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RAJIV GANDHI ABOLISHED INHERITANCE LAW TO 'SAVE OWN INTERESTS': PM MODI



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Upping the ante against the Congress on the 'inheritance tax' issue, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched another scathing attack on the grand old party, saying it was former PM Rajiv Gandhi who abolished the inheritance law "to save their own interests" after the demise of his mother Indira Gandhi.

Addressing a series of election rallies in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh on Thursday, PM Modi said that he wanted to share an "interesting fact" with the country.

"When Mrs. Indira Gandhi passed away, her property was supposed to go to her children. Had the previous law been in place, the government would have taken a portion of it. At that time, there was a talk that to save the property, her son and then Prime Minister (Rajiv Gandhi) simply abolished the inheritance law. When it came to their own interests, they removed the law," said Prime Minister Modi. "Today, driven by the greed for power once again, these people want to reintroduce the same law. After accumulating limitless wealth for generations without taxes on their families, now they want to impose taxes on your inheritance. That's why the country is saying 'Congress ki loot, zindagi ke saath bhi, zindagi ke baad bhi,'" he added. Later in the day, PM Modi addressed rallies in UP's Agra and Aonla where he again said that Congress will set a "dangerous precedent" by implementing an inheritance tax.

"The Congress-SP and INDI Alliance plans to impose a 55 per cent tax on your inheritance. This means they'll seize a significant portion of what you leave for your children. If you build a four-room house, only two rooms will go to your children, and the rest shall be seized by Congress-SP.

"Similarly, if you own 10 bighas of land, only five bighas will be inherited by your children, the rest will be confiscated by Congress-SP. Are you ready to surrender your property to them," he asked.

PM Modi also accused the Congress of hatching a "deep conspiracy".

"One of the Congress leaders is talking about conducting an X-ray of people's assets across the

country. Whatever you earn, the Mangalsutra, gold, and silver that our mothers and sisters have, Congress wants to seize them and distribute them among their vote bank supporters. Even the wealth left after you leave this world won't go to your sons and daughters. Congress wants to snatch more than half of your earnings. For this, Congress wants to impose an inheritance tax on you," he said on Thursday.

JHARKHAND HIGH COURT STAYS THE PROCEEDINGS AGAINST RAHUL GANDHI IN MP-MLA COURT

Ranchi: Jharkhand High Court has stayed the proceedings going on in the MP-MLA Court against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. This has given a big relief to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in the defamation case going against him in the MP-MLA court of Chaibasa.



The court has issued a notice to the complainant of the case and directed him to file his reply within two weeks. The MP-MLA Court in Chaibasa district had issued a non-bailable warrant against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on February 27. Rahul Gandhi had filed a petition in the High Court to ban this.

In the complaint lodged against Rahul Gandhi, a person named Pratap Katiyar, a resident of Chaibasa, has alleged that he had made derogatory remarks against the then BJP national president Amit Shah in the Congress convention in the year 2018. Rahul Gandhi had said that no murderer can become the national president in Congress. Congressmen cannot accept a murderer as the national president, this is possible only in BJP. Rahul Gandhi's advocate had applied to the court seeking permission to be physically present, but his application was rejected. After this he reached the High Court.

Eknath Shinde compares Uddhav Thackeray's change in political stance with 'chameleon changing colours'

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar | Agencies

Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde on Thursday made a scathing attack on Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's swift shifts in political stance, comparing it with the rapid colour changes of a chameleon.

Eknath Shinde made the remarks during a rally organised in support of MahaYuti candidate Sandipan Bhumre who is contesting from the Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar Lok Sabha constituency. "Uddhav Thackeray was singing hymns in praise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi while he was in the alliance. But now, Maharashtra has witnessed a lizard changing colour swiftly, with stones being thrown...", he said. Eknath Shinde emphasised the necessity for a united front against such political flip-flopping. "Maharashtra has observed a significant political metamorphosis, reminiscent of a lizard swiftly changing its hues," he said while denouncing the opportunistic nature of recent political maneuvers. "I firmly believe that the upcoming elec-



tion will usher in a victory for unity and progress," the Maharashtra CM said, underscoring the importance of the ongoing developments under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "PM Modi's initiatives, such as providing free ration to 80 crore underprivileged individuals, transcend religious boundaries," asserted Shinde, urging a departure from divisive rhetoric, and bringing the focus on constructive dialogue. "The ballot box, not vitriol, shall be the arbiter of our political landscape," he said, calling upon the voters to exercise their franchise wisely.

AKHILESH YADAV FILES NOMINATION FROM KANNAUJ LS SEAT

Kannauj | Agencies

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, on Thursday, filed his nomination papers from the Kannauj Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh.

An hour earlier, BJP candidate Subrat Pathak had also filed his nomination papers. Pathak is the sitting MP from Kannauj.

Meanwhile, Subrat Pathak told reporters that Akhilesh Yadav entering the fray would not make any difference to his victory prospects.

"Earlier, the match was between India and Nepal and



now it is between India and Pakistan. In both scenarios, the winner will be India and there is no doubt about it," he said. It may be recalled that the Samajwadi Party had earlier named Tej Pratap Yadav as its Kannauj candidate but on Wednesday evening, Akhilesh Yadav replaced him. Akhilesh had made his political debut from Kannauj in a by-election in 2000 and then won the seat in 2004 and 2009. His wife Dimple Yadav won the seat in the 2012 bypoll and then in 2014. However, she lost the seat to the BJP in 2019.

Credit card data of 17K ICICI Bank users exposed; bank blocks cards, assures compensation

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After credit card data of at least 17,000 new ICICI Bank customers was exposed and reached "wrong users", the bank said on Thursday that it has blocked these cards and is issuing new ones to the customers.

The issue surfaced after some ICICI Bank customers voiced concerns on social media about the bank's iMobile Pay app exposing credit card details, including their full number and card verification value (CVV).

On the finance-related forum Technofino, several users reported seeing sensitive data such as the full card number, expiry date, and CVV of unknown customers' credit cards of some users suddenly on their iMobile Pay app. In a statement to IANS, the ICICI Bank spokesperson said that it came to their notice that "about 17,000 new credit cards which were issued in the past few days were erroneously mapped in our digital channels to wrong users". "No instance of misuse of a card from this set has been reported to us. However, we assure that the Bank will appropriately compensate a customer in case of any financial loss," the spokesperson added.

According to the bank, the number of impacted credit cards constituted "about 0.1 per cent of the bank's credit card portfolio".



"As an immediate measure, we have blocked these cards and are issuing new ones to the customers. We regret the inconvenience caused," said the ICICI Bank spokesperson. One of the users wrote on Technofino: "I have access to someone else's Amazon Pay CC due to a security glitch on the iMobile app. Although OTP restricts domestic transactions, I can do international transactions using the details from the iMobile app."

The iMobile Pay app, launched in 2008, has more than 28 million users.

LAWYERS, PARTIES IN-PERSON TO RECEIVE SC CASE-RELATED MESSAGES ON WHATSAPP, ANNOUNCES CJI

New Delhi: Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud on Thursday announced the integration of WhatsApp messaging services with the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) services of the Supreme Court.



Now, litigants, parties in-person and advocates-on-record (AoRs) will receive automated messages regarding e-filing, objections raised by the registry, cause list and uploading of orders and judgments, CJI Chandrachud told the members of the bar in an open court. Saying that WhatsApp has taken the role of a powerful communication tool, the Chief Justice said that this "small initiative" will have a big-bang effect.

He added that the cause lists will be sent over WhatsApp to judges as well, and such a digital initiative will not only save paper but also our planet Earth. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, the second highest law officer of the Centre, who was present in the Chief Justice's court, said that the integration of the WhatsApp messaging facility is one more revolutionary step taken by the apex court and expressed his gratitude for the occasion.

Treating politician differently from ordinary criminal will violate Constitution: ED to SC on AK's plea

Team Absolute | New Delhi

On Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has told the Supreme Court that treating a politician differently from an ordinary criminal in a matter of arrest would violate the principle of equality enshrined under Article 14 of the Constitution.

"The petitioner was arrested because the investigating officer has material as required under section 19 which would indicate his guilt of the offence of money laundering punishable under PMLA. Differential treatment in favour of a politician who is guilty of the offence of money laundering would violate 'rule of law which would be a violation of the basic structure of the Constitution,'" the financial probe agency said in its affidavit.

The ED claimed that the investigation of the Excise policy case has to be seen as the background of the large-scale destruction of evidence.

"A total of over 170 approx mobile phones were changed/destroyed by 36 persons (accused and other persons involved) during the period of Scam and when the Scam and irregularities in the Delhi Excise Policy of 2021-22 became public," the agency claimed in its affidavit. In this manner, the crucial digital evi-



dence of the scam and money trail has been actively destroyed by the accused and other persons involved.

"Despite such active and criminal destruction of evidence, the agency has been able to recover key evidence which directly reveals the role of the petitioner in process and activities relating to proceeds of crime," it said.

The ED said that the destruction of digital phones highlighted above should be considered in the context that the accused/suspects were using high-end smartphones which had huge capacity to store the digital data/evidence.

"Order-fixing" - Now Abhishek Banerjee lashes out at court ruling in school jobs case

Kolkata | Agencies

After West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee launched a scathing attack against the judiciary over a recent ruling by the Calcutta High Court in the alleged cash-for-school jobs scam in the state, her nephew Abhishek Banerjee on Thursday accused a section of the judiciary of being biased with the BJP's agenda.

In a crucial ruling on Monday, the Calcutta High Court cancelled 25,753 appointments in teaching and non-teaching posts made by the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) in 2016. The case is being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement



Directorate (ED).

Referring to the court order, Trinamool General Secretary Banerjee drew a comparison with 'match-fixing' in cricketing terms.

"The footprints of BJP are there in the nitty-gritty of the Calcutta High Court order. In cricket match-fixing, some people can predict in advance what will happen next in a match.

That's what happened in this case also. This is like 'order-fixing' and 'court-fixing'.

'Manipur Super 50' scores big in providing opportunities to the state's youth

Kolkata | Agencies

Bihar has had its famed 'Abhayanand Super 30' for long. Now, Manipur also has its 'Manipur Super 50', thanks to the efforts of the Army's Spear Corps.

This initiative aims to provide coaching and support to the youth of the state to sit for competitive examinations and get more employment opportunities.

The move comes at a time when security forces are facing several challenges in Manipur in their efforts to bring about lasting peace and end the ethnic crisis prevailing there since May last year. "Manipur Super 50 coaching classes, a collaborative effort between the Indian Army, SBI Foundation, and NIEDO, have yielded remarkable results. With the successful completion of the first batch in 2023, boasting 75 per cent qualification rate in NEET and



50 per cent in JEE, the programme has demonstrated its effectiveness in equipping underprivileged students with skills and knowledge necessary for admission to top colleges and universities across India. Currently, 35 NEET and 14 JEE aspirants are under coaching at Super 50 as part of the 2024 batch," said a spokesperson for the Army's Eastern Command.

The mentoring centre established at Senapati in February 2023 has also

emerged as a hub for nurturing talent and ambition among NDA, CDS, and other competitive exam aspirants.

"Additionally, the recent registration drive for the Agnpath scheme for recruitment in armed forces in Bishnupur district underscores the dedication of the Spear Corps to foster inclusivity and diversity among the youth, who will be part of the nation-building process in the long run," the official added.

"When All This Is Over...": Mallikarjun Kharge's Open Letter To PM Modi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid the massive row triggered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks on the Congress manifesto, party chief Mallikarjun Kharge has written to him, saying that he "would be more than happy to meet you in person to explain our Nyay Patra".

In an all-out attack on the main Opposition party, the Prime Minister has alleged that the Congress has a wealth redistribution plan that it will put in motion if it comes to power. Under this alleged plan, private property, including houses and jewellery, will be taken away and redistributed, he has said. Even mangalsutra - a jewellery worn by women as a sign of their marriage - won't be spared, the Prime Minister



has claimed.

This line of attack was first employed by the Chief Minister at a rally in Rajasthan's Banswara Sunday. The Prime Minister alleged that when the Congress was in power under Dr Manmohan Singh, it had said Muslims have the first right on the country's wealth. "This means that they will gather this property and distribute it among people who have more children, among infiltrators. Will your hard-earned money be given to infiltrators? Do you accept this? The Congress manifesto is saying this."



IN POLL BODY'S NOTICES OVER SPEECHES BY PM, RAHUL GANDHI, A BIG QUESTION

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As the Election Commission issued notices to the leaderships of the BJP and Congress over complaints received in connection to political speeches made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi, many questioned why the poll body did not address the leaders directly, choosing to flag the matter to the party chiefs.

In both cases, the Election Commission press releases do not name the leaders - Prime Minister Modi or Gandhi. The rival complaints against them are attached to the poll body's notice.

In its notice, the Election Commission underlines the role of star campaigners in the election campaign. It says star campaigners are



"expected to contribute to a higher quality of discourse, inter alia, by way of providing an all-India perspective, which sometimes gets distorted in

the heat of the contests at the local level". "Thus, the expectation from Star Campaigners is to provide corrective action or a sort of healing touch, when intensity of local campaign disrupts or inadvertently crosses over such boundaries. The Star Campaigners are thus expected to utilize this privilege for "propagating the programme of the political parties" and, therefore, their speeches in the campaign space necessarily needs to be judged at a higher threshold of compliance," it says.

Holding the political party primarily responsible for star campaigners, the poll body says, "Whereas, in view of the foregoing and the plenary power of the political parties to nominate or withdraw the star campaigner's status with associated responsibility and authority to control their star campaigns, the Commission has taken a view that while the individual star campaigner would continue to remain responsible for speeches made, the Commission will address party President/Head of the political

party, on case-to-case basis." BJP chief JP Nadda and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge have been asked to respond by 11 am on Friday.

BJP'S COMPLAINT

In its April 19 complaint filed by Om Pathak, the BJP flagged a speech by Rahul Gandhi in Kerala's Kottayam the previous day. "..... If a daughter graduates from a university, her parents congratulate in Malayalam. When a brother loses the other brother, he communicates in Malayalam. Thus, Kerala is Malayalam, Malayalam is Kerala. I get surprised when I hear PM giving speeches where he says one nation, one language, and one religion. How can you tell people of Tamil to not speak Tamil, people of Kerala to not speak Malayalam, people... Every single Indian language is as important as any other language. BJP does this with language, place, caste and religion. Whenever they get an opportunity, they divide the country...." The Congress leader is quoted as saying.

The BJP accused Gandhi of trying to "create linguistic and cultural divide in the minds of the people of India for electoral gains". It also accused the Congress leader of trying to "tarnish the Prime Minister, defame him and indulge in his character assassination".

The BJP's complaint also targets Kharge, accusing him of misleading voters by declaring that the BJP is going to change the Constitution if it wins the election.

Ashok Gehlot says he's not aware of ex-OSD's allegations in phone-tapping case

Jaipur | Agencies

Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said on Thursday that he is not aware of the allegations levelled against him by his former Officer on Special Duty (OSD) Lokesh Sharma of hatching a phone-tapping plan during the political crisis in the state in 2020.

The alleged phone-tapping incident -- which created a huge uproar during the political crisis in Rajasthan in 2020 -- took a dramatic turn on Wednesday after Lokesh Sharma held Gehlot responsible for the phone-tapping, alleging that the ex-CM himself handed him a pen drive which carried three audio clips along with a piece of paper. Addressing a press conference here, Sharma said "The clippings and papers given to me by Ashok Gehlot were shared with the media on his direction. I came to know about the content in the pen drive after the news was flashed." Commenting on the matter, Gehlot said, "Who remains in staff, who goes in which party, when he leaves the party and when he joins the BJP should not be discussed but one needs to look at the truth."

He added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi loves Rajasthan so he has been camping



in the state during these elections.

Gehlot added that the PM gets nervous very soon. When I was in charge of Gujarat, I saw him getting nervous very soon.

"During campaigning, he used to refer to me as Marwari and said that a Marwari has been roaming in Gujarat. "Now should I say that I am a Marwari and a Gujarati is roaming here," he questioned. He also attacked the Election Commission and said that it has been sitting silent no matter what the PM says. "There should have been a ban on PM speech till June 4," said Gehlot.

CONGRESS'S COMPLAINT

The Congress's complaint, dated April 21 and filed by party leader Randeep Singh Surjewala, flags Prime Minister Modi's speech in Banswara, Rajasthan, the same day.

Accusing the Congress of a hatching a wealth redistribution plan, the Prime Minister said in the rally, "What Congress has said in its manifesto is serious. It has said that if the Congress forms the government, everyone's property will be surveyed, it will calculate gold belonging to mothers and sisters and then redistribute it. They won't even spare your mangalsutra," he said, adding that the Congress is now "in the grip of urban Naxals".

The Prime Minister alleged that when the Congress was in power under Dr Manmohan Singh, it had said Muslims have the first right on the country's wealth. "This means that they will gather this property and distribute it among people who have more children, among infiltrators. Will your hard-earned money be given to infiltrators? Do you accept this? The Congress manifesto is saying this." The Congress has accused the Prime Minister of making "false and divisive insinuations targeted at a particular religious community and a clear provocation to the general public to act out and breach peace, potentially against such a religious community". It has also alleged that the Prime Minister tried to mislead voters by making false and unverified allegations and to "falsely tarnish the sacrifices and legacy of an almost hundred and 140-year-old party" for "petty political gains".

Delhi court grants 30-day extension to police to conclude probe in Parliament security breach case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A court on Thursday granted the Delhi Police a 30-day extension to complete its probe in the December 13, 2023 Parliament security breach case.

This is the second time that the court has given time to the Delhi Police Special Cell to conclude the probe. Earlier, in March, 45 days were granted, and now the extension is until May 25.

An application by the Delhi Police, who originally sought a 45-day extension to complete their probe, was moved before Delhi's Patiala House Courts. Special public prosecutor Akhand Pratap Singh, representing the Delhi Police, stressed the necessity for the extension, citing pending reports and the



need to question witnesses, including those from Parliament, before finalising the charge sheet.

All the six accused persons were also presented before the court as their judicial custody ended. The court extended their custody till May 25, allowing the police

additional time to complete its investigation.

In March, Additional Sessions Judge Hardeep Kaur had allowed the police application but granted only 45 days against their request for an extension of three months to finish the investigation.

Advocate Dehadrai withdraws defamation suit against Mahua Moitra in Delhi HC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Advocate Jai Anant Dehadrai on Thursday withdrew his defamation suit against Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra in the Delhi High Court.

Dehadrai's suit alleged that Moitra made defamatory statements against him on various social media platforms, as well as in print and electronic media. He had sought Rs 2 crore in damages from Moitra, alleging that she referred to him as "jobless" and "jilted" and sought to restrain her from publishing further defamatory material against him on social media.

Dehadrai, represented by advocate Raghav Awasthi, sought permission from the court to withdraw the suit, upon his own instructions.

Justice Prateek Jalan, who was hearing the case, granted permission,



stating: "The suit is dismissed as withdrawn."

As Awasthi told the court that Dehadrai was willing to withdraw the

suit, provided Moitra offered an assurance not to make any palpably false statements against him, Justice Jalan urged both parties to find a more amicable resolution to the issue, suggesting that personal allegations be kept out of the public domain.

Advocate Samudra Sarangi, representing Moitra, stated that there could be no settlement between Moitra and Dehadrai.

However, Justice Jalan encouraged the counsel to collaborate on crafting an agreed wording for the court order in light of Dehadrai's decision to withdraw the suit.

In response, Awasthi stated that the withdrawal was an unconditional peace offering.

Earlier, the court had held that Moitra has a right to defend herself in the public domain.

Reservation given earlier to Muslim community continued in K'taka: CM Siddaramaiah

Bidar | Agencies

Reacting to the charges levelled by the BJP that the Congress is taking away the reservation of SCs-STs and giving it to the Muslims in Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah claimed on Thursday that the 4 per cent quota which existed earlier for the Muslims has been continued in the southern state.

Speaking to reporters in Bidar, CM Siddaramaiah stated that as per the report of the Chinnappa Reddy Commission, the 4 per cent reservation for the Muslim community was implemented from 1994. It was withdrawn during the tenure of the previous BJP government headed by then CM Basavaraj Bommai.

Questioning it, this class went to the Supreme Court. During that time, the BJP government had given an undertaking that the 4 per cent reservation



would be continued and that reservation is continuing in the present day as well, the CM stated.

On the criticism by the BJP that the

Congress is trying to snatch property from the people and redistribute it, CM Siddaramaiah without answering that asked has Prime Minister Narendra Modi fulfilled all his assurances? Was he able to deposit Rs 15 lakh in everyone's bank account? Create 2 crore jobs? Has the promise of doubling the income of farmers been fulfilled? Has he been able to bring down inflation?

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi charged on Thursday that the Congress is all set to take away the reservation of Dalits under the Other Backward Communities (OBC) and give it to the Muslims.

Joshi slammed the Congress leaders for injustice to Dalits only for appeasing the Muslims. The Congress has insulted Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Babu Jagjivan Ram and is doing opportunistic politics.

Surat | Agencies

Wanted posters for Congress leader Niles Kumbhani have been put up across Surat, labeling him a "murderer of democracy" and a "traitor."

Amid rumours of Kumbhani's potential defection to the BJP, Congress supporters have staged protests outside his now-vacant residence, denouncing him as a "betrayer of the people."

The posters, prominently displayed on the Hirabaug Bridge, were installed by former Corporator Dinesh Kachadiya. They urge the public to confront Kumbhani over his actions. This public display of dissent follows the controversial disqualification of Kumbhani's Lok Sabha candidacy by Surat Collector and Returning Officer, Sourabh Pardi, amid claims of inconsistencies in his nomination documents. Kumbhani has since become unreachable, sparking concern among his party colleagues and supporters. "He is neither at his home nor available on



calls. He hasn't contacted party members since the election of Mukesh Dalal," reported a Congress party worker.

The situation escalated after Mukesh Dalal from the BJP was declared the winner unopposed in Surat, a result that came into place after all rival candidates, including those from major parties like the BSP, mysteriously withdrew their nominations.

Ice cream vendor stabbed to death near India Gate, accused arrested

Team Absolute | New Delhi

An ice cream vendor was stabbed to death by a man near the highly secured India Gate late on Wednesday, police said.

The deceased is identified as 25-year-old Prabhat, a resident of Sangam Vihar in Delhi, and a native of Etawah in Uttar Pradesh.

According to police, on Wednesday at 9:02 p.m., an information regarding a quarrel near India Gate was



received at Kartavya Path police station, following which a police team rushed to the spot.

Upon reaching the spot, the injured (identified as Prabhat) was found and was taken to Lady Harding Hospital for treatment but he succumbed to his injuries

and was pronounced dead at the hospital.

"During the probe, it is found that Prabhat was an ice cream vendor at C-Hexagon India Gate who had come just on that day as a vendor. One person in his twenties came to his ice cream rehdh [cart] and stabbed him multiple times," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Devesh Kumar Mahla. Blood and slippers were found at the spot which were seized by the police team.

ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS MAY HIT MANGO CROPS IN UP: EXPERTS

Lucknow | Agencies

Battling the impact of climate change, the mango yield in northern India, including Uttar Pradesh (UP), may be hit by the earlier-than-usual summer this year, said experts at Lucknow's ICAR-Central Institute of Subtropical Horticulture (CISH).

The mango belt is known for its prized Chausa, Dussehri and Langra varieties globally and the northern belt accounts for 40 per cent of the total mango production in India.

Of 21 million metric tonnes (MT), 4.8 MT comes from UP alone, said T Damodaran, the institute's Director.

Temperature has seen a significant rise and the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) is predicting a further rise in the mercury in days to come. With the mercury expected to go up to 43



degrees Celsius soon, it may not be ideal for mango flowering, said experts at the institute.

Unlike the previous year, when mango produce was affected due to untimely hailstorm, thunderstorm and semi looper insects, mango flowering this year is good due to warm weather. But fruit produce may again suffer due to extreme climatic

conditions expected in coming days, the scientists said. "Looking at the intense heatwave forecast over the next 30 days, where the temperature is expected to go up to 43 degrees Celsius soon, policymakers and mango lovers have started having doubts about the fate of the mango crop for the current season," said the scientists.

Damodaran said high temperature during fruit formation is usually expected to favour the crop, however, sudden temperature rise may result in a higher fruit fall, if it is not managed with light to moderate frequent irrigation to keep the crop moist.

Mango crops are often considered the most vulnerable to climatic changes during flowering-fruiting period. The most crucial period for the crop falls in March-April when night temperatures start rising above 15 degrees Celsius, which decides the flowering and fruiting of mango crop, he explained.



NCP(SP) Manifesto: Rs 1 lakh/year dole to poor women & jobless youth, min wage hike

Team Absolute | Pune

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) President Sharad Pawar here on Thursday released the party's 2024 Election Manifesto with a slew of promises to attract the poor, women, farmers, the unemployed, the depressed sections of society and other backward groups for the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

Sharad Pawar, along with state President Jayant Patil and other senior functionaries disclosed the salient aspects of the Manifesto which include an aid of Rs 1 lakh per year to a woman from all the poor families in the country under the Mahalakshmi Scheme, and help make crores of women as 'lakhpatis'.

A like amount shall be given as a stipend to the educated jobless youth, who will be provided free training and skilling in the government or private sector for a year and prepare them to take up jobs of their choice.

Similar to the INDIA bloc proposal, the NCP(SP) will also amend the laws to hike the quotas' ceiling and provide for reservations to more categories, set up a special farmers' commission to advise, streamline and recommend loan waivers to the peasantry,



among other things, Pawar and Patil said.

The NCP(SP) also proposes to double the income of unorganised daily workers to at least Rs 400 per day, better sops for Anganwadi women workers, throwing open the government sector's 30 lakh jobs currently lying vacant to the unemployed youth, and other assurances for various other sections of the populace if and after the INDIA bloc comes to power.

The NCP (SP) is contesting 10 of the state's 48 LS constituencies, with many falling in the 'tough fight' category, along with support from the Maha Vikas Aghadi allies like Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT).

Last week, the Congress and SS(UBT) leaders indicated that if the need arises, they might issue an MVA's joint manifesto in the coming days.

Shiv Sena spokesperson Sunil Shah on Thursday said the announcement of Sharad Pawar-led NCP(SP) in its manifesto 'Shapathnama' with regards to minimum support price (MSP) for farmers is to "deceive" and "allure" them.

"It is important to note that he was the Union Agricultural Minister for 10 years between 2004 and 2014. During his tenure, he did nothing for the farmers. The MSP announcement in the manifesto is simply an attempt to deceive and allure the farmers," said Shah here.

"They have also shown a dangling carrot of 50 per cent reservation for women. However, the manifesto falls short in countering in leaps taken for women empowerment under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde," said Shah.

Offering cheap gas cylinders, and giving poor women Rs 1 lakh every year, are nothing but fake promises, she claimed.

"It is high time Sharad Pawar's National Corrupt Party stopped cheating people and making such promises," she said.

Clean chit to Sunetra Pawar in MSCB 'scam' should be accepted by all: NCP

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) said on Wednesday that the closure report submitted by the Economic Offences Wing of the Mumbai Police in the alleged Rs 25,000 crore Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) scam should be accepted by one and all.

Incidentally, the Mumbai Police gave a clean chit to Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra Pawar, who is the party's nominee from the Baramati Lok Sabha case, in this case.

The timing is crucial, given that Sunetra Pawar in her maiden electoral battle is pitted against her sister-in-law and NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) candidate Supriya Sule in a pre-tight fight.

State NCP spokesperson Anand Paranjape said Sunetra Pawar was not the lone director (of MSCB) as other directors from various political parties



were also included in the closure report filed in January.

"The EOW of Mumbai Police has carried out a detailed investigation and presented its case in the court of law in its closure report. The directors of the bank were from different political parties. After a comprehensive police probe, the closure report should be accepted by one and all," he noted.

The EOW in its closure report said the MSCB did not suffer any losses in the process of sanctioning loans to the Jarandeshwar Sugar Mill linked to Ajit Pawar or its sale. The EOW also submitted that it did not find anything illegal in the various transactions of the bank.

Kotak Bank goes into damage-control mode after RBI ban

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The top management of Kotak Mahindra Bank has gone into damage-control mode after RBI barred the lender on Wednesday from taking new customers online and issuing fresh credit cards with immediate effect.

According to reliable sources, Chief Executive Officer and MD Ashok Vaswani has in a letter to Kotak Mahindra Bank employees attempted to allay their fears over the stringent action taken by the RBI against the bank. He has assured them that management would work on the issues raised in the RBI investigation so that they are resolved soon.

Vaswani, who succeeded Uday Kotak as the CEO recently, also mentions in the letter that the explosive growth in business through digital channels has necessitated a completely different level of tech infra, and the bank has been investing in building tech infra and in the resilience of tech platforms.

In a bid to boost the morale of the staff, the CEO has also said that Kotak Mahindra Bank will continue to onboard new customers via non-digital channels and across all products other than credit cards.

The RBI order states that business restrictions on Kotak Mahindra Bank have been



imposed in the interest of customers as the Uday Kotak-controlled bank was assessed to be deficient in its IT Risk and Information Security Governance.

The RBI said stringent action has been taken to protect consumers and to prevent any possible prolonged outage which may seriously impact not only the bank's ability to render efficient customer service but also the financial ecosystem of digital banking and payment systems, according to the RBI order. Kotak Mahindra Bank has also issued a statement saying that the bank will work with the RBI to resolve issues at the earliest. The bank said it would commission a comprehensive audit of the bank's IT systems under the approval and supervision of the RBI.

Mahadev betting scam: Actress Tamannaah Bhatia summoned by Maha Police

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Tamannaah Bhatia has been summoned by the Maharashtra Cyber Police for the ongoing investigations into the multi-crore Mahadev online gambling and betting scam, officials here said on Thursday.

Bhatia had allegedly endorsed and promoted the online viewing of IPL matches on Fairplay app, one of the group apps of Mahadev, said the officials.

The actress has been asked to appear before the Cyber Police on Monday, April 29, to record her statement as a witness for the investigations into the alleged illegal streaming of the IPL 2023 series on the app.

Noted for her role in 'Baahubali' and other films, Bhatia follows other entertainment industry players like the business managers of Sanjay Dutt and Jacqueline Fernandez, besides singer Badshah and over 425 persons from different fields getting arrested across the country.

As more skeletons tumble out, multiple inter-state and Central agencies are now probing the Mahadev app scam, reported to run into an estimated over Rs 6,000



crore.

After the scam erupted in 2021, the involvement of many celebrities, entertainment world personalities, business folks and others, ostensibly with political patronage, came to the fore.

The case has seen six dozen more FIRs lodged all over India and as a money-laundering angle emerged, the Enforcement Directorate also jumped into the multi-dimensional probe.

Retired officer loses Rs 25 cr to cyber fraudsters who posed as cops, CBI officers



Team Absolute | Mumbai

A retired director of a multinational company (MNC) residing in Mumbai lost nearly Rs 25 crore to cyber fraudsters, who posed as police and CBI officers and intimidated her saying she was being probed in a money laundering case, officials said on Thursday, reported news agency. Police say this is one of the biggest cyber fraud cases targeting an individual in the city in recent times.

According to them, the retired director of MNC from Mumbai sold her and her mother's shares and mutual fund investments and even took out a gold loan to pay money to the scammers.

The incident occurred during a two-month period starting February 6 this year, a police official said.

"The complainant, who

stays in a western suburb, received a WhatsApp call with the caller posing as an official of the telecom department, who told her that her three mobile numbers will be deactivated. When the retired director of MNC from Mumbai, who is a senior citizen, sought to know the reason, the caller told her that he was connecting the call to a police officer," he said.

After that, another man posing as a police officer started speaking and said they have received a money laundering complaint against her and her mobile numbers and Aadhaar card was found linked to the case, he said.

"The caller then transferred the call to another person, who posed as a CBI officer and threatened her with the money laundering case. The caller told her that if she wanted to get out of

the case, she should deposit money into the bank accounts provided by him and assured that she will get her money back," the police official said. The fraudsters also opened a current account in the victim's name and asked her to deposit money there. They told her that her money will be sent to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The caller also told her to collect the receipt of the payment from the local police station, he said. The woman transferred around Rs 25 crore to the account, but failed to get it back, following which she approached the Mumbai police and filed a complaint against unidentified fraudsters, the police official said.

The cyber police station of the Mumbai crime branch initiated a probe into the case and froze 31 bank accounts so far, he said.

2 Children, missing for hours, found dead in locked car

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Two children missing for hours were found dead inside a parked car at Antop Hill in central Mumbai, with the police suspecting that the kids lost their lives due to suffocation, an official said on Thursday. The car was locked from inside and it appears that the children could not unlock it, the official said. Muskan Mohabbat Shaikh (5) and Sajid Mohammed Shaikh (7) were playing outside their homes, where the car was parked, on Wednesday afternoon. When the children did not return home till evening, their parents started a search for them. Subsequently, they also lodged a missing complaint at the Antop Hill police station, the official said. A few hours later, an onlooker found the children lying unconscious inside the car. The vehicle doors were opened and the kids were rushed to the hospital but doctors declared them dead, the official said. Prima facie, it seems the kids were suffocated to death as they were locked inside the car, the official said. Police are examining footage of CCTV cameras installed in the area and probing all possible angles, he said, adding that an accidental death case has been registered for now.



Manifesto Promises Manifest: 'Amrit Sarovar Abhiyan' quenches thirst of lakhs in Maha

Team Absolute | Mumbai

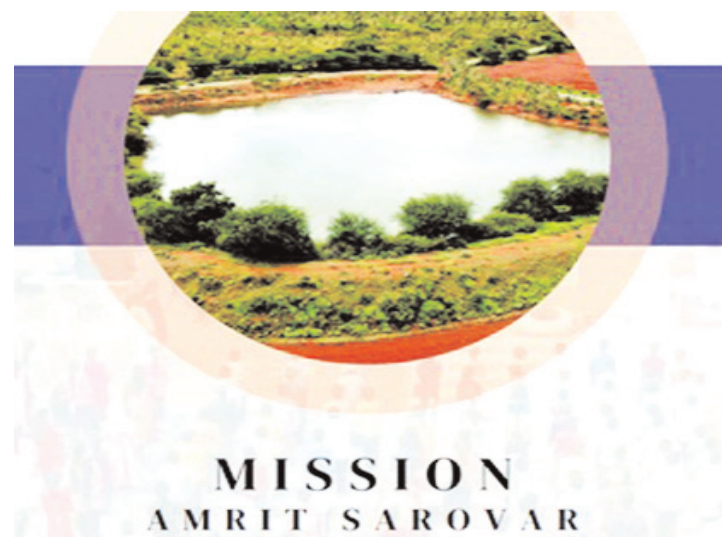
In August 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the completion of a unique 'Amrit Sarovar Abhiyan' (ASA) which rejuvenated the water bodies in semi-urban and rural areas of the country to solve their water problems.

Under the scheme launched in April 2022, it was envisaged to create at least 75 such Amrit Sarovars in each of the 766 administrative districts of India to improve the storage of water for drinking, irrigation and animals and provide a long-term solution to the water crisis experienced in summer each year.

According to the Union Ministry of Rural Development, the ASA envisaged more than 50,000 rejuvenated ponds/lakes all over India.

Till December 2023, 83,500-plus such works were undertaken of which nearly 68,200 projects were completed. In Maharashtra, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari kickstarted the initiative in May 2022 by launching 20 Amrit Sarovars, each with a water storage of 1,276 TCM in Akola and surrounding regions.

Deploying the Buldhana pattern of water conservation, more than 500 water bodies like lakes and 300 farm ponds have been revived under the



ASA, increasing the water storage by over 34,000 TCM at no extra cost, by deepening and rejuvenating the water bodies.

The soil, silt, stones and other material extracted from the reservoirs are being recycled for use on the national high networks, and the work has already been completed on more than two dozen big and small lakes.

Citing an example of Akola, officials said that the original irrigation potential was 150 hectares, but after

the ASA drive, it has increased to 663 hectares with the increased water availability through the revival of the water bodies, which will be a boon in the drought-prone regions of the country.

Union Minister Gadkari urged all the 71 Agricultural Universities in India to benefit from the ASA schemes and cited the example of the Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Agricultural University in Akola which even auctioned two such ASA lakes for Rs 800,000, and the model

helped people in 18 villages with a total population of over 100,000 through water recharge techniques.

In another scheme in 2022, more than 50-TMC surplus water was released from the Krishna River dams in the Satara and Sangli districts of western Maharashtra to help more than 450 villages in seven drought-prone talukas of the region.

The move came after a pilot project proved to be successful in 2020 and 2021, since after the dams in Satara and Sangli started overflowing, the excess water flowed down through the Krishna river to the neighbouring Karnataka state.

However, now the excess water that earlier flowed out of the state is gainfully utilised in Maharashtra, fulfilling an old demand of the local population to quench their thirst, especially in the summer months, plus for agricultural uses.

Earlier in 2020, the Pune water authorities had started pumping water to lakes in Sangli and Solapur districts to reduce the risk of floods and help the people in the drought-hit areas till the monsoon season.

With the additional flow of water supplied, an area of over 2.40 lakh hectares is getting irrigated in the Takari, Mhaisal and Tembhu schemes and more such works are in the pipeline.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Traffic cops report 15 pc drop in 'over-speeding' violations

Delhi Traffic Police claimed a notable decrease in over-speeding violations, with a reduction of approximately 15 per cent in prosecutions issued for such offences compared to the same period last year until April 15. Data shared by the Delhi Traffic Police revealed that up to April 15, a total of 816,372 notices were issued for over-speeding violations, marking a significant drop from the 952,367 notices issued during the corresponding period in 2023. A senior traffic police official said that through meticulous planning and implementation, they have significantly curbed over-speeding incidents on the city's roads and the systematic deployment of OSVD cameras has played a pivotal role in monitoring and regulating vehicular speed, thereby fostering safer road conditions for all commuters. "Enhanced deterrence measures have been instrumental in dissuading motorists from violating speed limits. The visible presence of Over Speed Violation Detection (OSVD) cameras serves as a deterrent, instilling a sense of responsibility among drivers and promoting adherence to traffic regulations," said the official. The official said that furthermore, OSVD cameras accurately capture instances of over-speeding, allowing for swift and precise enforcement actions against violators. "In addition to enforcement efforts, the Delhi Traffic Police has actively engaged in public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the importance of adhering to speed limits for road safety. These campaigns have helped in fostering a culture of compliance and responsible driving behaviour among the general public," the official added.

LS second phase polls in Raj

Two Union ministers, Lok Sabha Speaker, ex-CM Gehlot's son in fray

Four Lok Sabha constituencies have become high profile seats in the second phase of elections scheduled on Friday as two union ministers, a Lok Sabha Speaker and former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's son are in the fray. The two union ministers trying their fate at the hustings are Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Kailash Choudhary, while Vaibhav Gehlot and Om Birla are also in the fray.

While Gajendra Singh Shekhawat is contesting from Jodhpur, Kailash Choudhary is contesting from Barmer, Om Birla from Kota and Vaibhav Gehlot from Jalore Sirohi.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat defeated Vaibhav Gehlot by over 2.74 lakh votes.

Vaibhav was fielded by the Congress from Jodhpur then, however, this time he is a candidate from the Jalore-Sirohi seat.

The BJP has fielded Lumbaram Choudhary from this seat. It had won by 2.61 lakh votes last time but it has cancelled the ticket of Devji Patel, who had won three-consecutive elections from Jalore Sirohi.

Kailash Choudhary is in a triangular fight for the Barmer Jaisalmer seat. There is a direct challenge coming in from Independent candidate Ravindra Singh Bhati. He won Assembly elections from the Sheo seat as an Independent after being denied a ticket by the BJP.

Further, the Congress has fielded Umeda Ram Beniwal from Barmer. Beniwal joined the Congress after resigning from the RLP. In the Assembly elections, he contested from Barmer and was defeated by Congress veteran Harish Choudhary by a margin of mere 900 votes.

The Congress is banking on Beniwal due to his huge following in the Jat community.

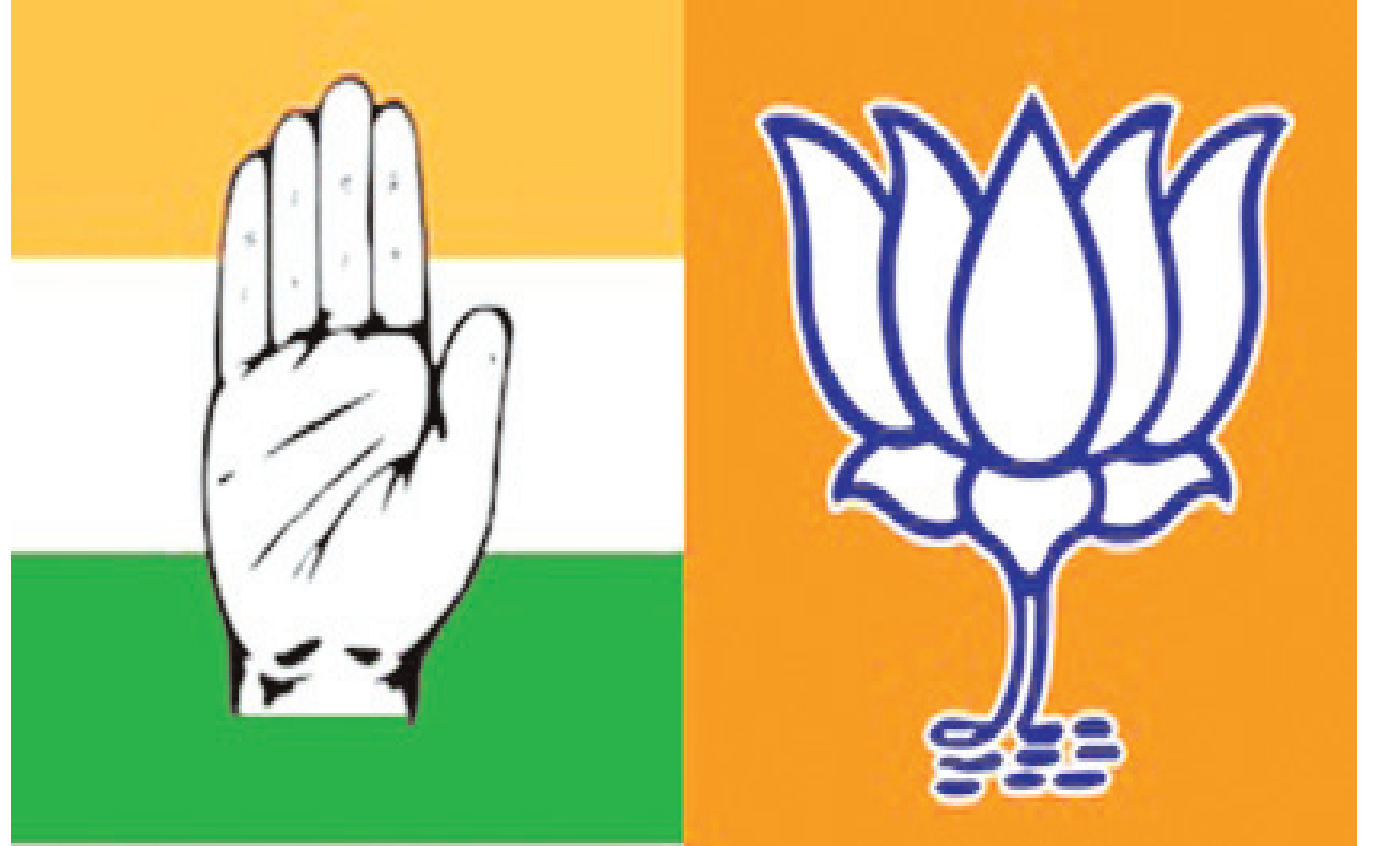
So, given the triangular contest, everybody is sweating it hard in order to win.

Jodhpur is witnessing yet another tight contest as the Congress this time has fielded Karan Singh Uchiyada who also comes from the Rajput community like Shekhawat.

So it's Rajput Vs Rajput on this seat due to which the community's votes will split and Jats and Vishnois will be the deciding factor here.

Shekhawat got a strong chunk of Rajput votes which was over four lakh in the last election, however, this vote bank will now be divided, said political sources.

In the second phase, Om Birla is facing a tough fight from Prahlad Gunjal from Kota. Birla had won last time by 2.79 lakh votes, however this



time, the Congress has fielded ex-BJP leader Gunjal against him.

Gunjal has been a loyalist of Vasundhara Raje and the former CM and Birla's relations are not very strong.

So now all eyes are focussed on whether Raje will help her loyalist Gunjal.

Further the Congress' former minister Shanti Dhariwal and Gunjal were political rivals who faced each other in recent Assembly polls too. Gunjal was defeated by a thin margin of over 2,500 votes by Dhariwal.

Dhariwal and Birla share a good bonding and Kota calls them the 'Om Shanti' pair. So now people are waiting to see if Dhariwal will help Birla or the Congress' candidate Gunjal.

In Jalore Sirohi the BJP has fielded a grassroots worker Lumbaram Choudhary against Vaibhav Gehlot.

BJP workers say Lumbaram Choudhary

knows the demographics of this region well and has been campaigning on his two-wheeler which, they say, is his plus point.

Calling Vaibhav Gehlot a prince, BJP workers say he doesn't have a reach in the interiors because four wheelers can't go there and he can't walk long distances in the hills.

Meanwhile, Ashok Gehlot, his wife and daughter-in-law are camping in Jalore Sirohi and campaigning for Vaibhav.

Although there is a tough contest on these four seats, both the Congress and BJP are making claims of winning.

Congress General Secretary Swarnim Chaturvedi said that Barmer, Jodhpur, Kota and Jalore Sirohi seats are coming to the party's kitty.

"There is a tough fight but we are confident of winning these seats. The BJP is scared and so it sent PM Modi to Barmer and

Jalore Sirohi and Amit Shah to Kota. Recently Kangana was called to Jodhpur as BJP sensed danger here too," he added.

Meanwhile Narayan Panchariya, BJP state Vice President said, "We are talking of development in all our programmes because the country will be a 'Developed India' by 2047. Voters trust our vision and mission. Hence PM Modi is spreading the message of 'Viksit Bharat 2047' among the people."

"On the contrary, the Congress has been speaking badly of Kangana who will represent woman power in Parliament after winning from Mandi. So people are watching everything. Wait for June 4 when we will emerge as the winners," he added.

international

Russia warns NATO nuclear facilities in Poland, says, 'could become military target'

Moscow | Agencies
Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov on Thursday warned that NATO nuclear facilities, if permanently located on the Polish territory, will become a military target for Russia. "The expansion of the practice of joint NATO nuclear missions - regardless of who becomes that country or those countries that can join those already participating in this practice - is of a purely destabilising nature. And in fact, threatening," Ryabkov said, Xinhua news agency reported.



will not add to Poland's security, but the corresponding facilities will certainly become a target. They will be at the forefront of our military planning," he stressed. Ryabkov referred to the ongoing discussion about deploying NATO nuclear facilities in Poland as an "evolving story."

Moscow closely monitors how Warsaw addresses this topic, he said.

Polish President Andrzej Duda, in an interview with the Fakt newspaper on Monday, stated that the Polish authorities have repeatedly discussed with the US the possibility of deploying nuclear weapons in Poland within the framework of NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements and expressed readiness for it if necessary.

"I'm not even talking about permanent deployment, which is also being hotly discussed by hotheads in Warsaw. Therefore, all those politicians

who are now enthusiastically discussing such a scheme in Poland and beyond, for their own reasons, must understand: shifts in this direction

US delivered new long-range missiles to Ukraine: Pentagon

Washington | Agencies
The US shipped a new long-range missile system to Ukraine after the delivery received a secret sign-off, the Pentagon has said. The precision weapons were part of an emergency military package for Ukraine announced by the US in March, but were not explicitly listed "in order to maintain operational security for Ukraine at their request".



ment said.

Several US media outlets, citing US government officials, reported that the missiles arrived last week and have already been used.

NBC News said Ukraine launched an attack on the occupied Crimean Peninsula

last week and this week on the occupied city of Berdyansk in south-east Ukraine.

According to reports, further ATACMS missiles are also to be included in the military package announced by US President Joe Biden on Wednesday following approval by Congress.

The Pentagon did not explicitly state on Wednesday if the ATACMS missiles supplied were models with a range of around 300 kilometres or those with a shorter range.

Last October, Ukraine deployed ATACMS missiles that came from the US. At the time, these were models with a shorter range of around 165 kilometres. The Ukrainian government has been pleading for missiles that can strike targets much farther away.

Five killed in road accident in Afghanistan

Kabul | Agencies
Five commuters lost their lives and another was injured in a road accident in Surubi district along Afghanistan's Kabul-Jalalabad highway. The accident occurred on Wednesday night, Xinhua news agency reported.

The accident happened along the highway linking the capital of Kabul to eastern provinces, when a passenger vehicle veered off the road and bumped into the mountain, leaving five dead and another injured, Kabul police spokesman Khalid Zadrant posted on his X account.

The injured are now receiving treatment in a local hospital. Fatal road accidents are common in Afghanistan due to poor road conditions, reckless driving, difficult terrains, overloading, overtaking and overspeeding.

North Korea touts ties with Russia on Kim-Putin summit anniversary

Seoul | Agencies
North Korea on Thursday reaffirmed its commitment to further strengthening ties with Russia on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the first-ever summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Kim and Putin held their first summit in the far eastern Russian city of Vladivostok on April 25, 2019, and also met at Russia's Vostochny spaceport in September last year. Yonhap news agency reported. "It is the consistent stand of the DPRK government to attach utmost importance to the DPRK-Russia relations and invariably develop the tradition of deep-rooted friendship," North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Im Chon-il said in an English-language statement uploaded on the ministry's website. DPRK stands for the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The official said the two nations have strengthened their cooperation and extended full support to each other on the "com-



mon front to smash the military threats and provocations, and high-handed and arbitrary practices of the imperialists."

"The DPRK-Russia relations rooted in comradeship and militant unity will steadily develop into invincible comradely relations and eternal strategic relations," Im said.

Im also reiterated the North's support for Russia in its war with Ukraine and pledged to stand aside the Russian military. Ties between Pyongyang and Moscow have significantly deepened following last year's summit, spawning speculation over their arms deal for Russia's use in the war.

Fears grow over medical professors' mass resignations in South Korea

Seoul | Agencies
Resignations by medical professors in South Korea in protest against the government's medical school quota hike plan were supposed to take effect from Thursday, sparking concerns over its impact on the medical system already reeling from the months-long walkout by trainee doctors.

Officials said most professors, who work as senior doctors at major hospitals, appeared to have continued to serve on the first day of resignations coming into force and no issues had been reported at hospitals regarding the resignation submission, Yonhap news agency reported.

Since March 25, medical professors nationwide have submitted their resignations, which would begin to take legal effect after the lapse of one month.

The professors have taken the step in support of junior doctors who have left their work sites since February 20 in protest of the government's plan to boost the number of medical students by 2,000 start-



ing next year.

"Each professor designated their own resignation date given their work schedules and other things," an official of the emergency committee of Seoul National University's medical school said.

The government has said that no resignations have been accepted so far and "not many" professors have submitted resignations.

Around 7 per cent of the country's total medical profes-

sors, or around 800, have tendered their resignations, and a mere 80 cases have been received by universities, according to some officials. Some have raised questions about resignations taking effect simply because one month has passed even though some of them failed to meet due procedures and formal requirements, while others say they can be valid even without approval from their employers. The situation, however, is

feared to be taking a turn for the worse, as there have been no signs of medical staff backing down amid their standoff with the government.

"We've sought legal consultations about whether resignations come into force though they have not even been opened. Medical professors of the university are supposed to walk off their job starting around May 1," an official of the school emergency committee said.

Medical professors have been struggling to fill the void of junior doctors and major hospitals have already reduced surgeries and treatments for patients markedly.

Professors are also reviewing taking a day off every week, saying that they are experiencing "excessive" workload, fatigue, and burnout, and they are "frustrated with the government's unilateral and unreasonable push" for medical reform plans.

Patients' groups appealed for professors' restraint to maintain essential emergency care services and treatments for serious cases.



CM YADAV-LED MP GOVT WILL RUN WITH FULL SPEED AFTER LS POLLS: PM MODI

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that the Chief Minister Mohan Yadav-led Madhya Pradesh Government will speed up its development work once the Lok Sabha elections are over.

Addressing a public rally in Morena Lok Sabha constituency in Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh, the Prime Minister said the state witnessed tremendous growth under the BJP government in the last few decades.

He said Madhya Pradesh was a BIMARU state under the Congress regime, and the BJP government made it a progressive one.

"Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's government will run with full speed and Madhya Pradesh will see more growth after the Lok Sabha elections," he said.

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, who is contesting the election from his family bastion Guna, senior BJP leader Narendra Singh Tomar, who represented Morena Lok Sabha seat twice, CM Mohan Yadav and state BJP chief, VD Sharma were present on stage.

CM Yadav, who replaced veteran BJP leader and former Chief Minister, Shivraj Singh Chouhan,



completed 100 days of his government recently.

PM Modi hit out at the Congress, calling it a "problem."

"People of Madhya Pradesh eliminated the problem twice. The Congress is a problem for the progress of the country," he stated.

Modi continued to sharpen his attack on the Congress on Thursday during an election rally, alleging that the grand old party accepted the country's division on the basis of religion. He made this accusation while addressing a public rally in Madhya Pradesh's Morena on Thursday.

He said that the BJP was trying to cleanse the "sin" that the Congress committed years ago. "Instead of opening the chains of 'Ma Bharati', the Congress cut its arms. The Congress accepted the country's division on the basis of religion," PM Modi said while addressing a large gathering. PM Modi said that the Congress divided the country earlier and is not ready to listen even today.

"The Congress' agenda is to divide the country for power. Once again, it is desperate to return to power," the PM added. The BJP has won the Morena Lok Sabha seat for the last seven terms since 1996.

Former Union Minister and Madhya Pradesh Assembly Speaker, Narendra Singh Tomar represented this constituency twice.

This time the BJP has fielded a new candidate from Morena, Shivmangal Singh Tomar against the Congress' Satyapal Singh Sikarwar, a former BJP MLA.

Preparations for second phase of voting completed in Madhya Pradesh, fate of many veterans at stake

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Voting is going to be held in six parliamentary constituencies on Friday in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh. In this phase, the fate of 80 candidates including Union Minister Dr. Virendra Kumar and BJP State President Vishnu Dutt Sharma is to be decided. There are a total of 29 Lok Sabha seats in the state, elections for which are being held in four phases. The first phase of voting was held on April 19 and now the second phase of voting is taking place on April 26.

In the second phase in the state, voting will be held from 7 am to 6 pm in Tikamgarh (SC), Damoh, Khajuraho, Satna, Rewa and Hoshangabad. In this phase, two seats are in discussion due to heavyweight candidates. Union Minister Dr.



Virendra Kumar is in the fray from Tikamgarh and BJP State President and current MP Vishnu Dutt Sharma from Khajuraho.

In Damoh, there is a contest between two new faces, Rahul Lodhi of BJP and Tarwar Lodhi of Congress.

Similarly, in Sagar also two new faces are facing each other. While Congress has fielded Guddu Raja, BJP has fielded Lata Vankhade as its candidate.

In Satna, four-time MP Ganesh Singh is contesting against Congress's Siddharth Kushwaha and BSP's Narayan Tripathi. In Rewa, BJP candidate Janardan Mishra is facing Congress's Neelam Mishra.

For the convenience of voters, there will be a public and general holiday on the day of voting on April 26 in six Lok Sabha parliamentary constituencies of the second phase.

Explosion in scrap warehouse of Jabalpur, cracks in houses

Team Absolute | Jabalpur

There was an explosion in a scrap warehouse in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh on Thursday afternoon. Due to this explosion, cracks have appeared in many houses. Some people have also been injured.

According to information received from the police, there was an explosion in a scrap warehouse in Khajuri Khiriyia bypass area of Aadhar Tal police station area on Thursday afternoon. The explosion was so intense that the sound was heard several kilometers away and the nearby houses also cracked. The roof of the warehouse was badly damaged.



Collector Deepak Saxena told reporters that there was an explosion in the scrap warehouse and details of how many people were injured in the incident are being gathered. Local people

have said that after hearing the sound of the explosion, they felt as if an earthquake had occurred. Bomb casings have also been found on the spot and there is a possibility of gunpowder etc.

THERE IS PANIC IN BJP, THEY DO TEMPLES AND MOSQUES: SACHIN PILOT

Team Absolute | Ujjain

Former Deputy CM of Rajasthan Sachin Pilot said in Ujjain, "There is an atmosphere of change in the country. People are tired of the same promises and assurances. Frustration and anger are visible in the speeches of BJP leaders after the first phase of elections. BJP leaders are very fond of playing with the word 'M-M'. They talk about Muslims and Hindus, about temples and mosques, about Mangalsutra.

Pilot was addressing the election rally on Thursday in support of Mahesh Parmar, the candidate from Ujjain-Alot Lok Sabha seat. He said, '272 MPs are required to form the government. Why does BJP need 400 MPs? Somewhere in their mind, this is what their leaders themselves say and today the top leaders of BJP are forced to refute on an open platform that we will not tamper with the Constitution, we will not tamper with reservation. Why do you even have to



refute it? Rajiv Gandhi's MPs had crossed 400 in 1984, sometimes he said that he would end the opposition.

State President of Madhya Pradesh Congress Jitu Patwari said, 'The scene is telling that times are about to

change. It has been 10 years since the promises made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, what happened in these 10 years? 17 governments were toppled, 500 MLAs were bought, 200 MPs defected. The black money was to come from Swiss Bank, Rs. 15 lakhs

each were to be received from this bank, its list did not come, but SBI's list came.

He said, 'Baba Ramdev had said that he would make petrol Rs 30/litre, but I made it Rs 100/litre. Sisters are being stripped of their clothes in Manipur, PM Modi has made such a country.' Questioning Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, he said why Mahakal does not investigate the corruption in the public.

Former Union Minister Arun Yadav said, 'Congress is going to become an MP in this Lok Sabha. I say with certainty that we are going to form a grand alliance government. This is a government of commission agents. He did not even spare Baba Mahakal. BJP MP from Rewa takes 30% commission. Rewa MP has earned commission of Rs 29 crore in 10 years. There is a fixed rate for every work.

Rajya Sabha MP Vivek Tankha said, 'If we get 5 seats in Madhya Pradesh, it means that the opposition government is being formed at the Centre.'

Advanced machine for cervical cancer detection inaugurated in AIIMS Bhopal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Liquid Based Cytology (LBC) PAP test service for the detection of cervical cancer was launched by the Department of Pathology and Lab Medicine of AIIMS Bhopal on 25.04.2024. Inaugurating this facility, Professor (Dr.) Ajai Singh, Executive Director, AIIMS Bhopal, said that the opening of this facility will greatly help in screening cervical cancer among women in Central India and it can be detected in the early stages. Today, cervical cancer has emerged as one of the biggest problems in the country. Cervical cancer detection through LBC technique takes less time. Besides, its accuracy is also very high. Women in the age group of 25 to 65 will get special benefits from this facility.

AIIMS Bhopal is the first government institute in the entire Madhya Pradesh where such a facility will be available. Dr. Vaishali Walke, Head of the Department of Pathology and Lab Medicine, said that with the introduction of the facility of this



machine, cases of cervical cancer will now be identified early and their prompt treatment will be

ensured. Till now cervical cancer is diagnosed through traditional PAP test.

Congress manifesto is the voice of the people: Kamal Nath

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Kamal Nath has described the Congress manifesto as the voice of the people.

Kamal Nath wrote on social media platform And felt."

Kamal Nath says, "Congress's five justice is an innovative effort to give strength and power to youth, women, farmers, workers and every weaker section through participatory justice. Come with Congress and strengthen the campaign of providing justice to all. Do it. We are among you with many public welfare schemes like employment to youth, loan waiver to farmers, MSP to women, remuneration of Rs 400 per day to workers, caste census etc."



Congress Leader sits in drain water, takes a dip in polluted river

Team Absolute | Ujjain

In a bold act of protest against the pollution of the Shipra River, Congress' Ujjain Lok Sabha seat candidate Mahesh Parmar on Tuesday took a dip in the river and sat in the overflowing drain water entering the river.

Mahesh Parmar expressed his determination to clean up the river and restore its purity. "Today, after taking a dip in the Shipra River, I took a vow that until the Shipra River is purified and the discharge of sewage into it is stopped, I will fight for Shipra Maa till my last breath. I request the people of Ujjain that this is a matter of honour and pride for Ujjain. Please come to the streets and fight for this cause," Mahesh Parmar said.

Despite claims of development and a "double-engine government" by the ruling party, the condition of the river has deteriorated, Mahesh Parmar emphasized. "The people who claim that there is a double-engine government in Madhya Pradesh and the country for the past 10 years, such as Members of Parliament, MLAs, ministers, and other public representatives, and this is the condition of the Shipra River. Despite those who talk about



development, and our Chief Minister spending crores, this is the current state," Mahesh Parmar said.

Parmar will be facing Anil Firojiya of the BJP who is the sitting MP from Ujjain. Ujjain goes to the polls in Phase 4 on May 13. Polling for the Lok Sabha in Madhya Pradesh will be conducted in four phases, with the next three phases of voting scheduled for April 26, May 7 and May 13. The counting of votes has been scheduled for June 4. Madhya Pradesh has a total of 29 Lok Sabha constituencies, making it the sixth-largest state in terms of members it sends to the Lower House. Of these, 10 seats are reserved for SC and ST candidates, while the remaining 19 are unreserved.

Migration from Bundelkhand will now stop: Vishnu Dutt Sharma

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh's Khajuraho MP and BJP state president Vishnu Dutt Sharma says that in his first term, the foundation stone for the prosperity of Bundelkhand has been laid and in the next term, the stigma of drought, poverty, unemployment and migration on the face of this region will be completely eradicated. It will disappear and this area will shine like a sun tilak.

BJP state president Sharma is completing his first term as MP and voting is taking place in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections on Friday, April 26.

In a special conversation with correspondent, he said, "In the last five years, efforts have been made to change the picture of Bundelkhand. A network of roads has been laid, health services are improving and work is going on on an action plan to give a new shape to tourism. Ken Betwa Link Project will bring revolutionary changes in the area which is facing water problem. When there is water, irrigation for the fields will become easier due to the availability of water. It will also gain momentum."

He said, medical colleges are being



established in every district here which will make it easier for people to get health facilities. Referring to the prosperity of Bundelkhand, Sharma said that this is the area where there are diamonds in the land and there is a possibility of getting everything from LPG gas to petroleum. Not only is there a diamond in the land, the common man here is also no less than a

diamond, who goes to different parts of the country and sheds his sweat and is contributing like a diamond in the development of the country.

Referring to the changing picture of Bundelkhand under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sharma said that an international level airport has been built here, rail facility like Vande Bharat has been

provided, the work of Ken Betwa Link Project is going on at a fast pace, in every district. Medical colleges are being started and Ayurveda Medical College is going to be established in Khajuraho. State Chief Minister Mohan Yadav is engaged in a campaign to bring inclusive development on the ground.

On the question of Congress's continuous attacks on Bharatiya Janata Party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sharma said that whether Congress or opposition parties, they are completely surrounded by dynastic politics and are unable to counter the current Modi wave. Are not capable. Their situation is exactly like that at the time of flood, when the water is in spate, all the poisonous creatures from snakes to scorpions gather on a tree to save their lives. Exactly such is the Indi alliance of opposition parties, who have come together to save lives and will start fighting later. Despite this, they are going to get swept away in the Modi wave.

There are a total of 29 Lok Sabha seats in the state. In the last elections, BJP had won 28 seats while Congress could win only one Chhindwara. BJP claims that the party will win all 29 seats in this election.



Nicola Coughlan warned about not getting work for supporting Palestine

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Nicola Coughlan, who is known for her role of Penelope Featherington in the hit streaming show 'Bridgerton', has revealed she faced repercussions for her vocal support to Palestine during the Israel-Hamas conflict. The actress shared that she was told her support for Palestine could affect the acting roles she's offered, reports 'Mirror.co.uk'.

The Irish actress has been vocal about her support for Palestine amid the Israel-Hamas war on social media. She explained her support and willingness to be vocal - especially about the children of Palestine - comes from a "moral responsibility to give back" because of her privileged position. Nicola noted her desire to be proactive in support of causes she believes strongly in began before she landed her breakout role in Derry Girls.

As per 'Mirror.co.uk', she recalled getting involved in several causes, including campaigning for marriage equality in Ireland and marching for abortion rights. "I've always cared about causes and social justice," she told Teen Vogue. "To me, it always becomes about supporting all innocent people, which sounds oversimplified, but I think you've got to look at situations and just think, 'Are we supporting innocent people no matter where they're from, who they are?' That's my drive". Nicola admitted she's been told that certain agents and studios may not want to work with her due to her vocal support for Palestine amid the ongoing conflict. Despite the warning, she continues to wear her Artists4Ceasefire pin. At the 2024 Oscars, Rami Youssef, Billie Eilish, Finneas O'Connell and Ava DuVernay were among the celebrities also seen wearing the pin. She said, "You do get told, 'You won't get work, you won't do this.'"

Courtney Cox opens up on why she wishes she'd been a "firmer parent" to her daughter

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Courtney Cox, who shares a daughter, Coco, with her former husband David Arquette, reflected on her upbringing, acknowledging instances where she hesitated to intervene in certain situations despite sensing that something wasn't right at the time. Cox opened up on the 'Minnie's Questions' podcast, expressing, "I didn't want to step in even though I knew something wasn't right because she would get so mad at me. I did understand, and I should've trusted myself, and I should've stepped in."

"I'm not saying I made her who she is, but you do see things in other people, whether it's just always taking care of people and being the nicest person. And I mean, that's one of the things with age, I've learned to say no, I've learned to have boundaries," she added. Reflecting on her parenting journey, Cox admitted, "But I mean, earlier on when she was a kid, or not even that many years ago, I wish I'd been a firmer parent." Currently, in a relationship with Snow Patrol rocker Johnny McDaid, Cox shared a surprising anecdote about their past. She revealed that there was a moment when he split up with her just one minute into a counselling session.

Describing the experience as intense, she added: "We broke up in therapy. I didn't know it was coming. He broke up with me within the first minute, I was like, 'What?' I was in so much pain. I also don't like surprises. There was that much that needed to be dealt with that he had to protect himself around his heart." The 'Scream' actress further disclosed that when they eventually reconciled, she had gained valuable insights about her own relationship with the world.



Billie Eilish reveals her dramatic 2021 blonde hair transformation caused an identity crisis

Los Angeles | Agencies

Grammy Award-winner Billie Eilish revealed that her dramatic blonde hair transformation sparked an identity crisis, leaving her feeling like she had "no idea" who she was. In an interview with Rolling Stone, she said: "And then I dyed my hair blonde, and I immediately was like, 'Oh, I have no idea who I am'." The glamorous look aligned with the softer feel of her sophomore album, 'Happier Than Ever', but ultimately, it felt like too much of a departure from Eilish's true self, reports people.com. "In a weird way, that was a little like being in a tornado cellar, reading a cute little story," Eilish's brother and collaborator, Finneas O'Connell, said in the profile. "It was a coping mechanism for an album." Eilish showcased her new icy blonde hair in a March 2021 Instagram video. She made her Met Gala debut six months later in a peach tulle Oscar de la Renta corset ball gown, with her blonde hair styled into a glamorous bob.



Kaley Cuoco jokes she is 'mom of the year' after planning daughter's b'day

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kaley Cuoco, who is best known for playing Penny in the sitcom 'Big Bang Theory', has called herself 'mom of the year'. The 38-year-old actress gave the title to herself after she planned her daughter's first birthday party all by herself. Cuoco welcomed baby Matilda into the world last year with Tom Pelphrey and admitted that when it came to marking the little one's first birthday, she took it upon herself to become "mom of the year" by throwing a Disney-themed party, reports 'Female First UK'. The actress told Access Hollywood, "I planned a Minnie Mouse-themed birthday party. I did it all by myself, I was mom of the year. All by myself, swear to God, on my own! It is shocking because I'm not great at stuff like that but, no, I did it." According to 'Female First UK', the former 'Big Bang Theory' star also joked that she is "very proud" to have made it to a year and said that everything should now be plain sailing until her little girl reaches adulthood. She said: "I'm very proud of making it to a year, I feel like it's going to be so easy now. The next 17 years are going to be nothing." The actress had previously shared that Tom and she end up getting emotional at every small milestone with their daughter. She told 'People': "Tom and I were sitting with Matilda the other day, and she was literally staring at us, and she touched both of our faces, and just gave us this innocent, just really joyful, 'Hi' smile. I mean, I could cry right now. We both looked at each other and we started tearing up. He goes, 'Is this our life now, where we just cry at everything she does?'" Cuoco has four dogs named Ruby, Opal, King and Blue, and she joked that little Matilda had been "thrown to the wolves" upon her birth and thought she



might have to "send her back," had the tot not gelled with her canine companions. She said, "Oh my God, she got thrown to the wolves literally. After she was born, I'm like, 'If this child doesn't like dogs, I might have to send her back. There's no choice. This is your life. This is it. They have jumped on her. They have crawled across her. We have let them lick her, kiss her. Our paediatrician was like, 'It's okay.' So they love her so much."

DREW BARRYMORE SPENT THE 'MOST CHASTE' EVENING OF HER LIFE WITH JORDAN KNIGHT

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Drew Barrymore recalled spending the "most chaste" evening of her life with New Kids on the Block member Jordan Knight at the peak of his fame. The actress reminisced about what she anticipated to be "every girl's fantasy" as she found herself in the hotel room of the New Kids on the Block singer during his pop heyday. However, the pair simply played music until the early hours of the morning before Barrymore headed home. Speaking on her self-titled talk show to Knight's bandmate Donnie Wahlberg and his 'Blue Bloods' co-star Bridget Moynahan, Barrymore shared, "I thought about a night that I remember walking through a sea of girls at a hotel on the Sunset Strip." She added: "And it was in the late eighties, early nineties, and I got to go into Jordan Knight's hotel room, and it was like, literally, I was getting to live out every girl's fantasy. All we did was he played the keyboard, and at about three in the morning, I left and went home." "It was the loveliest, most chaste evening of my life. You didn't think that was where it was going. I know that wasn't where I wanted it to go, I think, at the time."



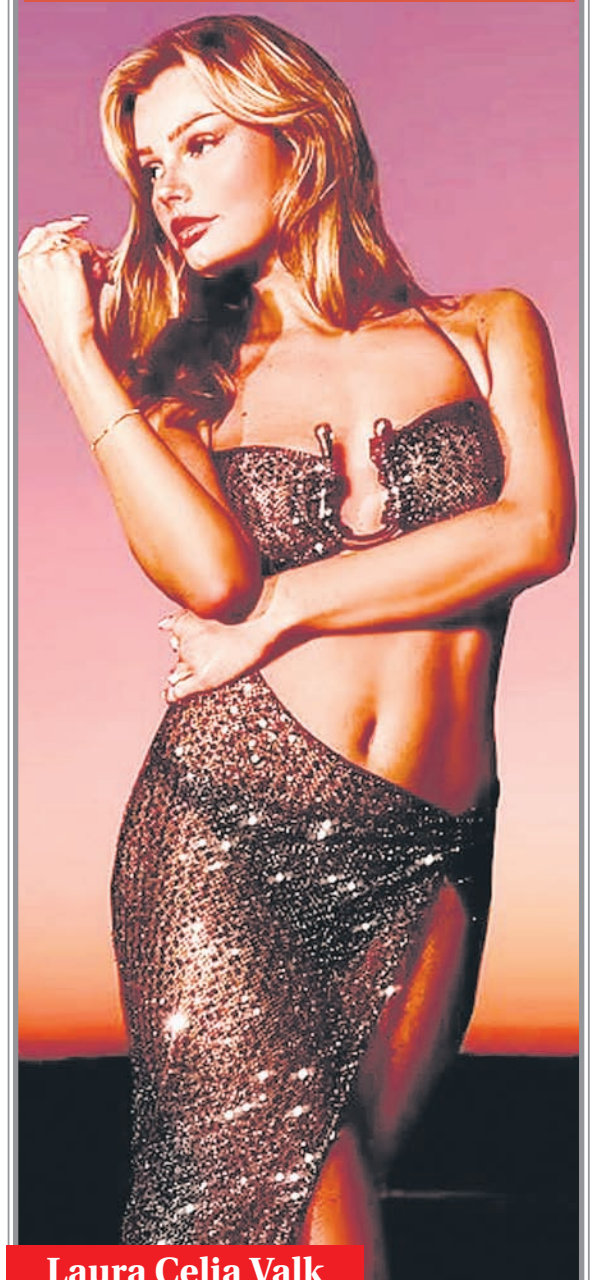
NICOLA COUGHLAN, LUKE NEWTON LOUNGED TOGETHER IN THE BUFF WHILE FILMING 'BRIDGERTON'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actors Nicola Coughlan and Luke Newton's friendship made shooting intimate scenes in the upcoming season of the period drama series 'Bridgerton' feel a lot less daunting. The actress, known for her role as Penelope Featherington on the show, disclosed this during an interview with Teen Vogue. Discussing the comfort level while shooting intimate scenes with Newton, the Irish actress shared: "Yeah, so it's really funny," she said when asked about the rumours. She said: "That is true." "It is a testament to the fact that we just got to a point where we were so comfortable together," she added. "We'd just finished the big sex scene, the most intense and involved one... and we just felt relieved." Coughlan noted that logistics also played a role, given that they weren't wearing "real clothes". She said they would have exposed themselves to the crew if they stood up. Regarding Newton's perspective, he said that having a solid platonic relationship with the actress made the experience "easier". "Having shot (romance) scenes with Nicola and with actors that I would perhaps meet on the same day, I think a lot of people think it's better not to know the person," he added. "But I actually think having a really solid friendship with someone and trusting someone is a lot easier," the actor continued. "We could support each other in whatever way we needed on set, and also just have a laugh about it. I'm really glad we got to share it together. It was like having a really close friend as you're going through something that's maybe quite daunting."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Laura Celia Valk



Selectors likely to name squad for T20 World Cup this weekend, say BCCI sources



New Delhi | Agencies

The senior national selectors are likely to meet this weekend in Mumbai to name the 15-member Indian squad for the ICC T20 World Cup, scheduled to be played in the West Indies and the USA later this year, Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) sources told IANS.

The ICC has set a deadline of May 1 for the participating boards to announce their provisional squads for the mega sporting

spectacle.

The Ajit Agarkar-led selection committee of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) faces the challenge of picking a balanced 15-man squad based on players' performances in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 season.

Sources said to IANS, "They (selectors) will sit on April 27 or 28 to pick the 15-member squad. It will be really tough to name the squad as some young guns are really impressive in the ongoing IPL."

Arjun Babuta breaches Air Rifle world record in Olympic Selection Trials

New Delhi | Agencies

Arjun Babuta shone brightest on Day Seven of the ongoing Olympic Selection Trials (OST) 1&2 for Rifle and Pistol, breaching the existing finals world record in Men's 10M Air Rifle, to post a commanding win. His sensational tally of 254.0 in the OST T1 final, was 0.3 above the mark set by fellow finalist and India teammate Divyansh Singh Panwar, at the Cairo World Cup earlier this year.

Also registering wins in their respective OST T1 final matches were Nancy (women's 10M Air Rifle), Varun Tomar (men's 100M Air Pistol) and Rhythm Sangwan (women's 10M Air Pistol).

Arjun's scoresheet was studded with two perfect 10.9 gems, besides 13 other shots which were 10.6 or above. His lowest score of 10.0 came only on the 21st shot, by which time he had already established a huge gap over the field, winning it by 2.8 in the end over 2022 world champ Rudranksh Patil. Sri Karthik Sabari Raj was third.

Nancy bosses it in women's 10m Nancy was probably a little less lethal than Arjun in the women's 10M Air Rifle OST T1 final, but definitely as effective in securing a comfortable and similar pillar-to-post



win. Her tally of 253.4, missed the world mark by 0.6 but was more than enough to ward off quota holder Mehuli Ghosh by 0.7. Olympian Elavenil Valarivan was third.

Varun and Rhythm claim Air Pistol wins

The men's 10M Air Pistol final saw Paris quota-holder Varun Tomar securing yet another comfortable victory on the day, with a score of 244.1. Ravinder Singh was a whole 4.1 points behind in the second, while Varun's fellow Paris quota holder Sarabjot Singh (217.4) picked up the final podium points with a third-place finish.

Rhythm Sangwan, one of three in the women's field to have qualified for both the Air Pistol and Sport Pistol trials, made up somewhat for the disappointments in the Sport Pistol trials earlier, by taking the overall lead in the Air Pistol event after a comprehensive performance in its first trial match.

After topping qualifications on Wednesday with a score of 578, she led from start to finish in the final to also collect the highest podium points available. Her score of 243.5 was a huge 5.7 better than second finishing Manu Bhaker. Reigning Asian Games champ Palak finished third.

ARCHERY WORLD CUP

INDIAN MEN'S RECURVE TEAM SECURES SPOT IN FINAL

Shanghai (China) | Agencies

With three consecutive wins, the Indian men's recurve team of Dhiraj Bommadevara, Tarundeep Rai, and Pravin Ramesh Jadhav, secured a spot in the final of the Archery World Cup here on Thursday.

The Indian trio lost the first three ends of the pre-quarterfinals match against Indonesia 1-3, but they rallied to win the next two ends, sealing the victory 5-3. After that initial scare, they didn't look back, winning easily 5-1 against Spain and Italy in the ensuing stages.

India maintained their form going into the knockout stages, finishing second overall and averaging a score of above 55 to reach the final. On April 28, they will compete for the title against the formidable South Korean squad in the final.

The women's recurve team maintained its dismal show, losing 3-5 to Mexico in the round of 16, thus exiting the competition early in contrast to the men's victory. Their failure was mostly due to the poor scores of under 53 that



Ankita Bhakat, Deepika Kumari, and Bhajan Kaur shot in three of the four ends.

However, it was a mixed day for the Indians in compound individual events as Aditi Swami and Abhishek Verma exited early, whereas Jyothi

Surekha Vennam and Priyansh progressed to the semifinals on Thursday. In the individual men's compound pre-quarterfinals, Priyansh produced a stunning shock by eliminating the world's top seed, Mike Schlosser of the Netherlands, in a shootout

(149(10)-149(9)). He advanced to the semifinals by winning another shootout, this time against Batuhan Akcaozlu of Turkey, 145-145(20-19).

Priyansh will face Nick Kappers of the United States in the semis on Saturday.

Rasikh Salam reprimanded for code of conduct breach

New Delhi | Agencies

Delhi Capitals (DC) bowler Rasikh Salam Dar was reprimanded for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during Match 40 of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 against Gujarat Titans at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Wednesday night.

"Dar committed a Level 1 offence under Article 2.5 of the IPL's Code of Conduct. He admitted to the offence and accepted the Match Referee's sanction," read a statement from IPL.

For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding.

According to the IPL code of conduct, Article 2.5 covers any words, deeds, or gestures that a player uses against a dismissed batter that could incite an aggressive response from the batter, regardless of whether a reaction occurs, or that could be interpreted as demeaning or disparaging the dismissed batter, regardless of whether the batter feels dehumanized or disparaged themselves (i.e., a "send-off").

Rasikh shone bright in DC's thrilling four-run win against GT. He claimed three crucial wickets of Sai Sudarshan, Shahrulkh Khan



and Sai Kishore giving away 44 runs. Rasikh was handed the crucial 19th over from the skipper with the visitors needed 37 runs. The right-arm pacer did concede 18 runs but ended up picking the key wicket of Sai Kishore with the final delivery of the over.

LA LIGA: XAVI TO REMAIN AS BARCELONA COACH, TO CONTINUE TILL JUNE 2025

Madrid (Spain) | Agencies

FC Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez has reversed his decision to step down as first-team coach at the end of the current season and will now see out his contract until the end of June 2025.

Barcelona vice-president Rafa Yuste confirmed the news late on Wednesday night outside the home of the club's president Joan Laporta following a meeting with Xavi.

"Xavi will stay, he's really happy and excited," Yuste told waiting journalists, before insisting the club had "never opened talks with any other coach."

Earlier on Wednesday, Xavi held face-to-face talks with Laporta and Barcelona's sporting director Deco in which he indicated he had changed his mind about the decision he made in January, reports Xinhua.

Xavi stunned Barcelona when he commented after a 5-3 defeat at home to Villarreal that he would step down at the

end of this season. He said one reason for his decision was to try and spark a reaction in his squad, while also talking about the pressures of the job at FC Barcelona.

Xavi said the club needs a "change of direction," and said he felt there was "a lack of respect, you feel that your work is not appreciated."

The coach's announcement saw a slight upturn in form, with the club moving into second place in La Liga and reaching the quarterfinals in the UEFA Champions League, before being knocked out by Paris Saint-Germain.

Although the 4-1 defeat in the second leg was a big disappointment, the team did fulfil the club's budget requirements by reaching the last-eight stage.

Barcelona reportedly had several candidates to replace Xavi, including B-team coach Rafael Marquez, who has helped nurture young talents such as Lamine Yamal and Pau Cubarsi.

Everton damages Liverpool's title hopes, Man Utd moves to sixth

London | Agencies

Liverpool's title hopes in the Premier League suffered a massive blow on Wednesday night as they were beaten 2-0 away to Everton at Goodison Park.

The result leaves Liverpool with 74 points, three points behind Arsenal, with four games left to play, and a point above Manchester City, who has played two games less and faces Brighton on Thursday, reported Xinhua.

Everton deserved the win that lifts them eight points above the relegation zone, with Jarrad Branthwaite scoring their first goal midway through the first half, while Dominic Calvert-Lewin took advantage of some poor defending to score their second following a second-half corner. It is only Everton's second win against their neighbors in 27 Liverpool derbies.

Manchester United twice came



back from behind to win 4-2 at home to Sheffield United and moves into sixth place.

Sheffield went ahead two times at Old Trafford, thanks to goals from Jayden Bogle and Ben Brereton, but

was pegged back by Harry Maguire and Bruno Fernandes.

A second goal from Fernandes with just nine minutes left put United ahead, and Rasmus Hojlund assured the win with five minutes left to play.

Newcastle United failed to keep pace with Erik ten Hag's side as Crystal Palace continued their excellent form under Oliver Glasner to win 2-0 thanks to two second-half goals from Jean-Philippe Mateta.

Crystal Palace is now mathematically safe from relegation, while Newcastle has dropped to three points behind Manchester United.

Wednesday's final game saw Antoine Semenyo score the only goal of the game as Bournemouth won 1-0 away to Wolverhampton Wanderers, with the visitors hanging on for a win after Milos Kerkez's 79th-minute sending off.

On Tuesday night, Arsenal returned to the top of the table with a 5-0 thrashing of a hapless Chelsea side in a result that will cast doubts over Mauricio Pochettino's long-term future in the wake of their weekend's FA Cup defeat to Manchester City, which meant they will end the season without a trophy.

PANT CAN DO THOSE THINGS THAT MOST INDIAN WICKET-KEEPER BATTERS CAN'T DO : SANJAY MANJREKAR



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar believes Rishabh Pant can do those things that most Indian wicket-keeper batters can't do and that's why he should be in the T20 World Cup squad.

Pant, after being scratchy in his 44 against Sunrisers Hyderabad, was at his magnificent best in hitting eight sixes and five fours at a strike rate of 204.6 against Gujarat Titans on Wednesday night. His inning of 88 in 43 deliveries propelled DC to 224 for 4 against GT.

DC were reeling on 44 for 3 when Pant joined hands with Axar Patel and both batters added 113 runs in 68 deliveries.

"The only reason why we are debating that is because of the option that we have. There is a Sanju Samson as an option and KL Rahul, two very exciting one but the thing about Rishabh

Pant and that is why I will back him all the time in the 15, in the playing 11 as well. Come the big stage, Semi-final of T20 World Cup. This is a guy who will get you a hundred in 60 balls and win the game," said Sanjay Manjrekar on Star Sports Cricket Live.

"Now that is something not too many in the Indian team will do it. We've seen the Indian team come into the final rounds and not quite deliver in the big matches Rishabh Pant is temperamentally just in a different kind of space where you know that kind of stage, platform just allows him to flourish more. He just relaxes in that kind of a situation," he added.

It was Pant's highest score of the 2024 IPL season as he has already amassed 342 runs in nine matches including three half-centuries with an average of 48.86. His blistering 88 not-out knock has favoured the star batter in the fight for a wicketkeeper batter slot in the T20

World Cup.

Another former India cricketer Deep Dasgupta was confident of Pant's inclusion in the playing XI and said, "He's there in my playing 11. Before today, I think we had this chat before the game as well and I said without a shadow of doubt Rishabh Pant walks into my playing 11."

"The only doubt before the IPL started was his fitness level after whatever happened a year and a half ago. What kind of physical state is he in and if he's fit which he is, he's better than fit. Actually, you know what I was having a chat with him. He's actually lost six kilos in the last four or five months and he's been working really hard. So yeah, let's talk about Rishabh Pant. I mean he's fitter, he's quicker, he's batting better. Without a shadow of doubt. I think that is not even a debate as far as I'm concerned. Yes, he's there," he added.



'Abhaar aur mera param saubhagya'



Big B on being honoured with Mangeskar Award

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan, who was feted with the Lata Deenanath Mangeskar Award for his remarkable contributions to the field of cinema, has expressed his gratitude for the honour.

Amitabh took to X (formerly called Twitter) and shared a picture of himself receiving the award from Usha Mangeskar, sister of the late legendary singer Lata Mangeskar.

"Aabhaar aur mera param saubhagya," he wrote in the caption. Actor Randeep Hooda, actress Padmini Kolhapure, and music composer A.R. Rahman were also seen

sharing the stage with Amitabh, who received the honour on the memorial day of Deenanath Mangeskar, the theatre-music veteran and father of the Mangeskar siblings.

Rahman was also feted with the Lata Deenanath Mangeskar Award for his contributions to the field of music, along with Randeep, Ashok Saraf, and playback singer Roopkumar Rathod.

'If it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you': Anupam Kher

Mumbai: Veteran Bollywood star Anupam Kher, at the age of 69, has redefined fitness goals with his latest workout video, where he is seen lifting weights for a back workout.

Anupam took to Instagram and shared a video. In the clip, he is seen using a lat pulldown machine, which helps strengthen the back and improve posture.

"If it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you," Anupam captioned the clip, which had the Shiva Tandav Stotram by singer Shankar Mahadevan playing in the background.

In the clip, the 69-year-old actor's back is towards the camera, and he is seen shirtless as he works out on the machine.

On the work front, Anupam is all set to return as a director after over two decades with 'Tanvi The Great'.

The film also features Oscar-winning music director M.M. Keeravani, Japanese DOP Keiko Nakahara, and National Award-winning choreographer Kruti Mahesh, who has choreographed numbers such as 'Ghoomar', 'Dholida', and 'Garmi'.

Anupam, who made his directorial debut with the 2002 film 'Om Jai Jagadish' starring Anil Kapoor, Fardeen Khan, and Abhishek Bachchan, announced 'Tanvi The Great' on his 69th birthday in March.



'TO DREAMING BIGGER, TAKING ON TOUGHER BATTLES': PRITHVIRAJ

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Malayalam superstar Prithviraj Sukumaran, celebrated his 13th wedding anniversary on Thursday. The superstar took to his Instagram and shared a picture with his wife, Supriya Menon. In the photo, both of them can be seen wearing sunglasses and embracing each other while enjoying a boat ride. In the caption, the actor penned a note, saying, "Happy anniversary partner! From being friends to the parents of an incredible little girl, this has been one hell of a ride! To dreaming bigger and taking on tougher battles, can't wait to see where this journey takes us in the years to come." Supriya also shared a sweet post for her husband on social media. She wrote: "13 years with you! Wow! From being kids when we met to now being parents of a wonderful little girl! How far we have walked together on this road that's been rocky many times! And yet here we are! Happy 13th anniversary @therealprithvi. To many more years together where we push each other to achieve our dreams and live our best lives."

Animal breeding industry is cruel : Jacqueliene

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Jacqueliene Fernandez, an avid animal lover, has stepped forward in support of them, urging everyone to adopt instead of shop.

Jacqueliene took to Instagram and shared a video on her story section. The clip showcased distressing conditions in which dogs, including two Pomeranians, one husky, and one poodle, were kept by a breeder before being rescued.

The actress, who herself is a cat mom, captioned the clip: "Another reason to adopt and not shop. The animal breeding industry is cruel and often illegal."

On the work front, Jacqueliene, who was last seen on screen in Rohit Shetty's 'Cirkus', will next be seen in 'Fateh', starring Sonu Sood.

The film, also starring Vijay Raaz, revolves around a former gangster hired to guard a young woman.

The actress will also feature in 'Welcome to the Jungle', the third instalment of the 'Welcome franchise', reportedly set for



release in Christmas 2024. The first instalment of the 'Welcome' series was released in 2007, starring Akshay Kumar, Katrina Kaif, Anil Kapoor, Nana Patekar, and Paresh Rawal in lead roles.

WOMEN HAVE BORNE THE BRUNT OF GENDER BIAS FOR A VERY LONG TIME : PRIYANKA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Priyanka Chopra Jonas, has said that women have borne the brunt of gender bias for a very long time.

The actress shared that her documentary is a call for solidarity and action to help women rise above the odds. 'Women of My Billion' (WOMB), directed by Ajitesh Sharma, is a stark and touching chronicle of the fight against all forms of violence faced by women in India. It follows the journey of Srishiti Bakshi as she embarks on a walking pilgrimage from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, spanning 3,800 km over 240 days, with a mission to find and share stories about women, their struggles, dreams, and rights.

Discussing the documentary, Priyanka said in a statement: "Women have borne the brunt of gender bias for far too long, enduring a silent struggle against entrenched social injustices that seek to suppress their voices. With 'WOMB', the aim is to transcend these struggles - to be a beacon of hope." "WOMB" is not merely a depiction of pain and suffering but a rallying cry and call for solidarity and action. We hope this film takes us a step closer to a world where every woman is appreciated, honoured, and empowered to soar," she added.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Pratika Sood

Lara Dutta: OTT has led to a greater representation of 'real' characters

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Lara Dutta made her streaming debut in 2020 with the action-comedy series 'Hundred'. Four years later, the actress has another show, 'Ranneeti: Balakot & Beyond', streaming on OTT.

Having spent close to half a decade in the streaming medium, the actress shared insights regarding OTT.

The actress said that the streaming medium today is growing tremendously, with many platforms coming into the picture. With numerous platforms available, there are greater avenues to explore different characters. Lara emphasised that OTT inspires a greater representation of characters, particularly bringing "real" characters to the forefront. Elaborating on this, the actress told: "The wonderful thing about OTT is that because there are so many platforms, you are addressing different segments of an audience. You have to create content that speaks to all of them." "It has resulted in not just greater representation of characters from different walks of life but also ones that are 'real'. OTT is a complete game-changer and has tremendous growth in the future," she said.

Lara also spoke about her character in 'Ranneeti: Balakot & Beyond', describing her as a lone wolf - someone who is ready to give her all for the country.

The actress said: "Manisha doesn't have a military background, but there are some similarities between us. I think the script is your starting point for a character. Manisha is a lone wolf, and she's very straightforward. It was interesting and fascinating to build out this kind of character for me. She's kind of careless about people and stuff, but when it comes to the country, she's ready to give everything."

"My approach to the character is to flesh out what you have never seen in the character, like the background story of the character. To create a character like Manisha Sehgal, I prepared from scratch. I'm sure when the audience watches this series, it will keep them on the edge of excitement," she added.

