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REALTY STOCKS MADE HIGHEST GAINS THIS YEAR

Team Absolute | New Delhi

For the year ending November 23, realty (59 per cent) and auto (33 per cent) made the highest gains, while bank (3 per cent) was the lowest performer, according to a report by Tata Mutual Fund.

All major sectors gained in November. Realty gained the most for the month.

Mid-cap and small cap index continue to outperform the large cap index on both one month and one year period, the report said.

One-year forward PE stands at 20x, higher than the historical average.

Expected earnings for FY24 is 15.0 per cent and FY25 is at 15.8 per cent.

Over the last 12 months, the Nifty 50 (7.33 per cent) has outperformed the MSCI EM index (4.65 per cent), the report said.



In P/E terms, the Nifty 50 is trading at 69 per cent premium to the MSCI EM index, above its historical average of 48 per cent.

The premium however has reduced from peak of 80-85 per cent about 12 months back. Stable macros, broad based earnings

growth and robust banking/corporate sector health driving the premium, the report said. Risk from electoral event has reduced post recent state election results.

INDIA'S TRADE DEFICIT DECLINES IN NOVEMBER AS IMPORTS DIP

New Delhi: India's merchandise trade deficit declined to \$20.58 billion in November, primarily driven by a fall in imports of gold and oil, according to government data released on Friday.

The exports, however, fell less sharply by 2.8 per cent to \$33.90 billion from \$34.89 billion a year ago.

Overall imports dipped by 4.3 per cent, to \$54.48 billion as compared to \$56.95 billion in the same month last year. Gold imports nearly halved on month to \$3.45 billion in November from \$7.2 billion in October.

Similarly, oil imports declined 22 per cent in November compared with the previous month to \$13.71 billion due to the fall in crude prices.

Electronic goods imports also recorded a close to 17 per cent decline at \$6.49 billion. The figures for the April-November period of the current financial year show that exports contracted by 6.51 per cent to \$278.8 billion. Imports during the eight-month period fell by 8.67 per cent to \$445.15 billion.

Hardik Pandya Replaces Rohit Sharma As Mumbai Indians Skipper Ahead Of IPL 2024



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Hardik Pandya was appointed the Mumbai Indians skipper ahead of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 season on Friday. It meant the end of Rohit Sharma's ten-year tenure as MI skipper. During his time as skipper, Rohit guided the franchise to five IPL trophies.

Pandya rejoined the MI side as part of a sensational trade move from Gujarat Titans. The all-rounder was the GT captain for the past two years and he won the title with the franchise back in 2022. Commenting on this transition Mahela Jayawardene, Global Head of Performance, Mumbai Indians said - "It is part of legacy building and staying true to the MI philosophy of being future-ready. Mumbai Indians have

always been blessed with exceptional leadership right from Sachin to Harbhajan and Ricky to Rohit, who while contributing to the immediate success have always had an eye on strengthening the team for the future. It is in keeping with this philosophy that Hardik Pandya will assume captaincy of Mumbai Indians for the IPL 2024 season." "We express our gratitude to Rohit Sharma for his exceptional leadership; his tenure as the captain of the Mumbai Indians since 2013 has been nothing short of extraordinary. His leadership has not only brought unparalleled success to the team but has also solidified his place as one of the finest captains in the history of the IPL. Under his guidance, MI became one of the most successful and loved teams ever. We will look forward to his guidance and experience on and off the field to further strengthen MI."

"We welcome Hardik Pandya as the new captain of MI and wish him all the very best." "In 31 matches for GT from 2022-23, Pandya scored 833 runs at an average of 37.86 and a strike rate of over 133, with six half-centuries and a best score of 87*. He also had 11 wickets for the team, with the best figures of 3/17. Pandya also played 92 matches for MI from 2015-2021, scoring 1,476 runs at an average of 27.33 at a strike rate of over 153, with four half-centuries and best score of 91. He also took 42 wickets for the team, with the best bowling figures of 3/20. Pandya has won five IPL trophies, four with MI (2015, 2017, 2019, 2020) and GT (2022).

SHARPEST LEG OF INDIA DEDICATED INFLOWS SINCE 2003-2006

New Delhi: India dedicated flows expanded to a 3-month high of \$713 million, again all led by Large cap flows. This is the sharpest and most consistent leg of India dedicated inflows since 2003-2006 period. It started since Oct'22 and pace is consistently expanding, says a report by Elara Securities. EM flows expand to 4-month high of \$4 billion led by sharp recovery in China and continuous flows into India. However, EM flows remain concentrated in large cap funds only. Post the FED comments on reversing rate hikes, euphoria is building up in Global flows. US flows expanded to 18-month high of \$26.3 billion, the report said. There was a strong rush of flows into US Mid and Smallcap funds, which have barely participated in the recovery from Oct'22 lows. S&P 500 is 2 per cent away from its all-time highs but Russell 2000 index is still 20 per cent lower. S&P Equal weight index has started outperforming the weighted index for first time since Jan'23. All these indicate a broadening in breadth in the US after almost 15-18 months. Flows into US Midcap fund expand to \$4.7 billion, largest since Dec'21. Smallcap flows of \$4.5 billion are 2nd largest since Jun'22.

DRDO successful carries out flight trial of indigenous UAV

Team Absolute | New Delhi

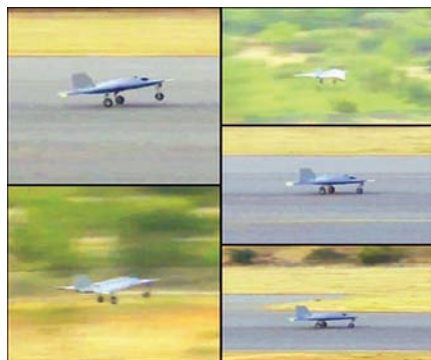
DRDO on Friday said that it has successfully carried out a flight trial of Autonomous Flying Wing Technology Demonstrator, an indigenous high-speed flying-wing Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV).

As per the Ministry of Defence (MoD) the test was conducted from the Aeronautical Test Range, Chitradurga in Karnataka.

"The successful flying demonstration of this autonomous stealth UAV is a testimony to maturity in the technology readiness levels in the country. With this flight in the tailless configuration, India has joined the elite club of countries to have mastered the controls for the flying wing technology," the MoD said.

It said that the UAV has been designed and developed by DRDO's Aeronautical Development Establishment.

It said that these flight-tests led to achievements in development of robust aerodynamic and control system; integrated real-time and hardware-in-loop simulation, and state-of-the-art Ground Control Station. The MoD said that



the aircraft prototype, with a complex arrow-head wing platform, is designed and manufactured with light-weight carbon prepreg composite material developed indigenously.

It said that the autonomous landing of this high-speed UAV, without the need for ground radars/infrastructure/pilot, showcased a unique capability demonstration, allowing take-off and landing from any runway with surveyed coordinates.

COW VIGILANTE BITTU BAJRANGI'S BROTHER SET ON FIRE BY UNKNOWN MEN

Faridabad: A group of unknown men allegedly poured some flammable liquid on Bittu Bajrangi's brother Mahesh Panchal and set him on fire at Chacha Chowk in Baba Mandi, Faridabad.

Police said the victim has sustained 54 per cent burns and is being treated at a private hospital.

The victim has identified one of the suspects as Arman who has a juice shop in Baba Mandi near the incident spot.

The victim has told the police that he was present in Baba Mandi on Wednesday night when a car carrying five to six men got out of the car and started beating him.

Bajrangi -- President of Cow Raksha Bajrang Force -- was arrested in connection with the Nuh violence but has been granted bail.

Sharmila Thackeray backs besieged nephew Aditya Thackeray in Disha Salian case

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a pleasant surprise for the Thackeray clan, Sharmila Thackeray, the wife of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) President Raj Thackeray, has openly come out in support of her nephew Aditya Thackeray, who is sought to be cornered in the Disha Salian case, here on Friday.

In a brief media interaction, Sharmila was questioned about the Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed to probe the allegations against Aditya Thackeray in celeb manager Salian's death case of June 2020. "I don't think Aditya will do any such thing... Anyone can order an investigation. We too



have gone through such things," said Sharmila, apparently in a relief for her beleaguered nephew. Sharmila's comments came with reference to the SIT set up to investigate the Salian case from a different perspective, in which political fingers are being pointed at Aditya Thackeray.

She spoke after attending a special event for women organised by the Mumbai Marathi Journalists' Association, and her observations on Aditya Thackeray sparked off a debate on social media.

Incidentally, MNS chief Raj Thackeray and Shiv Sena (UBT) President and former CM Uddhav Thackeray, the father of Aditya Thackeray, are estranged cousins who have been at political loggerheads for over 15 years now.

PARLIAMENT SECURITY BREACH: MASTERMIND LALIT JHA SENT TO 7-DAY POLICE CUSTODY

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Friday sent Lalit Jha, the alleged mastermind in the Parliament security breach case, to seven-day police custody.

After being on the run following the incident on Wednesday, Jha had surrendered before the Kartavya Path police station in New Delhi district on Thursday night. He was produced at the Patiala House Courts on Friday which sent his to seven-day police custody. On Thursday, the same court had sent four accused persons -- Sagar Sharma, Manoranjan D, Neelam Azad and Amol Shinde -- to seven-day police custody. All four were arrested from the Parliament premises on Wednesday. Citing a detailed investigation, including taking Jha to different cities, Delhi Police had sought 15-day remand of the accused. Delhi Police have registered an FIR under the relevant sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the Indian Penal code against the accused persons.

BHAJAN LAL SHARMA TAKES OATH AS RAJ CM



Jaipur: Bhajan Lal Sharma on Friday took oath as the 14th Chief Minister of Rajasthan. Along with him, two Deputy CMs -- Diya Kumari and Dr. Premchand Bairwa -- also took oath in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and other senior leaders.

Governor Kalraj Mishra administered the oath of office and secrecy to all three. When Bhajan Lal greeted the Prime Minister after taking oath, Modi patted him on the back. At the same time, former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, Vasundhara Raje and Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat were seen laughing and talking for a long time. During the ceremony held at Albert Hall, three stages were prepared, on one stage the saints and sages from all over the country were seated, while on the other stage all the political leaders were seated. The third stage was made for the oath, on which Prime Minister Modi, the Governor and the three leaders, who took the oath, were seated.

Indian docs support WHO ban on vapes, call on govt to take action

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The annual death toll of over 8.67 million attributed to tobacco use underscores the urgency of addressing this public health crisis.

The WHO said that while the long-term health risks of vapes remain unclear, they generate substances known to cause cancer, pose risks to heart and lung health, and could impact brain development in young people.

In India, where tobacco use is a leading risk factor for premature deaths, the urgency to address this issue is underscored by the experts who assert that tobacco use is among the unhealthy behaviours responsible for a preventable burden of cancers, strokes, and heart diseases.

After the World Health Organization (WHO) urged governments to treat e-cigarettes akin to tobacco and impose a ban on all flavours, health experts in India have called on the government to take immediate action.

The plea is coupled with an appeal to the nation's youth to renounce smoking in all its forms.

While e-cigarettes, commonly known as vapes, have been considered by some as a potential tool in mitigating the adverse health effects associated with traditional smoking, the WHO contends that "urgent measures" are required to control the growing use of vapes. In India, a concerning trend has emerged with more 13-15-year-olds using vapes than adults, pointing to the aggressive marketing strategies employed to lure the younger demographic. "Like other WHO countries, 13-15-year-olds and even adults are using vapes in India. Aggressive marketing of vapes has attracted the younger population more towards it. There are enough studies and sufficient evidence that



vapes also create health problems affecting the lungs. It might help tobacco smokers quit, but they are harmful to health and could drive nicotine addiction among non-smokers, especially children and young people," Dr. Col. Vijay Dutta, Internal Medicine & Pulmonologist, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre (ISIC), New Delhi, told reporter. The experts emphasise that vapes cannot serve as a viable substitute for tobacco smoking. "We cannot endorse the industry's claim that vapes pose signifi-

cantly lower health risks than tobacco. Youngsters are falling into the trap of using e-cigarettes early on and may become addicted to nicotine. Stringent measures are imperative, and a blanket ban could be the most effective solution. This includes bans on all flavouring agents, such as menthol, and applying tobacco control measures to vapes," Dr. Soumya Mukherjee, Consultant, BMT, Haematology & Haemato Oncology at Narayana Hospital, Howrah told reporter.

More SITs to probe violence incidents, crime in Manipur



Imphal | Agencies Special Investigation Teams (SITs), constituted after SC ordered to probe the incidents of violence, murder, rape and various other crimes during the ethnic violence in Manipur, started their inquiry and the remaining would soon start their tasks, officials said on Friday.

The officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and SITs are facing protests by the local organisations as the protesters alleged that the probe is not being done in a balanced manner.

A Manipur Home Department official said that the apex court earlier ordered the formation of 42 SITs. One headed by a Superintendent of Police rank officer to look at FIRs related to murder and other heinous crimes. And another, including a female

inspector, for FIRs related to rape, outraging of modesty and such other sexual offences.

Other FIRs will be investigated by SITs headed by the officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police. As per the order of the SC nine SITs will look after the cases in the districts of Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Imphal West, Imphal East, Bishnupur and Kakching, Thoubal and Tengnoupal districts. These nine SITs would be supervised on a weekly basis by an officer of the rank of Deputy Inspector General of Police or Additional Director General. Manipur Director General of Police Rajiv Singh would monitor the cases, being probed by the SITs, on a fortnightly basis.



TELANGANA CM ASKS POLICE TO AVOID TROUBLE TO PUBLIC DUE TO HIS CONVOY

Hyderabad | Agencies

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Friday directed police to take steps to avoid inconvenience to people during movement of his convoy of vehicles. He asked them to relax the existing rules for the movement of the Chief Minister's convoy to avoid any trouble for the common people.

Revanth Reddy directed police officials to make sure traffic is not stopped for long on routes used by his convoy. He said the number of vehicles in his convoy has been reduced from 15 to nine, and asked officials to take alternate measures so that there is no need to stop the traffic and there are no traffic jams.

Revanth Reddy told the officials that he has to undertake extensive visits to personally know the problems of people and hence, they should take alter-



nate steps to avoid trouble to people on the routes used by him.

He also said that he can't sit at home without addressing people's problems.

The Chief Minister's direction to police officials came amid reports of the VIP movements during the last few days causing inconvenience to common people in Hyderabad.

Police were stopping traffic at various points to facilitate the movement of the convoy of the Chief Minister from his residence in Jubilee Hills to the State Secretariat, Assembly and other places in the state capital.

Revanth Reddy, who assumed office on December 7, is visiting the Secretariat every day to hold review meetings with officials. When the BRS was in power, he and other Congress leaders have been criticising then Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao for not venturing out of his official residence to know people's problems.

BJP not to have alliance with any party in T'gana for LS polls

Hyderabad | Agencies

Upbeat over increase in seats and vote share in the recent Assembly elections in Telangana, the BJP has decided to go alone in the Lok Sabha elections scheduled next year.

BJP state president and Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy on Friday asked party cadres to prepare for Lok Sabha polls, due to be held in April-May.

He made it clear that the BJP will not have an alliance with any party.

In the November 30 elections to Telangana Assembly, BJP had an alliance with Jana Sena Party (JSP) headed by actor-politician Pawan Kalyan.

The JSP contested eight seats but drew a blank. The BJP, which had contested 111 out of 119 seats, bagged eight seats. The saffron party had won just a single seat in the 2018 elections.

It had later improved its tally to three after winning two seats in the by-elections.

The BJP also managed to double its vote share from 6.98 per cent in 2018 to almost 14 per cent. However, compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the vote share of BJP has come down.

In 2019, the BJP had polled 19.45 per cent



votes and bagged four out of 17 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

It had contested alone and this was the highest number of seats won by the party in two decades. The BJP bagged four seats in 1998 and seven seats in 1999 in united Andhra Pradesh. It drew a blank in 2004 and 2009.

Kishan Reddy claimed that BJP has huge opportunities to grow in Telangana.

He excluded confidence that the results will exceed the estimates of the poll surveys.

He said the BJP would fight both the Congress and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS).

Will enhance Mukhtar Ansari's security, if needed, Uttar Pradesh govt assures SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Uttar Pradesh government on Friday assured the Supreme Court that, if needed, it will enhance the security of gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari in a plea filed by his son alleging that there is a plan to assassinate his father in Banda Jail prior to the 2024 polls.

In its order, a bench headed by Justice Hrishikesh Roy took on record the assurance given by Additional Solicitor General K.M. Natraj that if required, an augmentation of security will be given by the Uttar Pradesh government to ensure no harm is caused to Ansari within the precincts of the jail.

The bench, also comprising Justice Sanjay Karol, adjourned the hearing after Natraj said that he will need to seek instructions from the state government on the prayer for transfer of Ansari in any jail outside Uttar Pradesh.

The matter will be taken up for further hearing on January 16 next year.

On Thursday, the ASG had urged the top court that the plea should be dismissed in limine considering the political nature of prayer seeking transfer to any jail outside UP in a "state ruled by any party other than the BJP".

Thereafter, the Supreme Court directed sen-



ior advocate Kapil Sibal, who appeared on behalf of the petitioner, to amend the petition.

In his plea filed before the apex court under Article 32 of the Constitution, Mukhtar Ansari's son claimed that "state officials, rival politicians, and persons within the police establishment" have hatched a plan to murder the political figure, who has been a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), for five-consecutive terms from Uttar Pradesh's Mau.

Shah has time for TV interviews, not for statement on LS security breach: Congress

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress on Friday slammed Home Minister Amit Shah for not making statement in both Houses of Parliament over the December 13 security breach in Lok Sabha.

The Congress also slammed the BJP and government for dubbing the Parliament security breach as a small incident while the case has been registered under the stringent unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and also asked the BJP government to clear the role of BJP Mysuru MP Patap Simha's role in the security breach.

"For the last two days the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have not functioned. On the security breach of Parliament on December 13, we have demanded for a statement by Shah in both Houses. However, on December 14 and today, INDIA bloc parties demanded that he must come to both Houses and give a detailed statement on the security



breach," Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said while addressing a press conference at the party headquarters. He said that the demand of

the opposition MPs is not new as it has been the tradition that on every big incident or any big subject when the Parliament is in function then the con-

cerned minister makes a statement in both the Houses of Parliament.

"But our Home Minister is having so much arrogance that he goes to a news channel and gives a detailed account of the security breach but he is not ready to say the same inside the House," Ramesh said.

He said that the MPs of INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) bloc have in written asked in both Houses for a detailed statement from him (SHAH) in both the Houses and then the House should function. "The government has not agreed to our demands and it was the reason why the both the houses were adjourned on two days as no other discussions took place and the no business was taken up," he said.

The Congress leader said that they have no expectation from the Prime Minister, but the concerned minister is not ready to come to the House and make a detailed statement.

DELHI COLDER THAN 'QUEEN OF HILLS' SHIMLA, DHARAMSALA

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Shimla

The national capital Delhi was on Friday colder by at least two notches than the 'Queen of Hills' Shimla and Dharamsala, both the preferred hill destinations in Himachal Pradesh.

Likewise, many places in the plains of north India were colder than the hilly tourist destinations, the Met Office in Shimla said.

Delhi recorded a minimum temperature at 4.9 degrees Celsius, while Shimla -- located around 7,000 feet above sea level -- saw a low of 6.8 degrees, a rise of 1.8 degrees from Thursday; Dharamsala 8.2 degrees Celsius; and Dalhousie 6.8 degrees.

Punjab's Amritsar and Ludhiana and Haryana's Hisar and Karnal recorded a low of 8 degrees, 11.8, 6.2 and 7.4 degrees Celsius, respectively.

Chandigarh, the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana, saw a low of 9.1 degrees.

An official at Shimla's Meteorological



Office told reporter that Shimla and Dharamsala saw high night temperatures compared to the plains.

"This is a natural phenomenon and occurs mainly due to settling of the inversion layer on mountain tops," he

said.

Generally, the air becomes cooler as elevation increases. The day temperature in most of the plains is abnormally high compared to Shimla. The warm air lifted from the plains overlaid the existing cold air in the mountains.

He said since Shimla and Dharamsala were near the plains, the impact of the inversion layer was more there.

At 3.5 degrees below the freezing point, Sumdoh in Lahaul-Spiti district was the coldest in Himachal Pradesh.

The weather in Himachal's popular destinations like Kasauli, Chail, Kufri, Narkanda and Palampur is expected to be sunny. "What pleasant days in Shimla," Nikita Gaur, a tourist from Delhi, remarked. "We are enjoying long sunny days and balmy nights."

The weatherman said dry weather would continue in the hills till the western disturbances -- storm systems originating from the Caspian Sea and moving across the Afghanistan-Pakistan region -- are active in the region.

Ayodhya, Varanasi to have Water Metro Service

Ayodhya | Agencies

Ayodhya and Varanasi will soon have a Water Metro on the lines of Kochi Water Metro which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April this year. The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) will start the Water Metro Service in Ayodhya and in Prime Minister Modi's constituency, Varanasi, soon.

According to vice chairman of the IWAI Sunil Kumar Singh, two Water Metros have reached Kolkata from Kochi from where they will leave for Ayodhya and Varanasi.

The Ayodhya-bound vessel will reach its destination around January 14-15, 2024.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to inaugurate the



Water Metro service in Ayodhya on January 22 on the occasion of consecration ceremony of Ram Lalla," said a senior official of the Ayodhya administration.

The Water Metro service

between Guptar Ghat and Naya Ghat will give boost to religious tourism in Ayodhya.

Two jetties from Kolkata have already reached Ayodhya.

A jetty is a structure that works as a walkway for boats.

B'luru techie complains of gang rape after going to pub but waking up at stranger's house



Bengaluru | Agencies

In a bizarre incident, a Bengaluru-based software engineer woke up at a stranger's home following a visit to a pub in the city after which she filed a police complaint alleging gang rape, sources said on Friday.

According to the police sources, the incident occurred on Tuesday when the victim visited the pub in the city's Koramangala area.

All she remembers is getting unconscious and waking

up at a stranger's place the next morning, the sources added.

The victim claims she was taken to the Deve Gowda Layout near Adugodi.

The police said that once she was awake, she managed to knock on the door of the nearest house, seeking help.

The residents of the house dialed the police helpline and Adugodi police rushed to the spot and rescued the victim.

Later, she was taken to the Koramangala police station, where filed her complaint.

Chandrasekhar Rao discharged from hospital after hip replacement surgery

Hyderabad | Agencies

A week after undergoing a hip replacement surgery, former Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao was discharged from the hospital on Friday.

He was admitted at the Yashoda Hospital at Somajiguda, Hyderabad, on December 8 after suffering a fracture due to a fall at his farmhouse at Erravalli.

The same day he had undergone the hip replacement surgery.

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) president thanked doctors, nurses and other staff who took care of him at the hospital. After leaving the hospital, KCR, as he is popularly known, reached his residence at Nandi Nagar in Banjara Hills. Family members welcomed him home with traditional rituals.

BRS MLAs, other leaders and well wishers had gathered



to welcome him.

He was seen walking with the help of walkers after reaching home.

According to doctors, KCR had undergone the operation of left total hip replacement. It may take six to eight weeks for recovery.

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, several ministers, former Andhra

Pradesh chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, leaders of various political parties and some leading film stars had visited KCR at the hospital.

As several BRS leaders, workers and well-wishers from various parts of the state were coming to the hospital to see him, he had appealed to people not to visit as this will cause inconvenience to other patients. KCR said he would

soon recover and will be in the midst of people.

After losing power to the Congress party early this month, the BRS chief was staying at his farmhouse at Erravalli in Siddipet district.

He had met newly-elected MLAs of the party and other leaders and also people who came to farmhouse from his native village Chintamadaka in the same district.

Huge pilgrim turnout in Sabarimala, but revenues fall by Rs 20 cr

Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies

For the past few days the authorities concerned with the pilgrimage at the famed Sabarimala temple were caught unawares on account of the huge turnout, but the revenue generated appears to have fallen as compared to the previous season.

The Travancore Devaswom Board -- the body that runs the temple -- on Friday pointed out that in the 28 days (starting November 17th till date) of the present season the total revenue that has been generated by way of offerings and sale of 'appam' and 'payasam' was Rs 134.44 crore compared to the 28-day period in 2022, which was Rs 154.77 crore.

Incidentally, early this week, there was a huge hue and cry as pilgrims had to wait for around 20 hours to get the 'darshan', which in the past was around 5 to 6 hours.

On these days there were around 75,000 pilgrims every day and also the roads leading to the temple town witnessed



massive traffic snarls.

Situated on the mountain ranges of the Western Ghats at an altitude of 914 meters above sea level, the Sabarimala temple is four kms uphill from Pamba in Pathanamthitta district, which is around 100 kms from the capital city. The temple, which bars the entry of women who have attained puberty, is accessible only on foot from Pamba.

Every pilgrim carries with him a kit -- 'Irumudi', which contains coconuts that are broken just before climbing the 18 steps. A pilgrim carries 'Irumudi' on his head during the pilgrimage and without it, none is allowed to step onto the holy 18 steps at the Sannidhanam.



ORDER TO GIVE UP BENEFITS OF 'LAADLI BEHNA YOJANA' CANCELED

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In Madhya Pradesh, the order regarding abandonment (self-decision of abandonment) of ineligible women availing the benefits of Laadli Behna Yojana has been cancelled.

In the letter issued by the Project Officer of Women and Child Development Department of Sagar, it was written that if any supervisor or any Anganwadi worker or assistant or president or secretary of a self-help group or a member of the group does not fulfill the conditions prescribed by the government of Laadli Behna Yojana. If the benefit has been availed contrary to the conditions, then you must give up the benefit within fifteen days or you yourself will be responsible for taking action against them if the benefit is availed contrary to the conditions.

The state government started facing embarrassment due to this order. But, Sagar's own program officer canceled this order. There was a political stir when this order came out and Congress State General Secretary Syed Jafar called it a betrayal of women.



At the same time, the Women and Child Development Department also became active and canceled this order. The order to cancel this has been issued by the District Program Officer of Sagar.

Naturally, the BJP government led by Shivraj Singh Chouhan had started the Laadli Behna Yojana to empower women financially. Through this scheme, it was promised to be given from Rs 1,000 to Rs 3,000 monthly.

Accordingly, women are currently getting Rs 1,250. Initially some conditions were set in this scheme, which were later abolished and most of the women came under the category of benefits of this scheme.

New MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav carries forward predecessor's bulldozer action

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Newly inducted Chief Minister Mohan Yadav carried forward the bulldozer action politics introduced by his predecessor Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Madhya Pradesh.

The houses of three persons, who allegedly attacked a Bhopal-based BJP worker, were bulldozed a day after Mohan Yadav assumed office on Wednesday - the first such bulldozer action under the new dispensation.

On December 5 (two days after the results of Madhya Pradesh Assembly election were announced), a BJP worker Devendra Singh Thakur was attacked by a group of persons associated with Congress MLA Arif Masood. Thakur was attacked with a sword, due to which, he suffered deep cuts to his hand while shielding himself.

Following the incident, several BJP leaders, including former CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Madhya Pradesh BJP president V.D. Sharma had visited the hospital and had assured the accused would face tough action. Five accused namely -- Farukh, Aslam, Shahrulkh, Bilal and Sameer were arrested and booked under several charges of IPC, including attempt to murder. They were also booked under the National Security Act (NSA).

On Thursday, the houses of three accused were bulldozed in the presence of heavy police personnel and administrative officers in Bhopal. This marks the first use of a bulldozer since Mohan Yadav assumed the role of Chief Minister in Madhya Pradesh.

Prior to this, during the Shivraj government, bulldozers were used on the houses of several accused who had violated law and order. Since



assuming office, the new CM has been making decisions one after another, and it's worth mentioning that the people of the state have witnessed the proactive and assertive actions of the new CM.

The first decision taken by CM Yadav give an insight into the priorities of the new government, spanning from law and order to education, e-governance and tribal welfare.

The CM also ordered a ban on unlicensed buying and selling of meat and fish in the open in urban areas, announced a 'PM Excellence College' in every district, legal action for cancellation of bail of 'habitual criminals', mandatory uploading of certificates and marksheets on DigiLocker, and a hike in tendu patta payout to Rs 4,000. The biggest buzz was over CM Mohan Yadav's noise-cancellation order. Sound amplifiers (loudspeakers/DJs) can be used only within prescribed standards, and flying squads will be formed in all the districts to check this.

In his very first order, CM Yadav has directed officials to ensure that all religious institutions and public venues must adhere to prescribed volume and time limits.

Relieved of CM's role, Shivraj has a 'field' day at his farm

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A day after the new Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav took charge of the office, his predecessor Shivraj Singh Chouhan was seen ploughing his field on a tractor. Chouhan, who always projected himself as a 'kisan ka beta' (son of a farmer) drove a tractor in his field in Vidisha on Thursday.

He also updated his social media bio, which now reads 'bhai aur mama' (brother and maternal uncle) along with 'Former Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh'. The former Chief Minister earned the 'bhai and mama' titles



due to his women-centric flagship schemes, especially the 'Ladli Laxmi Yojana' and the 'Ladli Behna Yojana'.

The kind of support Chouhan received from the people was also visible during the new Chief Minister's oath ceremony on Wednesday at Bhopal's Lal Parade ground, where the

crowd was seen chanting Shivraj's name while Yadav was taking the oath. Later, when Chouhan came out from the Lal Parade Ground, a large crowd stopped his convoy and forced him to step out of his car. Many supporters turned emotional as Chouhan waved goodbye to them.

National Herald Case: Complaint of illegal sale of plot in Bhopal filed in ED

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A complaint has been lodged in the ED office in Bhopal to investigate the illegal sale and income received of the plot of Associated Journals Limited in the Press Complex, Bhopal.

Mohd. Saeed of Navjeevan Employees Union, Sanjay Chaturvedi and former vice president of Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee Minority Cell Irshad Raine along with senior advocates Bharat Chaturvedi, Ashok Srivastava and Santosh Verma have handed over the documents of National Herald's land scam to ED for investigation. The ED is investigating a money-laundering case against Associated Journals Limited (AJL) under PMLA, 2002. Recently ED has temporarily attached assets worth about Rs 752 crore. Bhopal's property is not mentioned in ED's investigation and action, whereas this is a big case of violation of rules and illegal earnings. A commercial complex has been built on the 1.14 acre plot allotted at concessional rates for publication of the newspaper



in the press complex and has been sold in several parts.

In 2001, Associated Journals Limited gave power of attorney for development to Narendra Kumar Mittal of Ganga Enterprises, Delhi. Mittal started the work with his partner Harmahendra Singh by taking possession of the plot. Later, power of attorney holder Narendra Kumar Mittal gave power of attorney to many people, including Sanjay Sinha of Soumya Homes. Mittal and Sanjay Sinha got the cell registered on the basis of partnership in which they took 100 percent stake in their name, in which the stake of lease holder AJL remained zero. It is alleged that AJL sold the land in the name of power of attorney while the company did not receive the income from it.

It is written in the complaint that at the time when AJL's building in Bhopal was being sold, AJL had taken a loan of Rs 90 crore from Congress to repay its liabilities. If the income received from selling the plot had come to the company's account, it would have been by taking the loan, AJL could repay its liabilities.

KAMAL NATH WILL REMAIN MADHYA PRADESH PCC CHIEF

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After Congress's defeat in the assembly elections, questions are being raised about the role of PCC Chief Kamal Nath. What will be the role of Kamal Nath in Madhya Pradesh? Will he still make any strategy to revive the Congress which has lost in the Assembly or will he make Delhi his base at the age of 77? These questions are echoing in political circles.

Political analysts believe that for the time being Kamal Nath and Digvijay Singh will continue to dominate the state. There is no option for this combination in the state Congress. At the same time, senior journalist Dev Shrimali says that Kamal Nath will remain PCC Chief till the Lok Sabha. Can contest Lok Sabha elections from Chhindwara himself. They know that to win Chhindwara they will have to enter the field. By becoming an MP himself, he can hand over the command of MP politics to his son Nakul by



making him win the assembly by-elections.

Kamal Nath himself is not in the race to become the Leader of

Opposition. They know it will take a lot of time. After the coup in 2020, he was the leader of opposition, but could not spend much time in the assembly. After this, due to the one person one post formula in Congress, he had to leave the post of Leader of Opposition and Dr. Govind Singh was made the Leader of Opposition.

Kamal Nath will not leave the post of PCC Chief for now. He has not offered resignation to the central leadership after the election defeat. He has clearly said in his statements that I am neither retiring now nor leaving Madhya Pradesh. That is, it is clear that after discussion with the high command, it has been confirmed that the command of Congress in Madhya Pradesh will be with Kamal Nath only.

Kamal Nath has already become active in Chhindwara for Lok Sabha. It is believed that he may contest the Lok Sabha elections. If this happens, Nakul Nath will do state politics by contesting the assembly elections.

22-year-old woman shot dead, accused arrested

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A 22-year-old woman was shot dead in Madhya Pradesh's Narsinghpur district, police said, adding that the accused person was arrested on Friday.

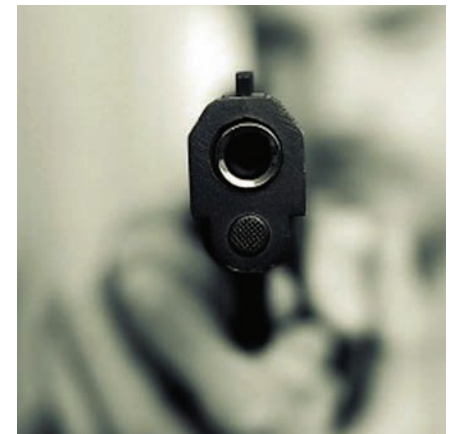
According to the police, the incident took place on Thursday night when the victim, identified as Kajal Sahu, was returning home from Jabalpur.

As the victim stepped out of the Narsinghpur railway station, she was shot, the police said.

Locals rushed Sahu to a nearby hospital but she succumbed to her injuries shortly. The incident was captured in a CCTV camera installed at the railway station.

Upon receiving the information, the police swung into action and arrested the accused, identified as Devendra Patel, on Friday.

Although preliminary investigation suggests that the victim and the accused were in relationship for the couple of years, probe into the case was still underway. SDOP Bhavna Maravi told reporters that



the accused was being interrogated.

On Friday, the victim's family and villagers staged a protest at the Narsinghpur highway and demanded stringent punishment to the accused.

The family further claimed that the accused had been harassing her for two years.

Boy dies after falling into borewell pit, collector issues restrictive order

Team Absolute | Alirajpur

Strict action has been taken by the Collector and District Magistrate, Alirajpur after a child died after falling into a borewell pit in Khandala village of the district. Taking immediate action, the District Collector has issued a restrictive order on Wednesday regarding not leaving borewells or tube wells open. Along with this, Additional Collector Anupama Chauhan has been appointed the nodal officer at the district level for the above work, and instructions have also been given to the concerned Chief Executive Officer, District Panchayat that action should be taken to definitely build parapets on

the wells constructed under MNREGA.

It is noteworthy that Vijay's father Dinesh, resident of Vaskal Falia village Khandala, died after falling into the borewell pit in village Khandala of the district on Tuesday. Despite a massive rescue operation by the district administration to save the child trapped in the borewell, the child could not be saved. After the rescue operation, when the child was taken to the district hospital, he was declared dead by the doctors there.

The above order was issued immediately after the incident, along with this the Collector has also given instructions to register a case against the concerned guilty person.

Shivraj can go to the center, murmur of expansion in the Union Cabinet intensifies

Team Absolute | Bhopal

There may be a small expansion of the Union Cabinet for the rehabilitation of former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan. Narendra Singh Tomar, who was the Agriculture Minister in the Modi cabinet, has been appointed the Speaker of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, in such a situation it is believed that Shivraj can be given the charge of the Agriculture Ministry.

Along with Chauhan, BJP state president Vishnu Dutt Sharma can also be made a Union Minister. The central leadership of BJP is proud of Sharma's efficient management in the assembly elections.

It is noteworthy that among the ministers from the Modi cabinet who had contested elections in



different states, Narendra Singh Tomar and Prahlad Patel from Madhya Pradesh have resigned.

According to BJP sources, the central leadership of the party is serious about the rehabilitation of leader Shivraj Singh Chauhan, who had been the Chief Minister of the state for eighteen and a half years. For many years, there were speculations that Chauhan could be included in the Modi cabinet, but when the BJP was defeated in the Karnataka Assembly elections, the party took a U-turn. Party leaders say that BJP lost in Karnataka due to the removal of former Chief Minister Yediyurappa, if he had remained the Chief Minister, the results would have been different. For this reason, after winning the assembly elections, BJP appointed Dr. Mohan Yadav on Chauhan's chair.

Brainstorming regarding new CS, DGP, indications of major reshuffle in Chief Minister Secretariat and Ministry

Team Absolute | Bhopal

With the arrival of the new Chief Minister in Madhya Pradesh, the face of the administration may also change. There may soon be major changes in the ministry as well as the CM Secretariat. Brainstorming is also being done regarding the new Chief Secretary and DGP in the state. Changes may also be seen in the officers posted in the districts.

State Chief Secretary Veera Rana is currently in additional charge. His retirement is after three months. Along with CS Veena Rana, DGP Sudhir Saxena is also retiring in the coming March. OSDs and personal assistants including the personal principal secretary to the CM will change. Before which brainstorming is being done regarding the new CS and



DGP. Preparations are being made for major changes in the state bureaucracy. Senior IAS Anurag Jain, Mohammad Suleman, JN Kansotiya, Dr. Rajesh Rajoria and SN Mishra are ahead in the race for Chief Secretary. Principal Secretaries Manish Rastogi and Vivek Porwal posted in the Chief Minister's Secretariat will also get new responsibilities. Officers will also be changed in the districts, but it may take some time.



EDITOR'S SPECS

BJP 'unhappy' with K'taka leaders

The BJP high command is reportedly displeased with the Karnataka BJP unit for not addressing the issue of a horrifying incident in which a mother was paraded on the streets after being stripped naked, according to sources. This incident occurred following the elopement of her son with a local girl when the winter Assembly session was being held at the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi city. The incident had shocked the state and proved to be a significant embarrassment for the Congress government, as it happened in a place located close to the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi. The BJP high command criticized its state leadership for not raising the issue during the session and for not holding the Congress government accountable for the failure in law and order system and protection of women. Sources state that BJP national President J.P. Nadda criticized the state leadership for not effectively addressing the issue during the state Assembly session. The incident occurred on December 10 when Kamalavva, a resident of Vantamuri village, was dragged outside and stripped naked. She was paraded naked and tied to an electric pole and assaulted after her son eloped with a girl from the village. The family members of the girl, infuriated by this, unleashed terror on the boy's mother. The Karnataka High Court strongly criticized the Congress government for the failure of the police department to prevent the incident. The bench, headed by Chief Justice P.B. Varale and Justice Krishna S. Dixit, remarked on December 14, "What will be the fear among other women? She will feel unsafe in the country. It did not even happen in Mahabharata. Draupadi had Lord Krishna who came up to help her, but in the modern world, no one came to help her. Unfortunately, this is a world of Duryodhanas and Dushyasanas."

They Call It Marketing!

Vinod Mirani

What we need in the film industry is writers who can turn out a decent script that appeals to all classes of the audience. That has not happened, so the makers have to keep devising new gimmicks to promote a film. Isn't the star power good enough?

Really speaking, films never needed marketing because they have a ready and keen viewership and, still, new-generation whizkids try to deviate from the traditional and foolproof promotion strategies and come up with complicated ideas to promote a film that serve no purpose.

The recent one is about how the promos or trailers are released on digital platforms before a film's release.

As if calling these trailers promos or trailers was not enough, now they are named in a manner that they coincide with a film's theme or title! Oh, yes, they were also called teasers for some time.

The trailers of 'Dunki' starring Shah Rukh Khan, for instance, are titled Drop 1, Drop 2 and so on! It seems the film is about illegal migration in countries such as the UK and the US and the activity is described as 'donkey flights' in the North. This is also known as 'kabutarbazi' in some sections.

'Dunki' is yet to release and the connection of naming or ranking the trailers as a series of 'Drops' with the film's story remains unclear so far. The tragedy is that those unaware of this bright idea but searching for promos of 'Dunki' on YouTube will still have to type in the keywords 'Dunki promo'!

I don't know who thought of this idea because you may publicise a film, but how will you tell people that when you look for 'Dunki' promos, look for Drop 1 and so on!

'Dunki', though, is not the only one to have people with such grand ideas. There are quite a few other films being promoted this way. I have often mentioned 'bhed chaal' in the film industry. If one filmmaker does or tries to do something different, others follow him and make it a trend.

The 'Jawan' trailer was launched as a Prevue. The 'Pathan' trailer as 'Pathan ka conversation' and Tiger 3 as 'Tiger ka message'; for the 'Dream Girl' trailer the name was 'Pooja ka kiss'. Films such as 'Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan', 'Tu Jhoothi Main Makkar' and 'Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani', all followed and dubbed their promos as something or the other. Did it help?

The thing is that the number of hits on promos released on YouTube are seen by many more people than those who watch the movie. So, hits on an online promo are not a measure of viewers attracted to the cinemas and, hence, nothing to



gloat about.

What worked when there was no Internet and no social media? They relied on street publicity. Posters of varied sizes -- 30"x40" or six sheeters (5'x10') and so on -- were plastered all over the cities. There were no radio jingles yet, forget television. The big attractions in those days, though, were trailers played in the cinemas. These promos were so exciting that people going for a movie made sure they reached in time so as not to miss the trailer of the forthcoming film. They just about summed up an upcoming film in three minutes with onscreen captions such as Drama, Romance, Music, Emotions, Comedy and Action. The prospective viewers instantly decided if they were going to catch that film.

The Internet and social media are not devised to spread lies or deceive. What good are these hits on an X post or YouTube promo because it is common knowledge that an army of bots are engaged to produce these hits.

What are the cinema chains doing in the name of marketing?

On Monday, the fourth day after the release of 'Animal', they took prospective spectators who came to the booking window by surprise when

the admission rates were hiked suddenly and arbitrarily from Rs 150 to Rs 300 out of the blue in a matter of minutes.

By the way, the online booking site still claimed that Rs 150 was the rate and the booking chart showed an almost empty house. There were some unhappy people at the booking window and they made sure the video went viral. This was contrary to the normal practice of reducing admission rates on the Monday or Tuesday after a film's release.

Now, is this any way of attaining the set target, which nowadays is anything between Rs 500 crore to Rs 1,000 crore? I think it is easier to fake figures on social media like it is done with the figures of all the major films lately, instead of cheating people with ad hoc admission rate hikes.

Suppose a young lad had somehow put together Rs 300 for two tickets to take his girlfriend out on a movie date, but comes to the cinema to learn that he cannot afford the revised rates. It would be awkward for him and a real let-down!

Now, PVR's newly acquired property at the Jio World Plaza in BKC, Mumbai, boasts of being

India's "first cinema with bar and lounge". So what?

Multiplexes have food plazas and, if you order, the snacks are delivered to your seat. And they are located within the cinema lobby. As for the lounge and bar, it is not the same as a food plaza and can't serve alcohol at your seat. It is just another facility attached to the property.

Publicising it as a multiplex with a bar is misleading. Airports have bars and lounges, but you cannot carry your drink to the flight. At least not in India. BKC is a purely commercial area with few residential buildings. More residential properties are still in the development stage and the present population of the area would not be more than 80,000. The area gets so deserted post office hours that even transport is hard to find.

Being in a commercial area, lounges and bars may still attract patrons who wish to discuss business or unwind over an after-office drink or two! The same cannot be assured for this six-screen multiplex.

international

Military offensive in Gaza to continue: Israeli leaders to US NSA

Tel Aviv | Agencies

Israeli leaders have told US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan that Israel will continue its military offensive in the Palestinian enclave of Gaza Strip, despite the international calls for a ceasefire.

Sullivan was in Israel on Thursday for meetings with officials as the US voiced its concerns about the rising civilian casualties in the continued Israeli strikes on Gaza.

Speaking to the press alongside Sullivan, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said that the war against Hamas "will require a long period -- it will last more than several months", Xinhua news agency reported.



The two met in the Israeli Defence Ministry in Tel Aviv to discuss the Israeli offensive in Gaza, its border conflict with Lebanon, and dozens of

on Israeli-linked ships as well as Eilat, an Israeli resort city on the shore of the Red Sea, Gallant said that Israel will support "international efforts in countering naval threats and will defend itself against any threat."

Later, Sullivan met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who thanked the US for its "support for Israel in the supply of munitions, in blocking the attempts at the UN to stop the fighting, and in the assistance in returning our hostages".

Sullivan said that Israel has "the support of the United States as you take on this terrorist threat".

I don't think Trump is right person to be President now: Haley

Washington | Agencies

Indian-American Nikki Haley, who has emerged as a strong contender in the Republican presidential primary race, doesn't think her rival Donald Trump is the right person to be President at the moment.

During the fourth Republican debate on December 6, Haley, the former South Carolina Governor, did not answer whether Trump is fit to be PPresident, but she told ABC News that it is not about fitness but rather Trump is just not the right person to be President right now.

"It's not about fitness. I think he's fit to be President. It's 'Should he be President?' I don't think he should be President. I thought he was the right President at the right time," Haley said in an interview that was aired on Monday.

"We've got to look at the issues that we're dealing with, coming forward with new solutions, not focusing on negativity and baggage of the past. So it's not about being fit. It's just I don't think he's the right per-



son to be President," she said. Trump maintains an unprecedented lead over his rivals in both early state and national polls, with 61 per cent of self-identified Republicans saying they would vote for the former President in the state-by-state nominating contest, according to a recent Reuters/Ipsos opinion poll. Haley, who served as Trump's UN ambassador for

his policies, but chaos follows him. Rightly or wrongly, chaos follows him. We can't afford four more years of chaos and survive it," Haley told CNN.

However, at the first Republican debate, Haley had indicated that she would support her former boss as their party's nominee for the 2024 race even if he was convicted of a felony.

"I'm not going to be 100 per cent with him. I'm not going to be 100 per cent against him. It's not personal for me. This is about what's right for the country," she told ABC.

"This is about how we're going to lead. This is about the direction we should go. It's not about the personal thoughts of an individual. It's about the fact that we have a country to save."

Haley recently got a big edge in the presidential race with an endorsement from New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu.

He called her "the candidate with the momentum to win and get our party back on track to delivering conservative victories across the country".

Indian-origin hotel owners arrested in US for 'hiding' fugitives

New York | Agencies

Two Indian-origin hotel owners have been arrested in the US state of Tennessee for allegedly lying to the police about the whereabouts of fugitives whom they hid inside their building.

Dakshaben Patel and Harshil Patel, who own the Super 8 and Mountain Inn in Monteagle, were each charged with felony on Wednesday for making false reports to police officers during an investigation on July 18, Fox News reported.

The Monteagle Police Department said their officers had been conducting surveil-



lance on the rear of the hotel due to "high drug transition" in the area.

They spotted two individuals on the bal-

cony, and identified them as having felony warrants out of Franklin County.

Officers chased the wanted suspects on foot and quickly took them into custody. After interrogation, investigators found that the hotel had a "hide out room on the corner of the building" and determined that was where the fugitives had been living, police said.

"Both Patel subjects had been advised multiple times about the wanted suspects and had lied to officers about their residence at the hotel," the department said in a release.

Yemen's Houthi militia claims attack on Israel-bound cargo ship in Red Sea

Sanaa | Agencies

The Iran-backed Houthi militia in Yemen has claimed a drone attack on an Israel-bound cargo ship in the Red Sea, amid increasing tensions in the region since the Israel-Hamas war erupted on October 7.

"The military operation against the Mersik Gebrlater container vessel that was heading to Israel was precise and caused damage to the ship," Xinhua news agency quoted Houthi military spokesman Yehya Sarea as saying in a statement late Thursday.

"The attack came after the ship's crew refused to respond to the call of our naval forces,"



he said.

The spokesman claimed that Houthis had successfully prevented the passage of several other Israel-bound foreign ships during the past 48 hours.

"Our forces will continue to prevent all ships heading to Israeli ports from navigating in the Arab Sea and the Red Sea unless food and medicine aid be allowed to enter into Gaza

Strip," Sarea added.

This was the latest in a series of anti-Israel attacks claimed by the Houthis since October 7.

On Tuesday, the militia group said they launched a missile at a Norwegian ship loaded with oil that was heading to Israel in the Red Sea.

On November 19, the Houthi fighters hijacked a commercial ship, Galaxy Leader, in the Red Sea and brought it to the port city of Hodeidah.

The Houthis have been in control of much of northern Yemen, including the capital Sanaa and the strategic Red Sea port city of Hodeidah since the Yemeni civil war broke out in late 2014.

Finland closes border crossing points with Russia again

Helsinki | Agencies

The Finnish government announced that it will close the crossing points at its land border with Russia once again, from Friday evening until January 14, 2024.

Following an earlier two-week complete closure, Finland on Thursday had opened two southeasterly crossings, reports Xinhua news agency.

According to Minister of the Interior Mari Rantanen, the



arrival of asylum seekers resumed immediately, and the phenomenon was accelerating. She told reporters that the situation on the eastern border creates a national security risk. The two crossings that opened on Thursday, Vaalimaa and Niirala, will close on Friday evening at 8 p.m. All land border crossings to Russia will remain closed until January 14, 2024. Finland shares a 1,340 km border with Russia, Europe's longest.



Maha babu's son mows down girlfriend in pre-dawn murderous attack, Thane cops probing

Quaid Najmi | Thane

In a chilling incident, Ashwajit Gaikwad, the son of a top Maharashtra bureaucrat, allegedly mowed down his girlfriend with his SUV in Thane recently, seriously injuring her.

The victim, Priya Umendra Singh, 26, a professional beautician, has narrated her shocking ordeal of the murderous attempt on her life in a social media post on the incident and her injuries.

"Need justice... Culprit Ashwajit Anilkumar Gaikwad, son of Anilkumar Gaikwad, Joint Managing Director of Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation," said Singh on her post. She also named Ashwajit's friends, Romil Patil, Prasad Patil and Sagar Shelke, all Thane residents, in her post, plus her boyfriend's driver-cum-bodyguard, Shiva.

Singh has tagged Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, Union Minister Smriti Irani, Shiv Sena-UBT's Aditya Thackeray, in her post with an emotional header: "My boyfriend rammed his car over me and left me dying in pain on the street."

Despite several attempts by IANS, Anilkumar Gaikwad - who was recently elevated as the



MSRDC Vice-Chairman & Managing Director - was not available for comments on the serious allegations against his 34-year-old son, or the incident that happened in the CM's home district.

The alleged incident occurred on Ovala Road in the Ghodbunder area of the district, and Singh has suffered grievous injuries in the stomach, back, arms and her right leg is broken and in a cast.

Singh also detailed how she was allegedly abused by Ashwajit and his friends, how he invited her to the Courtyard Hotel around 3 a.m. on December 11. There, a bitter fight ensued, when Ashwajit assaulted her, and then his friends Romil, Prasad and Shelke also joined in the attack.

As the situation appeared to worsen, she went to take her bag and mobile from the SUV but the youths allegedly attempted to cause her grave harm by first bulldozing the SUV into her back near a divider, then returned and drove it over her right leg, before speeding away in the darkness.

Surprisingly, Shiva, the SUV driver, turned out to be a Good Samaritan, he left them and rushed to help the bleeding and crying Singh, and also informed her family about the assault. Later they alerted the Thane Police on the entire sordid drama.

The prime accused Ashwajit and his friends reportedly warned the woman against involving the police and even boasted that they would use the political clout of the Gaikwad family.

Meanwhile, based on the complaint of Singh - who is in the ICU of Titan Medicity Hospital - the Kasarvadavali police have lodged a complaint against Ashwajit, Shelke, and the Patil duo (said to be linked to a retired police official), but no arrests have been made so far, even as the victim's post went viral on social media.

Given the sensitive nature of the case, top Thane police officials remained incommunicado despite attempts to get their version.

Sonia, Rahul, Kharge to address rally in Nagpur on Dec 28



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Congress presidents Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi along with incumbent party chief Mallikarjun Kharge will address a rally in Maharashtra's Nagpur city on December 28, on the occasion of the grand old party's foundation day. A senior leader said on Friday.

A meeting of senior Congress leaders in Maharashtra is currently underway here in the presence of All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal and senior leader Mukul Wasnik.

The meeting is being attended by Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole, former state minister Balasaheb Thorat, Leader of Opposition in the assembly Vijay Wadettwar, former chief ministers Ashok Chavan and Prithviraj Chavan among others. Talking to reporters, Venugopal said, "On the

occasion of Congress's foundation day on December 28, party president Mallikarjun Kharge and its former chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi will address a huge rally in Nagpur."

The winter session of the Maharashtra legislature is currently underway in Nagpur. Meanwhile, opposition INDIA alliance leaders staged a protest near the Gandhi statue in the Parliament complex on Friday, a day after 14 MPs were suspended.

While Derek O'Brien of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) was suspended from the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, 13 opposition MPs, including nine from the Congress and the DMK's Kanimozhi, were suspended from the Lok Sabha.

O'Brien joined the opposition MPs wearing a T-shirt saying he was on a 'silent protest'.

Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi also joined the protesters in their

demonstration.

The suspended MPs held placards saying they were suspended for speaking up, while the "culprit BJP MP" roamed free. The Congress has been demanding strict action against BJP MP Pratap Simha who provided the visitor passes to the intruders. The protesting MPs also demanded that their suspensions be revoked.

"Suspension and expulsion is nothing new for this government, last week Mahua Moitra got expelled. This week, the BJP MP from Mysore who issued the passes for the intruders is moving freely, and I and my colleagues have been suspended for raising the voice of the people of India, a very genuine demand that the home minister and the prime minister should speak in Parliament," said Hibi Eden, one of the MPs who was suspended from the Lok Sabha.

Both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were adjourned for the day amid opposition protests.

Drugs worth Rs 50,000 crore seized in Maharashtra in recent past: Minister

Team Absolute | Nagpur

The Maharashtra police have seized drugs worth about Rs 50,000 crore in the state in the recent past, said Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in the legislative assembly on Friday. He was replying to a question by Shiv Sena (UBT) legislator Ravindra Waikar, who represents the Jogeshwari East constituency in Mumbai.

In a major haul, the Mumbai police recently seized 151 kg of mephedrone worth Rs 300 crore and arrested more than a dozen persons from several cities in an operation that also included a raid



in a factory in MIDC Shinde Gaon in Nashik district. "The police have seized drugs worth Rs 50,000 crore

in the recent past. The police discretely tracked 2,200 small shops (selling drugs) in

Mumbai and removed them to curb the menace of drugs," said Fadnavis.

The deputy Chief Minister, however, did not specify the exact period during which the drugs were seized.

"The state government is keeping a watch on chemicals being imported which could be used to make drugs. We have also found that closed factory sites are being used for drug production," Fadnavis added.

Following the Rs 300-crore drug bust by the Mumbai police, the opposition and ruling dispensation have targeted each other over key accused Lalit Patil.

'CID' actress accuses mom and brother of assault, lodges complaint with Thane police

Team Absolute | Thane

Television actress Vaishnavi Dhanraj has approached the Kashmiri Police Station in Thane, accusing her close family members of allegedly abusing and assaulting her badly at home this morning, officials said on Friday.

She posted a video on social media from outside the police station showing several of her injury marks on the face, lips, right hand and wrist, and desperately appealing for help.

"Hi, this is Vaishnavi Dhanraj. I am talking to K. Himaanshu Shuklaa. I really need help right now. I am in Kashmiri Police Station... And I have been abused by my family, I have been hit really badly. Please... I need everybody's help, right from the media, to the news channels and everybody in the



industry. Please come and support me," she said in her video post.

An official from the Kashmiri Police Station confirmed to reporter that the actress has lodged a non-cognisable complaint against her family members this afternoon.

"We have summoned her mother and brother and warned them against indulging in such behaviour at home. Since it's purely a family dispute, we have filed a NC and allowed them to go," said the official.

Later, taking to social media, Shuklaa expressed his gratitude to the Thane Police, for helping her out in the crisis. Dhanraj, a divorcee, living with her parental family, is noted for her role in the long-running serial "CID" in which she played a cop, and "Laado" among other assignments.

Shreyas Talpade suffers heart attack, undergoes angioplasty

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Film actor Shreyas Talpade, who underwent an angioplasty late last night is in a stable condition and will be discharged in a few days, his wife Deepti said here on Friday.

"I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming concern and well-wishes following the recent health scare my husband experienced. I'm relieved to update everyone that he is now in stable condition and will be discharged in a few days," said Deepti.

She expressed gratitude to the medical team's expertise, exceptional care and timely response have been instrumental during this time of medical crisis.

She said: "The medical team's exceptional care and timely response have been instrumental during this time, and we are grateful for their expertise.



We kindly request respect for our privacy as he continues his recovery. Your unwavering support has

been a tremendous source of strength for both of us."

"We kindly request respect for our privacy as he continues his recovery. Your unwavering support has been a tremendous source of strength for both of us," Deepti concluded. Talpade, 47, noted for his roles in films like 'Iqbal', the 'Golmaal' franchise and 'Poster Boys' among many others, had a major health scare when he suffered a heart attack after a grueling shoot. Talpade had been shooting throughout the day, was joking around with the crew on the sets, shot some sequences which had a bit of action, but after going home, he told his wife he was feeling uneasy. She rushed him to the city's Bellevue Hospital in Andheri West, but he collapsed en route but upon reaching the hospital, the medics took charge. After various tests, Talpade underwent an angioplasty around 10 p.m., and the morning after was on the way to recovery.

Maharashtra govt announces SIT probe into violence in Beed district during Maratha quota stir

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Friday announced that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) would be set up in the next two days to probe arson during the Maratha quota stir in Beed.

He was speaking during the assembly during the Winter Session of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly.

During the Maratha Quota agitation homes of two Nationalist Congress Party MLAs were torched in Beed district. Fadnavis vowed the government will not spare anyone involved in the violence.

The agitation seeking reservation for the Maratha community in jobs and education had turned violent as protesters torched the homes of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLAs Sandeep Kshirsagar



and Prakash Solanke in Beed, central Maharashtra, in October-end. Solanke's home was also vandalised. Fadnavis, who is also the home minister, said

people involved in the incident will be prosecuted. He was responding to the calling attention raised by Kshirsagar whose house in Beed city was torched during the agitation.

Fadnavis said, "Actionable evidence is available to prosecute suspects. Although the investigation (launched after the incident) has progressed, I will set up a SIT with the approval of the house."

NCP (Sharad Pawar group) MLA Jayant Patil, a former state home minister, said police could have fired in the air to stop arsonists.

"An accused person's name is Pappu Shinde. Why did the local police not arrest people who have criminal background? At least firing in the air (by the local police) could have deterred some of them (violent protesters)," Patil said.

Fadnavis said no one involved in the unlawful act will be spared.

SC grants a 10-day extension, asks Maha Speaker to decide defection pleas in Shiv Sena split by Jan 10

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday granted a 10-day extension to Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar for deciding the pending defection petitions in the Shiv Sena split case.

Earlier, the top court had ordered the Speaker to announce his decision by December 31 on disqualification petitions filed by the two rival factions of the Shiv Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray and CM Eknath Shinde against each other.

During the hearing, a bench, headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud was apprised by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the Speaker would conclude the proceedings on December 20 and considering the voluminous documents involved in the case, and thus, the deadline may be extended by three weeks. Opposing this, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Shiv Sena-UBT leader Sunil Prabhu, submitted that similar requests seeking extension of time have been raised by the Speaker in the past.

Thereafter, the bench, also comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, ordered: "The Speaker has indicated that the proceed-

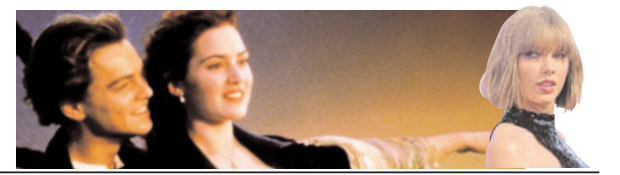


ings will be closed on December 20 and has sought a reasonable extension of time. Bearing in mind the time limit laid out earlier, we grant extension of time till January 10, 2024 for the Speaker to deliver judgment."

Following the split in the party, both the factions of Shiv Sena filed petitions against each other under the anti-defection law. Later, the Uddhav Thackeray faction of the Shiv Sena moved the apex court against delay by the Speaker in deciding the disqualification proceedings filed against Chief Minister Shinde and his camp. Jayant Patil of the NCP-

Sharad Pawar faction also filed a petition in the Supreme Court against the delay by the Speaker in hearing the defection pleas following a split in the NCP. The top court in October this year directed the Speaker to conclude the hearing in NCP defection petitions by January 31 next year.

Earlier in May, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court had directed that the Maharashtra Speaker "must decide disqualification petitions in a reasonable time" against 16 Shiv Sena MLAs, including Shinde, who were accused of anti-party activities.



Taylor Swift celebrates birthday with Blake Lively, Gigi Hadid, Zoe Kravitz

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift spent her 34th birthday surrounded by friends. The pop icon celebrated her big day with a party attended by many of her celebrity friends in New York City, and she posted to Instagram the following day to share photos from the event.

Stars including Gigi Hadid, Blake Lively, Jack Antonoff, Sabrina Carpenter, Gracie Abrams, Este Haim, Alana Haim, Zoe Kravitz and Antoni Porowski, among others, stepped out to Swift's party, as did her longtime friend Abigail Anderson - all of whom are pictured hanging with the 'Karma' singer on Instagram, reports People magazine.

Miles Teller and his wife Keleigh Sperry also attended the celebration, according to photos taken outside Manhattan nightclub, where the party was held following a dinner at Freemans Restaurant. "Can't believe this year... actually... happened? Thank you for all your beautiful birthday wishes yesterday", wrote Swift on Instagram, reflecting on her many accomplishments of 2023: launching the Eras Tour, breaking records with its theatrical film and releasing both Speak Now (Taylor's Version) and 1989 (Taylor's Version), among others. As per People, in the Instagram post's lead photo, Kravitz can be seen holding a cake from Milk Bar

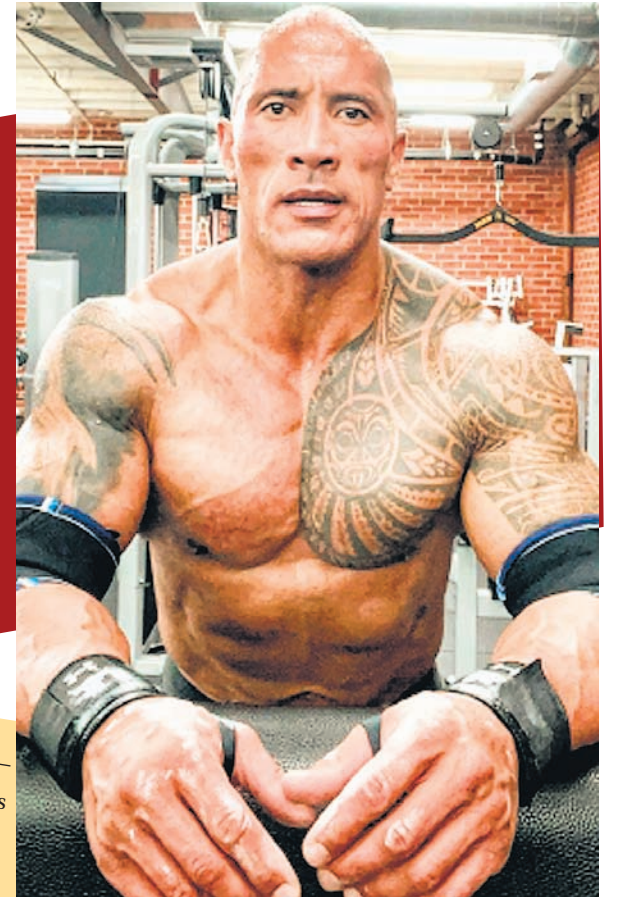


celebrated her birthday early with friends in Kansas City at a holiday party on Sunday, where they were spotted posing with partygoers and exchanging sweet kisses in group photos throughout the evening.

Dwayne Johnson cast as MMA fighter Mark Kerr in 'The Smashing Machine'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood Actor Dwayne Johnson is set to step into the shoes of mixed martial arts fighter Mark Kerr. A24 announced that the actor, 51, will portray



"The Smashing Machine" from filmmaker Benny Safdie, reports People magazine. "Dwayne and Benny are singular talents, and their shared vision for Mark's inspiring story is electrifying. We are deeply honoured to have their trust as collaborators in bringing this incredibly special project to life," A24's Noah Sacco said in a statement to The Hollywood Reporter and Variety.

Safdie, 37, previously worked with his brother Josh Safdie as the co-director of 'Uncut Gems', which starred Adam Sandler, and 'Good Time' starring Robert Pattinson. As per People, 'The Smashing Machine' will be Safdie's first solo project as both writer and director. Johnson, Safdie, Dany Garcia, Eli Bush and David Koplan are producing the film.

The movie is set to explore the life of Kerr, at the peak of his career in 2000, while he navigates career victories, love, friendship and addiction. Kerr, 54, earned the nickname "The Smashing Machine" due to his unbridled fighting style. He won over two dozen MMA titles and was a two-time UFC Heavyweight Tournament Champion, as well as a World Vale Tudo Championship winner. Dwayne Johnson's other upcoming projects include 'Red Notice 2', 'Fast X: Part 2', 'Jungle Cruise 2', 'Red One' and the live-action remake of 'Moana'.

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kate Beckinsale reveals personal items that bring her comfort



Actress Kate Beckinsale's greatest comforts in life include cuddly cats and giant candles. The 50-year-old actress, who was recently targeted by a troll for dyeing her naturally brunette hair blonde, posted a series of images of items that bring her solace and joy.

She captioned the carousel, which has pictures of a framed image of a cat surrounded by huge flickering candles, as well as Raymond Carver books, a skull ornament and one of her pals at a party, "Things and people that have given comfort or lifted my spirits, should anyone need some ideas x (there will be a volume 2 to this)".

Beckinsale has changed the colour of her locks for Christmas and also showed off her new look in a series of party pictures on Instagram, reports aceshowbiz.com.

They showed her in a shimmering dress enjoying time with friends, including 42-year-old heiress Paris Hilton.

Fans took to social media to praise her new look, but one said: "Why such a colour? I thought the original was better - a shame."

The message prompted Kate to hit back, saying: "Because sometimes one fancies a change and is not too bothered about what (you) may think about it, given we clearly do not share the same aesthetic, nor do we know each other."

Referring to a coat he was wearing in his Instagram profile picture, Kate also asked the male fan if he'd like people "saying they don't think your orange puffer jacket flatters you".

She then continued to ask him why it was appropriate for him to remark on someone's appearance, asking him: "Were you brought up to think your unwarranted opinion is the most important factor in any situation? If so, tell your mum she did a bad job."

Beckinsale's comments won the backing of a flood of Instagram users, who joked about her dislike of the man's jacket.

The actress recently marked her 50th birthday by dressing up and declaring getting older is "great."



Jessica Simpson shares 'Thirsty' picture on Instagram

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress-singer Jessica Simpson shared an Instagram photo of herself modeling a swimsuit from her clothing line on Thursday.

She wrote in the caption: "Thirsty". She posed against a wall while sporting the swimsuit from her collection, reports People magazine.

She regained control of her company after she bought it from partner Sequential Brands Group in 2021. Dripped in jewels, she wore a pearl choker, a dainty silver choker, a gold necklace with a diamond pendant of a tiger's head, a single silver bracelet and a pair of large bejewelled silver hoop earrings.

As per People, she accessorised her look with a pair of bronze metallic pointed high heels and oversized aviator sunglasses. The 'Employee of the Month' actress completed her look with a dark brown smokey eyeshadow look and a glossy nude lip.

During an October chat about a recent Jessica Simpson Collection drop, Simpson revealed her daughters Maxwell "Maxi" Drew, 11, and Birdie Mae, 4, have been exploring her many looks. "I have to do a weekly girls' closet inventory to check for missing items. They even know my hiding spots somehow," she said. She joked that she may have to consider "having one closet for all three of us ladies."

For Charlie Puth, planning his wedding to Brooke Sansone is 'more intense' than planning a tour

Los Angeles | Agencies



Singer-songwriter Charlie Puth, ahead of his performance at TikTok's In the Mix event over the weekend, has shared that he tends to be a bit more secretive with regard to his wedding plans.

"I like to keep some things in the confines of our home, of course, because stuff gets out so easily", he said. He revealed that "planning a wedding is a lot like planning a tour, reports People magazine.

He said: "It's probably even more intense". The singer and Sansone, who is a family friend, have been romantically linked since the summer of 2022, but first revealed their relationship publicly as part of a post for his 31st birthday. He then popped the question in September 2023.

"I've known her. I mean, she grew up one town over from me in New Jersey, and my parents know her parents," Puth said, quoted by People. "Her dad has been best friends with my dad since the third grade, so it's kind of like I'm just gaining another family right away, even before the wedding."

ding. And they've also known me before the fame, before everything, so I can't think of a better situation, quite frankly."

The couple's love is particularly evident in their thoughtful generosity towards one another. On December 2, Puth celebrated his 32nd birthday with Sansone, whom he says got him "the coolest present ever."

"She got me an Apple computer, an Apple 2 from 1991," he shares. "(The) serial number's from December of 1991, which is obviously when I was born, and the computer came with old recording software on it. Obviously, it's very rudimentary, but it's so cool just to see how they were able to record music in the past."

Expressing his happiness with the gift, Puth noted that Sansone "searched far and wide for that gift, we both love giving gifts," before stating "now I've got to top it for her birthday."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Sophie Habboo



HARDIK PANDYA ANNOUNCED AS MUMBAI INDIANS CAPTAIN FOR IPL 2024 SEASON, REPLACES ROHIT SHARMA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In an important development, five-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians have announced fast-bowling all-rounder Hardik Pandya as their captain for the 2024 season of the tournament, thus replacing its long-time skipper, opener Rohit Sharma, in the leadership role.

The franchise said in a statement that making Hardik as captain is a part of its significant leadership transition ahead of 2024 IPL season, with an eye on the future. The announcement comes just ahead of the IPL 2024 player auction to be held in Dubai on December 19.

"It is part of legacy building and staying true to the MI philosophy of being future-ready. Mumbai Indians have always been blessed with exceptional leadership right from Sachin to Harbhajan and Ricky to Rohit, who while contributing to the immediate success have always had an eye on strengthening the team for the future."

"It is in keeping with this philosophy that Hardik Pandya will assume captaincy of Mumbai Indians for the IPL 2024 season. We express our gratitude to Rohit Sharma for his exceptional leadership; his tenure as the



captain of the Mumbai Indians since 2013 has been nothing short of extraordinary," said Mahela Jayawardene, Global Head of Performance, Mumbai Indians.

Hardik led Gujarat to the IPL title in 2022 in their debut season, and was the Player of the Match in the final against Rajasthan Royals at the Narendra Modi Stadium in

Ahmedabad. In 2023, Gujarat made the IPL final for the second time in as many seasons under Hardik's captaincy, where they finished runners up to Chennai Super Kings.

In both IPL 2022 and 2023 seasons, Gujarat had also topped the points table in the league stage under Hardik. Later, on November 25, Hardik was traded from Gujarat to

Mumbai, his first IPL franchise, a day after the retention window came to an end.

It also marks the end of an era - of Rohit's ten-year reign of captaining Mumbai and leading them to five IPL titles in 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2020. Rohit developed into an astute leader ever since he took over midway from Ricky Ponting in the 2013 IPL season and earned widespread praise for making bowling and fielding placement changes quickly, with an emphasis on being tactically sharp and firmly controlling the proceedings of the game.

Overall, Rohit captained in 158 IPL matches, winning 87 games, losing 67 matches and four fixtures ending in a tie, with his win percentage standing at 55.06. "His leadership was not only brought unparalleled success to the team but has also solidified his place as one of the finest captains in the history of the IPL. Under his guidance, MI became one of the most successful and loved teams ever."

"We will look forward to his guidance and experience on and off the field to further strengthen MI. We welcome Hardik Pandya as the new captain of MI and wish him all the very best," concluded Jayawardene.

Difficult to set a field to Suryakumar Yadav, says David Miller

Johannesburg | Agencies

South Africa's senior middle-order batter David Miller highlighted the challenges of bowling to Suryakumar Yadav, who scored a 55-ball century in the third T20I which India won by 106 runs, saying it is difficult to set a field for a batter who plays shots all around the park.

Suryakumar smashed a delightful century off just 55 balls, smashing seven fours and eight sixes at a strike-rate of 178.57. With his fourth T20I century, Suryakumar, the top-ranked batter in the format, went level with Rohit Sharma and Glenn Maxwell for most centuries by a male batter in shorter format of the game.

"He's a special player, and it was a really, really good knock. The guys executed more often than not, and he came out and still managed to hit those fours and sixes. I think he just manages to hit all around the ground. It was



difficult to kind of set a field to him," said Miller in the post-match press conference.

Suryakumar was on 27 runs off 25 balls at one point, before taking the attack to South Africa in the second half of the innings by smashing 73 runs in next 31 balls. The onslaught began in the 13th over when he smashed three sixes and a four off

Andile Phehlukwayo, till he reached his century in the final over, as India made 201/7.

"So, you kind of try to double-bluff at times and go outside of a normal plan, and so I think anyone that can lap, scoop, play straight, and hit you over cow corner and over cover is difficult to bowl to," added Miller.

In reply, South Africa were bowled out for just 95 in 13.5 overs at the Wanderers, a batting performance which Miller called as disappointing. "We are good enough to play better than that. It was a par score. It was a really good wicket, but then things changed."

"It wasn't the same wicket as in the first innings. It is difficult to go at 10 an over when the ball is keeping low, but we should have been good enough to adapt and we weren't," concluded Miller, as India and South Africa will now play the ODI series opener at the same venue on Sunday.

Indian men's hockey goes down 0-1 to Spain in 5 Nations Tournament

Valencia | Agencies

The Indian Men's Hockey Team lost 0-1 against Spain on Friday in their first match of the 5 Nations Tournament Valencia 2023.

Spain's Alvaro Iglesias (29') scored the only goal of the match.

The first quarter saw both teams earn a penalty corner each but neither managed to find the back of the net.

Spain took the initiative in the second quarter, forcing a penalty corner save from Krishan Pathak. The pressure was telling as India received a green card and Spain immediately pounced on the opportunity. Alvaro Iglesias breached India's defence and scored the goal that present-



ed Spain with the lead.

The third quarter witnessed both teams in an intense battle to score the next goal but they were unable to break the others' tight defence.

India turned up the heat in the last quarter in the search

for an equaliser, earning two penalty corners. However, they were unable to capitalise and the match ended in Spain's favour.

The Indian Men's Hockey Team will battle against Belgium on Saturday.

NRAI ANNOUNCES SHOOTING SQUADS FOR ASIAN OLYMPIC QUALIFIERS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) on Friday announced a 20-member rifle and pistol squad and a 12-member shotgun team for the upcoming Asian Olympic qualifiers, scheduled next month in Indonesia and Kuwait, respectively.

The squad has been selected based on current domestic rankings and only those with quotas already to their name have been left out.

Three Olympians including former men's trap world champion Manavjit Singh Sandhu, Gurpreet Singh in Pistol and Anjum Moudgil in Rifle make their comebacks into the Indian team.

Among senior team debutants will be Sri Karthik Sabari Raj (men's 10m air rifle), Ujjawal Malik (men's 10m air pistol) and Bhavya Tripathi (women's trap).

Three shooters namely, Tilottama Sen (women's 10m air rifle, ranked seventh), Shriyanka Sadangi (women's 50m rifle 3 positions, ranked seventh) and



Bhowneesh Mendiratta (men's trap, ranked sixth), who are quota holders and not among the top three, have also been included in the squad to shoot in the RPO (ranking points only) category and will not be competing for medals.

Four other quota holders expressed their inability to participate in these competitions. A total of 16 Paris 2024 Olympic games quotas will be available in Jakarta, Indonesia, where the Asian Olympic Qualification Rifle and Pistol event is scheduled between January 5-18, 2024. As many as eight Paris spots will be up for grabs in the Asia Olympic Qualification Shotgun, scheduled in Kuwait City, Kuwait, between January 12-22, 2024. The Indian shooting squad already has 13 quota spots won for Paris 2024 and will be looking to add to that tally in these tournaments. In the Jakarta event, India will be looking to particularly add to their Pistol quotas, given five more are still to be won. All the eight quota places in Rifle events have already been secured.

RIFLE SQUAD:

10m men: Rudranksh Patil, Arjun Babuta, Srikarthik Sabari Raj

10m women: Mehuli Ghosh, Elavenil Valarivan, Nancy, Tilottama Sen (RPO)

50m 3-position men: Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Swapnil Kusale, Akhil Sheoran

50m 3-position women: Sift Kaur Samra, Anjum Moudgil, Ashi Chouksey, Shriyanka Sadangi (RPO)

Pistol squad:

10m men: Arjun Singh Cheema, Varun Tomar, Ujjawal Malik

10m women: Rhythm Sangwan, Surbhi Rao, Esha Singh

25m rapid fire men: Vijayveer Sidhu, Bhavesh Shekhawat, Gurpreet Singh

25m pistol women: Esha Singh, Simranpreet Kaur Brar, Rhythm Sangwan

Trap squad: Men: Lakshay, Zoravar Singh Sandhu, Manavjit Singh Sandhu

Women: Manisha Keer, Bhavya Tripathi, Shreyasi Singh

Skeet Squad: Men: Anantjeet Singh Naruka, Gurjoat Khangura, Muneek Battulla

Women: Ganemat Sekhon, Raiza Dhillon, Maheshwari Chauhan

Mixed teams: Rifle: Rudranksh Patil and Mehuli Ghosh; Arjun Babuta and Elavenil Valarivan

Pistol: Arjun Singh Cheema and Rhythm Sangwan; Varun Tomar and Surbhi Rao

Trap: Lakshay and Manisha Keer; Zoravar Singh Sandhu and Bhavya Tripathi

Skeet: Anantjeet Singh Naruka and Ganemat Sekhon; Gurjoat Khangura and Raiza Dhillon

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 power-play.

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 'Team45r0' 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."

Advani, Pherwani bow out in men's 15-Red snooker round-of-32

Chennai | Agencies

Sourav Kothari beat his PSPB colleague and 26-time IBSF world champion Pankaj Advani 5-1 in the men's 15-Red snooker round-of-32 of the 90th National Billiards & Snooker Championships at the Nehru Indoor Stadium here on Friday. Kothari, who lost to Advani in the world billiards final in Doha last month, won the best-of-9 frames 64-50, 62-33, 23-51, 80-56, 84-34, 70-16. Meanwhile, defending champion Kamal Chawla (RSPB) defeated Luv Kukreja (Delhi) 5-2 to move into the pre-quarterfinals. Joining Chawla in the round-of-16 was his RSPB colleague Md



Hussain who stunned last year's runner-up Sparsh Pherwani (Maharashtra) 5-3. Maharashtra's Shahbaaz

Khan created a ripple by packing off last year's semifinalist Brijesh Damani (PSPB) 5-3.

IND w v ENG W: Deepti's 5-7; Harman's 44* help India take control as 19 wickets fall on Day 2

Team Absolute | Navi Mumbai

Deepti Sharma bamboozled the batters to claim a maiden fiver (5 for 7), as India Women bundled out England for 136 and then raised 186/6 in their second innings to take total control of the four-day one-off Test at the DY Patil Stadium here on Friday.

It was a strange second day of action as India, who posted 428 in their first innings, gained a lead of 292 runs and decided to bat instead of forcing a follow-on. They ended the second day at 186/6 off 42 overs to extend their lead to 478 runs with two days to go.

At stumps, India skipper Harmanpreet was batting on 44 off 67, hoping to score her maiden half-century on the third day. Pooja Vastrakar was keeping her company with 17, as they raised 53 runs off 85 balls for the seventh wicket. For England, Charlie Dean claimed 4-68 while Sophie Ecclestone got 2-76.

After India raced to 410/7 on the first day, 19 wickets fell on the second with spinners bagging 16 of them. This is the maximum number of wickets to fall in a single day in a women's Test match in India, surpassing the 16 that fell in a day against England at Jamshedpur in 1995. Five wickets fell in the first session, eight in the second and six in the third session of the day.

While the Indian spinners got their victims with balls that kept low and turned sharply at times, their taller English counterparts foxed the batters with deliveries that bounced. It was a day dominated by spinners and none was better



than Deepti Sharma, who claimed 5-7 to turn the game India's way. It was a nice all-round performance for her as she scored 87 runs across two innings, getting out twice in a day. Deepti who was out for 67 in the morning as India posted 428 in their first innings, adding 18 runs to their overnight score, ended with figures of 5.2-4-7-5, her best bowling performance coming in her third Test. Cutting down on pace to extract sharp turn at times on a pitch on which some deliveries kept a bit low, Deepti tossed up her deliveries, got a good loop going and mixed them with straight ones to keep the batters guessing. The 26-year-old from Agra, Uttar Pradesh claimed the wickets of Danni Wyatt (19), Amy Jones (12), Sophie Ecclestone (0), Kate Cross (1) and Lauren Filer (5) as she came up with the brilliant display of spin bowling.

Fellow off-spinner Sneha Rana, who opened the bowling for India along with debutante pacer Renuka Singh Thakur,

claimed the crucial wicket of Nat Sciver-Brunt, who top-scored for England with 59 off 70 deliveries, hitting 10 boundaries. Sneha pitched it wide and extracted sharp turn as Nat went back to make space to cut it but missed it completely, the ball going on to crash into the stumps. Sneha also trapped Charlie Dean lbw for a duck for figures of 2/25.

Debutante Renuka Singh started England's downfall in the third over when a delivery moved in off the pitch and went through the big gap between bat and pad to crash into the middle stump. England were down to 13/1.

Vastrakar then made it 28/2 by sending back the dangerous Heather Knight in her first over. England's skipper, their most experienced player, got out as The ball moved in from outside off, evaded the bat and struck her back foot. Knight reviewed the decision but DRS showed no bat was involved.

Tammy Beaumont, who scored a double hundred in England's previous Test against Australia at Nottingham, was the next to go, run out thanks to a brilliant piece of pick-up-and-throw by Vastrakar. Beaumont and Nat Sciver-Brunt added 51 runs for the third wicket, England's best in the first innings. Deepti then got into the act and with Sneha Rana backing her up, triggered a collapse as England lost seven wickets for 32 runs from 104/3. Deepti started by dismissing Wyatt in her first over, getting her second delivery of the match turned and taking the inside edge onto her pads, lobbing up as a simple catch for Jemimah Rodrigues at short-leg.

Amy Jones got off freshly as her pull shot on a short one ricocheted off Smriti Mandhana's helmet at forward short leg

and ballooned for Shafali Verma to catch it at leg slip. The bizarre dismissal left at 126/5 in the 30th over.

Nat Sciver-Brunt, who was batting on a run-a-ball 35 at lunch, slowed down a bit and completed her half-century off 63 balls (8x4) as wickets continued to tumble at the other end. England lost their last five wickets for 10 runs to concede a huge lead. India then rubbed salt into the wounds as they extended their lead beyond 400 runs, setting England the biggest chase in the history of women's cricket.

Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana raised 60 runs for the opening wicket, the former a bit circumspect in her approach at the second calling while Mandhana started more aggressively as she scored 26 off 29 balls, hitting three boundaries and one six before she fell to Sophie Ecclestone, the ball hitting the top of the bat and landing in the hands of Charlie Dean at short-leg. Though Shafali scored her first run off the 11th ball she faced, she scored 33 off 53 balls, studded with two boundaries and two maximums. Dean got her as she walked down the pitch to try and lift the left-arm spinner over long-on but only managed to give Ecclestone catching practice.

Brief scores

At Stumps, Day 2: India 428 all out in 104.3 overs & 186/6 in 42 overs (Harmanpreet Kaur 44 not out, Shafali Verma 33; Charlie Dean 4-68) lead England Women 136 all out in 35.3 overs (Nat Sciver-Brunt 59, Deepti Sharma 5-7, Sneha Rana 2-25) by 478 runs.



Amitabh shares fond memories with Agastya, his passion for acting

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan, who was excited to host his grandson Agastya Nanda on the hot seat of the show 'Kaun Banega Crorepati 15', recalled holding him in his arms soon after his birth and shared how his grandson had a passion for acting.

The quiz-based reality show saw the presence of the star cast of the recently released teen musical drama 'The Archies'. Agastya, Suhana Khan, Khushi Kapoor, Vedang Raina, Mihir Ahuja, Dot, Yuvraj Menda came to the show along with their director Zoya Akhtar. Agastya, Mihir and Yuvraj sat on the hot seat in the first lot.

Agastya, who is the son of Shweta Bachchan, said: "It feels as though we have two exams today. One with you and the other is KBC!"

Yuvraj then said to Amitabh: "The team of The Archies has prepared something for you and we want Agastya to read it out to you."

Agastya then read a candid poem for his 'nanu' which said that the latter should ask them easy questions, and sign the cheque of Rs 7 crore fast.

Replying to him, Big B also narrated a rap and declined their request candidly, leaving everyone in splits.

The 'Don' actor then asked his grandson to describe his first day on the set of 'The Archies'. Agastya, who has made his acting debut with the film, said: "Firstly, such opportunities come by rarely. And when they do, it becomes our responsibility to give our best. I enjoyed myself. We were shooting together. We released a song called 'Sunoh'. We were performing that, and



I think I had a blast. I just enjoyed it."

Yuvraj added on to Agastya and said: "I also want to ask something to you sir. How did you feel when you got to know that Agastya was going to play Archies' character in this film?"

The 'Sarkar' actor shared: "I guess a lot of people don't know that he's the son of my daughter. This is a very difficult question. Five minutes after his birth, I held him. Then he grew up a little and I could carry him in my arms. And he had a habit of scratching my beard with one finger."

"Then he grew up a little more. He became an actor one day. When he said he wanted to be an actor and work in films, I never stopped him. I never asked my kids what they wanted to do. They were free to do as they pleased. He chose his own path. No one in the family told him he had to do acting. He comes from a family of businessmen. I thought he would do business but he wanted to do acting," said the

'Brahmastra' actor.

Amitabh used to observe Agastya closely. "We went to the gym together once. The TV was switched on and you can browse the channels. There were two channels that played film songs. He'd never tune into the news or any sports events. Agastya Nanda watched the TV intently. 'Look how Ranbir Kapoor is dancing. Which step will Ranveer Singh do next? Oh! That's Anushka Sharma and...' He used to only observe what actors were doing," said Amitabh.

"At that moment, I knew that he had started rehearsing. When I watch the film, I will know if what he watched on TV worked for him or not," he concluded.

Shreyas Talpade stable post angioplasty, to be discharged soon: wife Deepti

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Film actor Shreyas Talpade, who underwent an angioplasty late last night is in a stable condition and will be discharged in a few days, his wife Deepti said here on Friday.

"I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming concern and well-wishes following the recent health scare my husband experienced. I'm relieved to update everyone that he is now in stable condition and will be discharged in a few days," said Deepti.

She expressed gratitude to the medical team's expertise, exceptional care and timely response have been instrumental during this time of medical crisis.

She said: "The medical team's exceptional care and timely response have been instrumental during this time, and we are grateful for their expertise. We kindly request respect for our privacy as he continues his recovery. Your unwavering support has been a tremendous source of strength for both of us."

"We kindly request respect for our privacy as he continues his recovery. Your unwavering support has been a tremendous source of strength for both of us," Deepti concluded.

Talpade, 47, noted for his roles in films like 'Iqbal', the 'Golmaal' franchise and 'Poster Boys' among many others, had a major health scare when he suffered a heart attack after a grueling shoot.

Talpade had been shooting throughout the day, was joking around with the crew on the sets, shot some sequences which had a bit of action, but after going home, he told his wife he was feeling uneasy.

She rushed him to the city's Bellevue Hospital in Andheri West, but he collapsed en route but upon reaching the hospital, the medicos took charge.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor-comedian Vir Das, who recently won an International Emmy Award for his stand-up special 'Vir Das: Landing', is set to take the stage at the Apollo Theatre in London, on Saturday. He will entertain a live audience of nearly 5,000 people as a part of his ongoing Mind Fool tour.

The Apollo Theatre has witnessed performances by The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, David Bowie, Iron Maiden and Selena Gomez. The theatre has also been graced by comedy legend Louis C.K.

Talking about the same, Vir Das said: "Stepping onto the Apollo Theatre stage is not just a personal triumph; it's a momentous occasion for Indian comedy. The energy of this historic venue, which has hosted musical legends and comedy icons alike, is both exhilarating and humbling."

He further mentioned: "As I stand before a live audience of almost 5,000 people, I am driven by a desire to connect, to bring joy, and to be a bridge between cultures. The Mind Fool tour is my way of spreading laughter across borders, and I can't wait to share this experience with audiences around the world."

His tour spans 33 countries and encompasses 37 cities across India, and promises to be a cultural celebration.

BIG B SHOCKED AS SUHANA WAS CLUELESS ABOUT SRK'S 'PADMA SHRI' WIN



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Suhana Khan, who graced the quiz-based reality show 'Kaun Banega Crorepati 15' was left embarrassed as she was not able to answer a question on her superstar father Shah Rukh Khan.

Suhana, who made her acting debut with the movie 'The Archies', came on the show along with the director Zoya Akhtar and other star cast-- Agastya Nanda, Khushi Kapoor, Vedang Raina, DOT, Mihir Ahuja, and Yuvraj Menda.

During the Super Sandook round, Zoya, Suhana and Vedang were asked: "Shah Rukh Khan has not yet received which of these honours?"

The options given were- Padma Shri, Legion of Honour, L'Etoile d'Or +, and Volpi Cup. Suhana gave the wrong answer and said 'Padma Shri'. The correct answer was Volpi Cup.

Host of the show Amitabh Bachchan was left surprised by Suhana's cluelessness about her father SRK.

The 'Sarkar' actor said: "The daughter doesn't know what awards her father has received. Her father just told her that the person sitting in front of her has played his father's role. So ask him to take it easy with the questions. I asked such an easy question. But she couldn't answer."

Amitabh continued and said: "And in 2005, Shah Rukh Khan received Padma Shri."

SHAH RUKH KHAN, SUHANA PRAY AT SHIRDI SAIBABA TEMPLE



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood mega-star Shah Rukh Khan and his actress-daughter Suhana prayed at the famed Shirdi Saibaba Temple here on Thursday.

The Shirdi town visit came a couple of days after he went and prayed at the Vaishnodevi Mata Temple in Jammu, both coming ahead of his upcoming much-anticipated film.

Videos of SRK and Suhana have surfaced on social media showing the father-daughter duo at the Shirdi Saibaba Temple.

While King Khan is sporting a white t-shirt with a dark coat and black cap plus an orange shawl around his shoulder, Suhana is seen attired in a pastel blue salwar-kurta suit. Scores of fans taken by surprise at the sudden star-duo entry were seen jostling for a glimpse and clicking selfies, while Khan managed to greet and shake hands with some temple officials who came out to receive them, and waves out to his fans crowding around.

With two huge blockbusters -- "Pathaan" and "Jawan" under his belt this year, Khan is hoping for a hat-trick in 2023 with "Dunki", which is slated for a Christmas-New Year week on December 21.

Incidentally, prior to the "Jawan" release in September, Khan had visited the Lalbaugcha Raja marquee in Parel along with family and then prayed at Tirupati Temple in Andhra Pradesh.

Besides his own twin-blockbusters, this year daughter Suhana made her screen debut with Zoya Akhtar's "The Archies" -- based on the famous American comic books series -- in which she enacted the role of the rich and temperamental Veronica Lodge.

to perform at London's Apollo Theatre

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Tara Sutaria

DEEPIKA PADUKONE SEEKS BLESSINGS AT TIRUMALA VENKATESWARA TEMPLE WITH FAMILY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Deepika Padukone embarked on a spiritual journey to the Tirumala Venkateswara temple in Andhra Pradesh, and sought the blessings of Lord Venkateswara. The 'Chennai Express' star climbed the stairs of the temple barefooted at night, and was accompanied by her parents and sister Anisha Padukone.

The video that is doing rounds on the social media shows Deepika walking in the temple premises wearing a black hoodie and matching leggings. She was also accompanied by her team.

The other video shows the 'Om Shanti Om' actress seeking blessings at the temple, along with her family. She is wearing a traditional outfit, with jhumkas and her hair tied in a low bun. On the work front, Deepika was last seen in a special appearance in the action thriller 'Jawan', starring Shah Rukh Khan in the lead. Directed by Atlee, the flick stars Nayanthara, Vijay Sethupathi, Priyamani and Sanya Malhotra in pivotal roles.

She is now gearing up for the release of her upcoming aerial action drama 'Fighter', starring Hrithik Roshan and Anil Kapoor. Directed by Siddharth Anand