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OPPOSITION ALLIANCE OPENLY TRYING TO DIVIDE THE COUNTRY : NARENDRA MODI

Lambasting the Congress for adopting a soft stand against Pakistan in the past, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday emphasised that his government believes in giving a befitting reply to terrorists instead of sending dossiers.

Himmatnagar (Gujarat) | Agencies

Be it the frequent bomb blasts, the Mumbai terror attacks or our soldiers getting martyred daily in Kashmir, the government of that time used to send dossiers to Pakistan. Today's India gives a dose and not dossiers to terror masterminds, PM Modi said while addressing an election rally in Gujarat's Himmatnagar.

During his speech, Prime Minister Modi also addressed issues such as triple talaq, CAA and the abrogation of Article 370.

"The Congress scared the country that if Article 370 is removed, there will be chaos. Article 370 is history now, and there is no chaos in the country. And the tricolour is flying high at Lal Chowk," he stated.

He also criticised the Congress for indulging in vote bank politics and skipping the Ram Mandir inauguration in Ayodhya.

"Congress leaders used to scare



people, saying the country would be set on fire if the Ram Mandir was built. But was anything set ablaze?

No. It is only Congress that carries fire in their hearts," remarked PM Modi. Accusing the opposition alliance of

trying to divide the country, PM Modi said: "The situation of the Congress, which ruled for 60 years, is very worrying. They are openly trying to divide the country. The only strategy of Congress and its INDI alliance is to spread lawlessness and instability in the country. They want to set the country on fire, no matter what, to defame Modi."

Intensifying his electoral campaign in Gujarat, PM Modi's itinerary includes public addresses in Anand, Surendranagar-Rajkot, Junagadh and Jamnagar. On the second day of his visit, he will continue his campaign trail in the state, starting his day with a rally at Shastri Ground in Anand in support of BJP candidates from the Anand and Kheda Lok Sabha constituencies. Later on Thursday, PM Modi is scheduled to address a rally near Trimandir Grounds on the Surendranagar-Rajkot Road. This event will focus on supporting candidates representing the Surendranagar, Rajkot, and Bhavnagar constituencies.

Schools bomb threat: Security beefed up across Delhi



Team Absolute | New Delhi

After no explosive devices were found and threats to over 80 schools across the national capital were deemed hoaxes, the Delhi Police intensified their presence at critical points, including metro and railway stations, bus stands, and markets, said an official on Wednesday. The officials said that they have stepped up security as a precautionary measure. Meanwhile, according to police sources, the threatening emails originated from a Russian domain, a potentially routed through a

Virtual Private Network (VPN). The intention behind these threats appears to be the incitement of panic and disruption within Delhi. Delhi Fire Service (DFS) Director Atul Garg said that over 80 calls were received from across the city by the fire department regarding bombs in the schools.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) also said that there is no cause for alarm. "It seems to be a hoax call. Delhi Police and security agencies are following standard protocols and taking appropriate measures," said the MHA in a statement.

According to sources, in the South district, the email has been received at more than 15 schools, 24 in East, eight in Shahdara, eight in Southwest Delhi, 7-8 in Dwarka, two in North and one in North East Delhi. "Some schools of Delhi received e-mails regarding bomb threats. Delhi Police have conducted a thorough check of all such schools as per protocol. Nothing objectionable has been found. It appears that these calls seem to be hoaxes. We request the public not to panic and maintain peace," Delhi Police said on X.

HM Amit Shah holds massive roadshow in Karnataka



Bengaluru | Agencies

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday held a massive roadshow at Ranebennur town in Karnataka's Haveri district to garner support for the BJP candidate from the Haveri Lok Sabha constituency -- former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai.

The 30-minute roadshow began from the Kurubagiri Cross and passed through M.G. Road and concluded at

the Ashoka Circle in Ranebennur town.

HM Shah was accompanied by Bommai, former Karnataka Cabinet minister B.C. Patil and others.

Thousands of party workers and supporters were present at the roadshow. The people showered flowers on the vehicle on which HM Shah was moving during the roadshow. A massive crowd had gathered on both sides of the road, on buildings and balconies of the houses, and commercial establishments.

Later, addressing the gathering, HM Amit Shah thanked the enthusiastic crowd for turning up in large numbers while calling Basavaraj Bommai "one of the top leaders of the state". HM Amit Shah appealed to the people to vote for Bommai and strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Bommai is facing Anandswamy Gaddadevarmath, a fresh face from the Congress. He is the son of former Congress MLA G.S. Gaddadevarmath.

Congress candidates for Amethi and Raebareli in next 24 hours: Jairam Ramesh

► CONGRESS PARTY IS ALL SET TO END SUSPENSE OVER THE NAME OF ITS CANDIDATES FOR AMETHI AND RAEBARELI LOK SABHA CONSTITUENCIES, BOTH OF WHICH HAVE BEEN POCKET BOROUGHS OF THE GANDHI FAMILY FOR LONG.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress communications in-charge Jairam Ramesh on Wednesday said that the party's Central Election Committee (CEC) has empowered Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge to announce the names of candidates, as soon as possible.

He further told the scribes that the party president is likely to announce the names of candidates in the next 24 hours.

Notably, the party has remained tight-lipped until now, over who would represent the two family bastions -- Amethi and Raebareli. Robert Vadra's name also surfaced as the likely party candidate from Amethi, some days ago.



The party seems to have made up its mind for the two prestigious seats at a time, when the nomination deadline is getting closer. The last date of filing nominations for these two seats is May 3.

Meanwhile, there have been wide speculations about the announcement of Congress candidates for two prestigious seats.

Rahul Gandhi, who represented the Amethi Lok Sabha seat till 2019, is likely to be fielded from here again, say reports. The party was reportedly in a dilemma over Rahul's repeated candidature from Amethi, in the wake of a shock defeat in the 2019 elections. Currently, Rahul is in the poll fray from Kerala's Wayanad seat.

Raebareli is also shrouded in suspense after Sonia Gandhi's retirement

from active politics. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is widely tipped to be the Congress candidate for this seat as the party believes this will enthuse and energise the party workers.

Congress party is in alliance with Samajwadi Party (SP) in Uttar Pradesh. The grand old party is contesting 17 out of 80 seats while the rest 63 are with INDIA bloc ally SP and other regional outfits

Congress directionless and now leaderless: Yogi Adityanath

Lucknow | Agencies

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Wednesday that after Independence, the Congress became directionless and is now leaderless.

Addressing the media, he said that the adverse effect of this is that many Congress leaders have continuously made malicious attempts to curse, insult India's civilization and culture and defame Sanatan in every way.

The same unfortunate situation was seen during the UPA government when a senior Congress leader and the then Union Home Minister made a malicious attempt to insult India's Sanatan culture and defame it in front of the world in the name of saffron terrorism. Everyone knows that the policies of Congress have been the cause of Naxalism and terrorism within the country.

The chief minister said



that under the leadership of Modi, the problem of terrorism and Naxalism has been solved.

"Extremism-terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and anarchy in the North-East have also been curbed. During the UPA government, there were about 115-120 districts in 17 states which were in the grip of Naxalite violence. That government did not have the will to fight terrorism, Naxalism and extremism, that was the reason there was anarchy and disorder in the country but now Naxalism has been controlled. It has been limited to two-three districts of some states of the country. Very soon Naxalism will end from here also," he stated.

Vice Admiral Swaminathan takes charge as Vice Chief of Indian Navy

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan on Wednesday assumed charge as the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff.

On assuming charge, the Flag Officer paid homage to the bravehearts who made the supreme sacrifice in service of the nation by placing a floral wreath at the National War Memorial here.

Vice Admiral Swaminathan, who was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1987, is a specialist in communication and electronic warfare. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, Pune, the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivenham, the UK, the College of Naval Warfare, Karanja, Maharashtra, and the United States Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island.

A recipient of the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal, Vice Admiral Swaminathan has held several key operational, staff and training appointments in his naval career, including the Command of missile vessels INS Vidyut and INS Vinash, the missile corvette INS Kulish, the guided



missile destroyer INS Mysore, and the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.

After being promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral, he served as the Chief Staff Officer (Training) at the Headquarters of Southern Naval Command, Kochi. He was also instrumental in raising the Indian Naval Safety Team that oversees operational

safety across all verticals of the Navy.

He then went on to head the Work-Up Organisation of the Navy as the Flag Officer Sea Training after which he was appointed as the Flag Officer Commanding, Western Fleet.

After commanding the Sword Arm, he was appointed as the Flag Officer, Offshore Defence Advisory Group, and Advisor to Offshore Security and Defence. After being promoted to the rank of Vice Admiral, he was the Chief of Staff of the Western Naval Command, and Controller of Personnel Services at Naval Headquarters.

Before his current assignment as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, he served as the Chief of Personnel at the Naval Headquarters.

Vice Admiral Swaminathan's educational qualifications include a BSc degree from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, MSc in Telecommunications from Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kochi, MA in Defence Studies from King's College, London, MPhil in Strategic Studies from Mumbai University, and PhD in International Studies from Mumbai University.

Deve Gowda sent his grandson Prajwal Revanna abroad, says K'taka CM

Yadgir (Karnataka) | Agencies

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Wednesday that former Prime Minister Deve Gowda had sent his accused grandson abroad.

Speaking to reporters in Yadgir while seeking votes for the Congress candidate G. Kumar Naik for Raichur Lok Sabha seat, the CM said that Deve Gowda had planned the exit from the country after the scandal broke out.

CM Siddaramaiah refuted the allegations that there was an involvement of Deputy CM and Karnataka Congress President D.K. Shivakumar in bringing the scandal to the forefront. "There was a car driver named Karthik of Prajwal Revanna. Karthik had himself claimed that he had given the pen drive to a BJP leader. Former CM H.D. Kumaraswamy is making allegations for political reasons against Shivakumar," CM Siddaramaiah stated.



"Why Prajwal was given a ticket as everything about him was known. The Special Investigation Team (SIT) had been formed to investigate the matter. The SIT officers will probe the matter transparently. There is no question of protecting anyone," the CM said. Minister for Women and Child Welfare Laxmi Hebbalkar had alleged that Prajwal Revanna had unleashed brutality on 300 to 400 women. "It is not feasible to have a count. The victims belong to the age group of 16 years to 50 years. Maids and police officers are the victims. It is not known whether the atrocity was committed on the victims after issuing threats.



ASSAM CM BEST EXAMPLE OF BJP'S 'WASHING MACHINE' TACTIC: PRIYANKA GANDHI

Guwahati | Agencies

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra addressed an election rally in Assam's Dhubri on Wednesday where she launched a sharp attack against Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, calling him the best example of BJP's 'washing machine' tactic.

Priyanka Gandhi campaigned in the Balijan area under the Dhubri Lok Sabha constituency in support of Congress candidate Rakibul Hussain. "There were serious allegations against the Chief Minister of Assam before he switched sides to the BJP. However, once he joined the BJP, everything was forgotten. The Assam CM is the best example of BJP's washing machine tactic which began from here. Later, the BJP used the same formula in other places as well," she told the gathering. According to Priyanka Gandhi, the BJP is using the washing machine strategy to fool the people. "First, they speak about corruption and later they welcome the corrupt politicians into their party and all the allegations suddenly vanish," she said. The senior Congress leader also criticised the BJP-led Assam government for the "mafia raj" in the state. "Look at the Chief Ministers of the Congress-



ruled states. Whether it is Revanth Reddy in Andhra Pradesh or Siddaramaiah in Karnataka -- they have been working for the betterment of their states. The Congress CMs have dedicated themselves to the service of the people. But in Assam, a mafia raj is going on. We hear about land mafias, coal mafias, sand mafias, etc., in Assam," she said. The Congress leader also slammed the Centre on

the unemployment issue, saying, "The present unemployment rate is the highest in 45 years. Around 70 crore people in this country are jobless. Yet, at least 30 lakhs posts are lying vacant in the Central government departments but the BJP has not taken any step to recruit youths in these posts." She also attacked AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal, who is contesting against Rakibul Hussain in Dhubri.

"The BJP has a secret understanding with Ajmal in Assam, just like it has with Asaduddin Owaisi in Telangana," she claimed. Criticising the BJP on the electoral bond issue, Priyanka Gandhi said, "The BJP has become the richest party in the world in just 10 years. The Congress did not earn so much even in 70 years."

President Murmu offers prayers at Ram Temple in Ayodhya

Ayodhya | Agencies

President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday reached Ayodhya to offer prayers at the newly-constructed Ram Temple.

She was received at the airport by Governor Anandiben Patel and senior UP Minister Surya Pratap Shahi.

The President went straight from the airport to the Hanuman Garhi Temple and then to the Ram temple.

Later in the evening, she will attend the Saryu Maha Aarti before returning to Delhi.

Droupadi Murmu is the third President to visit Ayodhya and the second to pay obeisance to Ram Lalla, after her predecessor, Ram Nath Kovind, who had offered prayers to the deity in



2021. President Giani Zail Singh had also visited Ayodhya in

1983. Then, he prayed at Hanuman Garhi and Kanak Bhawan.

PDP unhappy at EC deferring Anantnag-Rajouri poll

Srinagar | Agencies

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Wednesday termed the Election Commission's decision to postpone elections in J&K's Anantnag-Rajouri constituency, from May 7 to May 25, "interference with free exercise of franchise by the voters".

Addressing a media conference here, former PDP minister Naeem Akhtar said: "We are disappointed at the way the people's right to exercise franchise is being interfered with."

In a post on X earlier, he wrote: "J&K has lost generations in pursuit of democratic rights. This decision to pander to the bontal parties planted post-August 2019 is fraught with immense dangers. It is a repeat of the disastrous 1987 election fraud".

Sharing a video on her X



account, PDP President and Anantnag-Rajouri constituency candidate Mehbooba Mufti wrote: "Is this why BJP wants to defer the Anantnag-Rajouri election so that its leaders can openly threaten violence against Paharis to force them to vote for Apni party or else they will create communal tensions reminiscent of the 1947 partition? @ECISVEEP should take note

& ensure peaceful and timely elections. The attempted deferment should be viewed in the context of threatening".

She asked the EC to take note of the alleged BJP threat to Paharis and ensure a free poll in the constituency.

Mehbooba Mufti faces senior NC Gujar/Bakarwal leader, Mian Altaf and Zafar Iqbal Manhas of J&K Apni Party.

I will not be intimidated by cases against me: CM Revanth Reddy

Hyderabad | Agencies

Telangana Chief Minister, A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday came down heavily on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah and accused them of trying to intimidate him.

CM Reddy alleged that they were being vindictive towards him for questioning them over the conspiracy to change India's Constitution.

He claimed that the duo from Gujarat was trying to do 'bossism' in Telangana and termed the Lok Sabha election a fight between 'Gujarat bossism' and 'Telangana vigour'.

CM Reddy was addressing a public meeting as part of the Congress' campaign at Korutla in Nizamabad Lok Sabha constituency.

Stating that a case was registered against him by Delhi Police, he alleged that PM Modi and HM Shah were trying to intimidate him, but he was not scared of such cases.



"You may have agencies like ED, IT, CBI and police but the four crore people of Telangana are with me," he said. He was referring to the case registered by Delhi Police against him and other Telangana Congress leaders over a doctored video of HM Shah

about reservation.

He asked if Amit Shah became Union Home Minister to call a Chief Minister to Delhi in the midst of election campaigns.

The Chief Minister said that if the BJP tries to intimidate him, they will

not win one seat in Telangana.

He added that Telangana was the land of revolutionaries who resisted autocracy and repression.

The Chief Minister also took exception to the remarks made by PM Modi at a public meeting in Zaheerabad on Tuesday.

Stating that he must be respectful towards the PM, CM Reddy said it is unbecoming of a person holding the top post to "come to Telangana and abuse us and threaten the Chief Minister." CM Reddy said instead of telling what he would do for Telangana and instead of giving assurances to fulfill the commitments made to the state, PM Modi abused and insulted Telangana. He reiterated the allegation that RSS and BJP had hatched a conspiracy to end reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Backward Classes. He claimed that the BJP was seeking over 400 seats to change the Constitution and vowed to provide evidence in support of his allegation.

After quitting Congress, ex-Punjab MLA Dalvir Singh Goldy joins AAP

Chandigarh | Agencies

A day after quitting the Congress, former legislator Dalvir Singh Goldy, who unsuccessfully contested against Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann in the 2022 Assembly polls, joined the AAP on Wednesday.

Goldy, who resigned from the Congress after he expressed his "displeasure" over the denial of a party ticket from the Sangrur Lok Sabha seat, joined the AAP in the presence of CM Mann here.

Welcoming Goldy into the party fold, CM Mann, who won the Dhuri seat with a margin of 58,206 votes in 2002, called him his "younger brother" and a "hardworking youth".

"I have always believed that youngsters should be allowed to come forward in politics and be the harbingers of change. But Goldy was ignored in the Congress. I am inducting him in the party as my younger brother," the Chief Minister said.

AAP has fielded Cabinet Minister Gurmeet Singh



Meet Hayer from the Sangrur parliamentary seat,

while the Congress candidate is Sukhpal Khaira, a legislator and AAP rebel.

Responding to Khaira's allegations that Goldy was under pressure from the Vigilance Bureau to join AAP, CM Mann said, "Khaira has already switched parties so many times and has no business to make such baseless allegations. It is the BJP that used government agencies to settle scores or scare opposition leaders."

"If there are allegations against Goldy, we would have initiated action and not got him here. There are no allegations against him," the Chief Minister said, adding, "He was told by party national convener Arvind Kejriwal that AAP must look for good and promising candidates from other parties, who were feeling ignored, and induct them into AAP".

In the 2017 Assembly polls, Goldy defeated AAP's Jasvir Singh Jassi Sekhon by a slender margin of 2,811 votes. The Dhuri Assembly constituency falls in the Sangrur parliamentary seat that comedian-turned-politician Mann is representing.

Maneka Gandhi files nomination from Sultanpur

Sultanpur (UP) | Agencies

BJP candidate and sitting MP Maneka Gandhi filed her nomination papers from the Sultanpur Lok Sabha seat here on Wednesday.

She took out a roadshow to reach the collectorate and then filed her nomination papers before the District Election Officer.

Nishad Party President and Minister Dr Sanjay Nishad and Apna Dal leader and cabinet minister Ashish Patel accompanied her at the time of the nomination filing.

Talking to reporters after filing her nomination, Maneka Gandhi said she would do more work in the



next five years than she had done in the last five years. She said she wanted to pro-

vide more houses to the people under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana here.

Sex scandal: Accused K'taka JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna says truth will prevail



Bengaluru | Agencies

Grandson of former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda and suspended JD(S) leader Prajwal Revanna, who is in the eye of a storm over obscene videos of him, on Wednesday commented for the first time on the issue.

In a social media post Prajwal Revanna sought seven days for his appearance before the Special Investigation Team (SIT).

Prajwal Revanna's obscene video showing sexual harassment and abuse of women has taken the political circles in Karnataka by storm.

Taking to social media, Prajwal Revanna stated on Wednesday, "Truth will prevail soon. I am not in Bengaluru to attend the enquiry. I have communicated to CID, Bengaluru through my advocate."

He also posted a letter submitted to the authorities through

his advocate addressed to the SP and Investigation Officers, Special Investigation Team (SIT) and Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Prajwal Revanna's counsel Arun G stated in his submission to the SIT that authorities have pasted a notice on the leader's residence in Holenarasipura town.

As per the notice issued under the CRPC Section 41A issued on April 30, Prajwal Revanna has been asked to appear before the SIT on May 1.

"My client Prajwal Revanna is on tour outside Bengaluru and informed me about the notice. My client has sought seven days to appear before the SIT as per the direction of the notice. I request on his behalf to provide him an opportunity on a different date after seven days to appear before the authorities," the letter stated.

Advocate G Arun stated that he had personally handed over

the requisition letter to the SIT.

"The officers have not responded yet but I am confident of getting seven days' time," he stated.

The SIT probing the case had issued a notice to the accused on Tuesday, asking him to appear before it for investigation within 24 hours. A notice has also been issued to JD(S) MLA, HD Revanna, the father of Prajwal Revanna who is the second accused in one of the cases of sexual harassment filed by their maid. On Tuesday morning, the JD(S) suspended Prajwal Revanna, the sitting party MP and the NDA's Lok Sabha candidate from Hassan, after the Congress government in Karnataka formed the SIT to probe allegations of sexual abuse against him.

The notice has directed both Prajwal Revanna and his father HD Revanna to be present before Superintendent of Police Seema Latkar within the stipulated period.



PHYSICAL ASSAULT WITH 19 CHILDREN IN THE ASHRAM OF UJJAIN: FIR AGAINST ACHARYA AND SEVADAR



Team Absolute | Ujjain

A case has been registered against the Acharya and servant of Dandi Ashram of Ujjain for sexually exploiting children. 19 children studying in the ashram complained. FIR was lodged at Mahakal police station at 12.30 pm on Tuesday. The director of the

ashram called the police and got Acharya arrested. The servant is absconding. Dandi Ashram located on Badnagar Road of the city is 30 years old. Initially, information about wrongdoing with three teenagers came. Parents held a meeting on this on Tuesday evening. In this meeting the number of victimized teenagers

increased from three to 19. Let us tell you, accused Acharya Rahul Sharma had helped a rape victim about 7 months ago. The bloodied 12-year-old girl was wandering for two and a half hours in partially clad clothes. Rahul fed him and informed him at Mahakal police station. Ashram director Gajananand Saraswati told that during the

Navratri of Chaitra, some parents had complained about sevadar Ajay Thakur. He was thrown out. Complaining children started coming forward one after another. After this, the parents created a group on WhatsApp and asked everyone to come to the ashram on 30th April. Parents of more than 20 children came to the meeting held on Tuesday. Everyone had complained about servant Ajay to their parents. His anger was also on Ajay Thakur. In the meeting, children were called one by one and information was taken about Ajay, but during this time one child also took the name of Acharya Rahul Sharma while crying. After this the parents of the children became more enraged. Acharya Rahul Sharma of Dandi Ashram, who helped the rape victim girl 7 months ago, had said, 'It was around 9:30 in the morning. I had just left the ashram on my bike. A girl was seen coming from the front. She was walking staggering. She was looking very tired. There was swelling on the eyes. There were traces of blood on the feet. She looked very scared and frightened. First of all, I took out my outer garment and covered it. Sat at the gate of the ashram. Questioned. She was so nervous that she couldn't even say anything.

Youth Congress leader questioned in HM Amit Shah doctored video case



Team Absolute | Bhopal

A team of Delhi Police on Tuesday arrived Madhya Pradesh's Chhatarpur for an investigation in connection with a doctored video of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Delhi Police team questioned Youth Congress leader Umashankar Patel in connection with the doctored video case. He was handed a notice and allowed to go after the questioning, official sources told reporter. Umashankar Patel, a

Chhatarpur-based Youth Congress leader, is district head of the party's IT cell. "He (Patel) was taken to Civil Line Police station and after questioning he was set free with a notice," a source said. Patel is the first person from Madhya Pradesh, who was questioned in connection with the doctored video, surfaced a couple of days ago. At least 16 leaders, including Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, in seven states have been summoned by the Delhi Police in connection with the case. The Delhi Police have sum-

moned the Telangana Chief Minister and four other state Congress (TPCC) leaders -- Shiva Kumar Ambala, Asma Tasleem, Satish Manne, and Naveen Pettem -- to appear before it on May 1. The case was registered after a doctored video surfaced on social media purportedly showcasing Home Minister Amit Shah making statements suggesting the BJP's intention to annul reservation provisions for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

Election Commission also active to increase voting percentage

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Not only political parties but also the Election Commission is worried due to low voting percentage in the first two phases of Madhya Pradesh. This is why efforts to increase the voting percentage in the upcoming phases have intensified. There are 29 Lok Sabha seats in the state and till now voting has been held on 12 seats in two phases. Voting is to be held in 17 parliamentary constituencies in the next two phases. The voting percentage in the first two phases was less than that of the 2019 Lok Sabha and



2023 Assembly elections. It has been told that in the third phase, voting is to be held in nine Lok Sabha constituencies in the state on May 7. In order to ensure good voting percentage in this phase, on the instructions of the Election Commission, BLOs are distributing door-to-door voter slips and contacting the

voters personally and appealing to them to vote. To increase the voting percentage in the third and fourth phase, arrangements like drinking water, lighting, ramps, benches, facility houses and awnings for shade etc. are being made in every polling station as per the needs of the voters.

MINOR GIRL RAPED AT SCHOOL'S HOSTEL IN BHOPAL, CASE FILED AGAINST 3

Team Absolute | Bhopal

An eight-year-old girl was allegedly raped in the hostel of a private school in Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal, following which a case has been registered against three persons, a police official said on Wednesday. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav ordered a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the case. The police said they were trying to ascertain when the incident exactly took place. "An eight-year-old girl was allegedly raped at a girls' hostel of private school. Following a complaint in this regard, the police registered a case on Tuesday night against three persons under Indian Penal Code (IPC) section 376 (rape) and provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual



Offences (POCSO) Act," Misrod police station in-charge Manish Raj Bhadoria said. Although the names of the accused are mentioned in the FIR, their identity is being established, he said.

When asked about the allegation that the girl was drugged before the crime, Bhadoria said all these things will be clear once the investigation gets over. "The process of carrying out the medical examination of the victim

and recording her statement is underway," he said, adding that several police teams have been constituted to collect the evidence related to the case. On whether the clinical examination confirmed that the girl was raped, Bhadoria said a comprehensive report is awaited. Replying to a query that injuries and swelling were found in the girl's private part during a medical examination conducted by doctors as per the request by the victim's mother, the police official said the complainant has made this allegation, but this will be clear in a detailed medical examination. Bhadoria said that the CCTV footage of the hostel has been recovered as the date of the incident is not clear. "The accused will be arrested once their identity is established," he said.

Rumor of PCC President joining BJP, Patwari said - Minister Rajput is unconscious

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On Tuesday, rumors spread that PCC Chief Jitu Patwari and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Umang Singhar would join the BJP. However, both the leaders termed this news as baseless and slammed the BJP leaders who were spreading rumours. Both the Congress leaders called the leaders who were talking about their joining BJP as drug addicts, runaways and their brains got stuck due to the heat. In fact, a day after Congress candidate Akshay Kanti Bam joined BJP in Indore, senior Congress MLA Ramniwas Rawat also joined BJP. After two major setbacks for Congress in two days, senior Congress leaders are in tension. In the next two phases in the state, voting is to be held in 6-6 Lok Sabha constituencies on 7th and 13th May. On Tuesday, Sagar Minister Govind Singh Rajput



had claimed that it is possible that Jitu Patwari may also join BJP after May 7. PCC Chief Jitu Patwari discussed this statement of Minister Rajput with the media in Bhopal and denied the rumours. In a meeting in Sagar, Cabinet Minister of Madhya Pradesh Government Govind Singh Rajput said The

way Congressmen have started joining BJP. We feel that Jitu Patwari may also join BJP by 7th. In the election meeting in Sagar itself, Minister Govind Singh Rajput said, I am seeing this for the first time in my political life. Lok Sabha candidates are also withdrawing their nominations. Leaving Congress and joining BJP. This has happened in Indore. Congress candidate Akshay Kanti Bam was completely a candidate of Jitu Patwari. Minister Rajput said- I have also heard that many people of Congress had advised not to give him ticket. But, Jitu Patwari had given the ticket on his insistence. Jitu Patwari always accuses those who leave Congress and join BJP that they have sold out. If Akshay Kanti Bam has joined BJP and got sold, then this deal must have been done with the consent of Jitu Patwari. They should speak. Every day Congress people are coming to BJP. If this trend continues like this, that day is not far when by the 7th, Madhya Pradesh Congress State President Jitu Patwari will join BJP.

BJP's wishes will remain unfulfilled: Umang Singhar

Team Absolute | Bhopal

These days, the winds of defection are blowing in Madhya Pradesh, meanwhile, discussions about Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Umang Singhar also gained momentum and he said that BJP's wishes will remain unfulfilled. On the discussion of Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Singhar also joining BJP, he said, "I have always fought the battle of principles and will continue to fight. Those who are spreading wild rumors about my joining BJP are probably not familiar with



my personality. No. I do politics of principles and will continue to do so. BJP's desire to bring me into the party will remain unfulfilled." Singhar further said, "For those spreading rumours, I would just say that 'this thought is also good for entertaining the heart.'

While advising the BJP leaders, Singhar said that BJP should avoid such low-minded politics and unrestrained rhetoric. BJP has nothing left, hence it is conspiring to confuse the public. The people of the country and the state are watching the move, character and face of BJP and have completely understood it. Many big leaders of Congress are joining BJP. Indore candidate Akshay Kanti Bam left the field and took membership of BJP, similarly, six-time MLA and backward class face Ramniwas Rawat has also taken membership of BJP.

After the change of guard, Bam said, "What will anyone give in the deal to a person who wears a watch worth Rs 15 lakh?"

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Businessman Akshay Kanti Bam, who withdrew his nomination at the last moment from the election race in Madhya Pradesh's Indore Lok Sabha constituency, has rejected the allegation that he has switched sides and joined BJP as part of some "deal". While talking to reporters on Tuesday evening in Alirajpur, about 200 km from Indore, Bam said, "As of today, what I have and what I don't have is already clear. What would anyone give in any deal to a man who wears a watch worth Rs 15 lakh? Responding to this allegation of Congress leaders, he said that he has joined BJP under some "deal". In the affidavit submitted while filing nomination as Congress candidate from Indore, Bam had given details of his movable and immovable properties worth Rs 55.28 crore, in which he had declared the value of his wrist watch as Rs 14.05 lakh. Bam also denied the allegation of Congress leaders that



he had joined BJP due to fear of electoral defeat. He said that during the last assembly elections, he was seeking Congress ticket from area no. 4 of Indore, which is considered to be the most difficult seat in the state for this party. A Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) of Indore had taken cognizance of a case against Bam and his father on

the application of the victim. This case was related to a land dispute of 17 years ago... An FIR under sections of bomb and attempt to murder was registered against his father for allegedly attacking a person. In this connection, JMFC had also ordered the father and son to appear before a sessions court on May 10.

Dean of Shivpuri Medical College is giving free salary to his wife

Team Absolute | Shivpuri

The controversies in the medical college, which came into controversy even before it came into existence, are showing no sign of stopping. It seems that Dean KV Verma's jungle rule is going on in the Medical College, by misusing his position, many such black scandals have been committed which show serious negligence by breaking the rules, investigation into the complaint of Dean KV Verma, in-charge of Shivpuri Medical College. It has been proven. According to the investigation report received from the RTI received from the Commissioner's office, Dean Dr. K.B. Verma recruited his wife Rinki Verma through outsource without the permission of the competent authority or committee and also paid her salary as a dietician. Outsourced employee Vinod Rawat and unskilled employees are not working in GMC Shivpuri. Vinod was assigned the duty of being a driver on most of the vehicles of the college,



while Vinod Rawat was not found to have a driving license during the

investigation. Serious negligence has come to light in imposing duty as a

driver on college vehicles despite not having a valid driving license. A medical board was imposed on Lokesh Namdev, a nurse who committed suicide in the medical college, and he did not allow her to join the job and asked for a report from Arogyashala Gwalior. The staff nurse went to Gwalior for examination on 7 October 2023, where a notice was issued from the Head of the Department of Dermatology in the college for not coming for duty. When the Dean was asked during the investigation, he clarified that the nurse can also do night duty in the college. In the investigation report, there was a complaint about hospital manager Dr. Vikas Tyagi staying in the warden house of the intern girls hostel and being made assistant warden. It is clearly written in the investigation that despite there being many women professors and assistant professors in the college, Dr. Tyagi was made the assistant warden. The rules to allow resident by making Assistant Warden are not favourable.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Yadav family faces turbulent weather in 'safe' seats

Lok Sabha constituencies like Mainpuri, Kannauj, Firozabad and Azamgarh have always been considered safe seats for late Mulayam Singh Yadav's family, mainly because of the large Yadav population there. However, this time candidates from the Yadav family on these seats are facing turbulent weather and aggressive campaigning by the BJP. The responsibility of retaining the family seats now rests on the shoulders of Akhilesh Yadav. Dimple Yadav has suffered shock defeats in Firozabad bypolls in 2009 when Raj Babbar of the Congress defeated her and then again in 2019 from Kannauj when Subrat Pathak of the BJP trounced her. While the BJP is making concerted effort to wrest the seat from the SP, the BSP is playing spoiler by fielding Shiv Prasad Yadav as its candidate. In Kannauj, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav recently announced his own candidature at the last minute. The SP has won from Kannauj seven times, including two bypolls. A major exception was in 2019 when Dimple Yadav suffered a defeat at the hands of BJP's Subrat Pathak. The SP faces its biggest challenge in Budaun Lok Sabha constituency where Aditya Yadav, son of Shivpal Yadav, is making his electoral debut. The party first named Dharmendra Yadav as its candidate from Budaun, then changed over to Shivpal Yadav and finally named Aditya Yadav. As Budaun prepares to vote in the third phase of elections on May 7, a controversy has erupted for Aditya Yadav with his old student life photographs at a pool party having gone viral on social media. In the pictures that surfaced on the Internet, Yadav was seen posing in a swimming pool with some girls. Akshay Yadav, son of Prof Ram Gopal Yadav, is contesting from Firozabad for the third-consecutive Lok Sabha polls.

If mangoes were for bail, then CM Kejriwal would ride out of jail

Deepika Bhan

As the common people await mangoes to flood the market, a special 'Aam Aadmi' has been quietly devouring them in Delhi's Tihar Jail. There is nothing wrong with eating a mango, but it can create a mess if not done properly. And, this is what the Aam Aadmi Party and its founder Arvind Kejriwal have landed in. The Aam Aadmi Party chief has been caught in the act literally -- eating mangoes, sweets, aloo-puri, etc., in jail. Again, there is nothing wrong with relishing mangoes and all those dishes. After all, he is the CM of the national capital and can have any type of home meal, even inside the jail (as the court has permitted). However, controversy arose when the ED revealed in court that the CM, who is diabetic, was eating mangoes, sweets, etc. to fall sick to create conditions for making a bail plea. A diabetic is supposed to be cautious with food because any deviation can be detrimental to the health system. This is what almost every household in the country knows. Kejriwal and his family know too. So, then why eat mangoes and sweets? CM Kejriwal is known for disruptive politics and does things for a reason. When he ate mangoes and other things prohibited for a diabetic, he knew what he was doing. However, the likely-would-be-disruption got caught in the eagle eyes of the ED, which complained to the court. Outside the court, Kejriwal's food has now become the only issue for the AAP to raise the flag against the BJP. Its leaders are alleging that there is a "conspiracy to kill Kejriwal". While the BJP is countering this with its logic of Kejriwal's hit-and-run politics, the Congress is sitting pretty. Interestingly, the main complainant in the excise policy case is the Congress, and yet it has not been attacking Kejriwal, a partner in the INDIA bloc. Both AAP and BJP are trying to play up



the mango episode to their advantage. While they push and shove, the common people are amused at the turn of events. Kejriwal's image of a typical middle-class babu with oiled hair and slippers has worked wonders for him. Delhiites gave him a huge mandate in the Assembly elections in 2015 and 2020. Instead of acknowledging the mandate and fulfilling all the promises he made during the Anna Hazare-led India Against Corruption movement, he simply turned the button off. Kejriwal's 'style' of working saw his close

friends like Yogendra Yadav, Prashant Bhushan, Kumar Vishwas, Mayank Gandhi and several others, losing favour and finally getting out of the party which they had helped to form. Mayank Gandhi had even said in 2015 while launching his book 'AAP and Down', that "Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has compromised with party principles." He and many others have said that Kejriwal "is autocratic and not democratic" - certainly a quality that does not go with the 'Mango Man' image. For CM Kejriwal, who claimed that the party was based on the principles of transparency, most activities have not been so transparent. And the alleged excise policy scam case is a pointer to this. The ED, which has arrested him in connection with the probe into the alleged case, has called him the 'kingpin'. How the case shapes up in the court cannot be predicted. The Kejriwal of 2011 has simply vanished and the Kejriwal of 2024 is a typical politician whose only concern is to stay in power and get votes somehow. He shares the stage with all those whom he had accused of corruption a decade ago and is, sadly, seeking their validation and support. Thirteen years ago, he began with the Lokpal movement that sought an ombudsman to look into complaints of corruption against government officials. But today, this former government official and serving Chief Minister of Delhi is in jail on corruption charges. He had said years ago: "Without jumping into the system, it will be impossible to clean up the system. We are going to challenge this system." He did jump into the system but the glitter of power was perhaps too strong. Ironically, today he is the accused in corruption cases and is using Mangifera Indica to beat the system and create a sensation. The now-not-so-mango-man has a lot to answer to the 'mango' people, who prefer to visit and jostle in local markets where the king of fruits, incidentally, is yet to make an appearance.

The 127-year-old Godrej empire split: How it was resolved amicably

In the increasingly contentious world of family business splits, the peaceful division of the 127-year-old Godrej empire worth \$5.7 billion is a rare occurrence. According to the company, Adi Godrej, who is head of the family and his brother Nadir Godrej, will retain control of the five listed companies of the Godrej Group. "Godrej was founded in 1897 to help build economic independence for India," Nadir Godrej said. "This deep purpose of innovating for a cause - the values of trust and respect and the belief in trusteeship and making communities that the companies operate in stronger and better - continue to form the bedrock of who we are 127 years later," Nadir Godrej said.

According to a stock exchange filing, the cousins, Jamshyd and Smita, will receive the unlisted Godrej & Boyce Mfg. Co., along with its affiliates and a huge land bank. Both the groups will continue to utilise the 'Godrej' brand and are "committed to growing and strengthening their shared heritage". The division of the conglomerate was agreed upon to honour the differing viewpoints within the family over business strategies, especially among the younger generation. "There have been no apparent undercurrents despite the differences," according to sources. The Godrej Industries Group - which includes the listed entities Godrej Industries Ltd., Godrej Consumer Products Ltd.,



Godrej Properties Ltd., Godrej Agrovet Ltd., and Astec Lifesciences Ltd - will be led by Nadir Godrej as chairperson alongside his brother Adi and their immediate families. The five listed companies are collectively valued at Rs 2.4 lakh crore. Pirojsha Godrej, the

son of Adi Godrej, has been appointed as the executive vice chairperson of the group. He is scheduled to assume the role of chairperson from Nadir Godrej in August 2026. Meanwhile, the Godrej Enterprises Group will be led by Jamshyd Godrej, who serves as chairperson and managing director, alongside Nyrika Holkar as the executive director, and their immediate families, as per the family settlement agreement. The Godrej Enterprises Group comprises Godrej & Boyce, along with its associated companies that operate diverse businesses including appliances, aerospace, aviation,

defence, energy, security, construction, healthcare, furniture, IT, and infrastructure. The family will also retain land banks, including over 3,400 acres in Vikhroli, a suburb of Mumbai, which remain the family's largest asset. "With this forward-looking family agreement now in place, we can further drive our growth aspirations with fewer complexities and focus on leveraging our core strengths in high-tech engineering and design-led innovation across our strong portfolio of strategic, consumer, and emerging businesses," said Jamshyd Godrej.

international

Daughters of Hindus being forcibly converted to Islam: Pakistan Senator

Hamza Ameer | Islamabad
Danesh Kumar, a Senator in Pakistan's upper house has gained the attention of all during the ongoing Senate session for highlighting the forced abductions and conversions of Hindu girls in Pakistan's Sindh province. "Daughters of Hindus are not a booty that someone should forcibly change their religion. Hindu girls are being forcibly converted to Islam in Sindh. It has been two years since innocent Pooja Kumari was abducted. The government does not take action against these influential people," Danesh said while addressing the Senate session. He stated that the forced abduction and conversion of Hindu girls is being done by influential people and religious groups, who enjoy the support of the political powers that continue to target religious minorities, especially Hindu minority girls. Abducted and forcibly converted to Islam, they are married off to Muslim men. Danesh mentioned that all of this is being done under the pretext that teenage Hindu girls are converting as per their free will. "For many influential religious groups, such conversions and marriages are celebrated considering it to be a devotion



to Islam. However, the teaching of Islam preaches otherwise. The law/Constitution of Pakistan does not allow forced religious conversions and neither does the Holy Quran," he said. Danesh has raised an issue that has been haunting Pakistan for years as many global bodies have raised serious reservations and concerns over Islamabad's inability to put an end to the ongoing suffering of religious minorities. There have been innumerable cases of girls from the minority Hindu community being forcibly abducted, converted and married off to Muslim men, most of them twice their age or even more. The United Nations (UN) recently slammed Pakistan

over what it termed as an "alarming situation" at the continuing lack of protection of young women and girls belonging to minority communities in the country. "Christian and Hindu girls continue to remain vulnerable to forced religious conversion, abduction, trafficking, child, early and forced marriage, domestic servitude and sexual violence," read a UN statement. "The exposure of young women and girls belonging to religious minority communities to such heinous human rights violations and the impunity of such crimes can no longer be tolerated or justified," it added. Highlighting the legislative and judicial failures to protect vulnerable underage girls, the

UN experts have underlined that early and forced marriage cannot be justified on religious or cultural grounds, adding that consent is irrelevant when the victim is a child under the age of 18. "The matter is not limited to only forced conversions and marriages of Hindu girls; it is being validated by the courts, who invoke religious laws and justifying keeping victims with their abductors rather than allowing them to return to their parents," said Hafeez Tunio, a local journalist from Sindh province. "Perpetrators often escape accountability, with police dismissing crimes under the guise of love marriage," he added. While the matter of forced conversions is pivotal and needs immediate and urgent attention of the government, experts say non-application of relevant provisions of Pakistan Penal Code, coupled with failure of the parliament of Pakistan to adopt further legislation to address the issue of forced conversions and marriages of minority women and girls, has further encouraged influential religious groups to continue with their vicious agenda, which they shelter under the facade of religious teachings and its spread.

Ukrainian drones damage oil targets in Russia: Reports

Kyiv/Moscow | Agencies
Ukrainian drones have damaged a refinery in Ryazan, some 200 kilometres south-east of Moscow, an unnamed representative of the Ukrainian military intelligence service HUR told the Ukrainska Pravda website. "A military target in Ryazan was hit. There is considerable damage," the website reported. Independent Russian media reported a fire at the Ryazan refinery. The second target was an oil processing plant in the Russian region of Voronezh. The intelligence service did not officially confirm the information, but the Ukrainian press is informed of such attacks in secret.



The Russian Ministry of Defence in Moscow announced that Ukrainian combat drones had been intercepted during the night over the Russian regions of

Voronezh, Ryazan, Belgorod and Kursk. The Ukrainian armed forces have further developed their drones and have been attacking refineries far into the Russian hinterland

for several weeks. The aim is to disrupt the fuel supply for the Russian army. The US has criticised these attacks because it fears an impact on world oil prices. However, Kyiv is sticking to this tactic. Ukraine has been fending off a large-scale Russian invasion for more than two years. On Wednesday, the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv was hit by several glide bombs fired by Russian aircraft from a safe distance. The governor there, Oleh Synyehubov, reported at least three deaths. Overnight, Russia fired missiles at the Ukrainian port city of Odesa on the Black Sea. According to regional governor Oleh Kiper, three people were killed and three others injured.

24 killed as highway collapses in China US, UK coalition launches fresh airstrike on Yemen's port city

Guangzhou | Agencies
At least 24 people were killed after part of an expressway collapsed in China's Guangdong Province, causing 20 vehicles to plunge on Wednesday, local authorities said. Another 30 people are receiving hospital treatment, with none in life-threatening condition, according to the government of the province's Meizhou city, Xinhua news agency reported. The incident happened around 2:10 a.m. on the Meizhou-Dabu Expressway in Meizhou. The collapsed section is 17.9 meters long and covers an area of 184.3 square meters, officials said. Aerial photos show one side of the expressway caved in, causing vehicles to roll down a slope. The accident did not involve any large vehicles or vehicles transporting hazardous chemicals, according to officials.

Sanaa | Agencies
The US-British coalition in the Red Sea launched a fresh airstrike on Yemen's Houthi-held port city of Hodeidah, media reported. The strike targeted the port of Ras Issa in the north-western district of al-Salif, the Houthi-run al-Masirah TV said on Tuesday without providing additional details. Residents described the explosion as powerful, saying the strike hit a Houthi position, Xinhua news agency reported. The coalition has yet to comment on the alleged strike. Since last November, the Houthis, who control much of northern Yemen, have initiated the launch of anti-ship ballistic missiles and drones targeting Israeli-affiliated vessels passing



through the Red Sea, to show support for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. They said their attacks would not stop unless Israel stops its military operation in Gaza. In January, the US and Britain launched a military operation by carrying out airstrikes on Houthi military sites. In response, the Houthis escalated their attacks on commercial and military vessels from the US and Britain in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Blinken meets Israeli President to push for Gaza ceasefire

Tel Aviv | Agencies
US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Israeli President Isaac Herzog in Tel Aviv on Wednesday at the start of a fresh round of talks aimed at bringing about a ceasefire in the Gaza war. The release of the hostages held by the Palestinian Islamist Hamas movement was currently a top priority, Herzog said at the meeting, according to his office. "We're determined to get a ceasefire that brings the hostages home, and to get it now. And the only reason that that wouldn't be achieved is because of Hamas," Blinken said. Blinken said there was a proposal on the table: "And as we've said, no delays, no excuses. The time is now." "At the same time, even as we're working with relentless determination to get the ceasefire that brings the hostages home, we also have to be focused on people in Gaza who are suffering in this crossfire of Hamas's making, and so focused on getting them the assistance they need - the food, medicine, the water, the shelter - is also very much on our minds and in the work that we're doing." Blinken said he planned to discuss these issues with Herzog. A meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is planned for later in Jerusalem.



Blinken had previously spoken of a "very, very generous" proposal from Israel for a deal with Hamas. As part of mediation efforts in Cairo, a response from Hamas is now being awaited.

Israel has announced a rapid start to the controversial offensive in Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip if no agreement is reached. Blinken had previously also visited Saudi Arabia and Jordan as part of his multi-day trip.



Governor urges people to create new, strong & prosperous Maharashtra

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Governor Ramesh Bais on Monday appealed to the people to come together to create a new, prosperous and strong Maharashtra, one of the leading states in agriculture, industrial products and manufacturing, trade and transportation. In his address after the flag hoisting and parade on the 65th foundation day of Maharashtra State at Shivaji Park, he said, "The geographical condition of Maharashtra is conducive to industrial development and Maharashtra has always been a centre of attraction for investment be it domestic or foreign. Our state is an economic and financial powerhouse which has always played an important role in the infrastructure development of the country."



a few of them today would be apt, including Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule, Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj, Bharat Ratna Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar," said the Governor.

"Maharashtra has always been at the forefront of social reforms and has a legacy of legendary leaders who devoted their entire lives to creating social equality, spreading education, women empowerment and eradicating superstitions. We are fortunate to have such legends and remembering

He said that one can have a glimpse of India through the diversity of Maharashtra, one of the states with the highest literacy. "Our state has various high-quality universities and vocational training institutes which attract students, researchers and

scholars from all over the world," he added.

The Governor further stated that Maharashtra has a rich tradition and cultural heritage with the legacy of the Warkari Sect and saints. It has a big coastline along with hill ranges, forests, forts, river basins and plateaus along with sanctuaries like Tadoba, Melghat and Pench which are rich in biodiversity. Maharashtra with all these heritage attractions attracts Indian and foreign tourists who refer to Maharashtra as the most

favoured destination. "Mumbai has a big contribution to the overall development of Maharashtra since the city houses the headquarters of most of the banks, corporate houses and financial institutions. India's biggest share market and the film industry are also in Mumbai and this city is one of the important ports as well which witnesses international trade in a big way. It is also an important centre when it comes to industrial manufacturing and financial as well as service sector," said the Governor.

"In addition to Mumbai, cities like Pune, Nashik, Nagpur, Kolhapur, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, and Solapur are also power centres for various sectors. Maharashtra is leading when it comes to implementing cyber security and providing cyber services to businesses and persons. Maharashtra has the biggest strength in its population which is hard-working, enterprising and progressive," said the Governor. "In any Parliamentary democracy, regularly held elections are nothing but festivity of democracy. People's participation is crucial in preserving and strengthening democracy. At present, we are having elections for the Lok Sabha and I appeal to everyone to exercise their franchise by voting and participating in this festival of democracy," he said.

Salman Khan firing case

Accused gun supplier found hanging in Mumbai police lockup, declared dead

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a sensational development, one of the prime accused in the firing at Salman Khan's home, Anuj Thapan, died after an alleged suicide attempt in a Mumbai Police lockup on Wednesday, an official said.

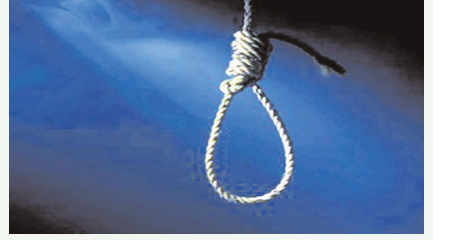
The incident took place shortly before noon at the Crime Branch lockup where Thapan, 32, was lodged for investigations after he was sent to police custody till May 8.

A policeman found Thapan hanging inside his cell toilet with the help of a bed-sheet, and immediately raised an alarm for help. He was rushed by a police team to the nearby St. George Hospital in a critical condition but was declared dead on admission, sending the police into a tizzy.

The Azad Maidan Police Station has registered an accidental death report, an official said, adding the motive behind Thapan's suicide is being probed.

Thapan, 32, along with Sonu Chander Bishnoi, was arrested in Punjab on April 25 for allegedly providing the arms and ammunition used for the pre-dawn firing outside Salman Khan's Bandra home on April 14.

Earlier, the Mumbai Police had tracked down the two shooters - Vicky Gupta, 24 and Sagar Pal, 21 -- in the Pakistan-bordering district of Kachchh in Gujarat and brought them to Mumbai. After their questioning, the police swooped on Bishnoi and Thapan, and they were arrested for supplying the two pistols and several rounds of ammunition which were used to fire at Khan's home in Galaxy Apartments in the posh Bandra west. As per the probe, Thapan worked as a



truck cleaner, while Bishnoi was a farmer-cum-grocer. Both reportedly had links with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang which claimed responsibility for the firing at Khan's house.

The Mumbai Police last month invoked various sections of the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, besides the Indian Penal Code and Arms Act, against all the four accused, of whom Thapan committed suicide on Wednesday, with possible ramifications on the sensitive probe.

On April 28, a Special Court had sent Gupta, Pal and Thapan to police custody till May 8, while Bishnoi was given judicial custody for a fortnight on health grounds. Simultaneously, the police have also named the mafia don Lawrence Bishnoi and his brother Anmol Bishnoi as 'wanted accused' for the firing at Salman Khan's residence.

The police managed to trace and fish out the two guns and many unused bullets which Gupta and Pal had flung into river Tapi in Surat while fleeing to Kachchh after the April 14 shooting. They were nabbed on April 16. Anmol Bishnoi is stated to be living in Canada and keeps travelling to different countries, while his sibling Lawrence Bishnoi is currently in jail for various serious crimes.

Another powerful name added to world of news: Maha CM

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday congratulated NDTV for the launch of its Marathi channel on the occasion of Maharashtra Day, saying another powerful name has now been added to the world of news. Speaking at the launch event, the Chief Minister said that NDTV starting its Marathi channel on this important day is a matter of happiness and satisfaction.

"If we look at Maharashtra over the past two years, the Atal Setu has been a game-changer project. The Mumbai Coastal Road has also been started from one side. We gave momentum to many projects. We are also enjoying the benefits of having a double-engine government," CM Shinde said, referring to the NDA governments at the Centre and in Maharashtra.

The Chief Minister also spoke about Maoism, saying that it has to be finished to increase employment in the areas affected by the Left-wing extremism.



BIS scientist in Nagpur sent to 5 years in jail, fined Rs 1.10 lakh in Rs 15K bribery case

Team Absolute | Nagpur

A special CBI court has sentenced a Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) scientist to jail for five years along with a hefty fine of Rs 1.10 lakh in a Rs 15,000 bribery case, officials said here on Wednesday.

Bipin Jambholkar, the convict, was a Grade A scientific cadre officer who was a nodal officer for BIS Nagpur at the time of the incident.

Following a complaint, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a case on March 9, 2015,



against Jambholkar, who was serving as a Scientist-C (Lot Cell) at the BIS' Enforcement & Legal Activities.

As per the CBI complaint, he demanded and accepted a bribe of Rs 15,000 for not appealing against the acquittal of a complainant in a case -- details of which are not

available -- that was heard by the Judicial Magistrate's Court in Wardha in December 2014.

After a detailed investigation lasting for nearly a year, the CBI filed a charge sheet in the case against Jambholkar on February 26, 2016, following which the trial started in the special CBI court. During the eight-year-long trial, the court examined 15 witnesses, the CBI prosecutor submitted 91 documents plus other evidence which stood the judicial scrutiny and resulted in the conviction of the accused.

12th gen Chhatrapati fights with 2nd gen MP for Kolhapur's 'raj-tilak'



Team Absolute | Kolhapur (Maharashtra)

The erstwhile royal kingdom of Kolhapur is witnessing a war of political supremacy between Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj who is the MVA-Congress nominee for the Lok Sabha elections, and the ruling Mahayuti alliance partner Shiv Sena's MP, Professor Sanjay S Mandlik. While Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj is the 12th direct descendant of the legendary Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Sanjay S Mandlik is the son of the four-time (undivided) NCP MP, the late Sadashivrao D Mandlik. In the heat and dust of the campaign for the May 7 elections, Mandlik seemed to have lost his bearings momentarily when he questioned the 'credentials' of his illustrious rival's royal lineage. Not surprisingly, Mandlik, 60, was greeted with howls of protests from all political parties and locals alike, with many demanding an apology for insulting the Chhatrapati, but the Shiv Sena nominee refused to oblige. On his part, the soft-spoken Chhatrapati, 76, popular as 'Maharaj Saheb' among his constituents, gently raked up the issue of the 'legitimacy' of Mandlik's party, the Shiv Sena - headed by CM Eknath Shinde - which was enough to rattle the ruling Mahayuti alliance. It may be recalled that in June 2022, Shinde had rebelled against the Shiv Sena founded (in 1966) by the late Balasaheb Thackeray, and in July 2023 ally NCP chief Ajit Pawar had broken up the party established by his uncle Sharad Pawar in 1999. The two splinters, part of the Mahayuti government, were recognised as the 'real' parties this year, and the Chhatrapati's mild plea for 'a politically-stable Maharashtra' or 'fight against a totalitarian regime' or 'political reforms', etc. shook the powers-that-be.

Quivering under the Chhatrapati's feather-touch salvos, Mandlik attempted to salvage the situation by claiming how he sought votes based on his work, that the people are the real 'heirs' of Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and merely belonging to the family doesn't grant anybody the status, and the poll battle was for the dignity of the Kolhapur people. Two months ago, when it became clear that Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj would be contesting the Lok Sabha polls, his son, Yuvraj Sambhajaraje Chhatrapati quietly made a royal sacrifice and instantly opted out of the elections (IANS - March 6) as he wanted to fight from the same seat.

This mark of respect to his 'revered father' went down well with the Kolhapur masses.

In one of those rare situations, Kolhapur witnessed a scenario in which a distinguished candidate was available, but he had no direct party affiliations, and the MVA allies Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) rushed to offer him a ticket.

Finally, they left it to the sagely Chhatrapati to pick the symbol he would prefer to contest on, and he chose the Congress' 'Hand' - with no heartburns among the MVA partners.

Mandlik had his share of woes, but given the changed political equations after the Shiv Sena and NCP splits, the Mahayuti allies buried their differences and offered him a second chance. Kolhapur comprises 6 Assembly segments of which 3 are with the Congress, 2 with NCP, and one with Shiv Sena. They are, Kolhapur North (MLA Jayshri Jadhav), Kolhapur South (MLA Ruturaj Patil) and Karvir (PN Patil) - all from Congress; plus Kagal (MLA Hasan Mushrif) and Chandgad (MLA Rajesh Patil) - both from NCP; and in Radhanagari it is Shiv Sena's Prakashrao Abitkar. The influential and respected Chhatrapatis - both from Kolhapur and Satara kingdoms - have entered the electoral fray several times both for Assembly and Parliament, on one or the other political party's ticket, while some were nominated to the Rajya Sabha.

Shiv Sena nominates Dr Shinde from Kalyan, Mhaske from Thane

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena has formally announced the nominations of Dr Shrikant Shinde from Kalyan and Naresh Mhaske from Thane constituencies.

Dr Shinde's nomination was earlier unilaterally declared by Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis but on Wednesday the formal announcement was made by the Shiv Sena.

Dr Shinde, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's son, was elected in 2014 and 2019 elections as the nominee of the Shiv Sena (United), and hopes to score a hat-trick in Kalyan.

He has been pitted against the Shiv Sena (UBT) nominee Vaishali Darekar who was earlier associated with the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS).

After Dy CM Fadnis' announcement, Dr Shinde had started his campaign.

It was only after intervention by Dy CM Fadnis and the Public Works



Minister Ravindra Chavan that BJP cadres came on board as they were initially reluctant to work for CM Shinde's son.

Further, after unconditional support by MNS chief Raj Thackeray to the Mahayuti, the lone MNS legislator Raju Patil is also now campaigning



for Dr Shinde. Patil had earlier raised objections against Dr Shinde's style of functioning.

As far as the Thane seat is concerned, Shinde had made it a prestige issue as Thane is his home turf. The Shiv Sena has fielded Naresh

Mhaske who is the former Thane Mayor and was among the few who left Uddhav Thackeray and joined Shinde after the split in the party in June 2022.

Mhaske will take on Shiv Sena (UBT) nominee and sitting MP Rajan Vichare.

The BJP had also staked its claim on the Thane seat as the names of party leaders Sanjay Kelkar, former MP Sanjeev Naik and former MP Vinayak Sahasrabudhe were doing the rounds.

The Thane seat was represented in the past by the BJP but after 1996 the Shiv Sena held the seat till 2009 when NCP nominee Sanjeev Naik wrested it from the Shiv Sena.

However, Shiv Sena (United) won the Thane seat in 2014 and 2019 elections again, riding on the PM Modi wave. In the run up to these elections, the BJP had aggressively pitched for the same but ultimately CM Shinde outsmarted it during the seat sharing arrangement.

Local train derails near CSMT; Re-railed hours later

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Mumbai local train derailed on the harbour line of the Central Railway at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) in Mumbai on Wednesday afternoon, an official said.

Central Railway chief spokesperson Dr Swapnil Nila said, "Two wheels of an empty rake while doing trial after attending the defective spot got derailed near CSMT. Local trains between CSMT and Wadala Road are affected. Inconvenience is deeply regretted."

No one was injured in the incident. The trolley of the coach derailed when the train was entering CSMT. Hours after the train was derailed, it was on Wednesday evening Re-railed at around 6:40 pm, the officials said.

They said that two wheels of an empty rake while doing trial after attending the defective spot got derailed near CSMT. The Harbour line locals were run from Platform No. 03. The derailed coach of the empty rake was Re-railed at around 18.25 hrs. The empty rake arrived at the Platform No. 2 at 18.40 hrs.

The incident comes days after another Mumbai local train had derailed near CSMT station.

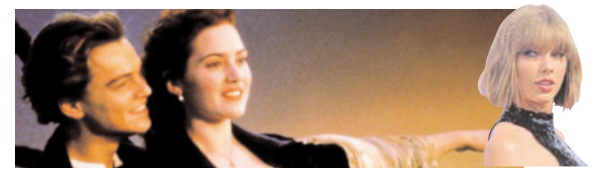
On Monday, a harbour-line Mumbai local train had derailed near the CSMT station. Nobody was injured in the incident. Services on the line were affected for some hours.

A trolley from one of the coaches of a CSMT-bound Mumbai local train from Panvel derailed as it pulled into platform number 2 around 11.35 am.

"Derailment of Panvel 56 local while arriving at CSMT Platform no. 2 derailed at 11.35 hrs. No injury to any passengers," Central Railway



spokesperson had said. There was no report of injuries to passengers in the affected compartment, he said. The derailment, however, disrupted Mumbai local train services on the Harbour Line, and the CSMT-bound trains were terminated at Masjid station, the Central Railway spokesperson. The derailed coach's trolley was re-railed at 1.15 pm. The track was cleared at 1.55 pm.



HAILEY BIEBER REACTS TO HUSBAND JUSTIN'S TEARFUL PHOTO



Los Angeles | Agencies

Justin Bieber may have scared a few of his dedicated fans over the weekend by sharing pictures of himself crying. The 30-year-old posted a series of pictures of himself on Sunday, April 28, including a handful of tearful selfies. Justin's wife, Hailey Bieber, reacted to his Instagram carousel by calling him "a pretty crier."

Fans swarmed the comments section by asking the "Baby" hitmaker what had made him cry in the first place. "I hope you are doing okay, i hate to see tears running down your face [sic]," one Instagram user wrote. "Are you okay bro?" another asked.

Justin's social media activity comes after he and Hailey, 27, became the subject of breakup rumors. In March, the model's dad, Stephen Baldwin, posted — then deleted — a cryptic request for fans to send "prayers" to the spouses. He didn't reveal the reason behind his since-deleted post, but many were convinced that this pointed to trouble in paradise between Justin and Hailey.



Clad in skimpy leopard print bikini, Demi Moore sizzles in vacation video

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Demi Moore, who is known for 'A Few Good Men' and 'Forsaken', shared a new Instagram video, giving a glimpse of her family vacation. The actress also flaunted her leopard bikini. Moore's post provided highlights from the family's beach vacation, with appearances from Tallulah, 30, Scout, 32, Rumer Willis, 35, Rumer's 1-year-old daughter Louetta, family friends, reports People magazine.

The beachgoers jump from inside a home onto the bright white sandy beach in the clip. Thanks to editing tricks, each jumped over the camera and landed on the beach. Moore, 61, kicked off the video and first sported a pair of white cargo pants and a white tank top.

As per People, when she landed on the beach, the actress was wearing a string leopard bikini and square brown sunglasses. Tallulah then followed her mom, transitioning from bright yellow pants and a brown T-shirt into a purple and white striped strapless bikini.

Scout quickly caught up with the two, switching from a matching white and grey striped linen set to a yellow, blue and purple floral bikini. Rumer finished the video by switching from a white-tiered maxi dress to a mint green bikini.



CHRIS HEMSWORTH, ROBERT DOWNEY JR. CHEER 'AVENGERS' CO-STAR JEREMY RENNER'S RECOVERY

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood stars Chris Hemsworth and Robert Downey Jr are celebrating their 'Avenger' co-star Jeremy Renner's recovery after his 2023 fatal snow plow accident.

Hemsworth and Downey Jr said in a new interview that the crew is still in contact with each other via a group text chain, which is how they initially found out about Renner's accident.

"He sent us all a sort of a doped out, hospital, beat-up image and said, 'All good, guys.' And then I didn't hear from him for a while as he was in the thick of it," Hemsworth said in an interview with Vanity Fair, reports deadline.com.

Last year in September, Renner attended Chris Evans' wedding, where they all praised him for his recovery. Downey Jr said: "If there's one characteristic we'd all agree is paramount... it's resilience. To see

Renner embody that literally and in the context of what was basically Portuguese-American wedding was mind-blowing. Fully recovered and ready to celebrate. So, yes, miracles happen."

Hemsworth added: "There was an astounding sense of gratitude from him around just being alive."

Hemsworth also opened up about his regret on 'Thor: Love and Thunder'.

"I got caught up in the improv and the wackiness, and I became a parody of myself. I didn't stick the landing."

He added: "Sometimes I felt like a security guard for the team. I would read everyone else's lines, and go, 'Oh, they got way cooler stuff. They're having more fun.' What's my character doing? It was always about, 'You've got the wig on. You've got the muscles. You've got the costume.'"

"Where's the lighting? Yeah, I'm part of this big thing, but I'm probably pretty replaceable."



WHY DAN RADCLIFFE FEELS 'SAD' ABOUT JK ROWLING'S ANTI-TRANSGENDER COMMENTS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Daniel Radcliffe feels "really sad" by Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling's constant anti-transgender comments and her support for others with transphobic views.

The actor revealed that he has not spoken to the author during an interview with the Atlantic, reports people.com.

"It makes me really sad, ultimately, because I do look at the person that I met, the times that we met, and the books that she wrote and the world that she created, and all of that is to me so deeply empathic," Radcliffe, who played the title role in eight Potter films, said of Rowling and her controversial comments.

"Jo, obviously Harry Potter would not have happened without her, so nothing in my life would have probably happened the way it is without that person. But that doesn't mean that you owe the things you truly believe to someone else for your entire life."

Radcliffe had also replied to Rowling's recent post on social media that he and his co-actors Emma Watson and Rupert Grint can "save their apologies" and that she wouldn't forgive them.

Radcliffe said: "I will continue to support the rights of all LGBTQ people, and have no further comment than that."



BELLA HADID IS NO LONGER PUTTING ON A 'FAKE FACE' AS SHE STEPS BACK FROM MODELLING

Los Angeles | Agencies

Supermodel Bella Hadid has shared that she is taking a step back from her glamorous career and starting anew in Texas with her "partner" Adan Banuelo.

"After 10 years of modelling, I realised I was putting so much energy and love and effort into something that, in the long run, wasn't necessarily giving back to me," Hadid told Allure magazine, reports people.com.

She shared that her life in Texas is different from how it was before as she has found a strong group of friends that she hangs out with and she has the "best time," never feeling like she needs to do "too much" when it comes to getting herself ready for a night out with them.

"For the first time now, I'm not putting on a fake face. If I don't feel good, I won't go. If I don't feel good, I take time for myself... And I've never had the opportunity to do that or say that before," she said.

"Now when anybody sees me in pictures and they say, I look happy, I genuinely am. I am feeling better; my bad days now were my old good days," the 27-year-old supermodel added.

In the past year, Hadid had quietly been working on her mental and physical health. She had even spoken about her battle with Lyme disease on social media and had shared that she is "finally healthy."

Emily Blunt quips she'll 'be with Ken forever' after Ryan Gosling's gift for her kids

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Emily Blunt says that a memento of co-star Ryan Gosling will live in her house forever.

Blunt walked the carpet at the premiere of 'The Fall Guy' at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood and she spoke with etonline.com about a special gift of roses Gosling gave her daughters earlier this month. "The roses are still in their playroom at home," Blunt said. "It's this massive box of roses that spells 'KEN' and they're just so happy about it. I mean, they bring their friends over just to show them, you know?" The actress has previously revealed in an interview with Jimmy Kimmel that her daughters Hazel and Violet got a chance to meet Gosling after their mom made a cameo appearance on his recent episode of Saturday Night Live. Talking about the bouquet, she said: "We will never be able to throw them out. And I'll just be living with Ken for forever."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Hailey Grice



IPL 2024: BRAR & CHAHAR; BAIRSTOW & ROSSOUW HELP PBKS REGISTER COMFORTABLE SEVEN-WICKET WIN OVER CSK

Chennai | Agencies

Spinners Harpreet Brar and Rahul Chahar took two wickets each in economical bowling spells of 2-17 and 2-16, while Jonny Bairstow and Rilee Rossouw hit useful 40s each to help Punjab Kings register a seven-wicket victory over Chennai Super Kings at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on Wednesday.

Brar and Chahar applied brakes on CSK's batting in the middle overs through their nagging line and length to return with collective figures of 4-33 in eight overs and an economy rate of 4.25, while conceding no boundaries, as the hosts' were restricted to a below-par 162/7.

In reply, Bairstow and Rossouw hit 46 and 43 respectively while sharing a 64-run stand for the second wicket. Shashank Singh and Sam Curran ensured PBKS completed the chase with seven wickets in hand and 13 balls to spare. PBKS are now at seventh place in the points table, after pulling off their fifth victory in a row over CSK, who were hampered by dew and losing Deepak Chahar to hamstring injury just two balls into the second innings.

Impact Player Sameer Rizvi's laboured innings ended when he was



caught by a sliding third man, while trying to ramp off Harshal Patel. But Gaikwad continued to stay afloat, getting his fifty in 44 balls by hammering Curran over long-on for six and pulled the left-arm pacer for another maximum to take 15 runs off the 16th over. From the other end, Bairstow

cut and pulled Shardul Thakur for a brace of fours as PBKS reached 52/1 at the end of power-play. Post that, Bairstow was severe on Jadeja in his opening over, cutting at the last moment and pulling powerfully to take two fours. It felt like Bairstow began from

where he left in his 48-ball 100 against Kolkata Knight Riders last week - seen from him pulling and slog-sweeping off Moeen for six and four respectively. After cutting Jadeja for another four, Bairstow's knock ended when a short ball from Dube, bowling for the first time in IPL 2024, was ramped behind to keeper.

But Rossouw pulled him for six over square leg, followed a four cut through cover to take 14 from the tenth over. Shardul Thakur came in to castle Rossouw with a full toss, and he could have got Shashank's wicket if Daryl Mitchell hadn't made mess of a chance at mid-off.

Shashank and Curran hit five boundaries between themselves while sharing an unbroken 50-run stand off 37 balls for the fourth wicket to ensure PBKS got another win on the road, with the winning runs coming off an overthrow.

Brief scores

Chennai Super Kings 162/7 in 20 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 62, Ajinkya Rahane 29; Rahul Chahar 2-16, Harpreet Brar 2-17) lost to Punjab Kings 163/3 in 17.5 overs (Jonny Bairstow 46, Rilee Rossouw 43; Shivam Dube 1-14, Richard Gleeson 1-30) by seven wickets

Pathan and Kaif back Jaiswal to be Rohit's opening partner for India in T20 WC

New Delhi | Agencies

Former India cricketers Irfan Pathan and Mohammad Kaif have backed young Yashasvi Jaiswal to be captain Rohit Sharma's opening partner for India in the upcoming Men's T20 World Cup, to be held in West Indies and USA from June 1.

Kohli has been leading run-charts in the IPL 2024 as an opener for Royal Challengers Bengaluru, but him opening with Rohit for India in the T20 World Cup could result in teams having left-arm fast-bowler and left-arm spinner match-up. However, Pathan thinks Jaiswal opening with Rohit will help India tackle this match-up in the T20 World Cup.

"It's a question which has been floating around a lot. It should be Yashasvi Jaiswal - as he being a left-hander, what happens is, a team from a bowling point of view, will start with a left-arm spinner and when that happens, you can actually play these two batters. If Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli



Kaif believes Kohli's previous stupendous success for India in ICC tournaments at number three is still a very big factor.

"I would see Jaiswal and Rohit opening, as Kohli has to be there at number three. Though he opens in the IPL, Kohli has done well in ICC events at number three. You need someone who has experience at number three and can bat through. With Yashasvi opening and Kohli in the dugout, there will be pressure on the opposition team that Virat is still to come out to bat."

"If he opens and the opposition gets him out, then it will be a big confidence booster for them. Jaiswal will attack from the first ball and Rohit Sharma also attacks in power-play, then it should be this way: Jaiswal, Rohit and Virat Kohli at number three," he added.

Pathan, the Player of the Match in India's 2007 T20 World Cup final win over Pakistan in Johannesburg, was left disappointed over the non-inclusion of Rinku Singh and Ravi Bishnoi in the 15-member squad.

Nadal bids farewell to Madrid Open after fourth round loss



Madrid | Agencies

Rafael Nadal bid farewell to fans at the Madrid Open, the ATP Masters 1000 tournament that he won five times during his illustrious career, after a 5-7, 4-6 fourth-round loss to the Czech player Jiri Lehecka.

The five-time champion of the tournament (2005, 2010, 2013, 2014 and 2017) produced the final epilogue of

his Madrid Open journey against Lehecka. His fourth-round match against a Czech player lasted two hours and two minutes.

A win would have meant victory number 60 for the Spaniard in Madrid, but his count will now forever remain at 59 triumphs and just 15 defeats since his first match against Alex Corretja in the Madrid Arena in 2003.

After the match, an emo-

tional Nadal received a special presentation on the court in which banners marking his five titles in 2008, '10, '13-'14 and '17 unfurled from the closed roof as Madrid said goodbye to its greatest champion.

"It's been a very special week for me, very positive in many ways, both personally and for my tennis. I had the chance to play again on court. A few weeks ago, two days before Barcelona, I didn't know if I would compete in an official match again and I've now played two weeks. It's been unforgettable," Nadal was quoted by ATP tour.

"The only thing I can say is 'thank you.' It's been an incredible journey that started when I was little. I came to Madrid for the first time in 2003, when the tournament was played indoors. The first time I came here feeling competitive was in 2005. It was one of the most exciting wins of my career, still indoors. Ever since, the support has been unconditional from everyone. I cannot thank you enough," he added.

IPL 2024: MI SKIPPER HARDIK FINED FOR SLOW OVER-RATE OFFENCE

New Delhi: Mumbai Indians' (MI) captain Hardik Pandya



has been fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate during IPL 2024 match against Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in Lucknow on Tuesday.

"As it was his team's second offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over-rate offences, Pandya was fined INR 24 Lakh" the BCCI statement read. "The rest of the members of the Playing XI, including the Impact Player, were each individually fined either INR 6 Lakh or 25 per cent of their respective match fees, whichever is lesser" it added. MI succumbed to its seventh loss of the season in 10 games after suffering a 4-wicket defeat at the hands of LSG.

After Tuesday's loss MI's chances for playoffs are bleak even if they win all of their remaining games.

Four Indian boxers march into semis at Asian U-22 & Youth Championships



Astana (Kazakhstan) | Agencies

Indian boxers Aryan, Yashwardhan Singh, Priyanshu and Sahil marched into semi-finals with confident wins at the Asian U-22 & Youth Boxing Championships 2024, here on Wednesday.

Aryan gave India a perfect start with a 5-0 unanimous decision win against Uzbekistan's Juraev Shakarboy in the 51kg category. His win was followed by Yashwardhan (63.5kg), who made a remarkable comeback after going down in the first round to grab a 4-1 victory over Iran's Mirahmadi Babaheidari.

Priyanshu (71kg) and Sahil (80kg), on the other hand, didn't break sweat as they wrapped the bout with referee stop the contest (RSC) decision against Chinese Taipei's Wu Yu En and Turkmenistan's Yklymov Abdyrahman respectively.

Meanwhile, Jatin ended his campaign in the 57kg category with a 1-4 loss against Uzbekistan's A Nodirbek.

The youth semi-finals will be played on Friday.

Aryan (92kg), Nisha (52kg), Akansha Phalasalwal (70kg) and Rudrika (75kg) will be in action later today in their respective youth quarter-finals bouts.

Late on Tuesday, Jugnoo (86kg), Tammana (50kg) and Preeti (54kg) claimed victories to enter the U-22 semi-finals.

On Thursday, eight U-22 pugilists will take the ring for their quarter-finals bouts. M Jadumani Singh (51kg), Ashish (54kg), Nikhil (57kg), Ajay Kumar (63.5kg), Ankush (71kg) and Dhruv Singh (80kg) in the men's category while Guddi (48kg) and Poonam (57kg) in the women's section.

The finals for the youth and U-22 category will be played on May 6 and 7 respectively.

WASIM AKRAM TO TRAIN SRI LANKAN BOWLERS FOR T20 WORLD CUP



Colombo: Ahead of ICC Men's T20 World Cup, Sri Lankan bowlers are to be trained by Pakistan cricket legend Wasim Akram.

The former seamer arrived in Sri Lanka on Wednesday to conduct a two-day training program for national players, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) announced.

During his coaching session, starting from Thursday, Akram will also train SLC High Performance Coaches (HPC) and the coaches of the major clubs.

"In total, Akram will conduct five sessions, covering the SLC pace academy, HPC, and major club coaches. He will also observe Sri Lanka's national players' preparation for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup," the SLC stated.

The board noted that this program will mark Sri Lanka Cricket's initiative to bring in the required expertise to enhance the coaching strength of the SLC High Performance Center and the Major Club system in the country.

DJOKOVIC SPLITS WITH LONG-TIME FITNESS COACH PANICHI

New Delhi | Agencies

Novak Djokovic has announced that he has split with fitness coach Marco Panichi, marking the latest change to his support team following a split with former coach Goran Ivanisevic in March.

For the past seven years, the 36-year-old has been collaborating with Panichi, but now they're set to embark on a new path.

In a social media post, the Serb thanked Panichi for his services. "Grande Marco, what amazing years of collaboration we've had. We reached the summit, won titles, broken records. But most of all, I have enjoyed our most 'ordinary'



days of training in and out of the gym." "Endless hours of 'cariofini' and laughs that made me feel super motivated to prepare for success. Grazie Romanista (as Goran calls you) for all the energy, effort and time you invested in making me the best possible player and person I can be.

"Much love and I will see you soon in Roma. Forzaaaa," he added.

Last month Djokovic announced he had split with coach Ivanisevic. The 36-year-old last week won the Laureus World Sportsman of the Year award for a record-equalling fifth time after a stand-out 2023 season in which he won three of the four majors and the Nitto ATP Finals.

The Serbian is 11-4 this season and most recently competed in Monte-Carlo, where he reached the semifinals. He pulled out of the Madrid Masters 1000 to carefully manage his schedule.



Rashid Khan to lead as Afghanistan announce T20 World Cup 2024 squad

Kabul | Agencies

Afghanistan have named their 15-member squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 in the West Indies and the USA in June this year, with Rashid Khan set to lead the side. Afghanistan have made a few additions to their squad compared to the 2022 edition, with Karim Janat, Mohammad Ishaq, and Noor Ahmad all named in the side,

as per ICC report. However, Hashmatullah Shahidi, who led Afghanistan in last year's ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023, wasn't part of the side, his last T20I appearance coming in 2022. Youngster Nangyal Kharoti, who made his international debut for Afghanistan in March this year against Ireland, also finds a place in the squad. The 20-year-old impressed in that series with five wickets in three matches with an economy

of just 5.90. Another young Afghan player to seal a spot is wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Ishaq, who was part of Afghanistan's squad in the 2020 and 2022 ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cups.

Rashid will lead the spin department with support from Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad, Nangyal Kharoti and veteran Mohammad Nabi. Naveen-ul-Haq, Fareed Ahmad and Fazalhaq Farooq

have retained their spots and make up Afghanistan's fast-bowling line-up.

Afghanistan Squad: Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Ibrahim Zadran, Azmatullah Omarzai, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Ishaq, Mohammad Nabi, Gulbadin Naib, Karim Janat, Rashid Khan (c), Nangyal Kharoti, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad, Naveen-ul-Haq, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Fareed Ahmad Malik



SUNNY IS 'STRONG LIKE SUPERMAN': BOBBY DEOL



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Bobby Deol, who received acclaim for his performance in 'Animal' and is gearing up for his films down south, appeared on the latest episode of the streaming comedy show 'The Great Indian Kapil Show' along with his

brother Sunny Deol. During the episode, Bobby revealed that his brother has had multiple back surgeries but he still stands strong and can effortlessly pull off action scenes.

Bobby shared: "In real life, if there is someone strong like Superman, then it's my brother. I have never seen a stronger person than him. He's had multiple back surgeries but in spite of that, whenever he

is required to lift someone for a role, he easily does it. The funny part is he does it like they weigh nothing. Flawlessly." In 2022, Sunny got treated in the US after he sustained a back injury during a film shoot.

The Deols had a great year 2023 as all their films worked at the box office including 'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaan' which starred Dharmendra, the Sunny

Deol-starrer 'Gadar 2' and 'Animal' starring Bobby as the antagonist.

The new episode of 'The Great Indian Kapil Show' promises a blend of humour, nostalgia, and candid confessions from the brothers in arms - Sunny and Bobby Deol. It delves into the Deol family's legacy with engaging conversations, anecdotes, light-hearted banter and great camaraderie.



Anupam Kher loves Jr NTR's work: 'May he keep rising from strength to strength'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran Bollywood actor Anupam Kher shared a picture posing with Jr NTR, and heaped praise on the star saying that he "loved" his work in 'RRR'. Anupam, on Wednesday, morning took to X where he shared a picture. In the image, the two stars are seen posing for the camera in a restaurant. For the caption, Anupam wrote: "It was such a pleasure to meet one of my favourite persons and actor @tarak9999 last night. Have loved his work. May he keep rising from strength to strength! Jai Ho! #Actors." Anupam is currently busy with his second directorial 'Tanvi The Great'. It marks his return to the director's chair after 22 years. His first film as a filmmaker was 'Om Jai Jagdish', revolving around three brothers played by Fardeen Khan, Anil Kapoor and Abhishek Bachchan. On the other hand, Jr NTR is busy prepping for 'War 2' starring Hrithik Roshan. The film is directed by Ayan Mukerji. 'War 2' is a sequel to the 2019 film 'War' featuring Hrithik, Tiger Shroff and Vaani Kapoor.

'WE ARE ALL CRAZY, IT'S NOT A COMPETITION': KAJOL

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Kajol, who was last seen in the streaming anthology 'Lust Stories 2' and 'The Trial', has shared a bit of wisdom on craziness.

On Wednesday, the actress took to the Stories section of her Instagram and shared a meme which read: "Relax, we are all crazy. It's not a competition."

The actress is quite active on Instagram and often shares quirky posts. Recently, the actress shared a funny text on her Instagram Stories where she spoke about how she is running out of patience.

She wrote: "My patience is basically like a gift card. Not sure how much is left on it but we can give it a try."

Earlier, she had also shared a funny picture from her pilates class. In the photo, the actress was seen lying down on the pilates machine, wearing athleisure and sunglasses.

She wrote in the caption: "Since everyone wants to know what my workouts look like... Here is a pic... Ab batao yeh workout ke pehle ka hai ya baad main (sic)"



SHRIYA SAYS BEAUTY OF MAHARASHTRA IS IN ITS CULTURE, TRADITIONS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shriya Pilgaonkar, who is known for 'Mirzapur' and 'The Broken News', is a proud 'Marathi Mulgi'. On the occasion of Maharashtra Day on Wednesday, the actress shared that the beauty of the state lies in its culture and traditions.

She told, "On the occasion of Maharashtra Divas, I would like to share that I am so grateful to be born in this wonderful state which has such a rich cultural history and heritage. Some of the most prominent philosophers, poets,

saints, (and) so much art, culture and literature have come out of Maharashtra. I am extremely proud of the language, culture and the diversity of Maharashtra and I would like to wish everybody 'Maharashtra Dina Cha Khub Shubheccha' (Happy Maharashtra Day)". She further mentioned, "The beauty of Maharashtra has always been its culture and traditions. My parents have over the years contributed to the incredible Marathi Film Industry... I am grateful to this land for giving me my livelihood... I hope to do my bit to keep the culture of Maharashtra alive".



NIMRAT KAUR SHARES GLIMPSES OF 'BANDRA MORNINGS'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nimrat Kaur, on Wednesday, gave a peek into her "Bandra mornings," and wished everyone on the occasion of May Day. The actress, who was last seen in 'Sajini Shinde Ka Viral Video' took to Instagram Stories and shared a string of pictures from her morning walk. The first snap shows some cats sitting on the roadside. It is captioned: "Bandra mornings..."

There is a glimpse of her jogging shoes and shiuli flowers. There is also a video of the church.

The last picture is a selfie, wherein we can see Nimrat wearing a beige coloured running jacket with no make-up and her hair tied in a ponytail.

She captioned it: "Happy May Day!!" International Workers' Day, also known as May Day, which is marked on May 1, is a celebration of labour and the working classes.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Pooja Hegde

Just winging it. Life, eyeliner, everything. : Amyra Dastur

Mumbai: Actress Amyra Dastur, on Wednesday, treated fans to some mesmerising pictures of herself in a golden shimmering saree, and shared how she is "winging" her life, eyeliner and everything!

Amyra, who is known for her work in 'Judgemental Hai Kya', 'Kaalakaandi', 'Jogi', etc, took to Instagram and shared a string of photos, in which she can be seen wearing a golden-coloured saree.

She paired the shimmering saree with a matching tube blouse, which has heavy embellishments on it.

For the makeup, she opted for peach brown lips, winged eyeliner and brown eyeshadow. She has kept her hair open, and accessorised it with silver pearl earrings.

The post is captioned: "Just winging it. Life, eyeliner, everything."

