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'Defaced ballots': SC summons Returning Officer of Chandigarh mayoral polls 'WON'T ALLOW DEMOCRACY TO BE MURDERED'



Team Absolute | New Delhi

We will not allow democracy to be murdered like this," the Supreme Court on Monday told the returning officer appointed for mayoral polls of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation (CMC).
Hearing a plea filed by INDIA bloc's mayoral candidate Kuldeep Kumar - who had accused the Presiding Officer of resorting to fraud and forgery in the counting process, a bench presided over by CJI DY Chandrachud, in strong terms, observed: "Please tell your returning officer that there is a Supreme Court watching over him."
Observing that returning officer Anil Masih has "defaced the ballots" in the Chandigarh mayoral polls, the Supreme Court on Monday summoned the official in question to

remain present before the top court on February 19 to explain his conduct. "During the course of the hearing, the video has been played in court. The Returning Officer shall remain present before this court on the next date of listing to explain his conduct as it appears in the video," said a bench presided over by CJI DY Chandrachud in its order.
The bench, also comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, ordered that the entire record pertaining to the election, including ballot papers and videography footage will be sequestered under the custody of the Registrar General of the Punjab and Haryana High Court by 5 p.m. itself. It ordered the Deputy Commissioner of Chandigarh UT to hand over the entirety of the record to the Registrar General of the High Court for safekeeping and custody.

Further, the apex court said that the ensuing meeting of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, which is scheduled to take place on February 7, will stand deferred pending further orders. "Prima facie, at this stage, we are of the considered view that an appropriate interim order was warranted, which the High Court has failed to pass, in order to protect the purity and sanctity of the electoral process," it added.
The directions were passed on a plea filed by INDIA bloc's mayoral candidate Kuldeep Kumar against the Punjab and Haryana High Court's refusal to stay the poll results held on January 30 for the post of Mayor.
In his plea, he had accused the Presiding Officer of resorting to fraud and forgery in the counting process and alleged complete departure of the practice and rules.

'THIS MAN HAS TO BE PROSECUTED'



After perusal of the CCTV footage given in the pendency by senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor, the bench, also comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said: "This is a mockery of democracy. He is murdering democracy. Is this the behaviour of a returning officer, who looks at the camera and defaces the ballot?" "It is obvious that he defaced the ballots. This man has to be prosecuted," observed the bench. AAP and Congress's joint candidate Kuldeep Kumar has petitioned the top court after the Punjab and Haryana High Court refused to stay the election results held on January 30 for the post of Mayor. In his petition before the high court, he alleged complete departure of the practice and rules saying that the presiding officer refused to allow the nominees of parties to monitor the counting of votes. He prayed for fresh elections in a free and fair manner under the supervision of a retired High Court judge.

Nehru attacked again

Modi refers to former PM's I-day speech while blasting Congress

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his reply to Motion of Thanks on President's Address in Lok Sabha on Monday, named two former Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi and called out 'inadequacies' of the chair that they held.

Mocking the Opposition for a lackluster performance in an election year in Lok Sabha, PM Modi touched upon statements of two former Congress Prime Ministers to point out their 'lack of faith' in their own citizens.

Recalling former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's Independence speech in 1959, he said: "Nehru had said from Red Fort that Indians don't have a habit of working hard. He said that we Indians don't work as hard as those in Europe, Japan, China, Russia and the US. Nehru thought that Indians are lazy," PM Modi said.

"Nehru thought that Indians were lazy and less intelligent," PM Modi said, amid slogan-shouting and angry protests by Congress parliamentarians.

PM Modi also stated how former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi mentioned once that Indians 'run away' from difficulties and obstacles.
Lambasting the Congress leadership for prioritising 'one family over everything', PM Modi said that the grand old party never trusted the



countrymen and its capability. PM Modi -- addressing the last session of Lok Sabha -- started his speech by training guns at the Congress for fostering 'parivaarvad culture' at

the cost of its top leaders. He said that Congress was 'launching & re-launching' one particular leader despite its repeated failures and never felt the need for introspection.

ABKI BAAR 400 PAAR

Listing the scrapping of the British-era penal codes, vision for developed India, the PM said, "Lord Ram has returned not only home, but to such a grand temple that it is definite that 'Abki baar 400 paar' (This time 400 plus). Even Kharge ji (Mallikarjun Kharge) is saying it. Not only will NDA win 400+ seats, BJP itself will win 370 seat".
PM Modi also targeted the opposition parties, particularly Congress in his reply to the debate on the motion of thanks to the President's address and said from "every word of their speech, I and the country are now convinced that they have resolved to sit for a long time in the opposition. I really commend the resolution of the opposition. From every word of their speech, I and the country are now convinced that they have resolved to sit for a long time in opposition. The way you sat here (in government) for many decades, the same way you resolve to sit there (in opposition)," he said.

Champai Soren govt in Jharkhand wins trust vote

Ranchi | Agencies

In a significant development, Champai Soren government in Jharkhand won the trust vote in the assembly on Monday as 47 votes were cast in favour while 29 voted against the government.
The number required for majority as per the current strength of the Assembly and the number of MLAs present in the House, is 40.
During Governor C. P. Radhakrishnan's nearly 35-minute address before voting, Congress and JMM MLAs continuously raised slogans in support of Hemant Soren. Before the commencement of the address, Congress MLA Pradeep Yadav alleged that



the people's elected government in Jharkhand has been deposed at the behest of the Central Government. Former CM and MLA from Barhait assembly constituency, Hemant Soren was also present in the House during voting. The Speaker had allotted a seat for him in the front row in the ruling party's designated place. The court had

allowed him to be present in the House for an hour and ordered him not to speak to the media. JMM's Ramdas Soren could not attend the House during the floor test as he was ill. Sita Soren, Lobin Hembram and Chamra Linda -- the three MLAs of the ruling coalition, who were said to be angry -- also voted in favour of the government.

JAIPUR RECORDS DECADE'S HIGHEST RAINFALL IN FEBRUARY

Jaipur: Rajasthan's capital city Jaipur has recorded 22.4 mm rainfall, the highest rainfall in a single day in the last 10 years in the month of February.
The MeT officials said that in the last 24 hours, light to moderate rain with thunder was recorded in different parts of the state. "Dholpur recorded the maximum rainfall of 35 mm while Bilara and Jodhpur in western Rajasthan recorded 18 mm of rainfall," the MeT said. The MeT also warned that the minimum temperature is likely to drop by 2-4 degrees in the next two-three days and dense fog may be recorded at some places in the northern parts. "There will be a reduction in thunderstorm and rain activities in most parts of the state from Monday. However, there is a possibility of partly cloudy sky and only drizzle in Kota division today. In most of the remaining parts the weather will remain mainly dry for the next 5-6 days," the MeT said.

DRDO successfully concludes four flight trials of 'ABHYAS'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully carried out four flight trials of high-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT) - ABHYAS.
The Ministry of Defence (MoD) said that it is designed for autonomous flying with the help of an autopilot indigenously made by the DRDO's Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE). It has Radar Cross Section, Visual and Infrared augmentation system required for weapon practice. It also has a laptop-based Ground Control System with which the aircraft can be integrated and pre-flight checks; data recording during the flight, replay after the flight and post-flight analysis can be carried out, an offi-



cial added. The MoD informed on Monday that the trial was carried out from the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur in Odisha, between January 30 and February 2.
The trials were conducted with four different mission objectives in a revised robust configuration, using a single booster designed by Advanced Systems Laboratory, Hyderabad to provide reduced

launch acceleration. Objectives like safe release of booster, launcher clearance and attaining the required end of launch velocity were achieved.
During the flight trials, various parameters like required endurance, speed, maneuverability, altitude and range were successfully validated, official added. Designed by ADE, ABHYAS offers a realistic threat scenario for practice of weapon systems. The MoD said that ABHYAS requires minimum logistics and is cost-effective compared to imported equivalents. The systems tested recently were realised through Production Agencies - Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Larsen & Toubro (L and T) Defence.
With identified production agencies, ABHYAS is ready for production.

Over 100 students fall sick after midday meals in Bihar's West Champaran



Patna | Agencies

Over 100 students fell ill after consuming mid-day meals in Bagaha sub-division of Bihar's West Champaran district on Monday, officials said.
The incident occurred at a government middle school located at Parsauni village in Bagaha. An official said that the children had consumed the midday meals on Monday afternoon, and soon after that, they started vomiting and complained of stomach ache. The news spread soon in the village

and the parents of the students assembled in the school in large numbers and took their wards to Ramnagar common health centre. Later, some of the affected children were shifted to sub-divisional hospital Bagaha. "We have admitted 90 students in the hospital and they are undergoing treatment. They are in the process of recovery and are out of danger," said a doctor of Bagaha sub-divisional hospital. "As soon as I learnt about the incident, I reached the hospital and assessed the situation.

INDIAN TOY MAKERS GET \$10 MN WORTH EXPORT ORDERS AT GLOBAL FAIR IN GERMANY

Indian toy makers, who participated in the five-day international toy fair at Nuremberg in Germany, claim to have received huge orders worth more than \$10 million, the Union Commerce Ministry said on Monday. According to the toy exporters, buyers from countries such as the US, the UK, South Africa and Germany showed interest in their products and placed a good number of orders at the fair that concluded on February 3. There were more than 55 participants from India this year who showcased their products.

▶ A substantial decrease of 52 per cent in overall import of toys from \$332.55 million in FY 2014-15 to \$158.7 million in FY 2022-23 and increase of 239 per cent in the export of toys from \$96.17 million in FY 2014-15 to \$325.72 million in FY 2022-23 has already been recorded, the ministry said.
▶ While the domestic manufacturers have already experienced success in Germany, tie-ups with internationally acclaimed big players, including Snapdeal and Walmart, are in the pipeline.
▶ The Nuremberg International Toy Fair concluded on February 3. Over 2,000 exhibitors from more than 65 countries participated this year in one of the world's largest toy fairs.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian manufacturers at the Nuremberg International Toy Fair stated that there was a considerable shift in the buyers' approach and behaviour. India is now being recognised as a lucrative alternative sourcing destination as high-quality products are being rolled out after Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Toyconomy policy.
The Indian toy industry highlighted that the government Initiatives like mandatory quality norms, increase in Customs duty and a National Action Plan on Toys (NAPT) have helped in the manufac-



ture of high-quality products, which have garnered appreciation at the international platform.

The Indian toy sector is growing at a healthy rate and competing with global players. Among the most popular cate-

gories at the fair were those pertaining to wooden toys and educational learning toys. The Indian toy makers also said that the prestigious platform opened the doors for international joint ventures with the Indian manufacturing ecosystem gaining global acceptance. The interest of global players in partnering with the Indian industry has provided an impetus to the domestic manufacturers to enhance their manufacturing capacity for catering both to the growing international and national market.
The emerging international recognition of 'Make in India' toys is expected to contribute to the increase in exports.



MANIPUR TRIBAL LEADERS TO MEET AMIT SHAH TO DISCUSS PREVAILING SITUATION

Imphal | Agencies

A delegation of various tribal organisations from Manipur is expected to meet Home Minister Amit Shah and officials of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in Delhi to discuss the current situation in the northeastern state.

The tribal leaders' delegation to meet the Home Minister and MHA officials comprises leaders of Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF), Committee on Tribal Unity, Kuki Inpi Manipur, Zomi Council, Hill Tribal Council and all tribe councils.

Senior ITLF leader and spokesman Ginza Vualzong said that the tribal leaders' delegation would reach Delhi late on Monday night. They are expected to meet the MHA officials Tuesday or Wednesday.

ITLF sources said that they would discuss the prevailing law and order situation in Manipur and the distress of people affected by the ethnic unrest since May 2023.

Ten tribal MLAs of Manipur, including seven from the ruling BJP and all the tribal organisations have



been demanding a separate administration (equivalent to separate state) for the tribals.

The demand was on a number of occasions rejected by the Union Home Minister, Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh and the ruling BJP.

Last week, Biren Singh held separate meetings with Shah and MHA officials in Delhi. He had said the Centre is set to take some important decisions keeping in mind the interests of the people of Manipur.

A senior official in Imphal said that the Chief Minister apprised Shah and

the Home Ministry officials of the latest situation in Manipur, especially in the bordering town of Moreh.

In the recent violent incidents, two Manipur police commandos, several village volunteers and villagers were killed, while many others were injured, including a BSF trooper, in attacks by suspected armed militants in different parts of the riot-hit state. The ITLF in a statement said that the imposition of President's rule is the only way the central government can prevent total anarchy in Manipur.

Manipur has witnessed unprecedented violent clashes, attacks, counter-attacks, and burning of vehicles and government and private properties in 10 of the 16 districts during and after May 3 'Tribal Solidarity March' called by the All-Tribal Students' Union of Manipur to oppose the demand for inclusion of the Meitei community in the Scheduled Tribe category.

In the ethnic violence between the non-tribal Meitei and tribal Kuki-Zo communities, over 190 people have been killed and over 1,500 people injured while over 70,000 people of both communities displaced.

Betting during IPL matches has become normal: Ex-Delhi top cop

Jaipur | Agencies

On the concluding day of the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) on Monday, a discussion was held on 'police files' with former Foreign Secretary of India, Vikas Swarup, and senior police officers who shared their experiences.

Sharing his views, former Police Commissioner of Delhi, Neeraj Kumar, said that betting has become a common thing during IPL matches.

"Betting worth thousands of crores is made during matches. During our investigation, only one name emerged behind all this, that of Dawood Ibrahim, who was making all the deals while sitting in Dubai.

Among the participants were Vikas Swarup, founder of Prayas NGO Amod K. Kant, Neeraj Kumar, and Mumbai Crime Branch's first woman Commissioner Meera Borbanker. Referring to one of his



famous cases, Neeraj Kumar said that in 2013, Dawood Ibrahim's name came up in the IPL spot-fixing saga.

He said that many people watch IPL matches along with their family members and predict the victory or defeat of a team. This type of betting takes place outside also.

Bets worth thousands of crores are made during the matches, he said, adding that

betting has become a common thing in IPL now, which happens in a very organised manner.

"We also proved this during our investigation. When we started investigating, we found out who was running all these rackets. There was only one name behind all this, that of Dawood Ibrahim, who was sitting in Dubai and making all the deals," Kumar said.

Govt rakes in Rs 600 crore as penalties from taxpayers' delay in PAN-Aadhaar link



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government has collected over Rs 600 crore as penalties from persons who failed to meet the deadline for linking their PAN with their Aadhaar card, the Parliament was told on Monday.

Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary told the Lok Sabha, in a writ-

ten reply, that the number of PANs not linked with Aadhaar, excluding exempted categories, is 11.48 crore as of January 29, 2024.

The deadline for linking PAN and Aadhaar was June 30, 2023.

The Income Tax Department had stated in its order that PAN cards will become inoperative if taxpayers fail to link their docu-

ments with Aadhaar within the deadline. Moreover, no refunds would be made against such PANs.

Failure to link PAN with the biometric document would also attract a higher TDS and TCS.

The PAN can be made operative again by paying a fee of Rs 1,000.

Mamata cancels Delhi trip, to skip meeting on 'One Nation, One Election'

Kolkata | Agencies

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced on Monday that she has cancelled her proposed trip to Delhi to attend a crucial meeting on 'One Nation, One Election'.

As per the original schedule, the Chief Minister was supposed to leave for Delhi on Monday evening to attend the meeting on Tuesday, and return to Kolkata on the same night.

However, she said on Monday that since the budget session of the state Assembly is presently underway, her presence in the House is important and hence she has decided to cancel her trip. Instead, she said, Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha members Sudip Bandopadhyay and Kalyan Banerjee will represent the party at the meeting on 'One Nation, One Election'.



Speculation had been rife over the Chief Minister's proposed Delhi visit for quite some time, with rumours doing the rounds that attending the meeting on 'One Nation, One Election' was not the sole purpose of her trip to the national capital.

Political observers here feel that the insistence of the Chief Minister to be present in the state Assembly during the budget session has gained significance, as there are talks that BJP's legislative team is fully charged to attack the state government during the session on the recent CAG findings about non-submission of utilisation certificates by the state government on fund utilisation under various centrally-sponsored schemes.

The issue has gained further significance after leader of opposition in the Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and discussed about the CAG findings.

No takers for YSRCP tickets, says Chandrababu Naidu

Amaravati | Agencies

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) President N. Chandrababu Naidu claimed on Monday that there are no takers for YSR Congress Party tickets to contest forthcoming Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh.

Naidu said that though Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy is offering YSRCP tickets for the Assembly elections, the candidates are not ready to be in the race.

The former Chief Minister was addressing a massive public meeting at Madugula in Anakapalle district as part of the ongoing 'Raa Kadali Raa' programme.

Taking a potshot at the YSRCP leader's public meetings titled 'Siddham' (ready), Naidu remarked that Jagan is not 'Siddham' (ready) and has several doubts on going to polls. Referring to Jagan's recent claim that he clicked buttons more than 100



times to transfer funds for welfare schemes, the TDP supremo asked why he had not pressed the button for the job calendar, for imposing total prohibition and on the revoca-

tion of Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS).

"I am sure that Mr Jagan will certainly go home with the button to be pressed by the voters," he remarked.

Jagan pressed the button nine times to enhance the electricity charges and imposed a burden of Rs.64,000 crore on people, he said.

Maintaining that he has seen several leaders in his political career but has never seen a "psycho" like Jagan, he said that the state will prosper only if Jagan is out of power.

"It's not the question of how many times you have pressed the button but you should reveal how much you have swallowed," he said.

Expressing deep concern that Visakhapatnam, which was once known as the financial capital of Andhra Pradesh, has now turned into the capital for crime, the former Chief Minister said that though Jagan wants to go to Visakhapatnam, the local people are not ready to welcome him.

Regretting that north Andhra has turned into a centre for violence, turbulence and land encroachments, he said that Jagan encroached even Rishi Konda.

Raj Thackeray's MNS opposes Pak singer Atif Aslam's 'comeback' to Bollywood

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Revising its old policy, the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) led by Raj Thackeray has warned Bollywood producers against 'laying the red carpet' for Pakistani singer Atif Aslam on his purported "comeback" plans to croon for a Hindi film.

MNS Cinema Wing President Ameya Khopkar said that those who are gearing up to bring Aslam here based on a court verdict "need to be shown their place". "Pakistani artistes will not be tolerated here. Never. It is unfortunate that we need to repeat ourselves, yet let me make it clear once again," Khopkar, who had earlier objected to the release of a Pakistan film titled 'The Legend of Maula Jatt' in December 2022, said here on Monday. He also targeted popular singer Arijit Singh, who is reportedly standing in support of Aslam.



"This was and will remain the stand of MNS. Not just Bollywood. I challenge the industries of any language in India to have any Pakistani artistes in their projects. Word of caution: DO NOT make the mistake of accepting this challenge," said Khopkar. As per current indications, Aslam is reportedly planning to record a romantic number for the upcoming Bollywood flick 'Love Story of 90's' to be produced by

Sangani Brothers Motion Pictures, starring Adhyayan Suman and Divita Rai.

Aslam (40), the Pakistan-born singer, lyricist, composer and actor, has recorded many songs with top Bollywood music directors for films such as 'Baaghi 2', 'Tiger Zinda Hai', 'A Flying Jatt', 'Race 2', 'Tere Naal Love Ho Gaya', 'Kismet Konnection', 'Race', 'Zeher' and 'Kalyug', among others.

AAP leader Sanjay Singh not allowed to take oath as Rajya Sabha MP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Sanjay Singh was not allowed to take oath as Rajya Sabha MP even as he was earlier allowed by a Delhi court to reach Parliament on Monday to take oath as a member of the Upper House.

Terminating the development 'unconstitutional', some AAP members met Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar over the issue, and they were apprised of the rules and procedures, an official said. A source from the Chairman's office said: "Proceedings of Rajya Sabha are regulated by the listed business which is notified in the bulletin. The oath taking of Sanjay Singh wasn't listed in the business of the House and no communication from Rajya Sabha on this matter ever came for con-

sideration of Rajya Sabha Chair." Some matters of Sanjay Singh are pending before the Committee of Privileges, including the alleged deliberate disregard of directions of the Rajya Sabha Chairman by Singh who was arrested last year in connection with the now-scrapped excise policy case.

His suspension was effected on July 24, 2023, and on August 11, 2023, the House passed the order. As per that, his suspension continues.

A source said that proceedings of Rajya Sabha are regulated by the listed business which is notified in the bulletin, adding "oath taking of Sanjay Singh was not listed in the business of House and no communication from Rajya Sabha on this matter ever came for consideration of the Rajya Sabha Chairman".

JAIPUR LITERATURE FESTIVAL 2024 CONCLUDES WITH APLOMB

Lalit Sharma | Jaipur

The final day of the Samsung Galaxy Tab S9 Series Jaipur Literature Festival 2024 suitably concluded the grand and iconic 5-day literary marathon with a set of marquee speakers who spoke on a range of topics from memoir to sports, history to migration, and food to gaming.

The morning began with a performance by Saptak Chatterjee, a third-generation Hindustani classical vocalist who played melodious tunes on his classical violin. The session began with Festival Co-Director, writer and historian William Dalrymple dwelling in the historical background of Shahjahanabad and its rich cultural heritage of arts and literature. Historian and author Swapna Little spoke about her book Shahjahanabad: The Broken Script which discusses the history of Delhi under the last of the Mughals and the East India Company, with a focus on the role of religion in defining oneself. Little remarked, "Of course, religion was an important part of your identity but it was not the only part of your identity." Sarmishtha Mukherjee revisiting the conversations she had with her father regarding the journey of Congress as a



political party. Mukherjee further divulged the diary entries of her father, which her newly released book Pranab My Father: A Daughter Remembers is mostly based upon. While talking about her father, Mukherjee said, "In a personality-centred political culture, the supreme leaders might find it a bit irksome to work with somebody who has a mind, a very strong mind of his/her own, but with a formidable combination of experience, expertise and knowledge, that kind of person can never blindly toe the line." Writer, mathematician and Simonyi Professor for Public Understanding of Science at Oxford, Marcus du Sautoy's recent book Around the World in Eighty Games, in which he traverses the globe while exploring the genesis of games and what makes them fascinating. Veteran writer Mridula Garg and literary activist and translator

Kalpna Raina spoke of the trajectory and narrative arc of their illustrious literary journeys and iconic contributions to translations. Raina spoke about the journal and digital literary magazine 'Words Without Borders', which provides a platform to the people who don't have a voice in the English-speaking world. Speaking about the power of translation, Garg added, "Translation is also creation. It is like writing; the only thing is you have to make your ego subservient to that of the writer's." Indian-born British restaurateur and cookbook author Asma Khan talked about her recent cookbook Ammu: Food to Nourish Your Soul. She shared her life in Cambridge while studying and then starting a 'Supper Club' to organise dinners and serve Indian food to provide employment to women in need and to break the stereotype that "Indian food is ghee, cream and loads of tomatoes". The session ended with Khan expressing her concern for women being mistreated in the kitchen at restaurants and dismissed at home. The definitive coming together of ideas, perspectives and the vast treasury of knowledge that this Festival has come to embody globally, will once again be awaited for the course of the coming year, with anticipation and curiosity.

I will fight the polls from Chhindwara, not Kamal Nath, says son Nakul Nath

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Congress is yet to finalise its candidates for the coming Lok Sabha election but the party's lone MP from Madhya Pradesh, Nakul Nath, on Monday said that he would be the candidate from Chhindwara constituency and not his father and former Chief Minister Kamal Nath.

Addressing a gathering of party workers in Susar Assembly seat of Chhindwara, Nakul Nath said: "There have been rumours doing the round for the last few days that Kamal Nath will be contesting the Lok Sabha election. Let me make you all clear that I will be the candidate from Chhindwara constituency and not Kamal Nath." He further added that his father and veteran Congress leader will be supervising the election preparation. "People of Chhindwara have been showing their love for my father for last 40 years,

and I believe that strong bonding between you (people) and the Nath family will remain forever."

He also noted that Chhindwara has been the only district where the Congress won all seven assembly seats the election held in November last year. The Congress had won all seven assembly seats of Chhindwara in 2018 also.

Nakul Nath's statement came a day after his father had said that the party would decide candidates.

Nakul Nath, 49, a graduate from Boston University, was elected as MP from Chhindwara in 2019, and is said to be the richest MP in the 17th Lok Sabha with assets worth Rs. 660 crore.

Kamal Nath was elected as a MP for nine times from his bastion Chhindwara. Even during the state Assembly election, Kamal Nath has presented his home district as a model of development in Madhya Pradesh.



SOME MARATHAS JEALOUS OF ME, CLAIMS JARANGE-PATIL; VOWS TO GO ON HUNGER STRIKE AGAIN

Team Absolute | Jalna (Maharashtra)

Claiming that some Maratha leaders were 'jealous', the Shivba Sanghatana leader Manoj Jarange-Patil reiterated on Monday that he would go on a hunger strike from February 10. Speaking to the media, Jarange-Patil demanded that the Maharashtra Government immediately implement its promises on the draft given to him on January 27 and initiate the work on giving the Marathas reservation. The Maratha leader said, "A handful of 10-20 disgruntled people from the government as well as opposition groups, have taken the contract to speak against me and attack me on social media. They are jealous of me



and resent me... This fight is for the Marathas... But from now onwards, if they don't stop their antics, then I will reveal their names along with their parties and leaders." He said that these people keep raising issues like "what have the Marathas got?" or what have the "Marathas lost through this long movement." "They are making desperate attempts to sideline me. But I will not step aside till my Maratha brethren tell me to... These elements want to grab credit and are resorting to such tactics," declared Jarange-Patil. He slammed those "bent upon destroying the cause of the Marathas" and said that a handful of people are "unable to digest the fact that a man from a poor family is fighting for the community's quota. They are worried

that if I am not broken and the agitation is not managed, they will lose their standing among the Marathas." "Wherever I go, people always talk of Maratha quotas. For the cause of the community, I will go ahead with my hunger strike from February 10," he said. Simultaneously, the opposing OBC groups have also threatened to intensify their agitation vis-à-vis the Marathas, especially after break-away Nationalist Congress Party (AP) Minister, Chhagan Bhujbal, disclosed how he had "quit" his post way back on November 16, and his resignation letter was still with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. On his part, Shinde has repeatedly assured that the Maratha quotas would be given without affecting the share of other communities.

SC to consider listing Thackeray faction's plea against Maha Speaker ruling

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday said that it will consider listing the plea filed by Shiv Sena-UBT faction challenging the ruling of Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar which had held that Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and his camp constitute the "real" Shiv Sena. "We will list it," a bench presided over by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud told senior advocate Kapil Sibal, who appeared on behalf of the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction and mentioned the matter for listing. "Milords, the matter was to be listed today. If it can be



listed, elections are to be held," Sibal said. On January 22, the top court had issued notice on a plea filed by Shiv Sena UBT leader Sunil Prabhhu and called for the response of CM Shinde and 38 other MLAs within a period of two weeks.

Former CM Thackeray-led Shiv Sena faction has petitioned the Supreme Court questioning the January 10 decision passed by Narwekar holding that the group led by CM Shinde was the real "Shiv Sena" as it commanded a majority in the legislature and also in the party's National Executive. The petition also challenges the dismissal of the disqualification petitions filed against CM Shinde and other MLAs of his camp. On the other hand, ruling Shiv Sena's Chief Whip Bharat Gogavale has petitioned the Bombay High Court seeking disqualification of Thackeray's faction legislators.

IIT-Bombay Racing tops overall at 'Formula Bharat 2024'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Indian Institute of Technology Bombay Racing team bagged the top honours at the Formula Bharat 2024, emerging as the overall champions in the Electric Vehicle Category, besides shining in other categories, officials said here on Monday. The team outshone 41 other teams from across India and garnered several accolades at the event held recently. In the Electric category, the IIT-B team secured the first place overall and also emerged victorious in Static events, bagging the first place, from among 41 competing teams from all over India. In the Cost Event, the team came in second



place, while in the Vehicle Dynamics (VED) category, they secured third place. Additionally, the IIT-B team, led by the Faculty Advisor Prof. Sandeep Anand of Electrical Engineering, also received a Special Award for the best control system at the event. The Formula Bharat is an Indian Formula Student-style engineering design

competition that attracts participation of universities and colleges from across the country, to compete with a life-size formula-style vehicle in areas of engineering design, overall cost, marketability and dynamic performance. It replicates the global student Formula series hosted in around 11 countries every year.

PM Modi to open Mumbai Coastal Road on Chhatrapati Shivaji's 394 birth anniversary

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the new toll-free Mumbai Coastal Road Project north-south portion of Phase 1, here on February 19 -- the 394th birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj -- which is expected to revolutionise road commute in the country's commercial capital. The MCRP, which is named officially as 'Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Coastal Motorway', is being executed by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) from its own resources. As per Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's suggestion, the CSMCM will be toll-free for Mumbai commuters and will shall the travel time from Worli to Marine Lines, a distance of 10.58 km, from the existing 50 minutes to barely 15 minutes. When fully completed, the 8-lane,



29.2 km long grade-separated motorway will link Marine Drive with Kandivali suburb via the city's western coastal route, the first of its kind in the state and billed an engineering marvel, costing around Rs 12,700 crore. The work on MCRP was first proposed by the Shiv Sena President Uddhav Thackeray in 2013, the work

on the project started in 2017-2018. Later in November 2019, Thackeray took over as Chief Minister heading the Maha Vikas Aghadi coalition, and work slowed down due to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown before picking up pace later. "We started the work in 2017-2018 and till our government was toppled

by a bunch of cowards in June 2022, the MCRP work had already completed 65 per cent progress. We held weekly reviews and monthly visits, unlike the current regime," said World MLA Aditya Thackeray, taking potshots at the current MahaYuti government of Shinde. Slamming the government, he said that in order to claim credit before the elections, the government wants to inaugurate an unfinished coastal road. "Elections are the criteria, not citizens. Inaugurating the coastal road, not fully ready, is a bad idea... but then, for politics, what all can be done! Shame that our city is being used for their politics," said Aditya Thackeray. The first phase will be fully ready by May 2024 when it will be thrown open to traffic in both directions, as indicated by BMC Commissioner I.S. Chahal last week.

Shiv Sena ministers meet Fadnavis over BJP legislators' allegations against CM Shinde

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Two days after a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislator Ganpat Kalu Gaikwad was nabbed for shooting a ruling Shiv Sena leader in Ulhasnagar, several Ministers of the latter's party called on Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis here on Monday. The Shiv Sena ministers met Fadnavis before the state cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Excise Minister Shambhuraj Desai told mediapersons later. The ostensible reason for the meeting was Gaikwad's comments levelling serious allegations against the CM, accusing Shinde of reportedly owing him a lot of money and for setting up a criminal fiefdom in the state. "Shinde is trying to establish a kingdom of goons in the state. He deceived Uddhav Thackeray, he will betray the BJP also. He owes me crores of rupees. Shinde should quit if Maharashtra has to be administered well. This is my humble plea to Fadnavis and Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Gaikwad earlier had said before he was whisked off by the Thane Police. Apparently rattled by the allegations hurled publicly by a ruling ally directly naming and targeting the Chief Minister, the delegation is understood to have conveyed its sentiments to Fadnavis, terming the comments as "baseless and unwarranted". It may be recalled that late on Friday night (February 2), Gaikwad had



opened fire at Shiv Sena Kalyan-Ulhasnagar leader Mahesh Gaekwad inside the Hill Line Police Station of Ghatkopar, sparking a massive political furore. Mahesh Gaekwad sustained six bullet injuries and his aide Rahul Patil took two bullets. Gaekwad underwent a six-hour emergency surgery on Saturday to extricate bullets at the Jupiter Hospital in Thane city -- the hometown of CM Shinde -- and his condition is now grad-

ually improving. Taking a serious note of the incident, CM Shinde and his son, Dr. Shrikant E. Shinde, Kalyan MP, have visited Gaekwad several times at the hospital to enquire after his health. The comments of Gaikwad -- now in police custody till February 14 -- have not gone down well with the party rank-and-file as they came from an ally leader ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

STRONG, FOUL SMELL FROM LOCKED HOUSE NEAR MUMBAI LEADS TO 3 DECOMPOSED BODIES

Mumbai: A foul smell from a locked house near Mumbai has led to the discovery of three decomposed bodies, the police said today. The bodies found in Vasai had no injury marks, and there was a strong smell of gas in the house, they added. The bodies have been identified by their nicknames - Mo Ajam, Raju and Chhotku - as fruit sellers from Anand Nagar in Vasai. The residents had informed the cops on Sunday afternoon on noticing the stench coming from the second floor of the building. The cops broke in to find the three dead bodies and a strong smell of gas in the house. Initial probe suggests someone would have left the gas on and a lack of oxygen led to their death. However, the exact reason will be known only after post-mortem.

Vistara flight from Dubai misses immigration procedures at Mumbai, takes passengers to domestic terminal



Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

After arriving on a Vistara flight from Dubai, certain passengers were erroneously taken to Mumbai's domestic terminal, without completing immigration procedures on Sunday at Mumbai airport. The airline has said that they will enhance operating procedures to avoid such occurrences in the future. This incident raises con-

cerns as it appears to be a security violation, considering the mandatory immigration process for international arrivals at Indian airports. Bureau of Civil Aviation (BCAS) is yet to respond to the incident. Meanwhile, in a statement issued on Monday, the airline said that few of their customers, arriving from Dubai to Mumbai on Vistara flight UK 202 on February 4, were erroneously taken to domestic arrivals instead of international arrivals.

"Our teams worked alongside security agencies and relevant authorities to ensure that the said customers were taken to the designated area to complete their arrival formalities and conclude their journey," said the spokesperson. "We regret the inconvenience caused to the customers, inadvertently. We are revisiting and further tightening our standard operating procedures to avoid any recurrence," the spokesperson added.

Mumbai cops cane crowds protesting arrest of Mufti by Gujarat ATS for 'hate speech'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

At least two persons were injured when Mumbai Police resorted to mild caning to control a huge crowd which protested the release of a Muslim preacher who was arrested by Gujarat Police in a 'hate speech' case, officials said here on Monday. A team of Junagadh Police (Gujarat) came to Mumbai and nabbed Mufti Salman Azhari who had allegedly made an inflammatory discourse at a public event there on January 31. After videos of the discourse went viral, the Junagadh Police booked two local organisers M. Yousef Malek, Azim H. Odedara and Mufti Azhari, who had reached Mumbai later after allegedly making objection-

able utterances. The Gujarat Police's Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) rushed to Mumbai and swooped on Azhari's home in the eastern suburbs early on Sunday, detained him for several hours before placing him under arrest and then took him to Ghatkopar Police Station for completing the formalities before taking him to Junagadh. Hearing of the arrest, a large number of his supporters gathered outside the police station, on Sunday even and the crowds kept increasing by late night, raising slogans and demanding the immediate release of Mufti, disrupting traffic movement for some time. In the wee hours on Monday (February 5), the police resorted to mild caning to disperse the crowds in

which at least two persons were injured, and videos of the victims surfaced on social media. The situation is said to be under control and police are keeping a tight vigil in the vicinity. An alumnus of the Al Azhar Cairo University (Egypt), Mufti Salman Azhari is a Islamic scholar, Sunni preacher and YouTuber who has founded several institutions, and lectures all over the world. In a statement on his official account on X, it is said that 25-30 strong Gujarat ATS teams came and detained him around 11.56 a.m. (Sunday), and the action came after the Gujarat Police lodged a FIR based on "a false allegation of hate speech by right wing activists".

4TH INDIA FASHION AWARDS TO BE HELD IN MUMBAI ON MARCH 7-8

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Mumbai

The fourth edition of India Fashion Awards (IFA), will be held on March 7th and 8th at St. Regis Hotel, Mumbai. IFA is the only fashion award in the country that recognizes and celebrates the creativity and innovation of the fashion industry players. Embracing the theme "Fashion for Good" in partnership with WION, IFA will explore the different facets of sustainability that resonate with the forward-thinking ethos of the fashion realm. The upcoming fourth edition of IFA promises an engaging two-day conclave, accompanied by an array of other exciting additions. IFA acknowledges the unsung heroes behind the scenes as well as the artisans who play a vital role in sustaining the fashion ecosystem. Beyond the spotlight of designers and models, the awards recognize the invaluable contributions of show directors, stylists, makeup artists, backstage managers, and all the other



stakeholders who collectively shape the vibrant tapestry of the fashion industry. The spirit of IFA imbues excellence and champions the ongoing evolution of Indian fashion, propelling the nation's style quotient to

unparalleled heights. Expressing his excitement about the upcoming edition, Sanjay Nigam, Founder, India Fashion Awards, said: "India Fashion Awards is a movement that aims to change the dynamics of

the fashion industry. We plan to bring together every individual from the fashion fraternity transcending their distinct roles in the entire ecosystem, along with the 'farm to fashion' approach which talks about adding value in each step of the process-reflecting the true essence of sustainability." The fourth season of IFA will hold conclave sessions, panel discussions, and gala award ceremonies, all designed to foster growth and innovation within the fashion ecosystem and make a positive impact. This edition features over 30 award categories, such as Designer of the Year, Fashion Stylist of the Year, Model of the Year, Makeup Artist of the Year, Fashion Influencer of the Year, and Fashion Photographer of the Year. The distinguished jury includes Lubna Adam, Candice Pinto, Leena Singh, Rochelle Pinto, Anaita Shroff Adajania, Raghavendra Rathore, Tarun Khadwal, and Aditi Srivastava. In addition to the jury, Daman Chaudhary will serve on the advisory panel.



EDITOR'S SPECS

New challenges for Nitish

Political history repeated itself in Bihar with JD(U) president Nitish Kumar returning to the NDA, forming the government and taking oath as Chief Minister, but this time 'Sushasan Babu' faces the herculean task of managing his political foes in the BJP-led alliance. There is no doubt in the fact that this time, the BJP government in the state is the strongest ever. However, the NDA's allies include Nitish's political opponent LJP (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan. In the new government in the state, BJP's Samrat Chaudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha have been made Deputy Chief Ministers, and both of them are also considered as political opponents of Nitish. Both deputy chief ministers have a hardliner image in the party, and under such circumstances, Nitish is facing a challenge to manage them in the alliance. Meanwhile, Jitan Ram Manjhi's HAM(S), which has just four members in the state Assembly, has demanded two ministerial berths. Manjhi said that if his demand is not accepted, then it would be injustice with his party. He also made it clear that in the Mahagathbandhan in the state, he was being considered for the post of chief minister. However, even if Manjhi parts his ways with the NDA, it wouldn't have any impact on the BJP-led alliance, so the chances of fulfillment of his demands are minimal. LJP(Ram Vilas) State President Raju Tiwari said we do not have any personal enmity with Nitish, if he runs the government well, we are with him. One week has passed since the formation of the NDA government in the state, and former union minister Upendra Kushwaha has met Manjhi and Nitish, but how much of their differences were sorted out will be revealed in the near future.

POST A SENSIBLE BUDGET, MARKETS HAVE RALLIED; NOW, A CONSOLIDATION IS NEEDED

Arun Kejriwal

The week gone by was super eventful, volatile and action packed. We had the last of the Union budgets by the present government being presented. Even though it was just a vote-on-account, there was expectation which got built up into the same. This was partly on account of media hype and the opposition wishing and wanting to counter the government if they made announcements which went against the spirit of this being just an appropriation bill. Thankfully none of this happened and the budget saw markets move up even sharply on the following day. For the week, markets were up on three of the five sessions and lost on two. BSE SENSEX gained 1,384.96 points or 1.96% to close at 72,085.63 points while NIFTY gained 501.20 points or 2.35% to close at 21,853.80 points. The broader indices saw BSE100, BSE200 and BSE500 gain 2.36%, 2.50% and 2.62% respectively. BSE MIDCAP gained 3.13% while BSE SMALLCAP was up 3.35%. The Indian Rupee gained 20 paise or 0.24% to close at Rs 82.92 to the US Dollar. Dow Jones had a great week and gained on four of the five trading sessions. This was even though the FED kept rates unchanged at its meeting during the week. It now appears any rate cut may happen in either two months' time or maybe four months. This did not affect the markets and they continued to rally strongly. RBI would be meeting for its bi-monthly policy review meeting between February 6 and 8. It is widely expected that repo rates would remain unchanged. The current repo rates are at 6.5% and they have remained at this level since February 2023. RBI took strict action against Paytm payments bank and debarred Paytm from allowing fresh transactions and credits into the wallets which are operated by Paytm payments bank because of serious compliance issues. The stock markets reacted in the manner that they know best and the share lost 20% each for the last two days. The share price of Paytm stands at Rs

487.05, a loss of Rs 273.95 or 35.99% from Rs 761 on Wednesday. While the business of Paytm and its use as a payment facilitator is not impacted, it needs to shift balances and appoint new payments bank at the earliest within the current month of February. In what could at best be described as a major coincidence, the Jio Payments bank, which had been granted a licence in April 2018, is all over social media. I believe as investors realise the ground reality, the share Paytm should begin to consolidate in the coming week. The budget was announced on Thursday and markets were fairly quiet on a net basis on that day. They lost marginally and were down about 0.15%. The event saw a couple of important events from the market perspective. There was a very strong message and body language that was visible from the FM's speech when she said that the government would present the full budget in July 2024. The temptation to splurge some money on populist measures ahead of the general elections was done away with. On the other hand, the budget has remained within the confines of the fiscal path and actually cut some of the capital expenditure. Indian bonds would list later on during the calendar year in international markets and to ensure that they get fair valuation, the budget targets and fiscal prudence are being exercised for a fourth year in a row. Increased expenditure on infrastructure projects, railway development and announcement of new freight corridors were highlights of the budget. The budget led to euphoria in the markets the next day and intraday the BSE SENSEX was up about 1,450 points while NIFTY was up 425 points. Markets ended with gains of 440 points on BSE SENSEX and 150 points on NIFTY. In the process, NIFTY made a new lifetime high at 22,126.80 points beating the previous high made on January 16 by a whisker. The difference was a mere 2.65 points. However, BSE SENSEX was unable to make the new high and fell quite short of it, almost 340 points. The week ahead is yet another



bumper IPO week with as many as four mainboard IPOs opening and closing during the week. These IPOs are from those companies for whom listing before February 15 is important as they have bonds listed on the exchanges and need to declare quarterly results and also those who were waiting for the budget and hoping that it would not dampen sentiments. The first IPO is from Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Limited, which is tapping the capital markets with its fresh issue of Rs 600 crore and an offer for sale of Rs 320 crore. The price band is Rs 147-155. The issue opens on Monday (February 5) and closes on Wednesday (February 7). The retail portion is 10% of the issue as the company had not reported profits in the financial years 2021 and 2022. The company reported an EPS of Rs 2.75 for the year ended March 2023. The PE multiple for the company is 53.45-56.36 which is comparable with its peer set such as Chalet Hotels, Lemon Tree and Samhi Hotels. The issue merits subscription. The second issue is from Rashi Peripherals Limited which is into the national distribution of global technology brands for information and communication technology products. The company is tapping the markets with its fresh issue of Rs 600 crores in a price band of Rs 295-311. The issue would open on Wednesday (February 7), and close on Friday (February 9). The company reported revenues of Rs 9,454.27 crores and a net profit of Rs

123.34 crores for the year ended March 2023. The EPS for the company on a fully diluted basis was Rs 29.50. The PE for the company is 10-10.54 times which compares favourably with its listed peer, Redington India Limited. Subscription to the issue is warranted. The third issue to open during the week is from Jana Small Finance Bank Limited which is tapping the capital markets with its fresh issue of Rs 462 crores and an offer for sale of 26,08,629 equity shares. The price band of the issue is Rs 393-414 and the issue would open on Wednesday (February 7), and close on Friday (February 9). The company reported a fully diluted EPS of Rs 42.64 for the year ended March 23. Based on this EPS, the PE multiple for the small finance bank is 9.22-9.71. Post issue, the NAV of the bank would be Rs 298.52. At this NAV, the price to book, a key ratio for evaluating banks would be at 0.72 which makes the offering very lucrative and would receive overwhelming support. The issue becomes one where investors should try their luck and hope that their application is successful in the lottery. The fourth and final issue to open this week on Wednesday (February 7) and close on Friday (February 9) is from Capital Small Finance Bank Limited. The company is raising Rs 450 crores in a fresh issue and consists of an offer for sale of 15,61,329 shares in a price band of Rs 44.5-46.8. The compa-

ny is into Agriculture, MSME and mortgage loans and is present in 5 states and one union territory. Its presence is strongest in Punjab followed by Haryana, Delhi and it has entered Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh as well. Chandigarh is the union territory it is present in. The company reported an EPS of Rs 27.21 on a fully diluted basis for the year ended March 23. The PE for the company is 16.35-17.20. It is expensive compared to another issue which is open at the same time from Jana Small Finance Bank Limited. The NAV for the bank, post the issue, is at 232.79. The price to book for the bank at the above NAV assuming the issue is priced at the top end would be 2.01. The issue is reasonably priced looking at the opportunity. However, if we were to look at subscribing to just one of the two banks on offer, the issue from Jana is better priced and offers a higher return than Capital. Coming to the markets in the week ahead, one can clearly say that the risk reward ratio is against the investor. The sharp volatility witnessed particularly on Friday is a dangerous sign and does not augur well for the markets. The sharp gains in the PSU stocks particularly the railway stocks are behaving is another reason to feel discomfort. It makes sense to take some money of the table and allow markets to cool off. FPIs were big sellers in January 2024 and sold stock worth Rs 25,744 crores. In short, it's time to be cautious and with no news flow in the immediate future, cooling off is a must for markets. While the RBI meeting in the coming week is expected to keep rates steady and the election results are a no-brainer, the pace at which markets are rising need to taper. We cannot peak so soon with result day still four months away. Trade cautiously. (Arun Kejriwal is the founder of Kejriwal Research and Investment Services. The views expressed are personal)

international

10 COPS KILLED IN TERROR ATTACK ON PAK POLICE STATION AHEAD OF POLLS

Hamza Ameer | Islamabad

At least 10 police officers were martyred and six critically injured in yet another targeted terror attack on a police station in Dera Ismail Khan during the early hours of Monday. The attack signifies the tense, sensitive and critical situation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province with increased terror attacks, only four days before the polling day on February 8. According to the police, terrorists entered the Chodhwan police station at around 3 a.m. on Monday morning, sniping out the guards standing around it. "They hurled grenades as well as shot at police officers they encountered. Four of the martyred belong to the Elite Force," said a police official. "After entering the building, the terrorists used hand grenades which caused more casualties to the police," said Malik Anees ul Hassan, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) of Draban. Police sources also revealed that the attack was carried out by at least 30 terrorists, who attacked from at least



three different directions. "There was an exchange of fire for at least two-and-a-half hours," KP Provincial Police Chief Akhtar Hayat Gandapur said. "Following the attack, a clearance operation was initiated by police officers as well as military personnel. Military has taken up security duties around the police station and are also leading a clearance operation in the forest nearby," he added. The latest attack is part of a series of attacks in recent days, further complicat-

ing the security situation in the province and raises even more concerns over the upcoming general elections to be held on February 8 across the country. Just over a month ago, at least 23 soldiers were martyred after militants rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into a security forces post in Dera Ismail Khan district. The car bomb was followed by a suicide attack, collapsing the building causing casualties. The Dera Ismail Khan district has been under the shadow of terror attacks

for some time, especially since the announcement of the polling day. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has also taken notice of the ongoing incidents of terror attacks and had called in an emergency meeting with security officials. It is to be noted that the terror attacks have also claimed lives of candidates of various political parties. Awami National Party (ANP) activist, who was contesting as an Independent candidate for the National Assembly in KP's Bajaur district, was killed at a political rally of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in Qilla Abdullah in Balochistan. Moreover, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate Ali Madad Jattak was killed in a grenade attack in Quetta's Sariab Road while a similar attack also claimed life of Mir Zahoor Buledi in Kech district of Balochistan. Targeted terror attacks on political rallies and people contesting elections, especially in KP and Balochistan, including targeted major attacks on security posts and police stations, have put some serious questions over the maintenance of security during the Election Day.

Fresh trouble for Sunak as Minister accused of giving Infosys 'VIP access': Report

London | Agencies

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is facing a fresh conflict of interest row after a Conservative minister on a trade mission to India last April said he would be happy to help IT firm Infosys, owned by his wife's family, grow in the UK. According to a Daily Mirror investigation, Trade Minister Dominic Johnson said he was "keen to see a bigger Infosys presence in the UK and would be happy to do what he could to facilitate that". The development comes as the Bengaluru-based firm founded by Akshata Murty's father vies for contracts in the UK worth 750 million pounds and plans to increase its workforce in its second-biggest market by 20 per cent to 6,000. Valued at more than 500 million pounds, much of the enormous wealth accumulated by Sunak and his wife -- who has a 0.91 per cent stake and reaped dividends of 13 million pounds in the last financial year -- comes from this IT firm. At a meeting at the company's office, details of which were obtained by The Mirror by using Freedom of Information requests, Johnson steered Infosys on how to obtain UK visas for its staff. Johnson "outlined the mobility schemes available which Infosys could take advantage of, particularly the High Potential Individual visa scheme," which allows holders to stay in the UK for two years.



The April 2023 meeting also discussed how the India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) would benefit Infosys. "Reassurance that the FTA will further create new opportunities and investor-friendly policies to support business growth," one of the points mentioned in the briefing notes for Johnson read. Ahead of Sunak's visit to India for the G20 summit in September last year, trade experts and parliamentarians raised concerns alleging that Infosys would financially benefit from the post-Brexit trade deal.

Turkey 'neutralises' 11 Kurdish militants in Syria

Ankara | Agencies

Turkish security forces "neutralised" 11 members of the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in northern Syria, the country's Defence Ministry said on Monday. The YPG members were targeted while plotting an attack on Turkish soldiers in the "Operation Olive Branch" and "Operation Euphrates Shield" zones in northern Syria, the Ministry said in a statement as quoted by Xinhua news agency report. "We continue to respond in kind to terrorist attacks," the Ministry added. Turkish authorities often use the term "neutralise" in their statements to imply the alleged "terrorists" have either surrendered, been killed, or been captured. The



Turkish army launched Operation Euphrates Shield in 2016, Operation Olive Branch in 2018, Operation Peace Spring in 2019, and Operation Spring Shield in 2020 in northern Syria to create a YPG-free zone along the border with the neighbouring country. Turkey sees the YPG group as the Syrian branch of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PKK, listed as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the US, and the European Union, has rebelled against the Turkish government for more than three decades.

Gov Newsom declares state of emergency as heavy rain, winds batter California

Los Angeles | Agencies

California Governor Gavin Newsom has proclaimed a state of emergency for several counties in Southern California as a series of winter storms began impacting much of the state with high winds, damaging rain and heavy snowfall. The proclamation covers eight counties -- Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura, Xinhua news agency reported. The emergency proclamation includes provisions authorising a California National Guard response if tasked, facilitating unemployment benefits for impacted residents, and mak-



ing it easier for out-of-state contractors and utilities to repair storm damage, according to Newsom's office. "California is ready with a record number of emergency assets on the ground to respond to the impacts of this

storm," Newsom said in a statement. More than 790,000 customers in California are experiencing power outages as of Sunday night, according to PowerOutages.us. The US National Weather Service (NWS) issued a rare hurricane-force wind warning for the Central Coast. "Additional areas of heavy rainfall are expected in the Central and Northern CA Coastal Ranges and the Central Valley going through the evening and into the overnight hours," said NWS. A flash flood warning is in effect for parts of the Southern and Central coast, including areas in Los Angeles, where officials warned of one of the "most dramatic weather days in recent memory".

Hamas condemns US-British airstrikes on Yemen

Gaza | Agencies

Hamas has condemned the US-British airstrikes on Yemen, considering it "an escalation that will drag the region into more turmoil". "We strongly condemn the US-British airstrikes of the Republic of Yemen and consider it a blatant attack on the sovereignty of an Arab country," Hamas was quoted by Xinhua news agency as saying on Sunday. Hamas in a press statement said that the airstrikes represented "an escalation that will drag the region into more turmoil and instability, for the repercussions of which Washington and Israel bear full responsibility".

US and British forces launched joint strikes Saturday against targets in the Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen, said the Pentagon. Yemen's Houthi group said on Sunday morning it would launch retaliatory attacks for the US-British airstrikes overnight on six provinces under Houthi's control in northern Yemen, including the capital Sanaa. Since the Israel-Hamas conflict broke out on October 7, 2023, the Houthis have carried out more than 40 missile attacks against commercial vessels and US naval ships in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The Houthis said they aimed to press Israel to end the offensive and siege of Gaza.



CM YADAV SETS UP CORE TEAM OF IAS OFFICERS; RESHUFFLE OF IPS OFFICERS, COLLECTORS NEXT

Team Absolute | Bhopal

New Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Mohan Yadav, has begun setting up a core team of IAS officers for his office and a reshuffle of IPS officers and District Collectors is likely in the next few days.

After IAS officers, the state is gearing up for a reshuffle of IPS officers with Yadav holding a meeting with DGP Sudhir Saxena last week. Sources privy to the development told IANS that a major reshuffle of District Collectors is likely in the next few days. The senior bureaucrats, who were posted in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) during former CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan's regime, have all been replaced with the new team.

Last month, senior IAS officer Sandeep Yadav was appointed as Commissioner, Public Relations, the department being headed by Mohan



Yadav, and Sameer Yadav, who is a 2000-batch state police officer, was made in-charge of the CM's security. Similarly, a 1997-batch IAS officer,

Raghendra Singh, who previously served as Commissioner, Public Relations, was appointed as Principal Secretary, CMO, last month. Now, some more senior bureaucrats have been added to the CMO.

In the reshuffle Bharat Yadav, a 2008-batch officer was appointed as Secretary to the CM, while Avinash Lavania, a 2009-batch officer and Managing Director of the MP Road Development Corporation, has been appointed as his Additional Secretary.

Other senior bureaucrats who have found a place in the CM's core team are Chandrashekhar Walimbe, a 2010-batch officer who has also been elevated as Additional Secretary to the CM, while Aditi Garg, a 2015-batch officer, and Anshul Gupta, a 2016-batch officer, have been made Deputy Secretaries in the CMO.

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Kamal Nath sends papers with Lord Ram written 4.31cr times to Ayodhya

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath on Monday flagged off a vehicle carrying papers with Lord Ram name written on them 4.31 crore times to Ayodhya.

The vehicle was flagged off from Chhindwara in presence of his son MP Nakul Nath while over one lakh people were in attendance to flag-off the vehicle. "Got the privilege of sending Lord Ram's name written approximately 4.31 crore times by lakhs of people from Chhindwara to Ayodhya," Kamal Nath said after flagging off the vehicle.

The process of writing the name of Lord Ram was started on the very same day the Congress' central leadership had announced not to attend the Pran Pratishtha ceremony,



ny, terming the occasion as a BJP-RSS event.

Nakul Nath had then said that he will distribute papers to the people to write the name Ram. The father-son duo also wrote the name of Lord Ram on papers at the Hanuman Temple in Chhindwara. During the assembly election in Madhya Pradesh, which the Congress fought under the leadership of Kamal Nath witnessed a stunning defeat against the

BJP. The veteran Congress leader had adopted a pro-Hindutva face despite a section of leaders from his own party were not happy with his step. As Lok Sabha elections are just a few months away, Kamal Nath's move to send 4.31 crore Ram name will raise doubts in political circles. Importantly, Chhindwara has been the only Lok Sabha seat the Congress won in 2019 while the BJP bagged 28 seats.

Compassionate appointment on 139 posts in Health Department

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the month of January, the Health Department has resolved 147 compassionate appointment cases and provided appointment to 139 eligible persons. Compassionate appointment includes 15 persons on the post of Assistant Grade-3, 4 on the post of Computer, 2 of Lab Assistant, 16 of Dark Room Assistant, 16 of Class IV, 5 of Contingency Charge and Contingency Fund of Class IV, 63 posts of MPW. It is noteworthy that Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla had given instructions in the initial meeting of the Health Department to resolve the cases of compassionate appointment on priority.



Modi to kick-start Lok Sabha poll campaign in MP from Jhabua on February 11

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh on February 11, to kick-start the BJP's campaign for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

State BJP President, VD Sharma said on Monday that Modi will launch the party's polls campaign for 29 seats in Madhya Pradesh and the state BJP has begun preparations for the PM's visit.

BJP leaders Mahendra Singh and Satish Upadhyay, who were recently appointed as in-charge and co-in-charge respectively for Madhya Pradesh, arrived in Bhopal last week and started the process of meeting state leaders. The BJP



bagged 28 out of 29 Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh in 2019. Now, the BJP would be looking to create a record by winning all 29 seats this time. The Opposition Congress, which till now has not had too much success in the General Elections in the state, said it will win at least 15 Lok Sabha seats this time around. Former Chief Minister Kamal Nath's son Nakul Nath, who won from Chhindwara, is the only Congress MP from Madhya Pradesh.

However, during a visit to the Gwalior-Chambal region with AICC General Secretary in-charge of Madhya Pradesh, Jitendra Singh, state Congress President Jitu Patwari said on Sunday that the grand old party will win more than 15 seats in the General Elections.

Order for magisterial inquiry into threat of 'cutting off hands' in Damoh

Team Absolute | Bhopal | Damoh

A dispute between two people took the form of communal tension in Damoh district of Madhya Pradesh. People from one section reached the police station and even talked about cutting the hand of a person belonging to another section. The police took this matter seriously. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has also ordered a magisterial inquiry into the matter.

Actually, on Saturday, there was a dispute between two people in Damayanti Nagar, after this dispute, hundreds of people belonging to one section came out on the road and created ruckus by gheraoing the police station. During this, there was also a scuffle with the police officers. Along with this, even talk of cutting



hands and neck was said on the mic. This video is going viral on social media.

Expressing displeasure over the incident in Damoh, Chief Minister

Dr. Mohan Yadav wrote on Twitter, "The miscreants tried to disturb the law and order in Damoh, which was handled by the police administration in time. It is our duty to main-

tain peace and law and order in the state." It is a priority. Orders have been given for a magisterial inquiry into the Damoh incident."

On the instructions of the Chief Minister, Additional Collector Meena Masram has been appointed as the investigating officer for the magisterial inquiry. District Magistrate Mayank Aggarwal has also highlighted the main points of the investigation. In this investigation, the cause of the incident will be found out, apart from this the people responsible for the incident will be identified. The connection of the people involved in the incident with anti-social elements will also be ascertained. Apart from this, necessary suggestions will be given to ensure that such incidents do not happen.

Aastha train leaves for Ayodhya with devotees from Indore

Team Absolute | Indore

After the consecration of Ram Lalla in the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the number of devotees going to Ayodhya is continuously increasing and in this sequence, more than nine hundred workers of 23 organizations including Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, from Indore, the commercial city of Madhya Pradesh. And Kar Sevak Aastha left for Ayodhya by special train.

Indore railway station was completely saffron in color on Sunday night and echoed with Jai Ghosh of Ram. Devotees were going from here to have darshan of



Ramlala. Many devotees had musical instruments in their hands and were singing Ram songs. The Aastha special train was specially decorated and a large number of people came to the station to bid farewell to the devotees.

More than nine hundred devotees have gone to Ayodhya in this train.

It has been told that the Railway Ministry has made

this special arrangement for four days. This train will reach Ayodhya from Jhansi, Kanpur and Lucknow via Ujjain, Nagda and Ratlam. These devotees will attend the Mangal Aarti to be held in the newly constructed Ram temple at 6 am on February 6 and on the same day this train will depart for Indore in the evening and will return to Indore on February 7.

Minister was looking at pictures of beauties on mobile, photo went viral, Congress tweeted

Team Absolute | Bhopal

BJP is busy holding election committee meeting in Madhya Pradesh regarding possible candidates for Lok Sabha elections 2024. On the other hand, an example of how seriously the party leaders take these meetings has come to light recently. In fact, in the election committee meeting, minister Kailash Vijayvargiya was reportedly seen watching colorful pictures of beauties on his mobile.

Actually, a picture of him looking at his mobile has gone viral on social media. In this viral picture, a photo of the minister viewing the photo on the mobile is seen. Congress did not let this opportunity go by hand and sarcastically said that Kailash Vijayvargiya was seen using mobile in the meeting. A woman's picture is visible in the mobile. Congress media coordinator Piyush Babile posted this on social media platform X and wrote, Kailash Vijayvargi is seen using mobile in the meet-



ing. A woman's picture is visible in the mobile. Along with this, while questioning, he has further written that this is the scene of BJP's election committee meeting tomorrow. Where is the minister engrossed in his mobile? Is BJP selecting candidates from such colorful photographs? This matter may be being read and shared with great enthusiasm on social media, but it is a matter of concern for BJP that the leaders are not serious even on such an important subject and are seen using mobile phones during the meeting.

Road connecting Khajuri Kalan to DRM office will be constructed

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A road connecting Khajuri Kalan to DRM office will be constructed. Minister of State for Backward Classes and Minority Welfare (Independent Charge) Krishna Gaur inspected along with the officials to remove the hindrances in the construction work.

Minister of State Gaur said that out of the sanctioned road of approximately 7 kilometers length, 5.5 kilometers have been constructed, while due to non-construction of 1.6 kilometers, citizens of more than 2 dozen colonies are



facing problems in commuting. The construction work has been stalled for the last one and a half decade due to the presence of MGM School complex between the road connecting DRM office to Khajuri Kalan. Minister of State Smt. Gaur discussed with MGM school management and local citizens. Local citizens agreed to donate land for the road.

Local citizens agreed to donate land for the road. Keeping in mind the interests of a large number of citizens, Minister of State Gaur appointed CPA Executive Engineer K.S. Tomar was asked to start road construction immediately.

King Vikramadityas values of justice, charity, bravery and good governance to be imparted to students: CM Dr. Mohan Yadav

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav laid foundation stone of Samrat Vikramaditya Sainik School at Bagwada village in Budhni tehsil of Sehore district. This will be started by Vidya Bharti Madhya Pradesh on approximately 40-acres. Separate residential complexes will be built for students. Day boarding facility will be available. The main building of the school will be built on 24500 square meters. Along with this, sports ground, athletics track, hockey field, horse riding field, swimming pool and shooting range will also be available. Speaking on the occa-



sion, the Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that the students in the Sainik School named after Emperor Vikramaditya will get education and inspiration from Emperor Vikramaditya's justice, charity, effort, bravery and good governance.

Former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Swami Ishwaranand Maharaj

(Uttam Swami), RSS National Executive member Suresh Soni, Vijay Kumar Sinha, Ashish Chauhan, Ram Aravkar also addressed foundation laying ceremony. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said that Vidya Bharati Sansthan will promote values and spirit of nation building among the students. Vidya Bharati Sansthan has made immense contribution in formulation of the new education policy. He said that opening of Sainik Schools will provided full support from the State Government.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Samrat Vikramaditya Sainik School is being constructed by Vidya Bharati Madhya Bharat Province.

FIR against those giving misleading information regarding class 10 paper

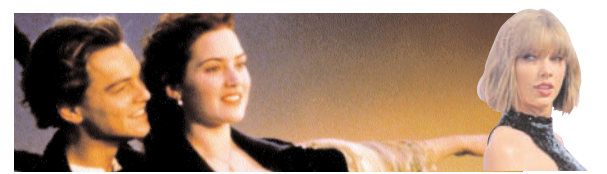
Team Absolute | Bhopal

The high school and higher secondary examinations of the Board of Secondary Education are being conducted from February 5 to February 29, 2024. Today the Hindi subject paper of class 10 was held. Regarding this paper, before the paper was held today, information was received that the question paper of Hindi subject was going viral in Indore and on various social media groups. Based on the information, the district

administration took immediate action and started legal action against the accused. During investigation, the viral question paper of Hindi subject did not match with the actual paper of the board exam. Some anti-social elements are trying to mislead the students by giving misleading information regarding making the question papers of the Board of Secondary Education examination viral. Cyber police registered an FIR regarding today's incident. After this 5 persons were detained.

The School Education Department has appealed to the students appearing in the Class 10 and 12 board examinations of the Board of Secondary Education to beware of false information related to question paper leak on social media platforms. The department has said that on receiving such information, it should be immediately reported to the nearest police station. The department has requested the students to take the examination in a stress-free environment.

▶ STATE GOVT. TO EXTEND FULL SUPPORT FOR OPENING SAINIK SCHOOLS. LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE OF SAMRAT VIKRAMADITYA SAINIK SCHOOL OF VIDYA BHARATI MADHYA PRADESH IN VILLAGE BAGWADA (BUDHANI), SEHORE.



When Leonardo DiCaprio was browsing through Victoria's Secret catalogue on a film set

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio has reportedly passed time looking "through a Victoria's Secret catalogue" on the set of one of his blockbusters. Details of actor's penchant for dating models around half his age was revealed by filmmaker Edward Zwick, 71, who shared the anecdote while writing about directing the Oscar-winner on 2006's 'Blood Diamond' alongside 53-year-old Jennifer Connelly, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Zwick said in his new book 'Hits, Flops, and Other Illusions: My Fortysomething Years in Hollywood': "It seems Leo was currently between gorgeous girlfriends. One morning I walked into the makeup trailer as I often did to discuss the day's work with him."

"I found him in the chair waiting for his turn and noticed he was paging through a Victoria's Secret catalogue. 'What are you doing?' I asked. Connelly was in the chair beside him. Without even looking over, she said, 'Shopping.'"

Zwick added there was only "one instance of even the mildest misbehaviour" on his set, adding about the 'Blood Diamond' cast: "It's more a testament to their camaraderie than anything else."

The Hollywood star has been slammed by some for his habit of dating younger, beautiful women who he tends to break up with once they turn 25. His model exes have included Eva Herzigova, Helena Christensen, Erin Heatherton, Gisele Bundchen, and Bar Refaeli, and his latest partner is model Vittoria Ceretti, 25, to whom he was first linked in 2023.

Ceretti has fronted advertising campaigns for fashion houses including Chanel, Prada, and Dolce and Gabbana and was seen on holiday with Leonardo in Miami back in December.



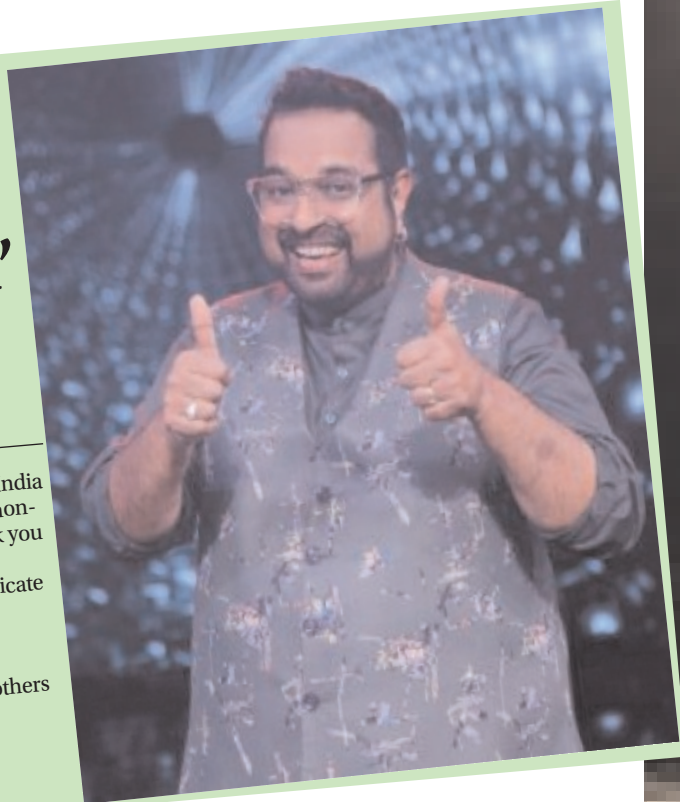
66th Grammy Awards: Shankar Mahadevan says 'we are proud of you, India' in acceptance speech

Los Angeles | Agencies

Musicians Shankar Mahadevan and Zakir Hussain's 'Shakti' band made India proud at the 66th Grammy Awards as it won the Global Music Album honour at the event. While accepting the honour, Mahadevan said: "Thank you boys. Thank you God, family, friends and India. We are proud of you, India." Mahadevan then dedicated the award to his wife and said: "I would like to dedicate this to my wife, whom every note of my music is dedicated to."

The group also has guitarist John McLaughlin, V. Selvaganesh and Ganesh Rajagopalan.

The artists mentioned were nominated in the Grammy Awards alongside others such as Susana Baca, Bokante, Burna Boy, and Davido.



66th Grammy Awards: Record of the Year for Miley Cyrus' 'Flowers'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Miley Cyrus marked her second win at the 66th edition of the Grammy Awards as she clinched the honour for Record of the Year for her song 'Flowers'. Earlier, she won the trophy for Best Pop Solo Performance category for the same song.

The singer beat fellow nominees Olivia Rodrigo, Jon Batiste, Taylor Swift, Boygenius, Billie Eilish, Victoria Monet and SZA in the Record of the Year category.

The Recording Academy took to its official handle on micro-blogging site X and congratulated the winner. They wrote: "Congrats Record Of The Year winner - 'Flowers' @MileyCyrus #GRAMMYS."

Miley Cyrus was nominated for six Grammys this year in major categories like record, song and album of the year for 'Endless Summer Vacation'. She has been nominated a total of eight times.

The 66th annual Grammy Awards, which recognises the best recordings, compositions, and artists are being held at the Crypto.com Arena, Los Angeles Trevor Noah as the show's host.

66th Grammy Awards: Taylor Swift honoured with Album of the Year award for 'Midnights'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, who earlier won Best Pop Vocal Album for 'Midnights' registered her second win at the 66th edition of the Grammy awards as she won the coveted Album of the Year award for 'Midnights'.

She defeated her fellow nominees Olivia Rodrigo, Jon Batiste, Boygenius, Miley Cyrus, Lana Del Rey and Janelle Monae.

'Midnights' is the tenth studio album by Swift. The singer conceived it as a concept album about nocturnal ruminations inspired by her sleepless nights.

The autobiographical songwriting explores broad emotions such as regrets, self-critique, fantasies, heartbreak, and infatuation, using confessional yet cryptic lyrics that allude to her personal life and public image.

The Recording Academy took to its official handle on micro-blogging site X and congratulated the winner. They wrote: "Congrats Album Of The Year winner - 'Midnights' @TaylorSwift13 #GRAMMYS."

The 66th annual Grammy Awards, which recognises the best recordings, compositions, and artists are being held at the Crypto.com Arena, Los Angeles Trevor Noah as the show's host.



66th Grammy Awards: Jay-Z slams Academy for never giving Beyoncé Album of the Year

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rapper and record producer Jay-Z called out the Grammys while receiving the Dr Dre Global Impact award, calling out the ceremony for snubbing his wife and singer Beyoncé by never awarding her album of the year.

Jay-Z talked about how he has always wanted the Grammys to recognise the artists that most influence culture.

"How far we have come with Will Smith, the Fresh Prince winning their first Grammy in '89 and boycotting, because it was not televised," he said.

"And then they went to a hotel to watch the Grammys. I don't even understand, it was not a great boycott. But then in '98, I took a page out of their book and was nomi-



nated for best rap album. And DMX put out two, they were both number one, and he was not nominated at all," reports Variety. "So I boycotted and I watched. I'm just saying, we want you all to get it right. We love y'all, we love y'all. We want you to get it right — or at least get it close to right. And obviously, it's subjective, because it's music and its opinion-based, but some things..."

He looked at Beyoncé and said: "I don't want to embarrass this young lady, but she has more Grammys than everyone and never won album of the year. So even by your own metrics, that doesn't work. Think about that. The most Grammys, never won album of the year. That doesn't work."

He then doubled down by saying, "When I get nervous, I tell the truth."

66TH Grammy Award: Zakir Hussain honoured for 'Pashto', Shankar Mahadevan for 'This Moment'

Los Angeles | Agencies

India took centre stage at the 66th Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, after Zakir Hussain was named the Best Global Music Performance for his work in 'Pashto' alongside Bela Fleck and Edgar Meyer, featuring Rakesh Chaurasia.

Shankar Mahadevan took home the award for Best Global Music Album at the Grammys for 'This Moment'. In a post on X, Indian music composer Ricky Kej, said that this is a great year for India at the Grammys.

He wrote: "Ustad Zakhir Hussain, the living legend creates history by winning 3 Grammys in one night!!! Rakesh Chaurasia wins 2!! ...



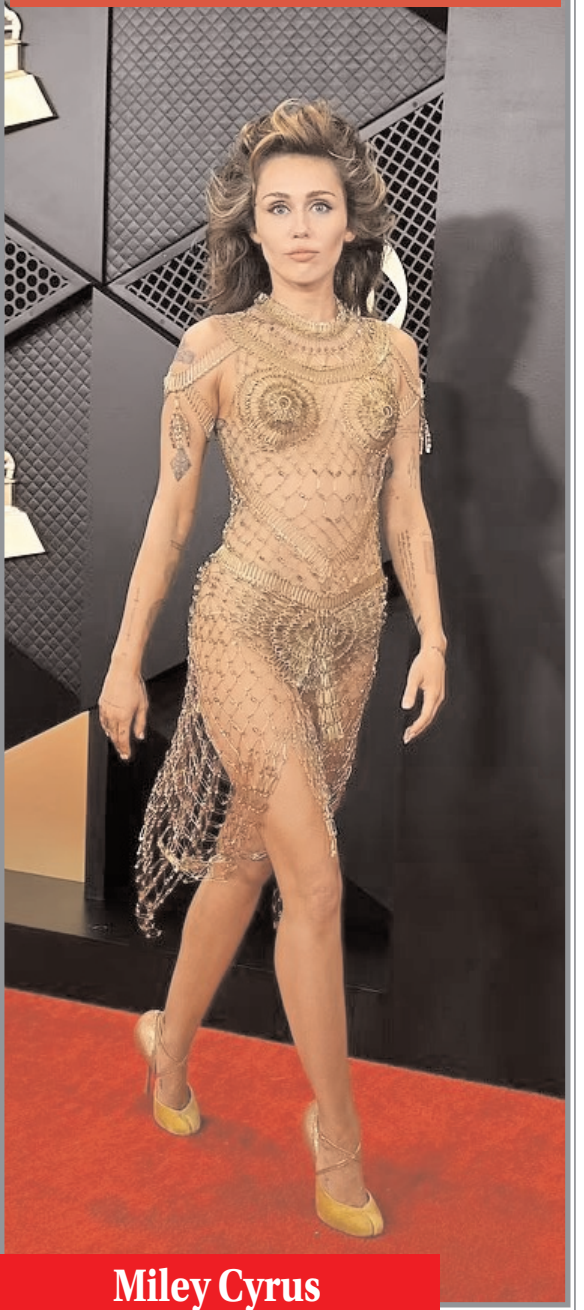
and I am blessed to witness it," he wrote.

Kej added: "SHAKTI wins a GRAMMY! Through this album 4 brilliant Indian musicians win Grammys!! Just amazing. India is shining in every direction. Shankar Mahadevan, Selvaganesh Vinayakram, Ganesh Rajagopalan, Ustad Zakhir

Hussain, Ustad Zakhir Hussain won a second Grammy along with virtuoso flute player Rakesh Chaurasia. Brilliant!"

The artists mentioned were nominated in the Grammy Awards alongside others such as Susana Baca, Bokante, Burna Boy, and Davido.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Miley Cyrus



2ND TEST: ASHWIN, BUMRAH SCALP 3 EACH AS INDIA BEAT ENG BY 106 RUNS, LEVEL SERIES 1-1

Visakhapatnam | Agencies

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin and fast-bowler Jasprit Bumrah took three wickets each as India beat England by 106 runs in the second Test at the Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium on Monday, to level the five-game series 1-1.

England put in a brave effort to chase a record 399, but hunting down a staggering target like that was always going to be an uphill task. They showed the positivity of continuing their uber-attacking approach, but it wasn't sufficient as they were bowled out for 292 in 69.2 overs.

Bumrah, whose spell of 6-45 gave India a vital 171-run first-innings lead, was the pick of the bowlers again with his spell of 3-46. Bumrah finished the Visakhapatnam Test with match figures of 9-91, which is also the second-best figures for an Indian fast-bowler against England. Ashwin bowled well to take 3-72 in Vizag and is now just one wicket away from reaching 500 Test scalps. Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav and Mukesh Kumar took a wicket each in India bouncing back from the 28-run defeat in Hyderabad with an emphatic series-squaring victory at Visakhapatnam.

The next game of the series will be held at the SCA Stadium in Rajkot on February 15.

In the morning session, England amassed 127 runs, but lost five wickets too, including of top-scorer Zak Crawley for 73, putting India in a pole position to win the match. Initially, the



Indian bowlers struggled with their lines as Crawley and Rehan Ahmed hit five boundaries between themselves, though the former was cautious against a sharp Bumrah.

Rehan became the first wicket to fall for England on 23 when he was trapped plumb lbw by Axar. Ollie Pope hit the ground running with his sweep and reverse-sweep off Axar for boundaries. Crawley got his second fifty of the match in 83 balls after dancing down the pitch to chip Axar over mid-off for four. Pope was at his determined best - sweeping, glancing and using his feet to take three fours off Axar. But his lively innings ended when he looked to slash with hard hands and only managed to get a thick outside edge to the left of Rohit Sharma at first slip, who was alert enough to take a one-handed reflex catch.

Joe Root, batting with an injured right little finger, was attacking from the word go - reverse-sweeping twice in his first four balls for boundaries off Ashwin, before smacking Axar over long-off for six. His frenetic knock ended when he miscued a slog off Ashwin and thick top-edge was caught by short third man.

Jonny Bairstow looked solid, driving Axar through and sweeping off Ashwin for boundaries. While Crawley smacked Ashwin down the ground for four, Bairstow cut the off-spinner for a boundary. The return of Bumrah didn't deter Bairstow, who brought out the extra cover drive and punch through point to get two cracking fours. But the momentum swung back in India's favour in the last ten minutes before lunch. Crawley was trapped lbw on backfoot against Kuldeep Yadav,

with replays showing the ball hitting leg-stump. Bumrah ended the session when his nip-backer trapped Bairstow lbw, with the review showing the ball clipping top of leg-stump.

The first 20 minutes of the second session saw captain Ben Stokes and wicketkeeper Ben Foakes bidding their time against the Bumrah-Kuldeep pairing. But Foakes was quick to take two boundaries off Bumrah - clipping through mid-wicket and edging between slip cordon and gully.

A comical misfield gave Stokes a boundary off Kuldeep Yadav, but Shreyas Iyer's direct hit from short mid-wicket resulted in the England skipper falling for 11 off 29 balls. Foakes got an inside edge running to leg-side, but with hesitation and causal running between the wickets, Iyer's one-handed throw caught Stokes inches short of his crease.

That run-out ended hopes for a miraculous winning knock from Stokes, as well as England's chances for an improbable win. Foakes and Tom Hartley dug deep to put up a defiant 55-run stand for the eighth wicket. The duo mixed defending and hitting boundaries whenever a bad ball came their way - totalling to six fours and two sixes.

Brief scores

India 396 and 255 beat England 253 and 292 in 69.2 overs (Zak Crawley 73, Tom Hartley 36; Jasprit Bumrah 3-46, Ravichandran Ashwin 3-72) by 106 runs

India return to 2nd spot in WTC25 standings after Vizag win



Visakhapatnam | Agencies

Following a remarkable 106-run victory over England in the second Test here on Monday, India have reclaimed the second position in the ICC World Test Championship 2023-25 standings, closing the gap behind table-toppers Australia.

India's triumph at the Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium has propelled them back up the rankings, pushing their point percentage to 52.77. The top half of the table remains highly competitive, with five teams separated by a mere 5% in point percentage, ICC reports.

India had previously dropped to fifth behind Bangladesh in the WTC standings after their shock 28-run defeat to England in the series opener in Hyderabad.

After the loss in the series opener, India responded well with a remarkable performance in the second Test. Yashasvi Jaiswal played a crucial role, achieving a double-century in the initial innings and guiding India to a total of 396 runs. Jasprit Bumrah's exceptional bowling display became the highlight of the match as he claimed a six-wicket haul, dismantling the English lineup and restricting them to 253 in the first innings. Building on a 143-run lead, Shubman Gill's century further strengthened India's position, setting a challenging target of 399 for England. Zak Crawley was the lone warrior for England in the fourth innings, standing out as the only English batter to surpass the 50-run mark. Ravichandran Ashwin and Bumrah picked up three wickets each to knock England over for 292, winning the match by 106 runs and levelled the five-match series 1-1.

Copa del Rey: Big players back in semis clash as Mallorca faces Real Sociedad

Madrid (Spain) | Agencies

Mallorca and Real Sociedad play the first leg of the first semifinal of the Spanish Copa del Rey knockout competition on Tuesday night in Mallorca's Son Moix Stadium.

The home side, who is coached by the experienced Javier Aguirre, has had 24 more hours to prepare for the game following their 4-0 defeat away to Athletic Club Bilbao on Friday night, while Real Sociedad drew 0-0 away to Girona on Saturday.

Both Aguirre and Real Sociedad boss Imanol Alguacil rested players for their weekend matches ahead of Tuesday's clash, with defenders, Matija Nastasic, Toni Lato, Vedat Muriqi and Abdon Prats on the subs' bench for Mallorca, reports Xinhua.

Meanwhile, Real Sociedad regulars such as Robin le Normand, Mikel Merino, Ander Barrenetxea and Umar Sadiq were all on the bench in Girona and will probably all start in Son Moix. Imanol's plans took a hit when right-back Alvaro Odriozola suffered another muscle injury after just three minutes on Saturday and he joins long-term injuries, Aihen Munoz and Carlos Fernandez, while Kieran Tierney, also misses out and Ariz Elustondo, and new signing Sheraldo Becker



are also doubtful.

A Brais Mendez goal decided the first La Liga meeting between the two sides in San Sebastian earlier this season, while the Basque team enjoyed an easy 1-0 win at home to Mallorca in the round of 16 in last season's tournament.

2nd Test: Winning a Test in these conditions is not easy; bowlers stepped up, says Rohit Sharma

Visakhapatnam | Agencies

After defeating England by 106 runs to win the second Test, India captain Rohit Sharma lauded the bowlers for stepping up to lead the team to victory in not-so-easy conditions.

In day four's play at the Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium on Monday, off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin and fast-bowler Jasprit Bumrah took three wickets each for India to defend 399 after bowling out England for 292.

Bumrah, whose spell of 6-45 gave India a vital 171-run first-innings lead, was the pick of the bowlers again with his spell of 3-46. Bumrah finishes the Visakhapatnam Test with match figures of 9-91, which is also the best figures for an Indian fast-bowler on home soil in Tests against England.

Ashwin bowled well to take 3-72 and is now just one wicket away from reaching 500 Test scalps. Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav and Mukesh Kumar took a wicket each in India bouncing back from the 28-run defeat in Hyderabad with an emphatic series-squaring victory at Visakhapatnam.

"(Bumrah) He's a champion player for us, done the job for a while. When you win a game like that you have to look at the overall performance. We know that winning a Test match in these conditions is not going to be easy, the bowlers stepped up,"



said Rohit after the match ended.

With the bat, young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal made a majestic 209 in the first innings, and Rohit appreciated his efforts. "(Jaiswal) Looks like a very good player, understands his game. Got a long way to go, of course. It was an exceptional knock. He has a lot to offer the team, I hope he stays humble. The wicket was good to bat on, a lot of the batters got starts and didn't convert. They are young, new to this format, it will take some time."

An emphatic series-squaring victory at

Visakhapatnam meant India managed to bounce back from the 28-run defeat in Hyderabad. The next game of the series will be held at the SCA Stadium in Rajkot on February 15, giving both teams a ten-day break.

"This win gives us a lot of confidence. Very proud of such a young squad, to come up against a team like that. Very positive. We want these guys to have time in the middle. It's a good challenge, England have been playing good cricket. Not going to be an easy series. Three more games to go, need to make sure we do most things right," added Rohit.

Bumrah, who was named Player of the Match, produced magical deliveries in the match - like casting the middle and leg stumps of Ollie Pope with a menacing yorker. "I don't look at numbers. If you think about numbers there is a lot of pressure. I'm very happy that we won and contributed to that. As a youngster that was the first delivery I learned in tennis-ball cricket (which led to Pope's dismissal). I used to feel that is the only way to take wickets." Bumrah also said with the team in transition, it is his responsibility to guide other bowlers in going about the business. "Not the leader (of the attack) but we are going through a transition so it's my responsibility to guide them. We discuss everything, about what I am thinking and what he (Rohit) thinks we should do."

Mumbai Open WTA 125K: Sharapova's pretty dresses inspired India's Shrivalli to play tennis

Team Absolute | Mumbai

There is usually something special that inspires youngsters to take up sports and in the case of India's promising women's tennis player Shrivalli Bhamidipaty it was the pretty dresses worn by former World No.1 Maria Sharapova that ignited her passion for the sport.

Among the most promising Indian women's tennis players in the main draw of the Mumbai Open WTA 125K tournament, Shrivalli made a sensational start to the tournament, winning two very impressive games in the qualifying round. The 22-year-old from Hyderabad is keen on making a solid impression in this prestigious event which returns to Mumbai after a gap of six years and is being played at the iconic Cricket Club of India. However, what inspired and motivated the current Indian national champion in both singles and doubles, was former World Number



1 Maria Sharapova, whose dress caught her eye. "I used to look at Maria Sharapova's pictures and really liked her pretty clothes. I, too, wanted to wear such pretty dresses and that's the reason I started playing tennis at the age of 11 and got hooked into the sport. Playing tennis allowed me to be able to wear pretty dresses. So, for me getting into sports was pretty

accidental," she said. Hailing from a sporting family, where her mother was a basketball player and her father played cricket and karate, Shrivalli began to take tennis seriously within a couple of years of being introduced to the sport. "For me, it was always a roller-coaster ride. Honestly, I just love the sport of tennis and being out there, because that way you don't have to be home and studying," she added. In her debut WTA tournament, Shrivalli is taking it one game at a time and ensuring she makes the best of every opportunity to be out there on the court. "I didn't have too many goals coming into the WTA Mumbai Open because it is my debut tournament, and I just wanted to go out there, play my tennis and have fun at the same time. I know everyone I play will be at a higher level than me. So, I just wanted to do my best and give it my best shot," she added. "I am thrilled to qualify for the main draw, and I will play normally like any other match."

Deputy Chief Minister Shukla inaugurated Shivaji Trophy Cricket Tournament

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla said that sports is important for the physical and mental health of humans. It promotes collective effort, courage, positive competition and teamwork along with development of skills. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India and Madhya Pradesh are setting new records every day in the field of sports. An important role of sports has also been determined in the new education policy.

The Deputy Chief Minister inspired the cricket players present by mentioning the



sports talents of Madhya Pradesh's cricket field, Soumya Tiwari, Soumya Pandey, Rajat Patidar. Deputy Chief Minister Shukla today inaugurated the Shivaji Trophy Cricket Tournament by playing a cricket shot at

Ankur Sports Ground, Bhopal. He got introduced to the players and wished them good luck. 32 teams are participating in this cricket tournament which will run from 5th February to 13th February.

IWL 2023-24: KICKSTART RESTORE WINNING FORM WITH FINE PERFORMANCE AGAINST EAST BENGAL

Kolkata | Agencies

Last season's runner-up Kickstart FC bounced back from their first loss of the Indian Women's League (IWL) 2023-24 season to comprehensively beat East Bengal 3-1 at the East Bengal Ground here on Monday.

Kickstart were dominant from the get-go and delivered a swift response after their shocking 1-5 home loss to HOPS last week. The win helped the Bengaluru side keep its title hopes alive as it closed the gap to leaders Odisha FC to two points. East Bengal, on the other hand, remain in sixth place with four points from eight games.

FASTEST GOAL OF SEASON

Langam Chaoba Devi's girls wasted no time to get off the mark, scoring the fastest goal of the season so far as defender Aruna



Bag headed in Yumlembam Pakpi Devi's corner after just 48 seconds.

Kickstart were all over the hosts in the opening stages of the contest and came very near to doubling the advantage when Sonia Marak's left-footed effort struck the crossbar in the sixth minute.

But the midfielder got a well-deserved first goal of the campaign at the half-hour mark as she caught the East Bengal defence napping and scored with a clean header from Supriya Routray's looping cross from the left.

The Red and Gold Brigade, who were largely confined to their own half in the first 45 minutes and struggled to get a foothold in the game, found some much-needed inspiration from their new signing Sanjida Akhter.

Three minutes into the second half, the

Bangladesh international scored her first IWL goal with a sensational free-kick from more than 40 yards out. Her meticulous effort dipped under the crossbar just in time to leave goalkeeper Maibam Linthoingambi Devi with no chance.

However, the joy in the East Bengal camp didn't last long as Karishma Shirvoikar's 56th-minute strike restored the visitors' two-goal advantage. Seema Kispotta's clearance fell onto the path of the IWL top-scorer, who juggled her way into the box and dispatched the ball into the top corner, knocking the wind out of East Bengal's sail. Karishma and Sanjida remained their side's respective protagonists for the rest of the match, with the majority of the chances falling to them. The East Bengal midfielder blazed over a first-time effort from close range, but the flag went up for offside.



Madhuri Dixit: Don't know why Suniel Shetty and I never worked together before

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Madhuri Dixit Nene, who has a career spanning over four decades, has opened up on her first collaboration with actor Suniel Shetty, pondering why they never worked together before. She also called the latter "mind-blowing."

Madhuri and Suniel are seen as the judges in the show 'Dance Deewane'.

Talking about the same, Madhuri said: "Suniel is mind-blowing on the show. This is my first collaboration with him, and I don't know why we never worked together before. While we haven't shared the screen in films, this opportunity emerged, and I'm thoroughly enjoying it."

"Initially, I sensed a bit of apprehension from him. As soon as he stepped onto the set and began sharing his comments, I was very impressed with his ease. The way he talks is amazing. When viewers see him as a judge, they will love him?immensely," shared the 'Saajan' fame actor.

If Madhuri were given the chance to dedicate a song to Suniel and perform with him in the family theme set for this show, which song would it be?

She said: "Well, I love a song from one of his films titled 'Jhanjhariya Uski Chanak Gayi' and I will definitely perform that song with him."

The song 'Jhanjhariya' is from the 1996 action film 'Krishna', starring



Suniel and Karisma Kapoor. Madhuri added that Suniel is a wonderful person, very down to earth, and a beautiful human being.

Bobby Deol looks suave in leather jacket, brother Sunny showers love

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Fans were treated to a visual delight as actor Bobby Deol shared fresh captures from his recent photoshoot, and it has garnered heartwarming admiration from his brother Sunny Deol.

Bobby, who enjoys 3.1 million followers on Instagram, shared a series of pictures, wherein he can be seen wearing a tan coloured leather jacket. He is sporting a beard and tied his hair in a bun.

In the captivating snapshots, the 'Soldier' fame, exudes charisma, dressed impeccably and radiating a sense of suave elegance, the actor effortlessly captures attention with his poised demeanour.

The subtle yet powerful expression on his face adds an intriguing depth to the photos.

The post is captioned: "Last glance and ready to go."

His brother Sunny Deol dropped several red heart emojis in the comment section. Vikrant Massey posted fire emojis. On the professional front, Bobby was last seen in the action drama 'Animal', directed by Sandeep Reddy The movie stars Ranbir Kapoor in the lead, while Anil Kapoor, Bobby, and Rashmika Mandanna play pivotal roles.



Kill me, crucify me, but save someone, says Poonam Pandey in her defence

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Stung by the widespread criticism of her faking her 'death' from cervical cancer, controversial model and actress Poonam Pandey stuck to her guns in her latest Instagram post that says, "Kill me, crucify me, hate me, but save someone you love." The marketing agency named Schbang, who was behind this campaign in association with Pandey, also issued an apology saying, "Yes, we were involved in the initiative for Poonam Pandey to spread awareness about Cervical Cancer in collaboration with Hauterfly. To start off, we would like to extend a heartfelt apology -- especially towards those who have been triggered as a result of having faced / having a loved one face the hardships of any kind of Cancer."

Hauterfly, incidentally, is a lifestyle and entertainment portal targeting millennial women.

Explaining the dramatic announcement that many saw as a cheap PR stunt, the statement issued by Pandey's agency noted: "Our actions were driven by a singular mission -- to elevate awareness about Cervical Cancer. In 2022, India registered 123,907 Cervical Cancer cases and 77,348 deaths."

"After Breast Cancer, Cervical Cancer



is the second-most frequent malignancy affecting middle aged women in India. Many of you may be unaware but Poonam's own mother has bravely battled Cancer.

"Having been through the challenges of battling a disease like this at such close personal quarters, she understands the importance of prevention and the criticality of awareness, especially when a vaccine is available."

It concluded by claiming, "This is the

first time in the history of this country that the words 'Cervical Cancer' have appeared in 1000+ Headlines."

Reiterating that it is deeply apologetic to those who may have been hurt due to this initiative, the agency said, "We understand that our methods may have sparked a debate about the approach. While we regret any distress caused, if the move results in spreading much needed awareness and preventing deaths, that would be its real impact."

Sushmita Sen: Had my share of ups and downs with my children

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Sushmita Sen has reflected upon the universal struggle of maintaining the bond between a mother and her child, sharing about the ups and downs with her own children. Sushmita, who plays the titular character in the thriller series 'Aarya' said: "It's every mother's worst nightmare to see her children go against her. No matter who you ask, that's something that unifies us all. None of us want our children in danger, afraid, or feeling unprotected. We never want them to turn against us. Aarya, as you've seen in part one of this season, reaches that heartbreaking point."

Sen, who is the mother of two adopted daughters --



Renee, and Alisah, added: "While I'm grateful not to experience it to the extent

Aarya does, I've had my share of ups and downs with my children, like any mother. I've

channeled those emotions into portraying the pain my character feels on screen."

Shehnaaz Gill, Kusha Kapila show how singles spend Valentine's week

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shehnaaz Gill and social media influencer Kusha Kapila have revealed what a Valentine's week is like for single people, and it is hilarious.

As Valentine's week commences with Rose Day on February 7. Following it is Propose Day, Chocolate Day, Teddy Day, Promise Day, Hug Day, Kiss Day and then on February 14 is Valentine's Day.

Shehnaaz and Kusha took to their Instagram accounts and shared a reel video, where they are seen looking for their Valentine's day partner. The clip ends with both going back to bed in an angry mood as they don't find anyone.

The clip has "Mere Khwabon Mein" sung by late legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar from the film 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jaayengay' starring Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol. The video has the title: "Singles during Valentines week" written on it. For the caption, they wrote: "Sab theek ho jayega behen." Shehnaaz and Kusha were recently seen sharing screen space in the film 'Thank You For Coming' which focusses on the topic self pleasure.

It also stars Bhumi



Pednekar, Dolly Singh and Shibani Bedi."

Akshay Kumar: I have been a Shiva bhakt for the longest time



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Akshay Kumar is all set to showcase a powerful experience with his music video 'Shambhu' and said that for the longest time, he has been a Shiva bhakt. Akshay, who played Lord Shiva in the 2023 film 'OMG 2', said: "Shambhu comes from a deep place in my heart that has only been beating with the name Jai Shri Mahakaal! For the longest time I have been a Shiva bhakt but lately my connection with him and devotion towards him has only become deeper."

The action star says that Lord Shiva is the power, love and is the help when needed. Akshay added: "He is the saviour, he is the surrender we all look to surrender to, he is the be-all and end-all. With this song, I just offer a droplet that I am to the infinite consciousness that Shiva is! Jai Shri Mahakaal."

The Shiva anthem is sung by the versatile Akshay along with Sudhir Yadvanshi and Vikram Montrose.

The song is releasing on February 5, and it aims to resonate with devotees seeking a spiritual and uplifting musical experience during this divine celebration.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Hina Khan