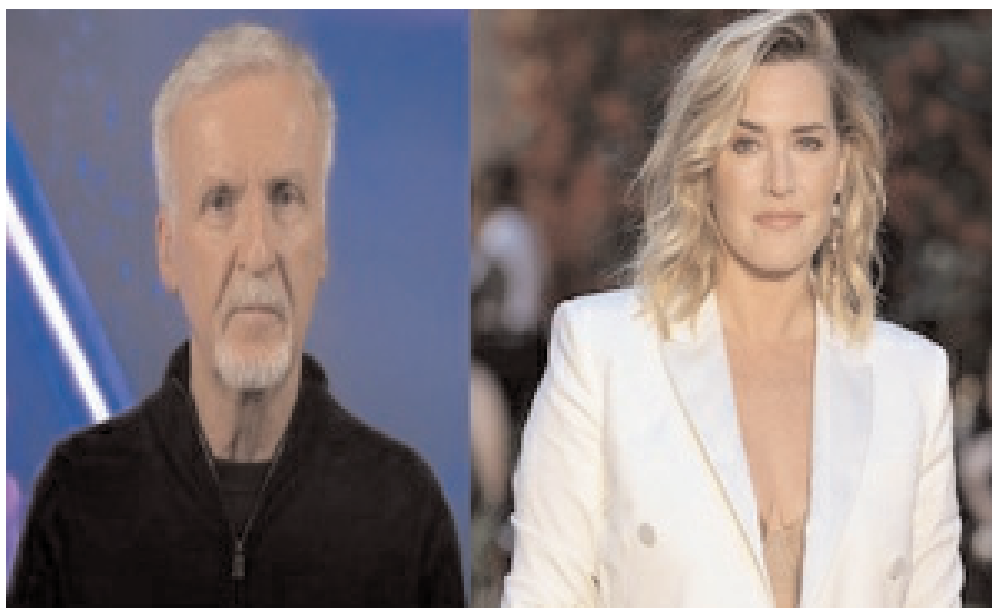
Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Anne Hathaway was considering playing Barbie for Sony Pictures back in 2017 with Alethea Jones circling to direct. However, that didn't materialise and the actress is glad. The Oscar-winner said in hindsight, it's a "lucky thing" that never happened, reports Deadline. The actress said the team behind this year's 'Barbie', "hit a bullseye." She continued, referencing her 2017 project, "Now imagine that version, that much energy, that much anticipation, that much emotion, but it's not the right version." Hathaway offered her assessment on Josh Horowitz's 'Happy Sad Confused' podcast. As per Deadline, she was equally effusive in her praise for the woman who is the producer and eventual actual onscreen Barbie, Margot Robbie. She said, "Margot is just sublime, period. What she is doing as a creative person and a producer is so exciting and inspiring. And the mythic giants they toppled with (Barbie) that have kept certain narratives in place that have not allowed opportunities to develop for so many people. They ran straight through it, dancing, sparkling". She added, "If I believed that the version I was attached to could have done that, yeah, I might feel differently about it, but I genuinely think their (film) was the best possible version. So it's actually very easy to just be thrilled and happy (for them). I'm also a person who loves watching women kill it. I just do, I just love it. And also, to do so well, so undeniably that they actually had to write new records, come on! ... I think it's probably going to make things better".

James Cameron confirms Kate Winslet will be back as Ronal in 'Avatar 3'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker James Cameron confirmed that he and actress Kate Winslet are working together again on 'Avatar 3'. James had said the project's post production schedule was "hectic", but the film is due out "Christmas of '25", reports Deadline. James said in an interview with People that Kate will once again play Ronal. While Kate's involvement in 'Avatar: The Way of Water' was relatively minimal, it sounds like she will have more to do in the third film. The director said Kate "went to school" with a real-life shaman to learn more about she will employ in the 2025 release. "When you see her doing that purification ritual to try to revive Kitty in the film and some of the stuff that she's going to do in movie three, that's based on actual practice," he said. It makes sense that we'd see more of Ronal, given James told GQ today that "the big (creative) advance in this movie is just going to be greater character depth." "We're seeing new cultures, new creatures -- all the same stuff you'd expect from an Avatar movie, but the whole idea of this cycle of films is to live with these people and go on this epic journey with them. "So I think it's not about, 'We're going to show you the best water (VFX) ever done' -- but you get more into the heart and soul of the characters. And there's some very interesting new characters that come in as well. This is a journey over time. It will play out through movie three, into movie four and movie five. There's an epic cycle to the whole thing."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Amanza Smith





Leander Paes, Vijay Amritraj become first Asian men to be inducted in Tennis Hall of Fame

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former doubles world No. 1 Leander Paes and ex-player, broadcaster and promoter Vijay Amritraj, become the first Asian men to be elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

Paes, an 18-time Grand Slam champion in doubles and mixed doubles, has been selected in the Player Category while Amritraj are inductees in the Contributor Category, which is considered for election every two years, along with British journalist and historian Richard Evans.

The Contributor Category recognizes true pioneers, visionary leaders, or individuals/groups who have made a transcendent impact on the sport.

The official induction ceremony will take place on July 20, 2024 in Newport, Rhode Island.

Paes, Amritraj and Evans will join an elite group of 264 inductees from 27 nations - with India set to become the 28th nation represented in the Hall of Fame.

With eight doubles Grand Slam titles and 10 in mixed doubles, Paes is



one of only three men in tennis history to capture a career Grand Slam in both disciplines. He won 55 doubles titles on tour and also spent a total of 462 weeks inside the ATP doubles top 10, including 37 weeks at No. 1.

"It has been my life's honor to play for my country for over three decades in a sport that has given and taught me everything. This acknowledgment is indeed the ultimate accolade for every tennis player. Induction into the

International Tennis Hall of Fame belongs not just to me, but to our billion-plus Indians.

"Receiving this honor culminates a professional journey of a lifetime, standing on the shoulders of greats and sets the tone for other youngsters in Asia and around the world, Paes said. Paes competed in a record seven consecutive Olympic Games, the most in tennis history, and is India's only Olympic medalist in tennis, cap-

turing bronze in singles at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

Amritraj was one of India's greatest players in the Open Era, anchoring India's Davis Cup squad to its only two Finals appearances in 1974 and 1987; in 1974, he played a key role in India's boycott of the Final against South Africa to demonstrate against Apartheid. Post-retirement, he has become the face of tennis broadcasting in Asia and the Middle East.

I-League 2023-24

Barretto strike helps Mohammedan beat Hamdhari, extend unbeaten streak to nine games

Team Absolute | Sri Bhaini Sahib (Punjab)

Beneston Barretto scored a late winner to help Mohammedan Sporting to a 1-0 victory over Namdhari FC on Wednesday and extended their unbeaten streak to nine matches in the I-League 2023-24.

Barretto scored in the 81st minute as Mohammedan Sporting won the away match played at the Namdhari Stadium at Sri Bhaini Sahib, near Ludhiana.

After a goalless first half, the Black and White Brigade stepped it up in the second session as a goal from Barretto earned them the three points.

This was Mohammedan Sporting's seventh win of the season, putting them three points clear at the top of the table with a game in hand. They now have 23 points from nine matches while second-placed Sreenidhi Deccan FC have 20 from 10.



Namdhari FC, on the other hand, find themselves in trouble, having earned merely five points from nine matches, and are placed second from bottom on the league table. Mohammedan SC will return to action on

December 17 for their next assignment, when they will lock horns with Churchill Brothers, while Namdhari will travel to Kalyani to face the TRAU FC at the Kalyani Municipal Stadium on the same day.

INDW v ENGW

Focus will be on bowlers on a flat and skiddy wicket for one-off Test

Team Absolute | Navi Mumbai

With skipper Harmanpreet Kaur declaring the pitch as 'skiddy', focus will be on the bowlers when India takes on England in the four-day one-off Women's Test at the DY Patil Stadium here from Thursday. While Harmanpreet reckoned that the pitch would not spin a lot and would rather help the pacers, England skipper Heather Knight concurred that would be a flat and skiddy pitch and said they are considering going into the Test with an extra bowler.

"When I last saw the pitch, they were going to shave it more. It might not turn more and will be skiddy even for the spinners. The spells from medium pacers will be very important," said Harman in the pre-match press conference on Wednesday. Though the 34-year-old off-spinner reckoned that spinners would not get a lot of assistance from the pitch, she said India had experienced bowlers who know how to gain advantage from such a surface. "We have spinners who have experience in bowling on flat, skiddy surfaces. If we bowl positively and go with aggressive field placements, we can pick up wickets. As a batter, if you can get set, it will ease out but at the same time, if you attack with the ball it won't be easy," said the 34-year-old Harmanpreet who has the best figures by an Indian bowler at home as she had claimed 9/85 in two innings against South Africa when India last hosted a women's Test in 2014. Heather Knight expects the wicket to skid and also help the spinners. Said though the surface and conditions will



have a bearing on the playing XI though they would like to go in with their best possible side. "We're certainly excited to face the challenge and see how the pitch plays and what it's like playing Test Cricket in India," said the England skipper. Harmanpreet said the wicket will not have much bearing on their final combination. She expects that would be enough for everyone in the pitch at the DY Patil Stadium. "It is a four-day game, so even if you have to bowl for two days, you have to look at who can bowl for two days and who are those batters who can bat for long. We have to make combinations accordingly. "If we look at the pitch and decide the combination, it will be different but if we look at our strengths, it will be a different combination. I would like to go with our strengths," the India skipper said. Though India will be playing the first Test match without the towering Jhulan Goswami running in and letting the ball rip, Harmanpreet has some very good bowlers at her disposal, though they are short on experience in red-ball cricket.

Nihal, Kabir, Danish, Bainsla and Ananyaa seek more success in 5th leg of US Kids Golf

Team Absolute | Gurgaon

Nihal Cheema, one of youngest Indian champions in US Kids Golf India series, will be among the winners from the recently held Indian Championships, who will feature at the fifth leg of the 2023 US Kids Golf India North Tour. The field for each of the last two events, the fifth and sixth and final leg, which is also the 2023 Tour Championships, will see almost 60 young golfers in action. Nihal leads a bunch of half a dozen Indian Championship winners from the flagship event, the three-day Indian Championships which was held last week at the same venue. Nihal, who played and won in Boys 7 Category will go back to Boys 6 and



under section. Kabir Goyal, another impressive winner in Indian Championship, will feature in Boys 8 category, where he will face stiff competition from Ojasv Saraswat, Sahib Aujla and Divyot Gupta. Three other Indian Championship winners, who will demand attention are Rudar Gupta (Boys 9), Danish Verma (Boys 12) and Prince Bainsla (Boys 13-14).

Life needs to move on, but it was honestly tough: Rohit Sharma on World Cup final heartbreak

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Opening up for the first time since India lost the Men's ODI World Cup final, captain Rohit Sharma admitted that though one has to move on in life, it was honestly tough for him to get over the defeat in the final at Ahmedabad.

In the final at the Narendra Modi Stadium on November 19, Rohit continued to give India fast starts in the first ten overs, slamming a 31-ball 47 as the hosts' reached 80 at the end of the first powerplay.

But after that, India never got the desired groove in the middle overs and eventually made 240. In reply, Australia chased down the total in 43 overs, and halted India's ten-match unbeaten streak in the tournament. It meant that India's date with destiny and ending their ten-year drought of a global trophy ended in a heartbreak.

"I've always grown up watching the 50-over World Cup. To me that was the ultimate prize, the 50-over World Cup. We've worked all these years, for that World Cup. And it is disappointing, right?"



"If you don't get through it, don't get what you want, what you've been looking for all this while, what you were dreaming of. You get disappointed. You get frustrated as well at times."

"I had no idea how to come back after the final, my family & friends kept me going - it was hard to digest but life needs to move on but honestly it was tough to move on from that day, it was the ultimate prize," said

Rohit in a video posted on 'Team45ro' Instagram account.

After the tournament was over, Rohit headed to United Kingdom with his family to try and get over the sadness of losing the World Cup final, while appreciating the fans for coming out to support the team in huge numbers. "After the final, it was very hard to get back and start moving on, which is why I decided that I need to get my mind out of this."

"But then, wherever I was, I realised that people were coming up to me and they were appreciating everyone's effort, how well we played. I feel for all of them. They all, along with us, were dreaming of lifting that World Cup, along with us."

"Everywhere we went during this entire campaign, there was so much support from everyone who came to the stadium firstly and people who were watching it from home as well."

"I want to appreciate what the people have done for us, in that one and half month period. But again, if I think more and more about that I feel quite disappointed that we were not able to go all the way."

Suryakumar Yadav strengthens his top spot in ICC T20 ranking

Dubai | Agencies

India batter Suryakumar Yadav solidified his position at the top of the ICC Men's T20I rankings following his quickfire half-century in the second match of his side's T20I series against South Africa. Suryakumar smashed 56 from 36 deliveries to gain a total of 10 rating points to further extend his lead as the No.1 ranked batter in the shortest format of the game.

As per the latest ICC T20I rankings update on Wednesday, Suryakumar sits comfortably on top with 865 ratings points, which is well clear of his nearest rivals in Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan (787 rating points) and South Africa's Aiden Markram (758) less than six months out from the start of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Suryakumar claimed the premier ranking during the most recent edition of the T20 World Cup in Australia towards the end of last year.

In other movements following the match, Rinku Singh's star continues to rise as he rocketed 46 slots



to 59th among the batters, following his dazzling and unbeaten 68 from just 39 balls, which lifted him to career-best 464 rating points.

South Africa opener Reeza Hendricks is one player to make ground on Suryakumar after he moved up one place to eighth following his innings of 49 against India while India's Tilak Varma moved up 10 spots to be placed 55th.

In the bowler's list, newly-crowned No.1 T20I bowler India's Ravi Bishnoi, who missed out on selection for the South Africa tour, paved the way for Afghanistan ace Rashid Khan to join the India young gun at the top of the rankings for T20I bowlers, with Proteas spinner Tabraiz Shamsi became the eighth spinner in the top 10 of the list when he hopped two places from 12th, moving to 654 points. India left-armers Kuldeep Yadav rises five places to 32nd on the same list, while Markram improves two places to second behind only India's Ravindra Jadeja on the latest T20I rankings for all-rounders.

FIH Hockey Men's Jr World Cup

India ready for German challenge in semifinals

Team Absolute | Kuala Lumpur

Following an exhilarating comeback win against the Netherlands in the quarterfinal of the FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup Malaysia 2023, the Indian team is set to face the formidable Germans in the semifinal round, here on Thursday.

In the previous matches, the Indian Team secured a 4-2 victory against Korea, suffered a 4-1 defeat to Spain, and bounced back with a commanding 10-1 win over Canada, ultimately securing a second-place finish in Pool C. Notably, India triumphed over the Netherlands, a European powerhouse ranked fourth in world rankings, in a



thrilling quarterfinal clash, staging a remarkable comeback to conquer the Dutch with a 4-3 scoreline.

Reflecting on the incredible turnaround in the quarterfinals on Tuesday and playing under pressure, Captain Uttam Singh, "We are now used to playing under pressure. Be it the Asia Cup Final against Pakistan or the Bronze Medal match in the Sultan of Johor Cup, we have played and won under pressure. It's something we have worked on and we have developed a skill set. It also helps that five players from the existing team were part of the previous Junior World Cup, so our experience also comes in handy."

T20I: Russell returns in style as West Indies clinch historic England victory

Barbados | Agencies

Star all-rounder Andre Russell made a successful return to international cricket as the West Indies showed they could be a force to be reckoned with at next year's ICC Men's T20 World Cup with an impressive four-wicket victory over England, here. It was Russell's first international match in more than two years and the talented 35-year-old turned it on in style with a three-wicket haul and an unbeaten 29* from 14 balls as the Caribbean side chased down England's decent total of 171 with 11 deliveries remaining.

The run chase was the highest successful one at the picturesque Kensington Oval ground in Barbados, surpassing the previous best of 155/5 by the West Indies also against England in 2014.

Russell was deservedly named Player of the Match for his superb individual heroics and admitted after the game that his return to international cricket had gone exactly to plan. The performance will provide the West Indies with plenty of confidence less than six months out from the start of the T20 World Cup that they will co-host with the USA, with a host of their best players appearing in good form against England. Russell helped turn the momentum the way of the West Indies after Phil Salt (40) and Jos Buttler (39) had given



England a good start by putting on 77 for the opening wicket in good time, with Alzarri Joseph (3/54) chipping in with a three-wicket haul of his own as the visitors were dismissed in their final over. Shai Hope (36) and Kyle Mayers (35) found the middle of the bat with ease in response for the West Indies, before a brief rain delay and some inspired bowling from Rehan Ahmed (3/39) provided England with a glimmer of hope. But Russell combined with Rovman Powell (31*) to guide the West Indies to the highest successful T20I run chase at the ground and help setup a 1-0 lead in the five-match series.

The teams meet next in Grenada on Thursday.



Being 'dolled up' is tedious & unnatural for me

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actress Sanjana Sanghi has shared that being dolled up for the characters is far more 'tedious' for her, and said how she finds it more 'unnatural'.

Sanjana made her acting debut as a child artist in 'Rockstar', and she had her breakthrough with the romantic drama film 'Dil Bechara', starring late actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Talking to reporter, Sanjana said she is the happiest person if she has to perform completely 'raw' on the screen.

"Personally for me being dolled up is far more tedious. I find it more unnatural to me. If you tell me to turn up on set and not do hair and makeup, and just perform then I am the happiest person. That's really who I am," said Sanjana. The actress shared how her debut role of 'Kizie Basu' in the movie 'Dil Bechara' was completely raw.

"So I am attracted to that, because it comes more naturally to me," shared Sanjana.

On what process she follows to choose roles, the 27-year-old actress said: "I think it is a bit of a process of 'what you seek is seeking you'. As I am doing more films I am realising that the choices I am making are obviously a reflection of somewhere there is a void I am trying to fill as an artist."

Sanjana said she chose to become an artist because there is some unresolved emotional conflict.

"I feel that we are trying to find a solution for. And I through every character personally I know that's the journey I am on. So sometimes a bubbly Katty, sometimes an innocent Manjari, sometimes responsible and vulnerable Sakshi. I think that's the journey and one is very grateful that through and all the genres are not repeating themselves," she said.

Sanjana was recently seen in the thriller film 'Kadakh Singh', starring Pankaj Tripathi in the lead.



Vishnu Manchu's upcoming to feature Preity Mukhundhan

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Vishnu Manchu's 'Kannappa' has found its lead lady in Preity Mukhundhan. Talking about it, director Mukesh Kumar Singh said: "For Preity, this isn't just an initial steps into the film industry but a leap into the world of art and cinema and mostly learning. She was a perfect fit for the role and we look forward to working with her."

The casting process for the pivotal role Preity portrays was rigorous, with numerous auditions held to find the perfect fit for the character. After a search, the filmmakers zeroed in on Preity, recognising her exceptional talent and the unique charm she brings to the table.

Preity background as a Bharatnatyam dancer brings a unique artistic dimension to her character.

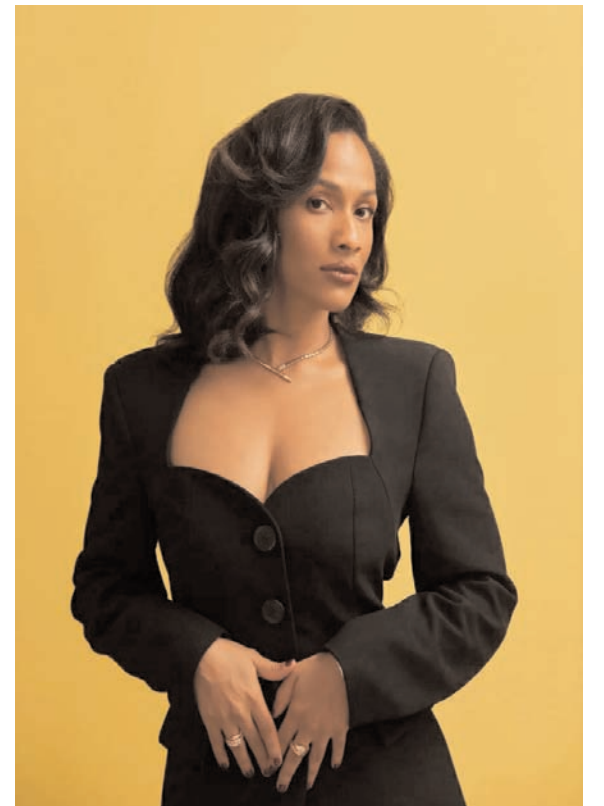


Masaba Gupta: Audio format of storytelling is taxing & challenging

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As a fashion designer and actress Masaba Gupta, who has lent her voice to Lisa Cartwright in Marvel's 'Wastelanders: Black Widow', has opened up on the audio format of storytelling, and said it's a lot more taxing and challenging. The Hindi Audible Original podcast series 'Marvel's Wastelanders: Black Widow' features Kareena Kapoor Khan as the voice of Black Widow/Helen Black, Masaba as Lisa Cartwright, Vihaan Samat as Jordan Temple, Adah Sharma as Yelena Belova, Nitu Chandra as Judy Kratz and Aditi Bhatia as K.I.M. Talking to reporter, Masaba said she found this medium intriguing because for her audio typically follows the video format of something. "But this was new because you are building the world through audio. And it's a lot more taxing and challenging because it's not like people can lean on the visual to understand something. I found it challenging also because there was no reference. I find it very intriguing. It's a surprise for me but I am excited for this new gen and new layer that is unlocked of storytelling," said Masaba. On working with Kareena, the judge of the 'MTV Supermodel of the Year' said: "If you are in the same story you have to be on the same wavelength. By which I mean that when you are especially recording voice only it can't be me speaking at different bandwidth and her speaking at different bandwidth, even though we had different characters we have to match that."

"But interestingly it worked out. A big part of my reason to say yes to this project was that Kareena is playing the black widow, and she is full of surprises and she is bringing something new to the table," she added. Meanwhile, on the work front, Masaba was last seen in 'Modern Love: Mumbai'.



Arjun Kapoor opens up on dealing with box office failures: Unfortunately you can't control it

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Arjun Kapoor has opened up on the box-office failures, and shared how the box-office can't be controlled, but he can control his effort and sincerity. Marking his acting debut with 'Ishaqzaade', Arjun has delivered hits like '2 States', 'Gunday', 'Ki & Ka'. However, his recent movie 'The Lady Killer', starring Bhumi Pednekar, was reportedly made on a whopping budget of Rs 45 crore, but has reportedly raked in around Rs 1 lakh on the box-office. On the chat show 'Koffee With Karan', Arjun and host Karan Johar discussed the box office failures and how they navigated their way through it.

Talking about the same, KJo said, "We all have public perceptions, we all have Instagram that shows a part of our personality that may or may not be accurate at times, but we are also combating box office pressures, industry dynamics." "Fubu, I'm gonna ask you some-



times when box offices have evaded you.

What is the way and I always know that you have been upbeat and have a sense of humor which I think is there that in the face of failure you can laugh at yourself. How do you deal with it," asked the filmmaker. Opening up about it, Arjun said, "There is so much adversity I have faced in my life ya Karan, I think I have spoken on this couch before about many aspects of my life."

"I am the first actor in my generation to deliver a 100 crore film, with Dharma and Sajid Nadiadwala that was '2 States'. I have seen the high, I have done a film like 'Ki & Ka' that did well, where I was a house husband, I have done all kinds of work, I have worked with so many people.

I mean Akshay Kumar has spoken so openly about the fact that he almost considered leaving the profession at one point of time, 11-12 flops I think he has seen," shared Arjun.

BIG B TO ATTEND PRODUCER ANAND PANDIT'S 60TH BIRTHDAY BASH

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As B-Town winds up 2023 with a mixed bag of hits and misses, producer Anand Pandit is about to end it on a high note with the biggest bash of the year. Celebrating his 60th birthday and 20 years of his successful real estate company Lotus Developers, Pandit is throwing what is expected to be the biggest bash of the year. Leading the attendees stretching across the entire galaxy of the industry, is megastar and chief-guest of the event Amitabh Bachchan. Pandit posted on social media, a heartwarming glimpse of the moment he visited Big B's home to invite him.

Sources say that the two have known each other for many years and share a very close bond. The superstar who rarely attends public events or private parties is hence making an exception this time and will grace Pandit's birthday celebrations. He also shares a close working relationship with Pandit, having worked in his recent productions 'Chehre' and 'Fakt Mahilao Maate.'

The news has created a massive buzz in the industry and all eyes are now on what is expected to be the most well-attended party of 2023.



Divya Khosla Kumar