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INDORE RANKED COUNTRY'S 'CLEANEST CITY' FOR 7TH TIME IN ROW

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Indore - the commercial capital of Madhya Pradesh, has emerged as the cleanest city along with Surat (Gujarat) in the country, at the Swachh Survekshan Awards that were presented by President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday.

Indore has achieved this feat for the seventh consecutive time with a seven-star rating as 'garbage free city', while the state of Madhya Pradesh bagged the second position in the category of cleanest states.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav along with state Urban Development Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya and Indore Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava received the award from President Murmu in Delhi on Thursday.

Upon receiving the award, CM Yadav congratulated the people of the state, public representatives and 'Swachhata Mitras'. He also thanked them for their cooperation.

He said that the credit for Indore winning the cleanliness award for the seventh consecutive time goes to the able guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Under the leadership of PM Modi, Madhya Pradesh will continue to contribute in realising the Swachhata resolution," Yadav said. Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh cap-



ital Bhopal has acquired the fifth position in the list of cleanest cities with a five-star rating for garbage free city. Budhni - the home town of former chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, bagged the award for 'Cleanest City of West Zone' among cities with a population of 15,000 to

20,000. Among the cities with populations less than one lakh, Nauruzabad and Amarkantak have got the first and second position, respectively, in the fast moving city category.

Mhow has acquired the title of cleanest Cantonment Board. The survey, which saw a tough com-

petition among more than 4,400 cities in different categories, carried a total of 9,500 points. Indore secured 4,709.40 points of 4,830 under 'Service Level Progress' for segregated collection, processing and disposal of different types of waste, a senior official of the Indore Municipal Corporation said.

'Not mentioned in Constitution': Mamata outlines objections to 'One Nation, One Election'

Mumbai | Agencies

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday wrote to the Secretary of the High-Level Committee on One Nation, One Election, Niten Chandra highlighting her objections to the proposed system.

In her letter, not as the Chief Minister, but in her capacity as the Chairperson of Trinamool Congress, she argued that the Constitution conceives of the Indian nation in a federal manner hence resulting in a system of parallel existence of one Union government and several state governments.

"If the framers of the Indian Constitution did not mention the concept of 'One Nation, One Election', how have you arrived at the concept of 'One Nation, One Election'? Unless this basic enigma is sorted, it is difficult to arrive at any firm view on the catchy phrase," she wrote in the letter, a copy of which is available with IANS.

In the letter, the Chief Minister also raised the point of an eventuality where the Lok Sabha is subjected to untimely dissolution while the state Assemblies have unaffected longevity.

"Instability of a government at the Centre and consequent impact on the Parliament should not destabilise the State legislatures, to be sure! How does your esteemed committee propose to navigate these questions?" she asked. According to her, it seems that the Union government is attempting to impose a structure that is against the spirit of a truly democratic and federal structure as laid down in the Indian Constitution.

"We object to the most unrepresentative



composition of the Committee and point out that no Chief Ministers are taken on board for fear of receiving practical objections," she wrote.

Banerjee also said that she doubts if the high-level committee is seriously interested in analysing the demerits of the case.

"I further suspect that it fails to consider that Parliamentary elections and state Legislative elections are substantially different in nature," the Chief Minister said.

Suspected Kuki militants kill 4 villagers in Manipur

Imphal | Agencies

Suspected Kuki militants killed four villagers, including a father and his son, in Manipur's Churachandpur district, police said on Thursday.

A police official in Imphal said that the four villagers from Akasoi village in Bishnupur district who went to nearby forested areas of Churachandpur district on Wednesday to collect firewood, were first kidnapped by the militants and then killed. The bodies of the victims were recovered on



Thursday by the police team from Kumbi in Bishnupur district. The four victims identified as Ibomcha Singh (51) and his son Anand Singh (20), Romen Singh (38) and Dara Singh (37). Villagers saw the dead bodies in the social

media network, operated by various Kuki organisations and informed the police who then recovered the bodies.

The security forces are now conducting the search operations to nab the militants.

Vegetarian served non-veg meal on Air India flight, slams airline on social media

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A passenger on an Air India flight from Calicut to Mumbai, took to social media to express her dissatisfaction with the airline's in-flight catering, after she was served non-vegetarian food, instead of the vegetarian meal she had ordered.

Veera Jain posted photos on X, showcasing the non-vegetarian meal she was served during the journey, accompanied by her PNR number and flight details.

"On my @airindia flight AI582, I was served a veg meal with chicken pieces in it! I boarded the flight from Calicut airport. This was a flight that was supposed to take off at 18:40PM but left the airport at 19:40PM," she said.

"When I informed the cabin supervisor (Sona), she apologised and informed me that there was more than one complaint about the same issue other than me and my friend.

However, after I informed the crew, there was no action taken to inform other passengers having vegetarian meals," she said in a series of posts.

"First the delay, then the non-veg in my vegetarian meal. This is highly disappointing and it has hurt my sentiments. I ask Air India to take strict action on its catering services and delays." And I would suggest everyone - Please check thoroughly what you consume on a flight. After two extremely delayed flights (Mum-Kozhikode on 4th Jan and return on 8th Jan) and nonveg served I have lost



trust in all of the airline food now," she added. The post quickly gained momentum on social media, with numerous users joining the conversation and expressing concerns about Air India's food handling practices. Some questioned the airline's ability

to cater to specific dietary preferences, while others shared similar experiences they had encountered.

"@airindia what action has been taken. Its a strict no for Jain's to even speak about non veg. It's not less than a crime what u did.. after this incidence, we have to think about traveling by Air india. Forget about having a meal in your aircraft," replied another X user on Jain's tweet.

Responding to the escalating online discussion, Air India issued a public reply to Jain, urging her to contact the airline directly through direct message (DM) to address her concerns. "Dear Ms. Jain, we have responded to your DM and request you to take a look. We request your kind understanding," the airline said.

'RAM NAAM MAHA YAGNA' IN AYODHYA FROM JAN 14 TO 25

Mumbai | Agencies

A grand 'Ram Naam Maha Yagna' to establish 1,008 Narmadeshwar Shivlings, will be held on the bank of Saryu River in Ayodhya from January 14 to 25.

Sources said that 21,000 priests from Nepal will arrive to conduct the Maha Yagna for which 1,008 huts have already been raised to place the Shivlings, along with a grand mandap, which has 11 layers of roof.

A tent city has been established on 100 acres on the sand ghat of Saryu River, 2 km away from Ram temple.

The Maha Yagna will be organised by Atmanand Das Maha Tyagi also known as Nepali Baba, who hails from Ayodhya but is now settled in Nepal. "I do this yagna every year on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, but



this year, we have scaled it up in view of the Ram Temple Pran Pratishtha ceremony," he said. According to him,

arrangements are being made to accommodate 50,000 devotees every day and a feast will be organised for

about 1 lakh devotees per day.

After the Maha Yagna is over, 1,008 Shivlings will be immersed in the Saryu River.

During the Maha Yagna, 'havan' will start from January 17 with the chanting of 24,000 verses of Ramayan, which will continue till January 25.

Every day, the Shivlings will be anointed with 'panchamrit' and 1,100 couples will perform havan with recital of Ram Mantras in 100 ponds built at Yagyashala. He said that for the carving of Shivlings, stones have been brought from Narmada River of Madhya Pradesh. "The carving work will be completed before January 14," he added.

Atmanand Das Maha Tyagi claimed that the Nepal King had named him 'Nepali Baba'.

Delhi records minimum temperature at 5.8°C; dense fog affects visibility, delays trains

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The national capital woke up to a minimum temperature of 5.8 degrees Celsius, which is the seasonal average, according to India Meteorological Department (IMD). It added that the maximum temperature is likely to hover around 15 degrees, making Thursday a cold day.

The city, on Thursday morning, was blanketed by dense fog with lowest visibility of 500 m at Safdarjung at 8:30 a.m. while the Palam recorded 100 m at 5:00 a.m., which improved later. The IMD classifies fog intensity into four types: shallow, moderate, dense and very dense fog. The visibility ranges from 999 m to 500 m, 499 m to 200 m, 199 m to 50 m and less than 50 m, respectively.

According to Indian Railways, 24 trains were running late by hours due to fog and cold wave. The Air quality continued to remain in the 'very poor' category at several stations



across the city. At the Anand Vihar area, PM2.5 levels remained into the 'very poor' category standing at 355 and PM10 reached 253 or 'poor'. The Air Quality Index (AQI) between zero and 50 is considered 'good'; 51 and 100 'satisfactory'; 101 and 200 'moderate'; 201 and 300 'poor'; 301 and 400 'very poor'; and 401 and 500 'severe'. Pressed PM2.5 levels at 332, the 'very poor' category while the PM10 was at 222, falling under the 'poor' category, again.

Instead of uniting, BJP's politics over Ram Mandir inauguration event dividing Hindus: K'taka CM

Bengaluru | Agencies

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has stated that instead of uniting Hindus, the BJP's politics over the Ram Mandir's inauguration event in Ayodhya is dividing the Hindu community.

In a press statement in this regard, supporting the Congress party's stand to refrain from attending the inauguration of the Ram Mandir, Siddaramaiah added that the statement of Ram Mandir Trust Secretary that there will be no power for Shaivas and Shaktas in the

Ram Mandir has stirred a controversy. "If this is true, it is an insult to all the Shaiva devotees. It is also reported that four Shankaracharya peethas in the country have boycotted the Sri Ram Mandir inauguration opposing misuse of the Ram mandir for politics," he stated.

"The decision regarding non-participation in the Ram Lalla installation programme taken by the AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge, senior leader Sonia Gandhi and LoP in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is correct. I support the decision," he added.

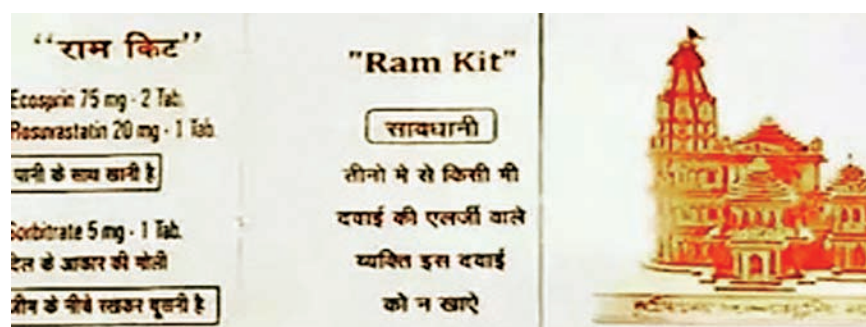
UP HOSPITAL DEVELOPS 'RAM KIT' TO HELP HEART PATIENTS IN EMERGENCY

Kanpur | Agencies

An emergency kit for heart patients, developed by Kanpur's Laxmipat Singhania Institute of Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery, has been named 'Ram kit'. The kit that comes with a photograph of Lord Ram follows the concept of 'We Treat, He Cures'. It also has vital drugs and helpline number of hospitals.

Authorities of the Cantonment hospital in Prayagraj district will be distributing the 'Ram kit' among 5,000 families in the city from Saturday, becoming the first hospital in the state to do so.

Cantonment hospital's director Dr S.K. Pandey said: "The Ram kit comprises three medicines -- Ecosprin (blood thinner), Rosuvastatin (cholesterol control) and



Sorbitrate (for better heart function) -- which are helpful in offering immediate relief to anyone suffering from heart ailments. With cases of heart disease and brain stroke increasing during the winter season, Ram kit will be useful to anyone in need of

immediate help and save lives."

Dr Neeraj Kumar, senior cardiologist at Laxmipat Singhania Institute of Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery, said that the reason the kit has been named after Lord Ram is that everyone has faith in his name.

"This kit contains life-saving medicines to thin the blood, open the blockage in the heart veins and provide immediate relief to the heart patient. What better name could have been given to a life-saving kit?" he said, adding that the phrase 'Ram Baan', originates from the belief that the Ayodhya prince never missed a target and stands for "the ultimate solution" to a problem.

Priced at a meagre Rs 7, the kit has been designed keeping in mind the poorest of the poor, Dr Kumar said. Dr Pandey, however, cautioned against relying on the kit solely and remaining at home in the incidence of chest pain. "The purpose of the kit is to give the doctors the golden hour in saving lives. Patients should take the medicines provided in the kit when experiencing chest pain and rush to the nearest hospital," he said.



PM MODI TO INAUGURATE NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL, HOLD ROAD SHOW IN NASHIK

Nashik (Maharashtra) | Agencies

The stage is set for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate the 27th National Youth Festival (NYF) and hold a 1.2 km long road show, here on Friday, an official said on Thursday.

The 27th NYF shall be inaugurated by PM Modi at Tapovan Maidan to mark the 161st birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda (Jan 12, 1863-July 4, 1902), in the presence of other top state and national leaders.

The road show will start from the Mirchi Circle to the Janardhan Swami Math Chowk on the Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar-Nashik Highway along with a cultural show in which over 1,50,000 people are expected to participate. Organised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs in collaboration with other departments, the NYF theme this year is 'MyBharat-ViksitBharat@2047 - By



the Youth, For the Youth' to herald the aspirations of the youth for India's future.

Besides Nashik, 750 districts and major cities will host various events like road safety, cultural programmes and events showcasing India's diverse heritage, to foster a spirit of national unity and progress among the youth.

The NYF will feature informative stalls and awareness drives by various ministries, departments and districts covering topics nutrition, traffic rules, KVIC start-up initiatives, empowering young minds with knowledge and actionable insights, among others.

The Nashik administration and police have completed elaborate preparations and security for the mega-event, the district has been declared 'drone-free' till January 16, the route for the road-show has been inspected with strict norms for entry to the venues.

Allahabad HC imposes fine of Rs 25,000 on UP govt for 'wasting' time

Lucknow | Agencies

The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court has imposed Rs 25,000 fine on the state government as its counsel "wasted" 10 minutes precious time of the court.

The order was passed by Justice Abdul Moin on a petition filed by Rajit Ram Verma. The matter was related to the Arms Act.

In the case, the state had filed its reply already. To the reply of the state, the petitioner filed his rejoinder affidavit, which was taken on record by the court.

After the matter had been argued for around 10 minutes, the court had gone through the provisions of the Arms Act, 1959 as well as the judgements as cited by petitioner's counsel. The court had also noted the arguments of petitioner's counsel. Thereafter, the state



counsel requested for some time to study the matter. As such, on his request, the court listed this case after a week.

The court said, "As the matter has been adjourned after hearing for around 10 minutes, a cost of Rs 25,000 is imposed upon the respondent -- state for its counsel having wasted precious judicial time of the court. A request for studying the matter could have been made by

the standing counsel as soon as the case was taken up, and not when sufficient time has been spent by the court and by counsel for the petitioner in the matter."

With this observation, the court directed that the cost be deposited before High Court Legal Services Subcommittee, Lucknow, within a week initially by the state government to be recovered from the persons responsible for the aforesaid fiasco

Include Bengali in classical language list, Mamata Banerjee urges PM

Kolkata | Agencies

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking the inclusion of Bengali in the list of classical languages of the country.

In her letter, a copy of which is available with IANS, the Chief Minister, in support of her plea, has pointed out that besides being a national language and the official state language in West Bengal, Bengali is also the second most-spoken language nationally and the 7th most spoken language globally. She also claimed that Bengali also fulfills all the four criteria to be classified as a classical language.

According to her, the case for Bengali's classical status is supported by its rich historical evolution encompassing both oral and written traditions.

"Evidence from archeological findings, inscriptions, references to ancient Sanskrit and Pali texts, and a substantial body of the pre-seventh-century Bengali literature underpins its classical heritage," the letter had read.

In another letter to the Prime Minister also written on Thursday, the Chief Minister has requested the PM's intervention in declaring the Gangasagar Mela at Sagar Islands in South 23 Parganas district as a National Fair.



She has also requested the Prime Minister to take time off the busy schedule and make a trip to Sagar Island during the fair days. In this letter, she has also pointed out that it takes huge expenditure to organise the Gangasagar Mela and currently it is fully funded from the state government exchequer without any kind of financial support from the Union government.

Delhi court to decide on closure of POCSO case against Brij Bhushan on March 2

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court on Thursday deferred pronouncement of order on whether to accept Delhi Police's cancellation report for a sexual harassment case lodged by a minor wrestler against former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief and BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh to March 2.

Additional Sessions Judge Chhavi Kapoor (ASJ) of Patiala House Courts said that some clarifications were required in the matter.

The police's cancellation report was filed on June 15, 2023, and was not opposed by the complainant during the last hearing. On August 1, 2023, the alleged victim and her father had expressed their satisfaction with the police investigation, raising no objection to the police's report in the case.

They had recorded their statement in an in-chamber proceeding before



ASJ Kapoor. On July 4 last year, the court had sought the complainant's response to the police's cancellation report. The 550-page report filed by the police before the Patiala House Courts had said that no corroborative

evidence was found in the allegations levelled by the minor.

"In the POCSO matter, after completion of investigation, we have submitted a report under Section 173 of CrPC requesting for cancellation of

the case based upon the statements of the complainant, i.e., the father of the victim and the victim herself," Delhi Police had said.

The FIR on the accusations levelled by the minor was filed under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, along with relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) concerning the act of outraging modesty.

However, the father of the minor wrestler had stepped forward later and claimed that he filed a "false" complaint of sexual harassment against Brij Bhushan.

The father alleged that his actions were driven by anger and frustration over the WFI chief's perceived biased treatment towards his daughter.

A second statement of the minor under Section 164 of CrPC was recorded in the court on June 5 in which she did not allege sexual harassment by Brij Bhushan, as per sources.

SUKHBIR BADAL FILES DEFAMATION SUIT AGAINST PUNJAB CM

Chandigarh | Agencies

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) President Sukhbir Badal on Thursday filed a defamation suit seeking Rs 1 crore damages from Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann for willful defamation as part of an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) conspiracy against the Badal family as well as the party.

The SAD President filed a civil suit in this regard in the court of the Civil Judge in Muktsar through this advocate and also submitted court fee of Rs 2.29 lakh.

The suit claimed that the Chief Minister indulged in a drama on November 1, 2023, by asserting precious water of Punjab was taken by the plaintiff and his family to their farm land in Balasar village of Haryana by constructing a private canal.

It said that Mann made this statement despite knowing the real facts of the case and did so deliberately



knowing it would have a cascading effect due to the position he held. The

suit said the real facts of the case were that Badal, as well as his SAD, had

fought tirelessly to save each and every drop of water even as the Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had taken an adverse stand with respect to river waters in Haryana to gain political mileage.

Badal, in his suit, said Mann was regularly making false, unsubstantiated and scurrilous statements against him. He said the Chief Minister had portrayed him as well as the Badal family as highly corrupt people who had looted Punjab besides calling them anti-Sikh and anti-Punjab.

"All this has been done as part of a pre-planned conspiracy of the Chief Minister in league with his political bosses," Badal added.

Later talking to the media, Badal accused Mann of making a habit of lying and even practising politics of lies.

"Now he will be held to account and will have to appear in court and explain his lies. We will not let him misuse his position as Chief Minister to indulge in slander."

Passenger's social media post exposes IndiGo Airlines seat mishap

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A man recently took to social media to recount his unsettling experience with IndiGo Airlines.

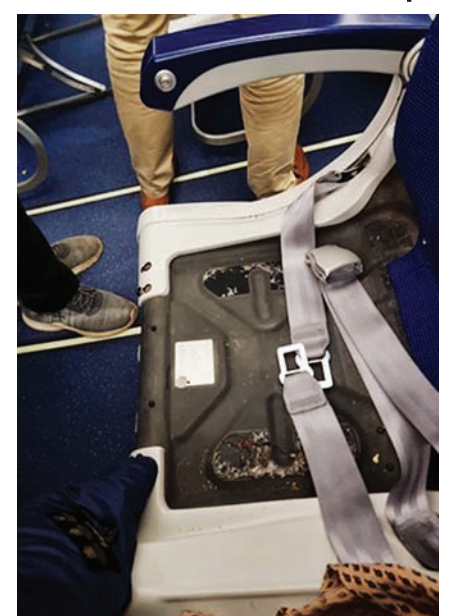
An X (formerly Twitter) user Revs shared a photo of a missing seat cushion during his IndiGo flight.

The incident unfolded amid a one-and-a-half-hour delay, leaving passengers frustrated. Revs revealed that, to the dismay of passengers, they were further delayed as the airline staff scrambled to address the missing seat cushion issue.

The social media post, however, lacked crucial details such as the flight number, route, or seat number, leaving many questions unanswered.

"On an IndiGo flight and the flight doesn't have F****g seats. We are waiting for them to bring in the b****y seats so we can sit. This for a flight that's already 90 minutes delayed. F****g hell," Revs posted on X on Wednesday.

Acknowledging the complaint, IndiGo Airlines responded promptly, expressing regret for the inconvenience caused to the passengers. "Hi, we deeply regret to note this. We request you to kindly share your PNR via



DM so we may look into this further. -Team IndiGo," the airline replied.

Veteran Left leader, former Tripura Minister Keshab Majumder passes away

Agartala | Agencies

Veteran Communist leader and former Tripura minister Keshab Majumder died here on Thursday after a prolonged illness, party and official sources said. He was 88.

His wife had passed away five years ago, and he is survived by a son and a daughter. Majumder, who was Health, Revenue, and Power Minister in the Left Front government (1993-2003), had joined the undivided Communist Party in 1958 and elected to the Tripura Assembly for a record seven times since 1977.

A teacher turned politician, Majumder joined the Communist Party of India-Marxist in 1964 and was a member of the party till his last breath.

Chief Minister Manik Saha, former Chief Minister and Majumder's student Manik Sarkar and other leaders conduced the death. Tripura Assembly members observed two minutes of silence as a mark of respect to the departed leader after Speaker Biswabandhu Sen read the condolence message.



Majumder's last rites were performed on Thursday night at Chhanbon (Udaipur) mass cremation ground in Gomati district with full state honours.

Chandigarh gets award for best safety standards for sanitation workers

Chandigarh | Agencies

Chandigarh on Thursday won the award for the city having the best safety standards for sanitation workers -- 'Safaimitra Surakshit Shehar' in the Swachh Survekshan 2023 Awards given out by the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry.

This recognition not only underscored the city's commitment to creating a safe and clean environment for its residents but also emphasises the welfare and security of the safaimitras in keeping the city clean.

During the award ceremony in New Delhi, city Mayor Anup Gupta, Chandigarh Adviser Nitin Kumar Yadav, Municipal Commissioner Anindita Mitra and Chief Engineer N.P. Sharma had the honour of receiving the award from President Droupadi Murmu.

Mayor Gupta expressed his delight and said, "This award reflects the persistent efforts of the Municipal Corporation and the unwavering sup-



port of the citizens and stakeholders. It is a testament to our commitment to transforming Chandigarh into a clean and sustainable city."

Municipal Commissioner Mitra conveyed her happiness and said, "Chandigarh has made substantial progress in its journey from manhole to machine hole. The city's consistent

efforts led to an impressive 11th rank at the national level in the Swachh Survekshan 2023 Awards. This notable advancement underscores the concerted efforts of the Municipal Corporation and its commitment to improving the city's cleanliness and sanitation standards."

Furthermore, she dedicated the

award and expressed gratitude to all stakeholders, citizens, and safaimitras for their valuable contributions and support in achieving these remarkable milestones. This recognition serves as evidence of the city's ongoing efforts to create a sustainable and clean environment for all its residents.



PRIME MINISTER SHRI MODI'S VISION OF CLEAN INDIA-HEALTHY INDIA IS TRANSFORMING INTO REALITY: CM DR. MOHAN YADAV

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav congratulated Indore for receiving the cleanest city award in the country for the 7th consecutive time, Madhya Pradesh for securing second place in the category of states in Swachh Survekshan 2023 and Amarkantak, famous for its natural beauty, getting the second position in the category of "Fast Moving City (in the category of population less than one lakh)".

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that the state is continuously securing cleanliness under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. The people of the state are proud and joyous as the state secured the second position in the category of states. Eight and a half crore people of Madhya Pradesh, all the residents of Indore, public representatives, employees, all the members of municipal corporations deserve gratitude. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that the resolve of the successful Prime Minister Shri Modi for Clean India-Healthy India is transforming into reality. I am confident that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Modi, the state will continue to contribute in realizing this resolve of cleanliness. It will continue to play an important role in the Prime Minister Shri Modi's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav congratulated former Chief Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, public



representatives, citizens, officers and employees on Budhni getting first position in the category of West Zone (15000 to 25000 population category) and cleanest city with

population less than one lakh in Madhya Pradesh. Congratulations and best wishes have been given. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Madhya Pradesh should always

remain the leading state in the fulfillment of the Prime Minister's resolutions, we all should remain continuously engaged in achieving this goal.

All Hindi textbooks for MBBS course to be available soon: MP DyCM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

All Hindi medium textbooks for MBBS course in Madhya Pradesh would be available soon as the translation from English to Hindi would be completed by the end of this month, Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla told IANS on Thursday.

Shukla, who is the health and medical education minister in Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's cabinet, made this statement after reviewing the progress of Hindi medium MBBS course at Bhopal's Gandhi Medical College (GMC). Notably, MBBS course in Hindi medium -- a first of its kind of pilot project -- was introduced jointly by the Centre and the state government at GMC in 2022.

Bhopal's GMC, the state's biggest medical institution, has a war room named 'Mandhar', which was set up in 2022, and around 100 doctors with different specialities have been working in preparing the Hindi textbooks.

The minister informed that three textbooks for Hindi medium students enrolled in first year have already been translated from English to Hindi and the books have been provided to the students pursuing MBBS in Hindi medium. He claimed around 10 per cent of the MBBS students have opted Hindi medium at GMC.

"Three translated (in Hindi) textbooks -- Biochemistry, Anatomy, and Medical Physiology, as of now are available for first year students. A total of 13 books of 12 subjects would be translated, nine of them have been completed and remaining four subjects would be completed by the end of January," Shukla said after his first review meeting on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the minister also directed the officials and doctors associated with the project



to prepare exams papers in Hindi medium also. "Initiating MBBS courses in Hindi medium is a revolutionary step taken by the Centre government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Also, it's a golden opportunity for Madhya Pradesh to make the project a success," Shukla added.

Notably, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ruled Madhya Pradesh has introduced the MBBS course in Hindi -- a first for any state in the country, claiming the step to be revolutionary and pioneering.

The promotion of Hindi through its wider use has been a programme under the BJP government at the Centre as well as in Madhya Pradesh. The New Education Policy-2020 (NEP-2020) lays emphasis on the use of the mother tongue in imparting education.

The three textbooks -- Biochemistry, Anatomy, and Medical Physiology -- that were translated from English to Hindi by three different writers -- were released in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah on October 16, 2023.

TIGER FOUND DEAD IN BANDHAVGARH RESERVE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The carcass of a young tiger was found in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district on Wednesday, forest officials said.

Prima facie, the tiger was killed in a fight with an adult big cat, an official said, adding that the exact cause of the death will be known after postmortem.

"The carcass of a tiger, aged between 15 to 18 months, was found lying in a trench in the Pator range of BTR on Wednesday morning when forest officials were installing a trap camera. The carcass is about 25 days old," said Forest Ranger Arpit Meral. All body parts of the



deceased tiger are intact but the head bone was found to be broken, he said.

At 785, Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of tigers in the country, followed by Karnataka (563)

and Uttarakhand (560), as per the report 'Status of Tigers: Co-predators & Prey in India-2022' released by the National Tiger Conservation Authority and Wildlife Institute of India last July.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav takes joint meeting of Sanchi and Amul to ensure fair price of milk to dairy farmers

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav took a joint meeting of Sanchi and Amul to ensure procurement of milk from milk producers of Madhya Pradesh and help dairy farmers get the right price for milk. Various possibilities were considered in the meeting that lasted till late night on 10 January in Ahmedabad.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav told to prepare a roadmap for collective participation of milk federations and milk unions of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat regarding milk collection, quality control, processing, marketing, capacity building, training, human resources, welfare schemes focused on dairy farmers to strengthen the interests of milk producers and



the cooperative system.

Minister of State for Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development Shri Lakhan Patel, Managing Director, Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (Amul), Shri Jayen Mehta, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Shri Raghavendra Singh, Principal Secretary Animal Husbandry and Dairy Department Shri Gulshan Bamra, Managing Director M.P. State Co-operative Dairy Federation (Sanchi) Dr. Satish Kumar, President of Panchmahal Milk Union, Shri Jethabhai Bharwad and Shri Mitesh Mehta, Managing Director, Panchmahal Milk Union from Gujarat were present in the meeting. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav was presented a memento on behalf of Amul and Panchmahal Milk Union.

OVER 6,000 KG POPPY STRAW SEIZED IN MADHYA PRADESH

Team Absolute | Bhopal

With a significant rise in seizures of drugs by authorities in the last few years, psychotropic substances such as poppy straw have registered a sharp increase among the seizure of usual drugs of opium and heroin. Over 10,000 kg of poppy straw, which is often smuggled under the cover of cattle feed, has been seized by the Central Bureau of Narcotics over the last one year, with over 6,000 kg of it being seized in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh this week.

Poppy straw - the husk left after extraction of opium from the pods -



has been seized by authorities of the Central Bureau of Narcotics mainly in the states of Rajasthan,

Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. In the latest seizure on Sunday, a vehicle was intercepted on the Udaipur-

Bhilwara highway carrying 120 bags of cattle feed as cover cargo to conceal the poppy straw. "The truck was thoroughly searched at the CBN Office and a total of 267 plastic bags of Poppy Straw weighing 5057.300 kg was recovered. After completion of legal formalities, the recovered Poppy Straw along with cattle feed and trailer were seized and one person was arrested under the relevant provisions of NDPS Act, 1985," a statement said. In another instance, the authorities seized 1131.90 kg poppy straw in 57 plastic bags on Saturday after searching a house in village Dhakdi, Pipaliya Mandi in district Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh.

Madhya Pradesh High Court Allows Rape Survivor To End 8-Week Pregnancy

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has allowed the termination of a teenage rape survivor's pregnancy of more than eight weeks, and directed her father to submit an affidavit stating that they will not refile their accusation during the trial.

The high court passed the order on January 2, in which it allowed the minor survivor's plea seeking termination of her pregnancy.

It directed her father to file an affidavit before Sagar dis-



trict's Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM), mentioning that she was subjected to

rape by the accused and has filed a petition to terminate pregnancy.

OPERATIONAL ISSUES UP PLASTIC POLLUTION IN RURAL AREAS OF MADHYA PRADESH

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Vidisha (Madhya Pradesh), Jan 11 (IANS/ 101 Reporters) In Karimabad village of Vidisha district, Nitesh Yadav (25) is preparing his field to cultivate wheat in the rabi season. What worries him is the increasing amount of plastic in the soil, thanks to the unscientific dumping of garbage from Sironj town and surrounding villages near his farm.

Lack of human resources, improper monitoring, poor financial condition of panchayats and lack of awareness contribute to the burgeoning waste problem.

Lack of human resources, improper monitoring, poor financial condition of panchayats and lack of awareness contribute to the burgeoning waste problem.

"It is very difficult to get rid of these small pieces of polythene from the soil. The generation of plastic and polythene waste, including multilayer and single-use, has been increasing with time due to the rise in consumption of fast-moving consumer goods," he remarks.

Lack of proper plastic waste management also plays a villain by reducing soil fertility. However, panchayats often end up burning huge mounds of waste, thus upping air pollution.

"Chemicals enter our fields when water from the waste heaps flows into our fields and the nearby River Kethan," Nitish says.

According to the Annual Report 2020-21 on Implementation of Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016, from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the total waste generation in Madhya Pradesh is approximately 8,022.5 TPD (tonnes per day), of which 7,235.5 TPD waste is collected, 6,472 TPD is treated and 763.5 TPD is landfilled.

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) dashboard says there are 16,515 waste collection and segregation centres in



Madhya Pradesh. In all, 34,989 villages have solid waste management and 46,545 villages have liquid waste management facilities. Segregation centres that separate solid, wet and dry waste are present in every village panchayat, but they do not work properly. On the other hand, material recovery facilities (MRFs) are present at the district panchayat level only. Here, along with segregation, the waste is recycled. The MRFs receive all types of waste, including domestic

waste. Karan Yadav (21) of Karimabad tells 101Reporters that an MRF was set up near Karimabad under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SMB-G) around three years ago, but it is not yet functional. Established by Sironj Municipality, the MRF is located four km from Sironj town. When contacted by 101Reporters, Sironj Municipality President Manmohan Sahu refused to accept that the MRF was not functional.

However, 101Reporters have learnt during a site visit that the MRF has remained shut. "We have been asking the administration to remove the waste, but we were not heard," says Karimabad sarpanch's representative Ejaz Khan.

An MRF is set up on the recommendation of the municipality or district panchayat near urban or industrial areas, where waste is available in sufficient quantities for the unit to process. The population of the area is also a criterion for setting up the unit.

Flourmill operator Dhanraj Sahu (36) says a similar facility was built under SBM-G in his native Vardha three years ago, but it has not been put to use to date. "All the waste is collected and dumped in the fields or on the village outskirts," he adds.

The problem of management of plastic and polythene waste is evident in the historical pond of Barigarh in Chhatarpur, located around one km away.

"This pond was constructed hundreds of years ago to conserve water. Barigarh Municipal Council is not managing the issue of plastic accumulation in it," says Uttam Ahirwar (44), a resident and local journalist.

Asked about the roadblocks, SBM Deputy Commissioner for Madhya Pradesh Ajit Tiwari tells 101Reporters that the mission has provided for the infrastructural needs of panchayats, yet there were many operational problems at the panchayat level, including lack of human resources, improper monitoring, poor financial condition of panchayats and lack of awareness.

"In the 15th Finance Commission, a provision has been made to spend 30 per cent of the budget of the three-tier panchayat system only on cleanliness. Plastic waste management at rural level is in its initial phase under SBM 2.0. It will take time," he says.



Leadership qualities that we should learn from Mahendra Singh Dhoni

The effectiveness of a leader in a specific field depends on how well they fulfill their responsibilities, with the crucial quality of bringing everyone together. If a leader lacks this quality, their leadership is deemed ineffective, in my opinion.

When thinking of an exemplary leader, Mahendra Singh Dhoni is the first name that comes to mind. Dhoni's remarkable career, beyond his cricketing prowess, serves as an inspiration. As a cricket legend and a distinguished leader, he has made a lasting impact on the game, imparting leadership qualities that extend beyond cricket and are applicable in any field. This is why he is known as Captain Cool.

Listed below are a few key leadership qualities that Dhoni has shown throughout his cricketing journey:

1. Lead by Setting an Example:
Dhoni's leadership is epitomized by leading through personal example. His unwavering dedication, exceptional work ethic, and the ability to excel with calm composure make him an outstanding leader. Dhoni's commitment to continuous improvement and consistent stellar performances serves as a source of inspiration for teammates, encouraging them to deliver their best. Dhoni's actions speak louder than words, establishing him as a role model for aspiring leaders.

2. Make Decisions with Conviction:
Dhoni's decision-making prowess, particularly in challenging situations, is commendable. Whether it's making bold team selections, adjusting the batting order, or executing game-changing moves, Dhoni relies on his instincts and makes decisions with unwavering conviction. This self-assuredness not only earns him respect but also fosters confidence within his team. A proficient leader should instill trust in their judgment and demonstrate the ability to make bold decisions, even in adverse circumstances.

3. Maintain Composure in Adversity:
Dhoni's standout quality is his ability to remain calm and composed under intense pressure. Even in high-stakes situations, he avoids being overwhelmed by the seriousness of the moment, staying focused on his goals, making rational decisions, and impressing everyone with his composure. This attribute not only enables him to deliver his best but also has



calming and positive impact on his team. Dhoni's patience underscores the significance of maintaining composure during challenging times, providing the clarity and poise needed to overcome obstacles.

4. Demonstrate Politeness:
Despite his remarkable achievements, Dhoni has consistently displayed humility and remained down-to-earth. He attributes his success not to himself but to the collective efforts of his team, consistently acknowledging their contributions. Dhoni's humility has cultivated a positive team culture, fostering unity and cooperation. As leaders, it is imperative to embody humility, recognize the strengths and accomplishments of team members, and celebrate

their successes as collective achievements.

5. Adaptability and Innovation:
Dhoni's standout leadership quality lies in his capacity to adapt to evolving circumstances and his proclivity for devising new strategies accordingly. Always on the lookout for innovative approaches, Dhoni fearlessly experiments with new tactics and techniques. His adaptability empowers him to respond effectively to unforeseen challenges and seize opportunities. In today's fast-paced world, leaders must embrace change, promote a culture of innovation, and inspire their teams to think beyond conventional boundaries.

6. Effective Communication:
Effective communication is a cornerstone of

Dhoni's leadership style. His remarkable ability to articulate ideas clearly and concisely ensures that each team member comprehends their role and responsibilities. Dhoni's transparent and impactful communication significantly boosts team confidence, eliminates ambiguity, and enhances team coordination for the seamless execution of plans. Leaders should strive to cultivate strong communication skills to foster an environment where ideas flow freely, and collaboration is actively encouraged.

7. Ability to Listen:
Dhoni's leadership is distinguished by his remarkable ability to attentively listen to his team members. He consistently values their opinions,

welcomes feedback, and makes decisions with consideration for different viewpoints. His active listening not only fosters camaraderie among colleagues but also facilitates informed decision-making. An effective leader must cultivate the art of active listening, fostering an inclusive environment that encourages diverse perspectives and promotes collective growth.

8. Inspire Others:
Dhoni possesses a unique ability to inspire and motivate his team members. With a skilful touch, he instills belief in the team's capabilities, encouraging them to overcome challenges through meaningful examples. Dhoni dedicates effort to nurture individual talents, creating an atmosphere where individuals can thrive and excel. As leaders, it is essential to consistently motivate our teams, providing the necessary guidance and encouragement to propel them forward.

9. Collaborative Teamwork:
Dhoni places a strong emphasis on the power of teamwork, prioritizing collective success over individual achievements. Recognizing the significance of each team member's contribution, Dhoni fosters an environment of trust, empowerment, and shared responsibility. This approach allows his team members to showcase their unique strengths. Leaders, by prioritizing collaboration over competition, can unlock the collective potential of their teams and cultivate an atmosphere that encourages innovation and growth.

10. Be a Role Model:
Dhoni's leadership is characterized by his exemplary role-model behavior. He stands shoulder to shoulder with his team members, setting high standards for discipline and dedication. Dhoni's unwavering commitment to self-improvement and his ability to confront adversity draw him closer to teammates and fans alike. As leaders, it is crucial to recognize the profound impact our actions have on others. By striving to be the best version of ourselves, leading by example, and inspiring those around us, we can create a positive influence within our teams and beyond.

international

213 DEAD, 52 MISSING IN JAPAN'S QUAKE-HIT ISHIKAWA PREFECTURE

Tokyo | Agencies

The death toll from the devastating 7.6-magnitude earthquake that struck Japan's Ishikawa prefecture on January 1, increased to 213 on Thursday, with 52 people remaining unaccounted for, according to authorities.

As of Thursday morning, the number of injured people stood at 567, Xinhua news agency quoted Japanese public broadcaster NHK as saying.

In a breakdown of the death toll, 98 had been confirmed in Suzu, 83 in Wajima, 20 in Anamizu, five in Nanao, four in Noto, two in Shika and one in Hakui.

The prefectural government also confirmed eight disaster-



related deaths, meaning that the victims survived the quakes but died due to deteriorating injuries or illnesses caused by physical and mental strain in the aftermath of the disaster.

secondary hazards such as landslides, prompting the prefectural authorities to issue warnings.

As per the prefectural authorities, over 26,000 people are taking shelter in evacuation centres, amid surging spreading risks of infectious diseases such as Covid-19 and influenza.

Approximately 3,100 individuals, meanwhile, remain isolated due to road disruptions.

The January 1 temblor, officially named 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake, is the first to kill more than 100 people in the country since the 2016 Kumamoto tremors in Japan's southwestern region, which claimed 276 lives.

POWERFUL EARTHQUAKE JOLTS AFGHANISTAN, TREMORS FELT IN NORTH INDIA

Kabul: A powerful earthquake measuring 6.0 on the Richter scale jolted the Hindu Kush region of Afghanistan on Thursday, with tremors felt in parts of north India and Pakistan. According to the GFZ German Research Centre for Geoscience, the quake's epicentre was at a depth of 192.1 km, was initially determined to be at 36.52 degrees north latitude and 70.71 degrees east longitude, reports Xinhua news agency.

There were no immediate reports of any casualties or damages.

The US Geological Survey (USGS) said the quake's magnitude was 6.4 while its epicentre was 44km south-southeast of Jurm, Afghanistan.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), tremors were felt in Islamabad, Lahore and its surrounding areas, and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, reports Dawn news.

SKOREA AIMS TO LAUNCH FULL-FLEDGED SPACE AGENCY IN MAY

Seoul: South Korea's science ministry on Thursday said it aims to launch a full-fledged space agency in May, with the nation seeking to join the ranks of advanced nations of spaceflight. The planned launch of the Korea Aerospace Administration (KASA), which came as the National Assembly passed a set of Bills this week, was one of President Yoon Suk Yeol's campaign promises, Yonhap news agency reported. In line with the planned launch of KASA, the Ministry of Science and ICT said it set an ambitious target of capturing 10 per cent of the global spaceflight market in 2045. Science Minister Lee Jong-ho told reporters that KASA is expected to help South Korea "find a new growth engine by facilitating the aerospace industry."

Russian rockets strike hotel in Ukraine's 2nd largest city, 10 people injured

Kiev | Agencies

Two Russian rockets hit a hotel in the second largest Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, partially damaging the structure, while also injuring 10 people, the country's State Emergency Service (SES) said on Thursday.

In a social post, the SES said the attack occurred at about 10.30 p.m. on Wednesday and the rockets targeted the central part of the city, located just 30 km from the Russian border.

It also said that SES Units, the National Police and emergency medical services were immediately dispatched to the scene. The teams found damage to the three-storey hotel building, as well as cars parked nearby. "The area of the fire was about 20 square meters. Eight people were evacuated from the build-



ing," the SES said in the post. According to preliminary data, 10 people were injured, including hotel staff, guests and a foreign journalist.

Photos put out by the SES showed the hotel heavily damaged and firefighters at the scene. According to Kharkiv Governor Oleh Synehubov, the attack was carried out by S-300 rockets, reports the BBC. The city's mayor, Ihor Terekhov claimed that "there were no military at all" in the hotel at the time of the attack, but 30 civilians were present. Tuesday's attack comes as Russia has stepped up air strikes on Ukrainian cities in the past two weeks. Kharkiv has suffered extensive damage from Russian air strikes since Moscow waged its war against Ukraine in February 2022.

Meta faces new EU complaint over 'pay for privacy' consent

London | Agencies

Privacy rights advocacy group noyb on Thursday filed a new complaint against Meta, alleging that the social media platform unlawfully ignores the users' right to easily withdraw consent and asks them to pay.

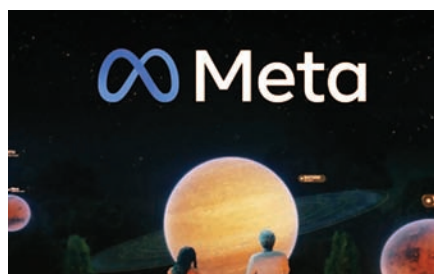
Since the beginning of November, Instagram and Facebook users who don't want to be tracked have to pay a "privacy fee" of up to 251.88 euros per year.

The new complaint, filed with the Austrian data protection authority, alleged that Meta is breaching EU law by framing a choice that makes it very difficult for users to withdraw consent to its tracking ads than to agree.

While one (free) click is enough to consent to being tracked, users can only withdraw their consent by going through the complicated process of switching to a paid subscription.

"This is illegal, as the GDPR clearly states that withdrawing your consent must be 'as easy as' giving it," noyb said in its complaint.

In the complaint, noyb said that the Austrian authority should order Meta to bring its processing operations in compliance with European data protection law and to provide users with an easy way to withdraw their consent -- without having to pay a fee. In addition, the privacy rights group suggested that the authorities should impose a fine to prevent further violations of the GDPR. It has been six



months since the European Court of Justice (CJEU) ruled that Meta's handling of user data was illegal. "Yet the social media giant has launched its third attempt to circumvent European privacy laws. Instead of asking users for their consent, Meta is now charging people for choosing a privacy-friendly setting," the complaint said.

The European Data Protection Board (EDPB) mentions monetary costs as an example of a burden that is incompatible with the principle of Article 7 GDPR in its guidelines, making it clear that Meta is making the withdrawal of consent not nearly as easy as to give consent. "The law is clear, withdrawing consent must be as easy as giving it in the first place. It is painfully obvious that paying 251.88 euros per year to withdraw consent is not as easy as clicking an 'Okay' button to accept the tracking," said Massimiliano Gelmi, data protection lawyer at noyb.

UK Post Office scandal: Indian-origin postmaster says Kate Middleton stood by him

London | Agencies

An elderly former postmaster of Indian-origin has revealed that Princess Kate and the Middleton family stood by him when he was accused of stealing 16,000 pounds in the Post Office accounting scandal. Hasmukh Shingadia, 63, served the Middleton family at the Spar (convenience store) and Post Office in Upper Bucklebury, Berkshire, where Kate and her sister Pippa grew up. He got suspended in 2010 over a scandal in which hundreds of post office managers across the UK were wrongly accused of theft and fraud because of a software glitch. According to The Sun, Shingadia would serve sweets to the princess, her sister and even Prince William during the early years of the royal romance.

A grandfather now, Shingadia said Princess Kate, who celebrated her 42nd birthday on January 9, and her family continued to fre-



quent his Spar and Post Office even after his conviction. "Not everybody did that, and some locals shunned me," he said, talking about the hard times. He was even invited to the royal wedding in 2011 along with his wife, Chandrika. "It meant so much to us. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity which they gave me despite the charges," he told The Sun. "For them to have done that for us, it was tremendous. I've known them more than 25 years, and they have

always been such kind and welcoming people," he said.

After his name was cleared at the Court of Appeal in 2021, Michael Middleton (Kate's father) was overjoyed and said, "well done".

"I am really grateful to the wider family for standing by me. They are really good people," he was quoted as saying by The Sun. The Duchess of Cambridge celebrated her 42nd birthday on January 9.

Months after the royal wedding, he was handed an eight-month suspended sen-

ence at Oxford crown court, ordered to pay more than GBP 2,000 in costs and do 200 hours' community service. "It was horrible, not only for me, but my family as well. We all went through hell. I had suicidal thoughts. I'm still dealing with the fallout emotionally and mentally," he told The Sun.

Shingadia is now urging Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to exonerate all 736 sub-postmasters convicted from 2000-2015. On Monday, convictions of 12 people, who were convicted based on evidence from the faulty IT system used by the Post Office from 2000, were overturned.

Sunak has confirmed a new law would be introduced so people wrongly convicted in the scandal are "swiftly exonerated and compensated". A public inquiry is also underway, and recently London's Metropolitan Police also opened a new investigation into the Post Office over potential fraud offences.



PM MODI TO INAUGURATE INDIA'S LONGEST SEA BRIDGE TOMORROW

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Maharashtra on Friday where he will hold a series of events, including the inauguration of the 21.8-km Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), which will connect Sewri in South Mumbai to Chirle near Navi Mumbai.

The Mumbai Trans Harbour link (MTHL), now named as 'Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewari - Nhava Sheva Atal Setu' is the longest bridge constructed in India. The foundation stone of the bridge was also laid by the Prime Minister Modi in December, 2016.

The PMO said that 'Atal Setu' has been constructed at a total cost of more than Rs 17,840 crore, is about 21.8 km long 6-lane bridge having about 16.5 km length over sea and about 5.5 km on the land.

It will provide faster connectivity to Mumbai International Airport and Navi Mumbai International Airport and will also reduce the travel time from Mumbai to Pune, Goa and South India. It will also improve connectivity between Mumbai Port and Jawaharlal Nehru Port, officials added. The PM will also inaugurate, dedicate to the



nation and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth more than Rs 12,700 crore in the public programme in Navi Mumbai.

The Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone of the underground road tunnel connecting Eastern Freeway's Orange Gate to Marine Drive. The 9.2 km tunnel will be built at a cost of more than Rs 8,700 crore and will be a significant infrastructure development in Mumbai which will reduce travel time between Orange Gate and Marine Drive, officials added. The Prime Minister will dedi-

cate Phase 1 of the Surya regional bulk drinking water project to the Nation. The project, developed at a cost of more than Rs 1,975 crore will provide drinking water supply to the Palghar and Thane district of Maharashtra, benefiting about 14 lakh population, officials added. During the programme, the Prime Minister will dedicate about Rs 2,000 crore railway projects to the Nation. These include the dedication of 'Phase 2 of Uran-Kharakopar railway line' which will enhance connectivity to Navi Mumbai as suburban services running

between Nerul/Belapur to Kharakopar will now be extended to Uran.

Other rail projects that will be dedicated to the Nation include a new suburban station 'Digha Gaon' on the Thane-Vashi/Panvel Trans-harbour line and the new 6th Line between Khar Road & Goregaon railway station. The projects will benefit the thousands of daily commuters in Mumbai. According to the PMO, the Prime Minister will inaugurate 'Bharat Ratnam' (Mega Common Facilitation Centre) for Gems and Jewellery sector at Santacruz Electronic Export Processing Zone- Special Economic Zone (SEEPZ SEZ). It is first of its kind in India with the best available machines in the world, including 3D Metal printing. This will house a training school for skilling of workforce for this sector, including specially-abled students. The Mega CFC will transform the export sector in Gems and Jewellery trade and will help the domestic manufacturing also. Prime Minister Modi will also inaugurate the New Enterprises and Services Tower (NEST)- 01 at SEEPZ- SEZ. The NEST - 01 is primarily for Gem and Jewellery sector units which will be relocated from existing Standard Design Factory - I.

Verdict not aimed at pleasing any party or person: Rahul Narwekar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra State Legislative Assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar on Wednesday said the verdict on the cross petition seeking disqualification of members by both Shiv Sena (Shinde) and Shiv Sena (UBT) was issued after carefully studying each and every aspect. The order is sustainable where all legal and legislative factors have been adequately considered.

Speaking to the press on the issue, after issuing the verdict in Vidarbha Bhavan, he said, "I would like to make it clear that the order was not spelled to please any party or person. It was done purely on merit."

The Supreme Court had issued certain guidelines and aspects for consideration, he said, and only after consulting both sides and MLAs from both factions was the order issued. The free fair verdict will restore people's faith in democratic and legislative system, he said. When his attention was drawn to criticism from



Uddhav Thackeray who described it as "murder of democracy", Narwekar said, "I would urge people to go through the order carefully and not make baseless statements." My verdict was not to please anybody, nor was it politically driven, he asserted. Responding to Sena (UBT) decision to appeal against the order in Supreme Court, he said, "Every citizen has the right to approach the Supreme Court against any order, and so can they (Sena UBT)."

"Firstly, I want to know what is erroneous in my order. Instead of making

baseless charges I should know what the lacunae are. Moreover, just because somebody is appealing in the Supreme Court does not mean the order is wrong," he said.

While justifying his decision to uphold qualifications of members representing both Senas, Shinde and Uddhav factions, Narwekar said, "Bharat Gogawale who was the chief whip of Sena Shinde faction did not follow proper procedure while issuing whip against the other faction members. Therefore, the order does not disqualify the Sena (UBT) MLAs.

SC extends interim bail to ex-Maha Minister Nawab Malik for six months

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday extended for six months the interim medical bail of former Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik in an alleged money laundering case.

A bench of Justices Bela M. Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal ordered that the temporary bail granted to Malik on medical grounds be extended for six months.

In a brief hearing, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S.V. Raju, appearing for Enforcement Directorate, said that the anti-money laundering agency has no objection if Malik's interim bail is extended by the apex court.

"Interim bail is extended for a further period of six months as prayed for. List the main matter after six months," the apex court ordered.

Previously, the top court



had extended the interim relief for three months noting that Malik is still suffering from chronic kidney ailments and his medical condition has not improved.

Malik was ordered to be temporarily released on bail by the Supreme Court in August last year solely on medical grounds for a term of two months on such terms

and conditions as may be determined by the trial court.

The ED had arrested the senior political leader of the state in February 2022 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in a money-laundering case arising out of an alleged undervalued property deal with underworld links..

Mumbai cops nab double murder accused after 1200 km, 12-day hunt across states

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After a hot pursuit lasting 12 days and 1200 kms across multiple states, the Mumbai Police finally caught a killer who was on the run after clobbering to death his wife and brother, an official said here on Thursday.

The accused, Drayson M. D'Sa, 40, had a huge quarrel at home and allegedly killed his wife Chitra, 35, and older brother Damian M. D'Sa at their home in Malad west late on December 29, before fleeing from there.

According to a complaint by his sister-in-law, Bindu Damian D'Sa -- who had gone to office at the time -- Drayson had pounded his wife Chitra and brother Damian with a china clay flower pot and also stabbed them with some sharp objects.

While Chitra died immediately, Damian lapsed into a coma due to the trauma injuries and died after five days (January 2) in a private hospital.



The purported motive is said to be an old property dispute between the two brothers and their wives, which claimed the lives of two, an official said. Based on the complaint by Bindu, the Bangur Nagar Link Road Police Station lodged an FIR of double murder and started the probe as

the killer had gone incommunicado. In a smart tactic to stay off the police radar, Drayson did not carry his mobile phone or use any electronic gadgets or bank cards, making it extremely difficult for the police teams to track or trace him. Nevertheless, the police teams

took into account all aspects, especially the possible modes of travel when he was on the run, and started scanning CCTV footage of the vicinity.

From a single grab on CCTV, the police launched a veritable man-hunt, painstakingly scanning the CCTV footage on the 'escape route' of Drayson, spanning Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka and finally zeroing in on him in Kolkata, West Bengal, as he was reportedly prepared to cross the borders to either Bangladesh or Nepal.

On Wednesday (January 10), with the help of Kolkata Police's Special Task Force, Drayson was picked up from a hotel room and later arrested. He is being brought to Mumbai to face the laws, said an official.

Top police officials, including Rajeev Jain, Ajaykumar Bansal, Renuka Bagde, Pramod Tawade, Bhaskar Kadam and their teams, successfully executed the difficult task after tracking the absconder for 12 days over 1200 kms through multiple states.

Speaker Rahul Narwekar's verdict not a surprise, our sympathies lie with Uddhav: Prakash Ambedkar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A day after Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar declared that the Shiv Sena faction led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde was "the real political party", Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) president Prakash Ambedkar said on Thursday that the verdict was "on expected lines" and did not come as a surprise.

The VBA and the Shiv Sena (UBT) are alliance partners. "The Speaker had limitations. The Election Commission of India (ECI) had already allotted the party title and the bow and arrow symbol to the Shiv Sena led by Shinde. Even the Supreme Court (SC) had in the past said it could not reinstate the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi



government as the decision to resign as CM was taken voluntarily by Thackeray without facing the floor test," Ambedkar, who is a lawyer, said. Considering the ECI and SC

orders of the past, the only factor the Speaker was left with was disqualification petitions filed by both factions of Shiv Sena, Ambedkar argued. "Therefore, the Speaker's

role and scope was limited to the disqualification aspects. He neither disqualified MLAs from Shinde Sena nor Shiv Sena (UBT)," Ambedkar said, adding that Narwekar's decision was based on the same arguments cited by ECI while awarding the party name and symbol to the Shiv Sena led by Shinde. However, he admitted the order was a setback to Thackeray. "Our sympathy is with Uddhav Thackeray and his party. We are confident we will together take the fight against the BJP to the people in the Lok Sabha polls," he added. In November 2022, Ambedkar and Thackeray decided to join hands and fight against the BJP. However, the VBA is not a part of the Opposition INDIA alliance or the Maha Vikas Aghadi coalition.

'Will not be cowed down... will fight it legally', says Marathi news channel Lokshahi editor on suspension

Team Absolute | Mumbai

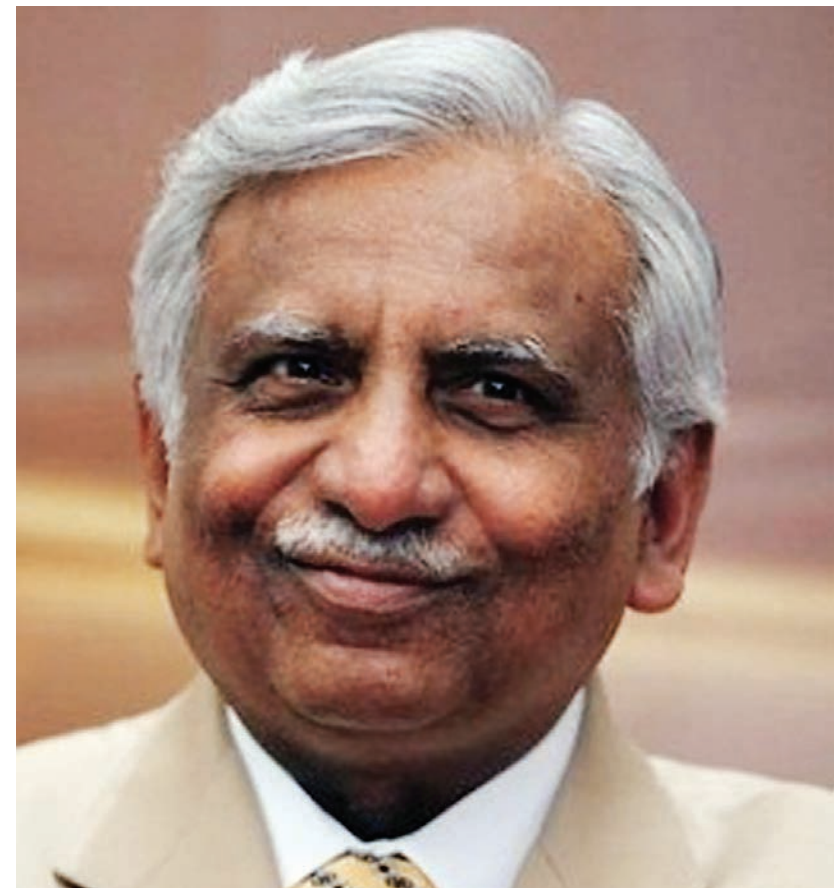
With popular Marathi news channel Lokshahi going off air after the Union Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry initiated action against it for the second time in six months, editor-in-chief of the channel Kamlesh Sutar said that they will fight the suspension "legally".

The channel was taken off air on Tuesday for 30 days after it reportedly failed to submit certain documents regarding its operations.

"We received the order at around 5.30 pm on Tuesday

and by 6 pm, the channel had gone off air. The I&B Ministry has suspended our licence. We are going to fight it legally... This is the first instance in history where a channel has been asked to shut down for 30 days. We will not be cowed down," Kamlesh Sutar, editor-in-chief of the channel, told

In July 2023, Lokshahi was taken off air soon after it broke a story on an alleged "sex video" of BJP leader Kirit Somaia. This time though, the I&B Ministry has shut the channel down citing non-submission of certain documents relating to the company.



Jet Airways founder Naresh Goyal to meet critical wife at home on Saturday

► DAYS AFTER JET AIRWAYS FOUNDER NARESH GOYAL HIGHLIGHTED HIS PLIGHT WITH TEARS, A MUMBAI SPECIAL COURT ALLOWED HIM TO CONSULT HIS PRIVATE MEDICAL DOCTORS AND ALSO GO HOME TO VISIT HIS WIFE SUFFERING FROM THE FINAL STAGE OF CANCER, CITING HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS, ON JANUARY 13.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Special Judge M.G. Deshpande on Tuesday permitted the ill Goyal, 75, to consult his private doctors for three days from Wednesday and also go to meet his spouse Anita -- the couple is wedded for over 36 years.

On January 6, a trembling Goyal narrated his predicament in jail, multiple health issues of self, wife and daughter, and pleaded that he wanted to die in jail, as the treatment in the government-run Sir JJ Hospital was too tedious, hectic, troublesome, and unbearable for his precarious physical condition.

The Special Judge overruled the objections of the Enforcement Directorate -- which nabbed him on September 1, 2023 in an alleged

money-laundering case arising out of a Canara Bank loan of Rs 538 crore -- citing humanitarian aspects, and said that Goyal would be escorted by police security.

Goyal had said that "he had lost every hope of life and better he should die rather than keep him alive in such a situation and he had no hope for any future" as his legal team moved a plea for access to medical specialists to treat his ailments.

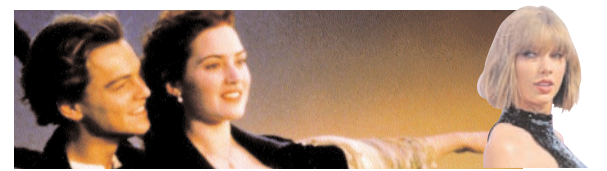
The once high-flying Jet Airways founder and top aviation honcho also said that his wife Anita was battling the final stages of cancer, and their sole daughter was also suffering from health issues and couldn't look after her mom.

Special Judge Deshpande took a benign view and assured Goyal of medical help and also considered the genuineness of his submissions from

the Arthur Road Central Jail where he is lodged.

"In the background of his natural, genuine submission and the limitation inside Arthur Road Jail to meet his health issues and assisting him every time, no prejudice will be caused if he is permitted to attend his private doctors and get himself examined, diagnosed properly and correctly and fixing the schedule of treatment by his private doctor," the Special Judge said.

To the ED's objections, the Special Court said that in view of the exceptional situation, it felt that empathy warrants to consider the accused' prayers to meet the end of justice on humanitarian grounds, allowing five specialist doctors to meet Goyal, but said they must take the Special Court's prior permission before admitting him to a hospital.



Kendall Jenner, Hailey Bieber pulled over by cops after 'running' stop sign

Los Angeles | Agencies

Reality television star Kendall Jenner and Hailey Bieber were pulled over by police for allegedly running a stop sign. The pair were driving in Beverly Hills close to the Beverly Hills Hotel with Kendall behind the steering wheel of her silver Mercedes-Benz G500 Cabriolet, when a police officer pulled them over, reports.

The celebrity friends, who have just returned from a beach holiday together, were pictured laughing and smiling at the police officer and afterwards.

As per Mirror.co.uk, the 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star wore oversized black sunglasses and a matching sweatshirt as she giggled with model bestie Hailey, who wore a white sweatshirt and sunglasses.

An inside source told TMZ that Kendall received a ticket for the incident from the officer before they were able to drive off and continue their day. This isn't the first time the two have been stopped by police officers together, as they were previously pulled over in a 2014 episode of 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' after going Christmas tree shopping together.

The incident comes after earlier this month Kendall was seen enjoying herself on a beach holiday to kick off 2024, with rumours growing that she's reunited with her ex Bad Bunny.

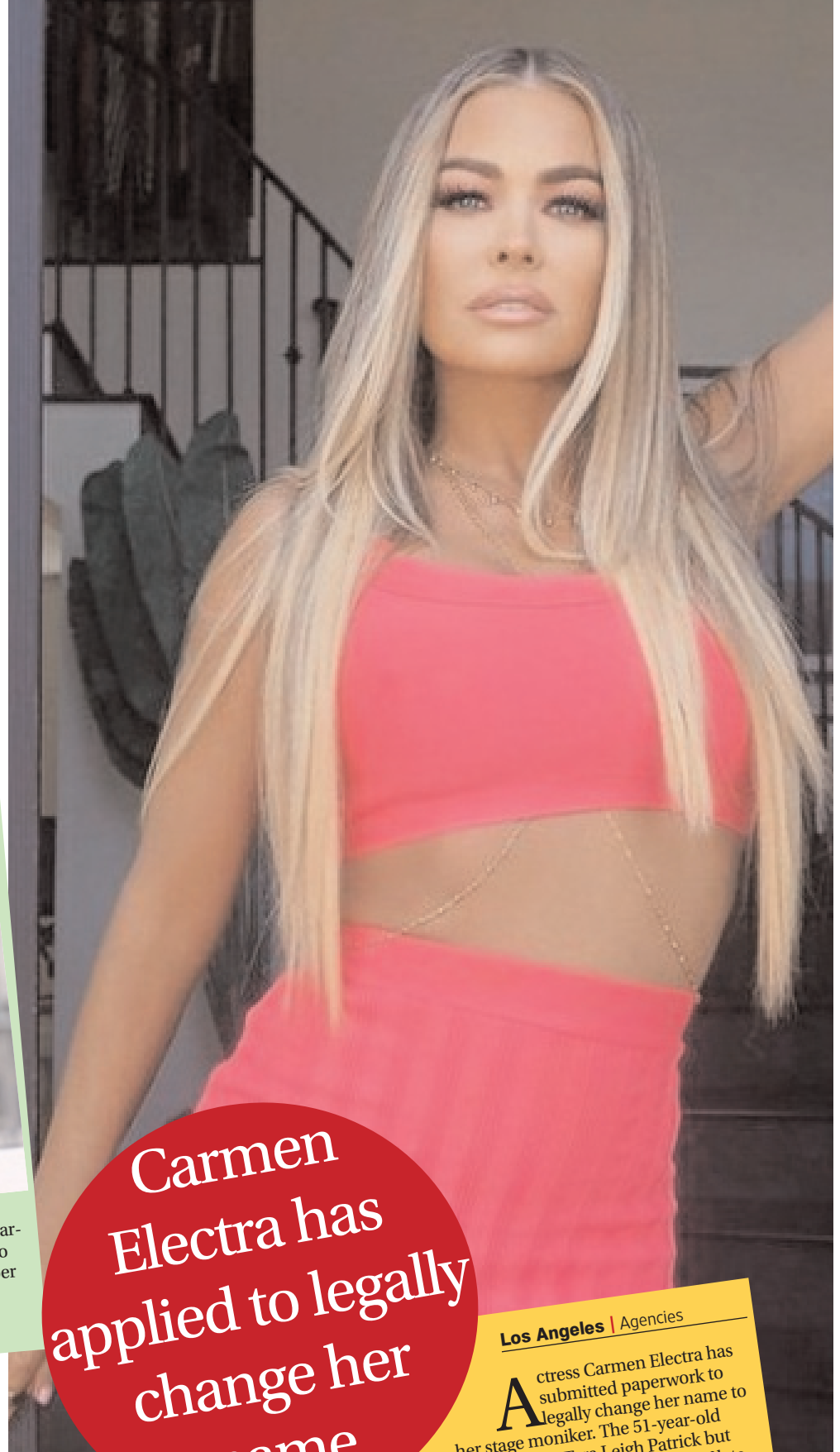


Jason Momoa says 'I live on the road' following Lisa Bonet divorce

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Jason Momoa revealed he is living on the road following his divorce from Lisa Bonet.

"I don't even have a home right now. I live on the road," Momoa told Entertainment Tonight Wednesday. The actor explained he's been working on the docuseries "On the Road," which follows his encounters with artisans, musicians and athletes as he travels across the US, reports pagesix.com. "I'm always in these weird places," he said, adding that fans are starstruck when they see him popping up in small towns. "It happens all the time. They're like, 'What the hell are you doing in our hometown?'" he continued. "I love the idea of just being with everyday people and doing my craft, which is filming, and then showing them. And so, I think through doing that for so long, I got to be curious about it." The new project premieres January 18 on Max. Meanwhile, the 'Fast X' star, 44, revealed his nomad lifestyle will continue for the foreseeable future as he next heads to New Zealand to film 'Minecraft'. Momoa settled his divorce with Bonet Monday shortly after she filed the legal papers. Documents obtained by Page Six stated that the 'Dune' actor and the 'Cosby Show' alum, 56, had reached an agreement about their marital rights and shared property. As per the filing, Bonet requested joint physical and legal custody of their two children: Lola, 16, and Nakoia-Wolf, 15. The former couple's divorce was listed as "uncontested," meaning neither intends to fight in court. Momoa and Bonet were separated for two years before the actress decided to make their split official. "We share our Family news that we are parting ways in marriage," they announced in a joint statement on Instagram in January 2022. "We share this not because we think it's newsworthy but so that as we go about our lives we may do so with dignity and honesty." The now-exes started dating in 2005 before getting hitched in a secret ceremony in October 2017. Bonet was previously married to Lenny Kravitz with whom she shares daughter Zoe Kravitz from 1987 to 1993. Momoa was most recently romantically linked to Eiza González when they were spotted riding a motorcycle together through Malibu, California, in July 2022.



Carmen Electra has applied to legally change her name

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Carmen Electra has submitted paperwork to legally change her name to her stage moniker. The 51-year-old actress was born Tara Leigh Patrick but adopted her stage name on the advice of late singer Prince and she's now taking legal steps to keep the moniker she is familiar to millions as. According to RadarOnline.com, the 'Baywatch' star filed legal documents applying to have the name used on her government documents and all other important paperwork on 29 December, 2023, reports femalefirst.co.uk. Carmen previous how she first met the 'Purple Rain' singer when she auditioned for a female group he was putting together, and though she wasn't chosen, she was stunned to receive a phone call afterwards, in which Prince offered to give her a song she'd written - but urged her to change her name. She told OWN: "I received a call from Prince saying I think you should be your own artist and not back up anyone else. I'm going to write you a song and if you like it, you can record it." The name of the song was 'Carmen on Top.' My name is Tara, so I was confused. I loved the song, I loved it, but he said, 'You're not a Tara. You're not Tara. You're Carmen.' The 'Scary Movie' star was happy to give up "control" to her mentor.



Selena Gomez announces break from Social Media post Golden Globes 2024 drama

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-actress Selena Gomez is taking a break from social media to focus on "what really matters." The 31-year-old singer has announced that she's stepping back from social media, after she was recently accused of gossiping about Kylie Jenner and Timothee Chalame's romance at the 2024 Golden Globes. She wrote on her Instagram Story: "I'm off social for a while. I'm focusing on what really matters."

During the awards ceremony, Gomez was seen chatting to Taylor Swift and actress Keleigh Sperry, and fans subsequently speculated that they were talking about Kylie and Timothee's high-profile romance. But Selena has already rubbished that idea, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Responding to the speculation, Gomez, who has a huge social media following, recently wrote on Instagram: "Noooooo I told Taylor about two of my friends who hooked up. Not that that's anyone business. (sic)," reports aceshowbiz.com.

Meanwhile, Selena started dating Benny Blanco in 2023, and she is said to be "super happy" with the record producer.

Matthew Perry was reportedly abusive to women including ex-fiancee Molly Hurwitz

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Matthew Perry was reportedly abusive to several women before his death, including his ex-fiancee, Molly Hurwitz.

According to a new report, the 'Friends' alum "hurled table" at his ex and "threw live-in sober companion against wall."

Bringing up the claim was The Daily Mail.

Sources close to the late actor told the outlet that he "threw a coffee table" at Molly in 2021 after she questioned him about cheating, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Perry and Hurwitz started dating in 2018 and got engaged in November 2020. However, they reportedly called it off amid rumours that he was reportedly flirting with then-19-year-old Kate Haralson on the dating app Raya.

The sources begged to differ, telling the publication that Hurwitz actually broke up with Perry in February 2021 after having a "huge fight" on Valentine's Day. The exes were arguing after she found out that he purchased a romantic gift for

someone else he also met on Raya.

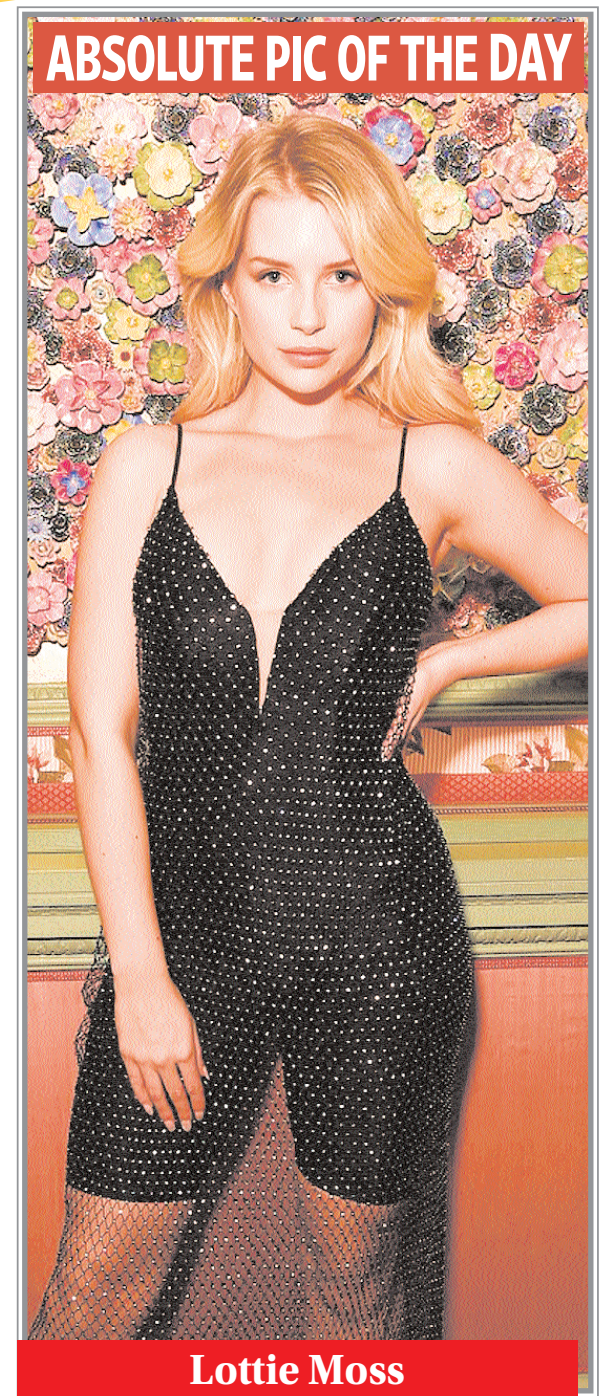
"He threw a coffee table at her and told her that she was crazy," the source claimed to the outlet. "He hated that she dumped him and he had terrible abandonment issues."

The Daily Mail also reported that Perry allegedly pushed his live-in sober companion, Morgan Moses, into a wall and "threw her onto a bed" in March 2022 during an alleged "meltdown."

Morgan subsequently quit her job as his sober companion following the incident and ended all contact with Matthew a year before his memoir 'Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing' was released in November 2022.

"Morgan was no longer working with Matthew. He had a horrible breakdown and in the heat of the moment he could not control his emotions," the source shared.

"He had a fear that he was going to be abandoned. He shoved Morgan into a wall and threw her onto a bed. She left... The man those close to him knew and the man that the world saw were two very different people."



Lottie Moss



IND V AFG: SHIVAM DUBEY ALL-ROUND PERFORMANCE HELPS INDIA WIN OPENING T20I

Mohali | Agencies

In a dazzling display of cricket prowess, India kickstarted their T20 World Cup preparations with a resounding six-wicket win over Afghanistan in the first T20I of the three-match series.

Celebrating coach Rahul Dravid's 51st birthday, India, under the captaincy of Rohit Sharma, triumphed where all-rounder Shivam Dube stole the spotlight. Dube's stellar performance showcased his versatility, making a strong case as Hardik Pandya's backup.

With the ball, he scalped a crucial wicket, dismissing Afghanistan's captain Ibrahim Zadran with finesse. But it was with the bat that Dube truly shone, anchoring the innings with a career-best 60 runs, guiding India to victory with 15 balls to spare.

Jitesh Sharma, known for his explosive finishes in the IPL, entered the fray early in the ninth over and contributed impressive 31 off 20 balls.

Axar Patel, stepping into the absence of Ravindra Jadeja, played a pivotal role with his darting deliveries, finishing with figures of 4-0-23-2.

In a strategic move, Kuldeep Yadav was rested, giving Washington Sundar an opportunity. Washington's economical spells in chilly conditions, showcased his versatility in different phases of the innings.

As the contest unfolded, Rohit Sharma's decision to stick with Washington in the penultimate over proved crucial, despite a challenging grip for spin-



ners. Washington's steady performance, coupled with a missed chance for a tough return catch, added to the drama of a tightly contested match.

Rohit Sharma's return as captain after a 14-month hiatus was marked by a mix-up with Shubman Gill, resulting in his run-out. However, the team's overall dominance and the successful chase of a modest 159-run target brought smiles to the Indian camp.

With the T20 World Cup looming in less than six months, India seized the opportunity to test their young talents. Players like Axar Patel, who claimed 2 wickets for 23 runs, and Jitesh Sharma, delivering a fine cameo, showcased their mettle, contributing to India's triumph and taking a 1-0 lead in the 3-match series.

Rohit Sharma etched his name in history, becoming the first men's player to achieve 100 T20I wins, joining an elite group alongside England's Dani Wyatt and Australia's Alyssa Healy and Ellyse Perry.

Brief scores:

Afghanistan 158/5 in 20 overs (Mohammad Nabi 42, Azmatullah Omarzai 29, Ibrahim Zadran 25; Axar Patel 2-23, Mukesh Kumar 2-33) lost to India 159/4 in 17.3 overs (Shivam Dube 60*, Jitesh Sharma 31, Tilak Varma 26; Mujeeb Ur Rahman 2-22, Azmatullah Omarzai 1-31) by six wickets

Mandya Open: Madhwin, Siddharth and Karan qualify for the quarters

Mandya | Agencies

As many as three Indians entered the quarterfinals of Men's singles in the ITF Mandya Open in contrasting styles at the PET Stadium here on Thursday.

Qualifier Madhwin Kamath advanced to the last eight by overcoming an effervescent Yuseok Jang of Korea who had to pull out after suffering a hamstring pull. The Korean who had felled 8th seed SD Prajwal in the first round, was trailing 2-3 in the final set after both the players had won a set each. Siddharth Vishwakarma overcame a fighting Manish Sureshkumar in a tough encounter 7-5, 6-4. Earlier, Manish had created the biggest flutter of the tournament thus far when he had shown second seed Giles Hussey of Great Britain the door with a 6-7 (4), 6-1, 6-1 victory in a first round match which was postponed overnight due to bad light.

Karan Singh became the third Indian to qualify after defeating country mate Ishaque Eqbal 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 to set up a clash with the top seed Kris Van Wyk of South Africa, who quashed the hopes of local favourite Manish Ganesh in straight sets 6-0, 6-4.



India's top ranked and fourth seeded Sasikumar Mukund, squandered away a few chances before bowing out of the event with a 6-2, 6-7 (3), 3-6 loss to Netherland's Jelle Sels.

Madhwin who had played two tough qualifying rounds to make to the main draw had won against Grigoriy Lomakin of Kazakhstan in his opening round. Today, the 22-year-old who has his roots from Karnataka, Madhwin lost his serve in the very first game which eventually cost him the first set.

The lad from Ahmedabad, broke Jang's serve in the second game itself and went 3-0 up after holding his own serve. Madhwin played with renewed confidence as he moved on the court swiftly

and came up with some good cross court winners.

However, the 20-year-old Korean was quick to restore parity after breaking his rival's serve in the 5th game after a long battle and even went 5-4 up after one more break in the 9th game.

However, Madhwin won three games in a row with two breaks in the 10th and 12th game to take the second set 7-5. In the decider, the Indian was leading 3-2 after both the players had held their respective serves when Jang pulled his hamstring and could not carry on.

Meanwhile, only one quarterfinal match could be completed in the doubles while three other matches were postponed to Friday morning owing to bad light.

Avani Prashanth stays second in Australian amateur golf

Melbourne | Agencies

Avani Prashanth stayed in the tied second place even after a disappointing third round of 4-over 77 in Australian Masters of Amateurs in Southern Golf Club.

Avani, who is India's top ranked amateur, and winner of Queen Sirikit Cup in 2023, who started the day at 7-under for two rounds is now 3-under after three rounds at the Par-73 Southern Golf Club course.

The leader is Lion Higo from Gold Coast, Australia. Higo who plays US College golf in Pepperdine, had played rounds of 71-71-70. Despite the round of 77, she stays in shared second place with two other players 3-under 216. The three players bunched at second are Rianne Malixi of the Philippines, Nika Ito of Japan and Avani.

Malixi, who shot 1-over 74 in the third round after 70-72 in the first two days, rose from third to tied second at 3-under 143. Ito, the leader for first two rounds, crashed to 5-over 78. She had rounds of 68-70 on the first two days. Avani struggled with bogeys on first and third and another on sixth. She had a fourth bogey on the 12th. She tried comeback with birdies on 13th and the 15th but two



bogey on the 14th and 18th saw her finish the day at 4-over 77.

The other Indians were disappointing. Heena Kang had a third final round of 83 and missed the cut, which was applied after three days. The top-33 and ties will play the fourth and final round.

The co-leaders in the men's section were Scotland's Oliver Mukherjee (69-70-66) and Max Moring (67-67-71) at 11-under 205.

The Indian men, Rohit Narwal shot 73 after 76-70 missed the cut. Also, Sandeep Yadav (84-74-75) missed the cut. The Top-45 and ties will play the final round in men's section.

Dakar Rally: Quintanilla bounces back for stage 5 win, Van Beveren joins him on podium

Al Hofuf (Saudi Arabia) | Agencies

Pablo Quintanilla made his mark on short run in the first of the big dunes as he took the win on the fifth stage of Dakar Rally 2024, here on Thursday.

Thursday's stage took in 118km of sand dunes through Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter as riders made their first tracks into the jaw-dropping landscapes towards Shubaytah.

Setting off early from the Al-Hofuf bivouac, riders were also faced with an arduous, energy zapping 527 km road section which would require some serious concentration during on the bike, before they were then thrown into the deep dunes on a hot day in the Eastern Province.

Joining Quintanilla on the podium was Adrien Van Beveren in second place, the Frenchman using his vast sand riding experience to get back up to the sharp end by being fastest for much of the day before dropping just 37 seconds to his teammate.



José Ignacio Cornejo and Ricky Brabec were assigned with opening the stage once they'd got to the start of the special and although they both clinched some of the time bonuses on offer, it wasn't enough for the Chilean. Cornejo's eleventh place finish cost him the lead of the overall

standings and he now trails Hero Motosports Team Rally's Ross Branch by over a minute in the battle at the top. Despite nearly going over his handlebars heading down a dune, Brabec also reduced his time in the standings as he remains in a podium position after his seventh place finish

in the desert.

Skyler Howes made some positive adjustments to his Honda CRF450 Rally in the morning and this enabled him to manoeuvre himself across the extensive sandy section catching the riders ahead as he sneaked himself into the top ten, just under five minutes behind Quintanilla.

Next up is the mammoth 48 Hour Chrono which will be the biggest test of this year's event with David Castera, the Dakar Rally organiser, already admitting he won't be gaining many fans after it. Hidden waypoints will prove to be a navigation nightmare if the fatigued competitors lose their focus.

With a reverse starting order in place from Thursday's results, Quintanilla will be the one to benefit as he will set off last out of all the RallyGP riders. With a total of 835 km to ride, the special will contribute a hefty 626 km as the Empty Quarter dunes will look to take no prisoners at the halfway point of the rally.

RHYTHM SANGWAN SECURES RECORD 16TH OLYMPIC QUOTA IN SHOOTING

Jakarta | Agencies

Rhythm Sangwan nailed a record 16th Paris 2024 Olympics quota place for Indian in Shooting, winning bronze in the women's 25m pistol, at the on-going Asia Olympic Qualification Rifle/Pistol here on Thursday.

The qualification world record holder, shot two rapid-fire series of 100 early in the morning at the Senayan Shooting range, to qualify for the final with a top score of 588.

She then had 28 hits out of her first 35 targets, finishing behind a pair of Koreans, who were ineligible for quotas in the event. That gave the world cup bronze medalist the first of the two available Paris quotas, with Chinese Taipei veteran Wu Chia Ying bagging the other with a fifth-place finish, behind a third Korean.

It also ensured India, would be sending their largest-ever Shooting squad to the Paris Games, overtaking the highest-ever 15-quota places won ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

"It was really tough to miss out specially after making two world championship finals. But that's the sport and guess it was waiting to be a special one, a historic one. I am very happy, especially with



the medals we have won and I want to thank my entire team for the support," the 20-year-old shooter said.

Rhythm began the day placed fifth after the first precision round on Wednesday and if there were any doubts on her final qualification, she erased all with near perfection in the second rapid-fire round. Her 298 out of 300 propelled her to 588, three clear

of Yeji Kim, the first of three Koreans to make the top eight. Simranpreet shot 577 to miss out in 11th place.

South Korea had already secured two quotas in the women's 25m pistol from previous qualifying events. That meant that Rhythm would have to finish better than at least three of the four remaining finalists, discounting the three Koreans to ensure the quota. The eight series of five rapid-fire shots began with Rhythm finding it tough yet again in the initial stages lying between fifth and sixth with two Singaporeans, besides Wu giving her a run for her money.

That changed with two consecutive hits of four in the fourth and fifth series, giving her a cushion over Wu and the Singaporeans, as Filipino Shayne Quiroz became the first to exit. The quota was confirmed after the sixth series, as Teh Xiu Hong became the second Singaporean to exit in succession. It probably boosted her confidence as she outgunned both Wu and Korean Minseo Kim to claim bronze behind Jin Yang, who won gold and Yeji Kim, who took silver. India also picked up a silver in the women's 25m pistol team event and still top the table ahead of China with eight gold, seven silver and six bronze medals.

Wrestling: Aman Sehrawat clinches men's 57kg gold at Zagreb Open

Zagreb (Croatia) | Agencies

Reigning Asian champion Aman Sehrawat won the gold medal in the men's 57kg at the Zagreb Open wrestling tournament, beating China's Zou Wanhao in the summit clash.

Sehrawat, who took the bronze last year, defeated Wanhao via technical superiority (10-0) to win the first medal in the 2024 edition of the Ranking Series on Wednesday night.

En route to his gold medal, Sehrawat beat Roberti Dingashvili of Georgia 11-0 in the semifinals after defeating Zane Richards of the USA with a similar margin in the quarterfinals. The Indian began his campaign with a dominating 15-4 win over Muhammet Karavus of Turkey in the qualification round. Olympian Deepak Punia (86kg) and Yash (74kg), the other two wrestlers competing on the day failed to win medals. Punia suffered 2-6 loss to Kazakhstan's Azamat Dauletbekov in the qualification round. However, Dauletbekov progressed to the final



and handed the India a chance for the bronze medal via repechage.

Punia beat Ukraine's Valentyn Babii 4-1 in one of the two repechage rounds but a 3-4 loss to Evsem Shvelidze of Georgia ended his medal hope. Yash, meanwhile, was defeated by USA's Quincy Monday via technical superiority in the round of 16 of the men's 74kg.

Indian wrestlers will compete in this tournament as neutral athletes due to the United World Wrestling's suspension of the Wrestling Federation of India.

OLYMPIC HOCKEY QUALIFIERS: SKIPPER SAVITA SAYS TEAM IS FOCUSED AND READY FOR THE CHALLENGE



Ranchi (Jharkhand) | Agencies

Gearing up for a "challenging" tournament in the absence of some experienced players, Indian women's hockey team captain Savita Punia is banking on strong support from the hockey lovers of the city and the hard work put in by her team to sail through to the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifier starting on Saturday here and grab a ticket to Paris 2024.

Addressing a press conference two days ahead of the start of the eight-team FIH Olympic Qualifiers, Savita said the team takes heart from the support it got from the local hockey lovers during the Asian Champions Trophy here a few months back and said the team is excited about playing in Ranchi once again.

India are in Group B along with New Zealand, the United States and Italy as eight teams in the fray have been divided

into two groups of four each. Pool A comprises World No.5 Germany, 2018 Asian Games gold medalist Japan, Chile and the Czech Republic. These eight teams are fighting for the three spots available at Ranchi for the Paris Olympic Games later this year.

On paper, Germany should clinch one of the three spots up for grabs in Ranchi, while India, New Zealand, USA and Japan will be fighting for the two remaining berths from this event.

"We have had a very good preparation for this event and we have done our best, both individually and as a team, to prepare for this event. The coaches have helped us work on all aspects of the game that needed attention," said Savita.

India are going into the event without experienced players like Deep Grace Ekka, Sushila Chanu, Vandana Katarjiya and Gurjot Kaur.

The Indian skipper, the main goalkeeper of the team and the most experienced member of this squad said they would

try their best to qualify for the Paris Olympic Games. She said the team is focusing on their own performance and matches and not thinking too much about the opponents.

"We will try whatever is in our hands to make it to Paris and also do well in the Olympics. But before that we will have to qualify for it and that is what we are concentrating on at this moment. We are focussing on our game and we are preparing well. We have tried our utmost to prepare for this event," she added.

The 33-year-old, who has made 266 appearances for the country so far, said they respect their opponent teams but have plans in place to tackle them. "If it is the Olympic Qualifiers, things will be tough, it will not be easy, it be a big challenge for us because all the teams that are here are quite strong. If they have reached this stage, they will have to be strong and just like us, they will try their best. We will focus on our strengths and work on our weaknesses," she said.



Kareena Kapoor: I don't seek validation from social media at all

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Kareena Kapoor Khan has been in the Hindi film industry for over two decades and enjoys a massive fan following for the work she has done over the years. In 2020, the diva made her debut on social media which she enjoys using, and through which she connects with her fans, however, she said that she doesn't seek validation from it.

Kareena currently enjoys a fan following of 11.4 million on Instagram and often shares glimpses of her day-to-day life and updates about her work.

Asked how much importance does social media validation hold for her, Kareena told IANS: "I enjoy using social media but for me, it is a way to connect with my fans and give them a glimpse into my life. I don't seek validation from social media at all but I'm happy that I get a lot of love from my fans."

Playing powerful characters on screen is validation enough for the actress, who has given impactful performances in films such as 'Asoka', 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...', 'Chameli', 'Dev', 'Omkaara', 'Jab We Met', '3 Idiots', 'Udta Punjab' and 'Bajranghi Baijaan' to name a few.

"As an artist, I'm stepping into the shoes of powerful characters, and that's validation enough for me. So, while I appreciate the love on Instagram, my true validation comes from the roles I take on, the stories I tell, and the legacy I'm building as an artist in the world of entertainment," she added.

However, there have been good and bad days in her journey in Hindi cinema, which began in 2000 with 'Refugee'.

Talking about self doubt, Kareena said: "I am only human, I could have days which may not be so good but I don't stop believing in myself. It's been over two decades for me in the industry and I'm sure there will be much



more. I know I want to keep doing something new and it's time to try something different constantly."

Kareena then revealed the toughest part of being a superstar.

Pat came the reply when asked: "Lack of privacy."

The 43-year-old actress, who is married to actor Saif Ali Khan, does agree that the profession comes with a price to pay.

"Every profession comes with its price to pay, it only depends on how much are you willing to give in and how you prioritise your life," said the actress.

Aamir Khan sheds a tear as Ira and Nupur are pronounced husband and wife

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan was seen getting emotional at the social wedding of his daughter Ira Khan with fitness expert Nupur Shikhare.

The wedding which took place on the night of January 10 in Udaipur followed Christian traditions. It was officiated by Ira's cousin, Zayn Marie Khan. The couple sealed it with a kiss after being pronounced man and wife.

Aamir Khan was overwhelmed as he shed tears of joy during the ceremony.

The guest list included Tamil actor and producer Vishnu Vishal and his wife and Badminton player Jwala Gutta. Sharing pictures from the festivities on his Instagram, Vishnu Vishal wrote: "God bless the newly weds."

Recently, Aamir Khan and Vishnu Vishal were rescued by boat together in cyclone-hit Chennai. Aamir Khan reportedly shifted his base to Chennai for the treatment of his mother. Jwala shared an album, which has pictures of her with Aamir Khan, Ira Khan and Nupur Shikhare, Aamir Khan's ex-wife and filmmaker Kiran Rao, and the actor's son Junaid Khan.

Nupur Shikhare and Ira Khan got engaged in September 2022. Nupur proposed to Ira at the Ironman Italy, where he participated. The couple made it official on January 3. They signed the marriage registration document in the presence of friends and family at the Taj Lands End in the Bandra area of Mumbai.

They will host the reception for the industry at the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre on January 13. The who's who of Bollywood including superstars Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan are expected to attend the reception.



Prabhas: I always share my plans and what's on my mind with Rajamouli

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Prabhas, who has been getting a lot of good response to his recently released theatrical extravaganza 'Salaar: Part 1 - Ceasefire', has shared that he always shares his plans with the 'Baahubali' director S. S. Rajamouli.

The two forged a bond during the making of the film 'Chatrapathi', which was released in 2005. Since then, the actor and the director have been inseparable having doled out one of the biggest pan-India hits, the 'Baahubali' franchise.

Talking about the same, Prabhas said:

"So, it's been 18 years since the film 'Chatrapathi' and we have developed a friendship. He has taught me a lot.

When Prashanth or anyone else comes around, we engage in general discussions. Rajamouli doesn't dictate terms like, 'You should do it like this', or 'You should do that'. We converse as friends, much like one would with friends. I



informed Rajamouli about my desire to work with Prashanth and our discussions."

The actor further mentioned: "I always share my plans and what's on my mind, and we have a casual chat where he also updates me about his projects. Our interactions are akin to friendly discussions. Rajamouli is also enthusiastic about my collaboration with Prashanth Neel. That's the nature of our friendship—a blend of personal life discussions and film-related talks. Both my friends and family are thrilled about me working with Prashanth and are even more eager for 'Salaar Part 2' to be released."

The actor also said that for him a good story matters the most, and that he would like to work again with all the directors whom he has worked with so far.

"I have had the opportunity to work with great directors, and I wish to work with them again in the future. As for exploring genres, I am open to all if the script interests me. Generally, I don't pre-determine the kind of film I should do", he added.

Neetu says Rishi Kapoor was never a 'friend' to Ranbir, Riddhima

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran actress Neetu Kapoor, who was last seen in 'Jugjugg Jeeyo', appeared on the latest episode of the streaming chat show 'Koffee With Karan' along with the 'Queen of Instagram', Zeenat Aman. During the course of the episode, Neetu revealed that her late husband, actor Rishi Kapoor, was never a "friend" to his kids, Ranbir and Riddhima.

It was much later in life that the senior reconnected with his kids.

Neetu Kapoor recalled their New York days, when Rishi Kapoor was treated for cancer. She revealed that it was only at that time that he opened up to his family. She said: "So Karan for me, I don't like to remember the sad part. I like to remember the good part of our relationship and of our time in New York. So New York was really sad, but we had the best year, I had the best year of my life."

She added: "Because you know Chintu Ji (Rishi Kapoor) is a very loving person. He had a lot of love in him. But there was something he never really showed his love for. He always kept his distance and bullying people, not showing his love. Especially with me and my children, he was like a big thing. Respect and all and with that he lost out on a lot



with his children. He was never a friend to them."

'BIGG BOSS 17': MUNAWAR CRIES, BEGS AYESHA FOR FORGIVENESS FOR 'CHEATING ON HER'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

In the latest episode of 'Bigg Boss 17', a major fight broke out between Ayesha Khan and Munawar Faruqui, where the former made some explosive revelations about the stand-up star.

After the revelation, Munawar was seen crying inconsolably, apologised for "cheating on her" and even accepted some of the claims she made about him.

After the nomination task, an angered Ayesha made shocking revelations about

Munawar.

She spoke about how he cheated on her, dated multiple women at once and even sent a "rishta" to a big social media influencer before entering the show.

"All he has done is lie to people. There were so many women involved in all this. He had also proposed marriage to someone. Munawar told me that he didn't want to be with Nazila and had broken up with her but I read all the chats, it was he who wanted her back. I've never wronged him but he played with my heart," Ayesha said.

Munawar broke down emotionally. He was taken to the medical room, where he said that he will not eat or drink with someone from the show. He was later talking to Ayesha and said: "There was a point where I thought my relationship with Nazila isn't going anywhere and it won't be going anymore and hence I did do things with her but we weren't together. Talking about Ayesha, I did wrong and I shouldn't have. I'm sorry Ayesha for doing you wrong."

"At one point I needed someone to take care of my child after the custody and because of that I did things I shouldn't have," he said.

Munawar was then seen apologising and begging to Ayesha for forgiveness.

Sanjay Dutt performs 'pind daan' for parents in Gaya



Team Absolute | Patna

Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt on Thursday performed the 'pind daan' for his father Sunil Dutt and mother Nargis Dutt in Gaya for peace to their souls. Arriving on a special charter flight, Sanjay, dressed in a white kurta-pyjama, went to the Moksha Dham Vishnupad temple, located on the bank of Falgu river, for the ceremony.

After hearing his arrival, a large number of his fans assembled outside the Vishnupad temple to see their favorite star.

Sunil Dutt died on May 25, 2005 and actress Nargis Dutt died on May 3, 1981.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sonam Bajwa